[13]

Jean Monnet Chair Papers

1922/23
From Illusion to Disillusion

Carole Fink

The European Policy Unit at the
European University Institute

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

Jean Monnet Chair Papers [13]

Fink, *1922/23 From Illusion to Disillusion*

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

The Jean Monnet Chair

The Jean Monnet Chair was created in 1988 by decision of the Academic Council of the European University Institute, with the financial support of the European Community. The aim of this initiative was to promote studies and discussion on the problems, internal and external, of European Union following the Single European Act, by associating renowned academics and personalities from the political and economic world to the teaching and research activities of the Institute in Florence.

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

Jean Monnet Chair Papers

1922/23
From Illusion to Disillusion

Carole Fink

1992

The European Policy Unit at the
European University Institute

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

All rights reserved.
No part of this paper may be reproduced in any form
without permission of the author.

© Carole Fink
Printed in Italy in October 1992
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico (FI)
Italy

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

1922/23 From Illusion to Disillusion

Carole Fink*

Only two years ago, in 1990, we were at the crest of the elation generated by the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe and the peaceful accomplishment of German unification. We envisaged that 1992, the Columbus quincentennial, would be an historic year of the economic and political integration of the European community.

It is unnecessary for me to detail how these high expectations have been tempered by the realities of 1992: by its political turmoil, economic deterioration, and ethnic convulsions, not unforeseeable but certainly more dangerous and pervasive than even the pessimists anticipated. Contemporary European historians who two years ago basked in requests to provide instant analyses of remarkable events are now tasked with explaining the denouement, the dramatic circumlocutions of human political behavior on this continent, from Vukovar to Sarajevo, from Hoyerswerda to Rostock, from Copenhagen to London to the suburbs of Paris.

History has undoubtedly not "ended" with the fall of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War. Indeed, the themes and subject-material of contemporary historians now consist of a confusing welter of ostensibly vanished elements, such as the revived ethnic nationalism and intensified religious strife in Central and Eastern Europe, the rekindled economic nationalism and rising xenophobia against foreigners in Western Europe. The old east-west division of the continent has re-emerged not so much in political or ideological terms as in an economic and spiritual separation.

The year 1922 on which I am focusing today may provide some instruction and critical perspective. Europe, seventy years younger than today, was a region emerging from a ghastly military struggle and hard-fought peace; it was teetering uneasily between treaty provisions and

* Dr. Carole Fink, Professor of History at The Ohio State University, was a guest of the European Policy Unit in October 1992. This paper is an edited version of a lecture organised in the framework of the Jean Monnet Chair.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

revisionist impulses, traditional values and revolutionary tendencies. There was an impressive roster of political actors: Hughes and Hoover, Lloyd George and Curzon, Briand and Poincaré, Rathenau and Stresemann, Lenin and Chicherin, Schanzer and Mussolini, Beneš and Piłsudski, as well as Mustafa Kemal and Chaim Weizmann, who shaped the postwar era with their goals, rhetoric, and actions. In 1922, at the three great conferences in Washington, Genoa, and Lausanne, European statesmen tackled issues that are highly pertinent today: the reduction of military and naval forces swollen by wars and revolution; the resuscitation of war-distorted economies in Western Europe and the economic and financial reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe; the search for security in Europe and Asia and for peace in the Near and Middle East. 1922 began with overweening hopes: for disarmament and a reparations settlement, a European security pact and detente with Soviet Russia. It ended on the eve of the Ruhr conflict, with several of its major actors gone, and new and more ruthless players on the scene; some of its illusions were dispelled, but others survived and took wing in different forms.

My purpose today is to discuss some of the guiding ideas and beliefs of the year 1922: their origins, their nature, and their dissemination. Two of my American colleagues, William Keylor and Sally Marks, have written eloquently of the "illusions" of the 1920s, and I shall add little to their excellent texts. By holding up this mirror to the mottled European terrain of seventy years ago, we can probe beneath the slogans and ceremonies to comprehend the hopes and fears, perceptions and misperceptions, and the efforts and the disappointments of 1922. The international system — much like our own — was the product of some objective long, medium, and short-term factors; but then, as now, it has been subject to cycles of human and seasonable behavior. The leading figures strove for equilibrium while thriving on novelty and change; they were both consummate public actors and captive to the forces of public opinion. Given their temperaments, ages, and political experiences, they understood historical lessons selectively and viewed the future through a narrow, nationalistic lens.

