REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LITTLE ENTENTE STATES 1921-1938 (CZECHOSLOVAKIA, YUGOSLAVIA, ROMANIA)

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by Zhyan Amjad RAMADHAN titled "REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LITTLE ENTENTE STATES 1921-1938 (CZECHOSLOVAKIA, YUGOSLAVIA, ROMANIA)" is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of Master.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the aforementioned statement.

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FOREWORD

Following the First World War, the Hapsburg monarchy was replaced by new successor states in Central Europe, whose populations had endured centuries of repression under the Austro-Hungarian imperialistic regime. After winning the right of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference, a shared desire to uphold the new order created by the Peace Treaties naturally brought the new successor states together. Czech Foreign Minister Edward Benes recognized the threat of post-war revisionism by the defeated countries in Europe and signed treaties with Romania and Yugoslavia in 1920–1921, forming the Little Entente. The Entente's primary objective was to preserve the territorial integrity and independence of its members through a coordinated foreign policy aimed at thwarting the expansion of German influence and the re-establishment of the Habsburgs as the legitimate heirs to the Hungarian throne.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The First chapter is an introduction, in which we briefly discuss the complete story of the Little Entente from its initiation to its termination. As well as, the roots and histories of each of the Little Entente States. In the second chapter, we demonstrate the formation of the Little Entente and Hungarian attempts to gain the revision of peace treaties by allying themselves with French interests. However, the two coups by ex-Emperor Karl to retake the Habsburg restoration during 1918–1921 and the continuous confrontation of the Little Entente with Hungarian revisionism after the coups until 1929. In the third chapter, we focus on the Little Entente's relations with each of the great power revisionist countries. The Little Entente relations with Germany, the Little Entente relations with Italy, and the Little Entente relations with Soviet Russia, from 1930 to 1935. In the fourth chapter, we analyze the factors of disintegration and the dissolution of the Little Entente after the Remilitarization of the Rhineland until Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1936–1938.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Bariş SARIKÖSE, for his great support during my master's studies. And i also would like to thank the members of the committee, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yenal ÜNAL and Prof. Dr.

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ABSTRACT

In the diplomatic struggle that followed the First World War, the new territorial Status Quo brought about by the peace treaties split Continental Europe between the satisfied and the dissatisfied: those who wanted to maintain the status quo of the peace structure established by the treaties and those who wanted the revision of the peace treaties. However, “Security” meant more than the simple maintenance of the treaty system, and revisionism went beyond a revision of the treaties.

This thesis focuses on the “Little Entente,” which is a diplomatic alliance consisting of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania that aimed to safeguard the territorial status quo achieved through the peace treaties in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the early 1920s, the Little Entente took its first step by signing bilateral agreements between its member states, such as the treaties between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia on August 14, 1920, and Czechoslovakia and Romania on April 23, 1921. The agreements signed between Yugoslavia and Romania on June 7, 1921, were particularly significant. The Little Entente became closely tied to France in the late 1920s, as the latter supported the alliance and entered into alliance agreements with Czechoslovakia on January 25, 1924, Romania on June 10, 1926, and Yugoslavia on November 11, 1927.

Despite these coalitions, the Little Entente was unable to defend its member states against Germany, Russia, or Italy. In 1938, when Germany and Italy dismantled Czechoslovakia, the Little Entente was powerless to prevent it, as France and Britain, the status quo powers, were also involved. Consequently, the Little Entente fell apart.

Keywords: The Little Entente, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Status Quo, Security, France, Germany, Italy, Soviet Russia, Revision of Peace Treaties

ÖZ

I.Dünya savaşından sonar Avrupa devletleri arasında imzalanan barış anlaşmalarından bazı devletler memnun olmadılar. Avrupa da savaş sonrası dönemde Avrupa devletleri arasında başta sınır problemleri olmak üzere birçok mesele ortaya çıktı. Balkan devletleri de güvenlik kaygılarıyla iş birliğine gittiler. Bu bağlamda Çekoslovakya, Romanya ve Yugoslavya arasında Küçük Antant paktı kuruldu.