One especially powerful and dangerous illusion in 1922 was the belief in conference diplomacy as a necessary and effective tool of international negotiation. The three great international endeavors of 1922 were the Washington, Genoa, and Lausanne conferences. They had deep historical roots, representing the continuation and expansion of World War I summitry as well as of 19th-century practice. For seven full years after the Napoleonic Wars, the Allies had assembled periodically to maintain their solidarity and to control events in Europe and overseas.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

After 1822, the shattered allied coalition against France was replaced by a looser, great-power "congress" system, which provided intermittent direction to European and international affairs, particularly after armed struggles had established new "facts." Congress diplomacy succeeded in containing Russian expansion but failed to control German or Italian unification. It established certain ground rules for Europe's overseas expansion but had no jurisdiction over Japan or the United States. Traditional conference diplomacy established a tacit parity among the great European powers, which were expected to adhere to certain rules and maintain an orderly international structure and flow of gold, trade, and investments. Small powers, often the irritants to a smoothly-functioning system, served as supplicants and satellites, objects and not participants in high-level negotiations. And great-power leaders were not expected to master the intricacies of military, financial, commercial, or social problems. Their occasional meetings established a loose international structure without mechanisms for regular consultation or coordination. Despite the pleas of certain visionaries, the European Powers had no intention of establishing a permanent universal organization with authority to mediate disputes and establish international norms of conduct.

During World War I, the frequent high-level Allied meetings not only served military and economic necessity but also suited the temperaments of the major statesmen as well as the public's appetite for displays of swift, authoritative deliberation. The peace negotiations in Paris were a masterwork of conference diplomacy, artfully blending a few ceremonial sessions with the numerous private great-power conclaves that decided everything. In 1920-21 there were fifteen Allied conferences. The political and economic fallout of the treaties plus the proliferation of unresolved questions regarding Soviet Russia reinforced the inclination to conduct international business through improvised high-level deliberations.

The sheer number and urgent aspect of the postwar great-power conclaves, their lavish expense and the abundant numbers of delegates and experts — as well as the presence of press, businessmen, and other observers — coated post World War I European diplomacy with a veneer of showmanship and artifice, stimulating overweening hopes and fears. Conference diplomacy tended to simplify complex issues, to manufacture timetables, to exaggerate the distinctions between great powers and small; and, despite its Wilsonian rhetoric, to insert large doses of secrecy and dissimulation into international affairs, and also to expand the development of wartime intelligence services — directed as much against friends as against former enemies. By establishing a

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

momentum of its own, conference diplomacy prevented calm and reasoned deliberation. Because of time-pressure and human distractibility, it linked the unconnected and divided the connected, while neglecting problems in the new Eastern Europe that did not scream for a solution, like the raging typhus epidemie and famine, the expropriation and expulsion of German and Hungarian peasants, and the threats to the Jews. Promoting image over substance, rhetoric over reality, the hectic, sensational pace created a store of anecdotes and ineradicable impressions, such as the long-winded Rathenau at Spa, the maladroit Briand at Washington, the duplicitous Chicherin at Genoa, the implacable Curzon at Lausanne.

The three major conferences of 1922, Washington, Genoa, and Lausanne, were all outside the aegis, and indeed opposed to, the League of Nations. This new organization in Geneva, staffed by a youthful and devoted international civil service, had been denied responsibility for the chief European issues of reparations and economic reconstruction, security and Germany's disarmament. Although the League supervised some long-term problems, such as Danzig and the Saar as well as mandates and minorities, and was reluctantly given authority to draw the contested borders for Upper Silesia, it was primarily expected to deal with humanitarian tasks, such as refugees and passports for stateless persons, the protection of labor and the struggle against drugs and white slavery, as well as the establishment of intellectual cooperation.

This Wilsonian creation, which elicited ardent support from the small states and from liberals and internationalists, had been crippled at birth by several shortcomings: by the absence of the United States, Soviet Russia, and Germany; by Britain's antipathy and France's virtual indifference; and by the inherent contradiction between its universalist, democratic assembly and the exclusive League Council. Two competing visions then, as now, dominated international order: one was based on impromptu and disjunctive conference diplomacy based on the initiative of the Great Powers — from the two-person, one-day Franco-British summit at Boulogne in February 1922 to the imposing thirty-four-nation, six-week Genoa meeting a few weeks later — the other was based upon a novice world organization, of still dubious permanence, which was in the process of creating sustaining institutions, meeting at regular intervals, and attempting to balance Great-Power desiderata against the needs of entire continents. Although the goals were the same — the maintenance of the peace established after World War I — the League was always subordinate. And, paradoxically, the more organized the

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

League became, the less it was capable of providing the rapid and flexible arrangements cherished by most leaders.

To be sure, underlying the Great Powers' ability to conduct international business were a series of their own ad hoc structures — the Supreme Council, the Conference of Ambassadors, and the Reparations Commission — that met periodically to administer treaty-related questions and provided a certain measure of stability and continuity as well as an aura of Allied solidarity. It is nevertheless true that these institutions, whose deliberations were largely shielded from public scrutiny, magnified the Allies' discord as much as their prerogatives.

There were other possibilities for organizing Europe. France, after failing to secure a straightforward Anglo-American guarantee of its security, attempted to surround Germany with a network of quasi permanent, peacetime military pacts with Poland, Belgium, and later with Czechoslovakia. The "Little Entente" was a loose organism to protect Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia against Hungarian revisionism. At the opposite pole was the Third International, an institution dedicated to subverting the Paris Peace Treaties, promoting socialist revolutions, and, of course, Soviet Russia's power and influence. Island Britain opposed all these burgeoning arrangements, which fragmented the continent and impeded general disarmament.

There were also proposals for creating new regional structures, perhaps subordinate to the League, to supervise specific political, financial, transport, and minority questions. But then, as now, small powers as much as the great have been generally reluctant to withdraw themselves, and their burning questions, from the great glare of conference diplomacy, as if requiring the insistent prod — however shortsighted and short-winded — of the public spotlight. Largely disregarded at Paris and Genoa and absent from Washington and Lausanne, Europe's small states championed the League, they formed ephemeral blocs, and they essentially acquiesced in a conference system based on the power and the initiative of the Great.

***

Underlying the reigning faith in conference diplomacy were several key attitudes. The first was a fundamental obliviousness to the revolutionary consequences of the war at home and abroad. Four years of death and destruction had squandered Europe's wealth, distorted its economies, and unleashed radical elements from Dublin to Saint Petersburg. It had weakened Europe's dominance over its colonies and the rest of the world and had primarily benefited Japan and the United States, two

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

powers unwilling to become equal participants in governing the postwar world.

If statesmen publicly paid lip-service to the goal of restoring the illusorily golden liberal order of antebellum Europe — of free trade, free movement of goods and people, and a self-regulating if ultimately anarchic international system dominated by the Great Powers — the political price proved untenable. The central place of war debts and reparations indicated the degree to which nations preferred to focus on, and argue over, others' obligations as to the key to economic salvation. No European political leader told his public they must assume the burdens themselves.

Another illusion was based on the prospect of full United States participation in postwar European affairs. European leaders appeared to confuse Wilson's momentous presence at Paris with Washington's longstanding reluctance to coordinate its policy with its fractious former wartime partners. The longer and more pervasive American tradition of neutrality was undoubtedly reinforced by Europe's fervent pleas for its help and participation which starkly contrasted with the Old World's still considerable stocks of arms, colonies, and financial power.

Conference diplomacy between 1919 and 1922 was haunted by the goal of subduing two important and resentful antagonists, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia. This duo's temporary weakness created disequilibrium in the new Europe. But in a longer perspective, both former pillars of the European system singly and jointly posed military, economic, and ideological perils to their neighbors and to the entire peace settlement. The long procession of conferences exacerbated Allied differences over how to handle Moscow and Berlin.

The extension of sovereignty to the new and enlarged states of Eastern Europe created an illusory sense of order between the Baltic and the Black and Adriatic Seas. All these governments were burdened by hostile neighbors, fragmented leadership, economic fragility, and acute minority problems. The leaders of Eastern Europe, including the deft and energetic Beneš, interposed a rigidity and vulnerability into postwar deliberations.