Avrupa devletleri Fransa, Rusya ve Almanya bölgedeki çıkarları çerçevesinde Küçük Antant devletleri ile ilişkiler geliştirdi. Almanya ve İtalyanın yayılmacı politikaları ve II. Dünya savaşı öncesi değişen dengeler Küçük Antant'ın etkinliğini kaybetmesine ve dağılmasına neden oldu. Küçük Antant Almanya'nın Balkanlar'da yayılmasını engelleyemedi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Küçük Antant, Çekoslovakya, Yugoslavya, Romanya, Statüko, Güvenlik, Fransa, Almanya, İtalya, Sovyet Rusya, Barış Antlaşmalarının Gözden Geçirilmesi

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ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.L.N **:** Agreements of the League of Nations

CA **:** Cumhuriyet Arşivi (Prime Ministry Republic Archive

Doc.BFP **:** Documents on British Foreign Policy

Doc.GFP **:** Documents on German Foreign Policy

Doc.USFR : Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States

Doc.HFR **:** Papers and Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of Hungary

Doc.SFP **:** Documents on Soviet Foreign Policy

D.I.A **:** Documents on International Affairs

FO **:** Foreign Office

F.P.A **:** Foreign policy Association

GFM **:** German Foreign Ministry

I.C **:** International Conciliation

L.N.T.S. **:** League of Nations Treaty Series

M.S.L.N **:** Monthly Summary of the League of Nations.

P.C.I.J. **:** Permanent Court of International Justice

S.I.A **:** Survey of International Affairs

TNA **:** The National Archive

SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis, titled “Regional Security Cooperation Between the Little Entente States 1921–1938 (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania),” deals with postwar Security challenges of territorial Status quo obtained by peace treaties after the breakdown of the Habsburg monarchy in Central and Southeastern Europe. However, the endeavors of its member states against the restoration of the Habsburgs and revisionism of peace treaties were examined.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This study explores the foreign policy of the Little Entente states, which aimed to uphold the post-World War I territorial status quo established by peace treaties such as the Treaties of Versailles, Saint-Germain, Trianon, Neuilly, and Paris. The Little Entente sought to counter efforts by Germany, Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union to revise these treaties and preserve the peace settlement. Additionally, the Little Entente attempted to promote stronger economic relations among its member states by preventing the Austro-German Customs Union, the so-called “Anschluss.”

While Central Europe was in desperate need of an organized force to protect the peace settlement and encourage reconciliation and cooperation, the Little Entente played a crucial role in maintaining the territorial status quo. Despite the dissolution of its Alliance at the end of the 1930s, significant efforts were made to preserve the existing borders.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This study is the result of a two-year investigation and is particularly based on various primary sources, including published and unpublished archival documents. Above all, digitized records from the National Archives of the UK (TNA) were particularly instrumental, including the German Foreign Ministry (GFM 33) series, which contains photocopies of captured microfilm copies of documents from

the German Foreign Ministry archives, such as TNA, GFM33/3467/9608/3, and its digitization process carried out on the basis of Funds.

However, The National Archives: Foreign Office (FO) documents, Such as TNA, FO 37/19892, TNA, FO-954-4A-7, TNA, FO-954-23B-307, have been utilized.

In addition, we also used some unpublished documents from Cumhuriyet Arşivi (CA), The Republic Archive of Turkey, like BCA, 30.10.0.0.246.667.

Published governmental documents, including HFR, DBFP, DGFP, USFR, and official documents from the League of Nations (L.N.) such as L.N.T.S., M.S.L.N., A.L.N., and P.L.N., and documents from some official Newspapers: like The Times (London). The New York Times and Le Temps (Paris) were also used.

While the thesis essentially relies on primary sources, secondary sources such as books, journal articles, theses, and Ph.D. dissertations were also consulted.

1. INTRODUCTION

Europe was at war in 1914; a revolution began there in 1918. When peace treaties are signed, a revolution like the one that occurred in Europe during World War I does not come to an end. It continues within each person's inner soul. The defeated are never prepared to submit to a ruling in which they have been physically restrained. Statesmen and nations tried to win the war until 1918; after 1919, their endeavors were focused on achieving peace (Arnold, 1958:1).

After the peace accords, Continental Europe was split between the consistent and the unhappy. In the post-war diplomatic conflict between those who wanted to preserve the status quo of the treaty-based peace system and others who wanted the treaties revised, nevertheless, "Security" went beyond only keeping the treaty system in place, and revisionism extended beyond merely changing the peace treaties.