Finally, in the eastern Mediterranean, the defeat and revival of Turkey posed formidable political, economic, and strategic problems for the Allies. Sorely divided amongst themselves over their short- and long-term interests in the Near East, they faced a hardy, victorious enemy with whom they would have to negotiate less imperiously than with Germany or with Russia. And in their old colonies and new mandates, the World War I victors faced an unanticipated eruption of Muslim sentiment that threatened their claim to rule.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

In sum, in 1922, the Allies confronted complex and insistent problems produced by the war and by their own decisions as well as by remnants of the past. Old empires had disappeared and new nation states had been created; revolution vied with counter-revolution; and new social, economic and political conditions challenged traditional values and mentalities. A frayed coalition of Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium, strongly dedicated to regaining some sort of imagined normalcy, presumed that they could set a solid course between disciplining their enemies, protecting themselves and their dependents, and maintaining a minimum of international organization. Here was the key illusion of the immediate postwar period — one we have not relinquished today.

***

The three great conferences of 1922 were steeped in hopes to restore remnants of a lost past; bolster the status quo; and avoid making dangerous changes: Lausanne in the Near East; Washington in the Pacific; and Genoa in the heart of Europe. The first largely succeeded; the second was a moderate triumph; and the third was a costly failure.

From unpromising beginnings, the Lausanne conference was a triumph of international diplomacy: the issues were fairly clear-cut, and unified Western negotiators faced a pragmatic, if wily Turkish enemy who, after four tough years of fighting had utterly destroyed the Greek army. In return for gaining his way on borders and minority-exchange, Ismet Pasha was prepared to abandon his Soviet ally on the key issue of the Straits. The Lausanne Conference succeeded because the West, no longer hobbled by Lloyd George's grecophilic fantasies, or by the specter of a Kemal/Lenin cabal, under Curzon's deft if heavy hand, blended precedent and innovations; a durable peace in the Near East was created.

The Washington Conference, which was linked to major problems that had preceded World War I, had a more problematic outcome. Its guiding spirits, the two tough-minded, congenial idealists Hughes and Balfour, simulated an aura of achievement. They succeeded in ejecting the Japanese from Shantung without, however, ending other existing concessions in China or restoring full Chinese sovereignty. The troublesome Anglo-Japanese alliance was replaced by an innocuous Four-Power Pact, which however established no real security system for the Pacific. The much-heralded naval disarmament agreement among Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States was limited to capital ships and a duration of ten years, but excluded submarines and land forces. In the euphoria following the Washington agreements,

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

several illusions were reinforced: that such cautious models could be applied from one region to another, regardless of the specificity of the issues and the selection of the invitees; that any meaningful steps towards disarmament could be separated from real security arrangements; that Japan's revisionism had been curbed or that Soviet Russia's exclusion from an important area of its interest had been accepted or appropriate; that basic inter-allied differences had been mended; and that America's unwillingness to become involved in the world's political governance had been reduced by its one-sided initiative.

As to Genoa, I could of course say a great deal; but the subject has been amply treated in two monographs written in the mid 1980s and in collection of essays published in 1991 by Cambridge University Press entitled *Genoa, Rapallo, and European Reconstruction in 1922*. It is nevertheless useful to evaluate the Genoa Conference in the context of the illusions, the suppositions that were tested and found wanting, in the spring of 1922.

At Cannes in the beginning of January 1922 the British premier, David Lloyd George convinced the Supreme Council to invite Soviet Russia, Germany, the other former enemy states and the neutrals, to a huge summit meeting to "remedy the paralysis of the European system." Desiring to detach his country from the constricting obligations of treaty enforcement, Lloyd George formulated an elaborate project that involved reestablishing political and economic ties with Moscow, the economic reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe, and the creation of a new Great-Power condominium that included Germany and Soviet Russia to fill the security gap, promote disarmament, and bring economic prosperity to Britain and to the ailing European continent. Notwithstanding French disapproval and American disinterest, Lloyd George rallied much of Europe and the British dominions to his revisionist design.

There were, of course, considerable risks created by a huge, open-ended gathering like the Genoa Conference which threatened to obliterate the distinction between winners and losers, diminish the League of Nations, and sow permanent discord among the Allies. America's refusal to participate eliminated the most significant source of fresh capital for Europe's renewal. When Raymond Poincaré replaced Briand after the Cannes Conference, France removed most of the significant issues — especially German reparations — from Genoa's agenda. And, the host, Italy weakened by domestic strife between its fascists and communists, exerted little influence as promoter of the conciliatory "spirit of Genoa."

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

The two outsiders at the Genoa conference had a disproportionate influence over its outcome. Soviet Russia, desperate for loans and investments, faced a stiff and perilous price for a truce the West and the support of its capitalists; full debt recognition, the complete return of confiscated property, and the total disavowal of its revolutionary project and the work of the Third International. Germany, denied any prospect of reparations relief or of playing a significant role in Western-Soviet negotiations, also faced the admittedly-remote prospect of an Allied-Soviet arrangement that might raise its reparations bill. The two pariahs exploited Lloyd George's glittering occasion to create a counter-Genoa. At a private meeting on Easter Sunday, the foreign ministers of Germany and Soviet Russia, Walther Rathenau and Georgi Chicherin, signed the bilateral "Rapallo" agreement, which fractured capitalist unity, doomed the Genoa Conference, and exposed the brittleness of the Paris Peace Settlement.

The Genoa Conference, which lasted five more weeks and produced a dismal follow-up conference at the Hague, expired from its creators' lack of flexibility, coordination and ability to take the first steps towards peace. There are nevertheless instructive lessons from this first major encounter between the capitalist and communist worlds in 1922. After four and a half years of rigid and fairly hostile relations, both sides suddenly offered hints of accommodation which ultimately could not be fulfilled. Lloyd George was hamstrung by the West's widespread fear of communism, by disunity in the Allied camp, and by his own political weakness and personal shortcomings. Lenin too was constrained by the fierce internal debate between bolshevik purists and pragmatists and also by his failing health, which removed him from wielding power at a critical juncture. Throughout the winter and spring of 1922, both sides tried to outdo their antagonists with surprise, bullying, heavy doses of propaganda, and divide and conquer tactics; both sides were weighed down by distorted perceptions and apocalyptic views the other; both sides held unrealistic views of the others' economic strength or weakness; and, ultimately, both sides shrank from any meaningful compromise that threatened their interests and their power. In a broader sense Genoa's failure discouraged future searches in the 1920s for forms of coexistence. A negative model of open-ended international negotiation, it reinforced the intransigent forces on both sides that preferred ideological correctness and old-fashioned power politics to exploring uncharted methods of political and economic contact. It increased Moscow's long-term estrangement from the West, whose repercussions are still to be examined.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

The failure of detente with Soviet Russia had a mixed result for Eastern Europe. On the one hand, with the bolshevik threat temporarily checked, it artificially solidified a status quo of borders, like Poland's, which extended far into former czarist territory but had no real Western guarantees of their permanence. On the other, Soviet Russia's virtual retirement from the larger diplomatic scene provided little incentive for the border states to create durable security arrangements for their collective defense against their most dangerous neighbors. The Little Entente provided Romania with no protection from Russia (nor Czechoslovakia from Germany or Yugoslavia from Italy). A fierce state nationalism and robust anti-communism dominated the new and enlarged states of Eastern Europe, which distorted their political development, opposed any risk of outside tutelage and control, and also smothered most democratic initiatives.

The inconclusive outcome of the Genoa Conference also tested of the old concept of "neutrality." The six non-combatants in World War I (Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), which had been excluded from the peace treaties but not from the League, found themselves adversely affected by postwar economic conditions — in stark contrast with their remarkable wartime prosperity. In 1922 they had searched earnestly before Genoa for a unified strategy to promote their and Europe's financial recovery; but this illusion soon burst. Due to their disparate power and interests, they failed to coordinate their strategies and tactics. There could be no "neutrals' bloc" not simply because of their divergent attitudes towards France and Britain, Germany and Soviet Russia. The neutrals were caught in this predicament: their inherent opposition to the peace settlement made them supporters of the revisionist camp; their loyalty to the League placed them alongside the small, new states; and their social and economic conservatism aligned them behind the traditional great powers, thus muting their preferred role as special pleaders for justice, democracy, and stability.