The political and economic unrest, insecurity, and instability were worse throughout South Central Europe than anywhere else in the years that followed the signing of the peace agreement (Arnold, 1958:1). When the war ended in 1918, the whole structure of Europe changed. While The Ottoman, German, and Russian empires all fell, the old and once-powerful Habsburg Monarchy also vanished from the stage of history.

The main problem that the Habsburg Empire had to deal with was its multinational structure; therefore, most historians focused their studies on the internal ethnic conflicts of the Monarchy. For example, Jaszi argues that "compared with other states, the defining feature of much of Habsburg history is the absence of a single common ideal or sensibility that could hold together the peoples or nations of the monarchy in any eventuality of political solidarity" (Jaszi, 1930, as cited in İşçi, 2017:544). Alan Sked makes a similar claim: "The question of nationalism has always been at the center of the debate over the viability of the Habsburg Empire, and no reputable historian has overlooked that it was a matter of life and death for the Monarchy" (Sked, 1981:175; İşçi, 2017:544).

This Monarchy has been a bulwark against revolt for generations. It had fought against liberalism and nationalism for centuries and had built a global empire in a

contemporary civilization centered on the national state. Although it had been in the process of disintegrating for many years, it was nevertheless considered “the second sick man of Europe.”

The final breakup of this Empire occurred in 1918, and numerous newly formed national nations were left in Europe due to the national and liberal fight, which was more national than liberal even in terms of liberalism in the 19th century. Great Empires cannot be dismantled without breaching long-standing customs, routines, and economic principles (Arnold,1958:1-2).

The defeat of the Empire, together with the Central Powers, as a result of the outbreak of the First World War caused the establishment of four states, namely Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, on the lands of the disintegrating Austro-Hungarian Empire. Some of the imperial lands were given to Romania and the newly established Poland (İkinci, 2018: 1604).

As it has been shown in the “Figure 1” below, The Germans and the Hungarians were the two main components of the Habsburg Monarchy. Only the Hungarians had preserved the lengthy, uninterrupted historical structure of all the national groups throughout the Monarchy. For more than 900 years, Hungary has been a historical entity founded not on race or language but on the rights of the Hungarian nobles and the Crown of St. Stephen. The upheavals of the 19th century gave rise to nationalism in Hungary, which took the form of the country's fight for equality with the German-Austrian component of the Monarchy and the development of chauvinism and intolerance among Magyars in the Hungarian territories of the Empire. The “Slovaks”, “Ruthenians,” “Croats,” “Serbs,” and “Romanians,” among the “submerged” or “oppressed” ethnicities, were ruled by the Kingdom of Hungary. The Hungarians opposed any attempts made by the non-Magyar tribes to establish their own national culture or political independence, even if individuals of these ethnic groups were allowed to become “Magyarized”and benefit from the unique position of that nationality (Arnold, 1958:3–4).

The Czechs demonstrated the highest socioeconomic advancement and the most advanced culture among the non-ruling ethnic groups. The ancient region of Bohemia-Moravia served as the ancestral home of the Czech people. The conflict between Germans and Czechs in Bohemia was one of the Habsburg Monarchy's top

priorities in the latter half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Without recalling the German colonization of Bohemian areas, one cannot understand the attitude of the Germans in the new Czechoslovak state. Particularly from the 17th century until the fall of the Empire, the Germans had been the governing class in Bohemia and had oppressed and suppressed the Czechs, whom they perceived as culturally unsatisfactory (Arnold, 1958:4). Bohemian territories were first colonized by Germans in the 12th and 13th centuries, and the Germans wielded such powerful influence that they are said to have "formed something not far from a state within a state."

In 1918, Czech leaders and participants in the Paris conference recognized the Germans as a major problem for the new state. In fact, Czech head of state Thomas Masaryk argued that it was precisely this principle that compelled the large German minority to remain in the new state, citing the extremely high proportion of German and Czech residents in "almost all Bohemian cities" (Larson, 1978:20). Centuries of international struggle and growth led to the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It was obvious that whatever agreements were reached at the Peace Conference about the frontiers of the new states, there would be unfairness to a certain extent, and it would be unjust in the view of many. The peace accords immediately faced criticism. The newly formed Central European republics and the successor states to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy benefited the most from the new structure established by the peace accords.

While Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia were on the winning side, the other two, Austria and Hungary, were on the losing side and suffered significant territorial and reputational losses. The first three nations were therefore vitally interested in maintaining the contemporary status quo influenced by the peace treaties, but the second and third nations were equally keen to alter the peace accords to reclaim their lost authority (Bonacich, 1951:8).

Of the states that emerged from the peace treaty, Czechoslovakia was a completely new political entity. The Czechoslovak state represented a union of the Czech, Slovak, and Ruthenian elements of the former Habsburg Monarchy in 1918 (Arnold, 1958:2–3; Planz & Lütem, 1955:188).

Figure 1: Austro- Hungarian Empire (The Habsburg Monarchy) in 1914 (Crampton, 1997:8).

The delegates of the major Czech political parties proclaimed the Proclamation of the independence of the Czechoslovak State on October 28, 1918, in Prague. The

“Martin Declaration,” which established the Slovak National Council and declared the independence of the Slovaks from Hungary, was issued on October 30. Slovaks joined Czechs in pledging their loyalty to the single state. The Slovak national council requested the “right of self-determination based on full independence” since it was known that the Slovak country was an “indivisible part of the culturally and linguistically unified Czech-Slovak nation” (Rychlik, 2009:28–29).

Nearly all of the Czech and Slovak exiles' territorial demands for post-war Czechoslovakia were met thanks to the work of Thomas G. Masaryk, Edvard Benes, Milan Stefanik, and Karel Kramar (Kephart,1981:14).

“Thomas G. Masaryk” and “Edvard Benes” were the only two presidents of Czechoslovakia during the interwar era of the country's existence. Both had played a crucial role in the Czechoslovak delegation's triumph at the Paris Peace Conference. The National Assembly chose Masaryk to serve Czechoslovakia's first president in May 1920. He held the position until he left office in December 1935. Masaryk was a Czechoslovak George Washington and a father figure for the country. Masaryk's victory in the presidential election was certain as long as he stayed healthy. He was a national emblem of stability and incredibly well-liked, even among the minority ethnic groups (Rothschild, 1974:112-125).

Masaryk stepped down as president at 85, and Edvard Benes took over as planned. Benes had served as the Foreign Minister before being elected president. From 1919 until he was elected president, Benes served in the position, bringing stability and continuity to foreign policy nearly unheard of in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe. Benes' foreign policy was built on three tenets: support for the League of Nations, solidarity with France, and the Little Entente (Rothschild, 1974: 104; Kephart, 1981: 18-9).

In 1884, Edvard Benes was born in Kozlany, Bohemia. He was highly educated and the son of a peasant. Benes' Ph.D. dissertation, titled “The Austrian Problem and the Czechoslovak Question,” was completed in 1908. Benes played a crucial role in the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic and the agreeable territorial settlement while living in exile during World War I. Benes was one of the most diligent statesmen in Europe, sometimes putting in fifteen-hour days. He possessed a rational, systematic understanding of the crucial European concerns of his time.

Benes was a key player in the League of Nations' founding and a steadfast supporter of global disarmament and collective security. Despite this, Benes played a significant role in modernizing the Czechoslovak army, the best-trained and well-equipped force in Eastern Europe (Kephart, 1981: 20-21).

According to “Figure 2” of this study, Czechoslovakian geographical gains, as they exist now, were divided into four main areas. The former Austrian territories of Bohemia, Moravia, and portions of southern Silesia were located in the west; Slovakia and Ruthenia, which were formerly parts of the Hungarian kingdom but differed in their social and ethnic makeup, were located in the east; and after a bitter dispute with Poland, Czechoslovakia was given the area around Cieszyn (Teschen) (Crampton, 1997:57).

The second nation of the Little Entente that emerged from the peace treaty as one of the successor states to the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the new Yugoslav state, created when the old Monarchy's Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs united with the Kingdom of Serbia.

On behalf of the ailing King Peter, Prince Regent Alexander declared the United Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes at Belgrade on December 1, 1918. After the Serbian administration, the crown and political representatives of the South Slavs from the defunct Austro-Hungarian monarchy engaged in serious negotiations (Danihelka et al., 2017:49). However, the Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro, absorbed into the new Yugoslavia, were autonomous before the World War, unlike Czechoslovakia, which emerged entirely from the Habsburg Empire (Kephart, 1981:29–30).