One of the great postwar illusions, nurtured by Woodrow Wilson, was centered on public diplomacy — "Open covenants openly arrived it." With the expansion of self-determination and democracy, it was assumed that an informed public opinion would assert a responsible control over state policy, preventing the recurrence of crises such as 1914. The use of photographs, film, and radio as well as the press would inform this popular opinion; indeed, most governments hastened to the printing press with masses of edited documents on the war's origins and aftermath, supplemented by a flood of semi-official memoirs.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

One of the most powerful and elusive factors in historical analysis, the state of public opinion in 1922 defies easy categorization. Predictably, there was widespread popular disillusionment over the paltry rewards of four or more years of privation, of social, economic, and political regimentation, and of propaganda barrages and heavy censorship. To be sure, the costs of the war had been unevenly distributed within particular countries and throughout the continent. The initial elation of peace had been replaced over large areas of Europe by mounting unemployment, inflation, and taxes. As demobilization proceeded at an uneven, often painful pace, a wary and resentful public, repeatedly assured by its governments that others would pay the costs, waited impatiently for relief and prosperity.

As usual, the press was rife with caricatures of faithless friends and perfidious enemies, barrages of patriotism and suave ex-enemy propaganda; the solid wartime certainties were replaced by a disorderly international atmosphere, complicated by a bewildering array of technical questions that in some roundabout way affected jobs as well as the price of bread and lodging and transportation and health care. Politicians and diplomats who paid considerable attention to their images timed their arrivals, conference openings, and press conferences to the popular evening press. But the cycle of public-opinion creation and response in the 1920s defied scientific precision. The ringing words and steely self-confidence of a Lloyd George or a Lenin could momentarily arouse masses of supporters; but, like today, mounting unemployment figures, closed factories, and diminished trade sent more insistent, more dangerous signals that politicians were helpless to control.

The peaceful, democratic public opinion envisaged by Wilson failed to materialize after the first World War for several reasons. First, despite all the rhetoric, there was no real peace until 1921, when conflicts had finally ceased on the borders of Russia and of Turkey; and even on May Day in 1922, Trotsky was still saber-rattling against Moscow's neighbors. Second, it is conceivable that the procession of postwar conferences — with their public scorecards of political and economic gains and setbacks — increased, rather than reduced, enmity among peoples and nations. Nationalist parliamentary majorities kept a tight rein on their leaders' latitude for compromise. And as seasoned spectators to numerous diplomatic bouts, the public demanded victory and punished losers. In 1922, Briand, Schober, Skirmunt, Schanzer, Beneš, and Lloyd George were all forced to resign over their diplomatic debacles.

Anti-war and pacifist sentiment, which spread through veterans' groups and women's organizations as well as in socialist and communist

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

quarters, failed to turn the public into partisans of military and moral disarmament. Except for tiny groups of ardent supporters, the League of Nations failed to inspire popular opinion because of its indistinct identity, technical tasks, and neglect by major world leaders; and fledgling organizations such as the World Court and the International Labor Office remained largely obscure. With Wilson gone, no European leader seemed capable of blending abstract ideals and political power. Lloyd George tried, and failed, at Genoa.

***

1922 was a relatively active and peaceful year in European diplomacy that left principal European questions unresolved: relations with Soviet Russia were put on ice; disarmament was delayed; and collective security postponed. However, the two key economic questions that were inextricably tied to European politics — inter-Allied debts and German reparations — could not be deferred indefinitely. The American government had demanded debt negotiation with its allies. Germany, in massive default on its reparations payments, asked for a continuation of its 1922 moratorium. In January 1923, the Reparations Commission voted three to one to send troops into the Ruhr to force German payment. Poincaré prevailed over Britain in what was France's final opportunity to enforce the Versailles Treaty. In the ensuing year-long struggle, German resistance and Anglo-American pressure ended French dominance over the reparations question. With the Dawes agreement of 1924, Germany's reparations were reduced, France's coercive power destroyed, and the Anglo-American insistence on decoupling economic issues, security, and political power triumphed. The door was now open to a revision of the Versailles peace on terms negotiated with the defeated.

Many illusions ceased with the French invasion of the Ruhr; but new ones were created. The German question became the main issue of European peace; despite loud threats, neither the Soviet government nor the Poles took any steps to intervene during the Ruhr crisis. Europe held its breath, while the German currency skyrocketed and Hitler made his first effort to seize power in November 1923.

Gustav Stresemann, who ordered an end to Germany's passive resistance and took drastic measures to strengthen the economy in late 1923, embarked on an audacious revisionist path of splitting the Allies, restoring German strength, and revising the Treaty. The Ruhr occupation, which had given France temporary economic benefits, rent the Western Alliance; and the outcome delivered the coup de grace.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

Poincaré fell in May 1924; Britain rejected the Geneva Protocol in November; and in January 1925 Stresemann came forward with the proposals leading to the Locarno treaties, signed in October 1925 that effectively revised the Versailles peace.