As it presents in “Figure 2,” geographical gains granted to Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference, like those granted to the other Little Entente nations, were mainly at the expense of Austria-Hungary. Slovenia, Dalmatia, Vojvodina, Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia were among the former Austro-Hungarian provinces that became part of Yugoslavia (Beden, 2018:116; Rothachild, 1974:201).

Numerous ethnic, religious, and national minorities lived in Yugoslavia, including those who had traditionally been divided by different rulers and cultural spheres of influence. These minorities included Germans, Hungarians, Albanians,

Turks, Italians, Romanians, and Ruthenians. Mountains in the country made it difficult for people to communicate and unite politically and culturally. Similar to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia lacked racial, ethnic, and cultural uniformity (Rothachild, 1974:201–204; Tomasevich, 2001:1).

The third nation comprising the Little Entente was Romania, which stood as one of the Victorious Allied Powers in 1919, despite its prior defeat by the Central Powers of World War I and withdrawal from the war in 1918. Unlike Czechoslovakia, Romania had already been an independent and sovereign nation before World War I, having experienced significant territorial and population growth during that period. Pre-war, Romania encompassed 130,177 square kilometers of territory and a population of 7,160,682, but post-war, it expanded to 295,049 square kilometers with a population of 15,541,424 (Rothschild, 1974:281).

As has been evidenced in “Figure 2,” Romania's territorial expansion came at the expense of Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Bulgaria, with acquisitions including Bukovina from Austria, Transylvania from Hungary, Bessarabia from Russia, and Southern Dobruja, which had been taken from Bulgaria in the Second Balkan War of 1913, lost in 1918, and restored to Romania by the Paris Peace Conference (Rothschild, 1974:281-283).

The three winning nations were uneasy and worried that the new period brought forth by the peace accords would not last from the very outset. The atmosphere of hostility that was all too palpable in the vanquished countries reinforced this dread, which pervaded every aspect of their national life. The vanquished states did not indicate that they had acknowledged the peace agreements as binding (Bonacich, 1951:8–9).

The Succession States' storm core has historically been Hungary. The preservation of the Hungarian borders as they had been under the Dual Monarchy was the “raison d'être” of the successive revolutionary administrations of Hungary that formed following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. From the time it appeared that the Central Powers would be defeated, the drive to maintain the ancient borders and prevent the region from being merged into the lands of the South Slavs, the Czechs, the Romanians, and the Austrians was the driving force behind Hungarian politics (Arnold, 1958:5).

Figure 2: Eastren Europe, 1918-1938, the new territorial status quo of the Little Entente (Crampton, 1997: 30).

The split between Slovakia and Transylvania, where huge populations of Hungarians lived—over 1.5 million in Transylvania alone—devastated Hungary. For many years, Hungary refused to formally contemplate losing these lands (Bonacich,

1951:9). No government in Hungary could consent to the Allied conditions of peace and continue to rule. The “Treaty of Trianon” was only ultimately signed in 1920 after much resistance and several impassioned demonstrations. All Hungarian leaders committed themselves to reforming the Treaty's territorial provisions starting at that point. However, Hungary became the focus of attempts to reinstate the Hapsburg monarchy due to its violent and overt hostility to the peace treaties (Arnold, 1958:5).

As unlikely as it may seem to us today, the Successor states' inhabitants worried that the Hapsburgs' return to power in vengeful Hungary would result in the transfer of the entire Crown of St. Stephen to a brand-new, ambitious, and powerful Hungary. The mention of the Habsburg name instilled terror in the inhabitants of that nation, who had long endured oppression under the previous Dual Monarchy. This last step significantly accelerated the winners' ability to work together (Arnold, 1958:5). It was natural that they were largely influenced by the shared goal of maintaining the new status quo and searching for security for the territories that subsequently benefited from the peace treaties of 1919. This common objective played a major role in bringing about the signing of a series of bilateral agreements between the Czechoslovak state, Yugoslavia, and Romania in the 1920s, which created in Central Europe the diplomatic alliance soon known as the Little Entente (Arnold, 1958:2).