Locarno signified that the Allies had failed in their attempt to dominate Germany. In return for accepting its Western borders, agreeing to arbitrate disputes in the East, and acquiescing in some limitations on the Reichswehr, Germany regained much of its diplomatic status as a great power without surrendering its special ties with Moscow. France, which at Locarno was denied ironclad security guarantees for itself and its eastern allies, virtually surrendered to Britain and to Germany and began building the Maginot Line. Britain resumed its pre-1904 role of balancer.

The Locarno treaties "decoupled" the issues of reparations, security, and politics. France could no longer use reparations to cripple Germany; nor could the Germans use their economic frailty to harass and divide the Allies. This decoupling undoubtedly benefited Germany, which was larger and economically stronger than France. Stresemann was free to proceed slowly and cautiously with his short- and long-term aims of liberating German soil and expanding Germany's economic and military power.

The Locarno treaties are associated with the venerable term "appeasement," which was rooted in prewar British policy, reemerged in 1922, and shifted its focus in 1925. But it was a notably more limited appeasement than envisaged by Lloyd George at Genoa. It meant solving one great specific problem — to Germany's benefit — and leaving the rest unsettled. A far conservative episode than Genoa, the five-power Locarno conclave, with its circumscribed agenda, all but excluded the small states. Whereas Lloyd George's aspiration at Genoa was for a comprehensive settlement linking all former enemies under a mantle of appeasement, Locarno was an essentially pro-German, anti-Soviet proceeding that anticipated the diplomacy of the 1930s. Locarno was held outside the aegis of the League of Nations, whose structure and future had nevertheless been adversely altered. Germany's permanent seat on the Council, its exemption from Article 16 — the obligation to engage in economic or military sanctions in the case of Soviet aggression against Poland —, and the evaporation of the League's power to punish potential German treaty violations, constituted a near reversal of Germany's defeat in 1918.

With flamboyant, if empty toasts to lasting peace Locarno whittled down the Paris Peace settlement without constructing anything solid to replace it. Soviet Russia remained excluded from the European system;

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

the United States and Japan remained resolutely disengaged; Italy under Mussolini was moving into the revisionist camp, and the East European states between Berlin and Moscow were more vulnerable than ever. During the next four years, the Locarno tea-partners, Britain, France, and Germany lacked the power, prestige, unity of interests, time and even inclination to replace the tattered Versailles with a new global political and economic order. If all seemed well and peaceful, cooperative and stable until 1929, it was an illusion.

***

What conclusions can we draw from these hopeful, cautious, and ultimately misguided steps seven decades ago? It is by now a truism that the Paris Peace Settlement lacked mechanisms for adjustment and proper enforcement, because the victors in World War I had neither the strength nor the cohesion to rule the postwar world and the defeated were still strong and unrepentant. As revisionist strength and pressure mounted, the titular upholders wavered and dispersed; the Paris creations — the new and enlarged states, the League of Nations, and certain innovations like the Minority Treaties — were sacrificed to a resurrected, and illusory "balance of power" system which, from Locarno to Munich, destroyed European peace.

European diplomats after World War I were faced with a baffling complex of questions relating to ideology and politics, finance and economics, security and disarmament. The Washington and Lausanne Conferences of 1922 succeeded, because their tasks were limited. The Genoa Conference of 1922, which tried to tackle everything at once, failed.

The result was to reinforce the Anglo-American inclination to separate issues, to employ ostensibly neutral experts, and to construct "businesslike" solutions to seemingly technical, non-political questions. This sowed another dangerous illusion for European order, creating a perilous, fragmenting practice with its own artifice, politics, and public confusion. French politics and security *were* inextricable from the matters of reparations and war debts. Stability in Central and Eastern Europe *was* tied to individual states' economic performance, to their domestic integration, and to their ability to constrain their neighbors' appetites. Each time a prop of the Versailles edifice crumbled in one place, it *did* weaken the whole.

Germany and Soviet Russia would inevitably have regained their strength. The problem that was raised, and not solved, in 1922 was how to weigh traditional balance-of-power considerations with the new

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

sacred principles of self-determination and democracy; how a durable peace might be constructed despite considerable disparities of size, wealth, and national cohesion; how sovereignty was to be respected and protected while at the same time creating a stable and prosperous continent.

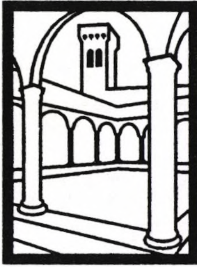
Remnants of the past coupled with brutal wartime experiences made the immediate postwar period a breeding ground of radical forces of the right and the left. By 1920 democracy had lost its momentum in Central and Eastern Europe, and ruling parties everywhere exuded strong doses of chauvinism and intolerance as well as protectionism and autarchy. The sense of a tainted victory and unadmitted defeat, of nostalgia and defiance, of anxiety and resentment permeated the political atmosphere. New constitutions, institutions, and leaders grafted upon aged disharmony had little prospect of succeeding without concerted and active intervention from outside. In the vacuum left by Wilson, and in the wake of Lenin's excesses, where would these positive tutelary forces emerge?

1922 represented a moment like our own of challenge and risk. At the Genoa conference Lloyd George and his supporters launched an idealistic effort laced with British pragmatism, self-interest, and short attention-span, to shape Europe's future: to merge old values with new realities before national antagonisms became so solidified that another war would become inevitable. His counterparts in Washington and Moscow, Paris and Berlin, Rome and Prague — and the people behind them — were undoubtedly too scarred by the war and too buffeted by its confusing aftermath to foresee the opportunities and to avert the dangers before them.

Victory in 1918, as in more recent times, came with a heavy price. The Europe Lloyd George attempted to "reconstruct" at the giant Genoa Conference was an economically, politically, and spiritually divided continent that required patient, persistent, knowledgeable, and organized effort to restore all of it to health, prosperity, and peace. And although this illusion was ostensibly dispelled seventy years ago, it has been revived, with comparable needs, hopes, prospects, and impediments, in our own time.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.



EUI
Jean Monnet
Chair Papers

EUI Jean Monnet Chair Papers are published and distributed by the
European University Institute, Florence

Copies can be obtained free of charge
– depending on the availability of stocks – from:

The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

Please use order form overleaf

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

Publications of the European University Institute

To The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

From Name . . . .

Address . . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

- ❐ Please send me a complete list of EUI Jean Monnet Chair Papers
- ❐ Please send me a complete list of EUI book publications
- ❐ Please send me the EUI brochure Academic Year 1992/93
- ❐ Please send me a complete list of EUI Working Papers

Please send me the following EUI Jean Monnet Chair Papers:

No, Author . . . .
Title: . . . .
No, Author . . . .
Title: . . . .
No, Author . . . .
Title: . . . .
No, Author . . . .
Title: . . . .

Date . . . .

Signature . . . .

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

Jean Monnet Chair Papers

CHRISTOPH BERTRAM/Sir JULIAN BULLARD/ LORD COCKFIELD/ Sir DAVID HANNAY/MICHAEL PALMER
Power and Plenty? From the Internal Market to Political and Security Cooperation in Europe,
April 1991, pp. 73

ROBERT GILPIN
The Transformation of the International Political Economy,
April 1991, pp.27

EDMOND MALINVAUD
Macroeconomic Research and European Policy Formation
April 1991, pp. 58

SERGIO ROMANO
Soviet Policy and Europe Since Gorbachev,
April 1991, pp. 25

BERNT VON STADEN, The Politics of European Integration,
April 1991, pp. 33

HELGA HAFTENDORN
European Security Cooperation and the Atlantic Alliance,
July 1991, pp. 42

THOMAS ANDERSON/STAFFAN BURENSTAM LINDER
Europe and the East Asian Agenda,
October 1991, pp. 87

ROGER G. NOLL
The Economics and Politics of Deregulation,
October 1991, pp. 89

ROBERT TRIFFIN
IMS International Monetary System - or Scandal?,
March 1992, pp. 49

EGON BAHR
From Western Europe to Europe,
June 1992, pp. 42

HELGE HVEEM
The European Economic Area and the Nordic Countries - End Station or Transition to EC Membership?
June 1992, pp. 21

ERIC STEIN
Post-communist Constitution-making: Confessions of a Comparatist (Part I)
August 1992, pp. 63

CAROLE FINK
1922/23 From Illusion to Disillusion
October 1992, pp. 19

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.
© The Author(s). European University Institute.

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

© The Author(s). European University Institute.
Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.