To maintain security and preserve the existing order, the most effective approach was to surround Hungary. As a result, Czechoslovakia pursued alliances with Romania and Yugoslavia. The initial agreement was reached in August 1920, as Czechoslovakia formed an alliance with Yugoslavia to counter Hungary. Romania, which later also signed a bilateral agreement with Yugoslavia, joined the alliance in 1921 (Bilman, 1998:2).

The belief that the Republic of Austria established by the “Treaty of St. Germain” was financially and militarily frail and incapable of existing independently served as the foundation of the opposition in Austria. Austria had no illusions that her borders would expand due to a territorial adjustment. Her actions were therefore geared toward an “Anschluss” with Germany (Bonacich, 1951:9-11).However, the Treaty forbade such a union only with the approval of the League of Nations Council, and the victorious nations objected to it. Czechoslovakia was particularly opposed because, according to the provisions they put in Article 80 of the Treaty of Versailles

and Article 88 of the Treaty of Saint Germain En Laye, they forbade such a union (Ekinci, 2018:1604-1605). After all, it formally accepted the independence of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia).

Bulgaria was formerly referred to as the Prussia of the Balkans, but World War I reduced her to being the least significant Balkan state among competitors who had grown powerful via the spoils of war. Bulgaria entered World War I as a Central Powers ally to make up for the losses she had suffered at the hands of Serbia and Romania in the Second Balkan War. Bulgaria was the first country to submit to the Allied Powers in 1918; its country had been devastated by war and left desolate and destitute. Bulgaria lost Dobruja, Macedonia, and the Aegean Sea areas to her neighbors in the Balkans. Injustice was felt in Bulgaria because more than a million Bulgarians lived under Greek, Romanian, or Yugoslav control, which fueled revisionist accusations. Yugoslavia and Romania incorporated safeguards against Bulgarian attack in their bilateral accords that formed the Little Entente. Although the Macedonian issue continuously threatened the stability of the Balkans, Bulgaria did not play a significant role in Little Entente diplomacy (Arnold, 1958:5–6).

All the Little Entente nations, then, had distinct revision issues and interests in their interactions with the Great Powers. Despite their shared policies against the threat of Hungarian revisionism, each wanted the backing of its particular policies and the fulfillment of its demands. Even though these policies and goals were not always the same, they were comparable enough to produce similar sentiments toward the Great Powers at this time (Bonacich, 1951:10).

The main issue for Czechoslovakia was Germany. A diversified, multiethnic population was discovered in the contemporary state of Czechoslovakia due to its victory in the territorial settlement at the Paris Peace Conference. The majority of the contemporary state of Czechoslovakia was made up of ethnic German speakers from the border regions of Bohemia and Moravia, who were subsequently known as Sudeten Germans (Rothschild, 126–129).

According to the 1921 census, in the interwar period, 6.5 million people were living in Czechoslovakia, including 76,000 Poles, 2.2 million Slovaks, almost (747,000) Hungarians, nearly (459,000) Ruthenians (Ukrainians), and nearly (747,000)

Jews (180,000). Germans represented 3.1 million (Aramaoglu, 2018:283). According to Wildermuth, there were around 3.2 million Germans (Wildermuth, 1973:32).

Due to their size, significance, and lengthy resident history, the "Sudeten Germans" in Czechoslovakia make an effort to assimilate into German Austria and the Weimar Republic. The two neighboring nations forever pledged their protection, assistance, and compassion. A major point of conflict between Nazi Germany and Czechoslovakia eventually developed over this Sudetenland (Larson, 1978:21)

Ethnography: the Poles, Germans, and Hungarians had their own nations behind the new political boundary of the new state of Czechoslovakia, so they had little cause to be content in Czechoslovakia (Rychlik, 2009:29). German and Hungarian nationals had long enjoyed privileges under the Habsburg Empire. Many grumbled about losing their privileged position and the dominance of Czech and Slovak politics. During the interwar years, the Polish, Magyar, and German minorities were a constant source of contention for the Czechoslovak administration. The Sudeten German problem was the most pressing of the minority issues (Kephart, 1981:126–129).

Despite Hungary's Government's ongoing irredentist concern for the destiny of the Magyar minority throughout the interwar era, the Sudeten German issue only became a problem when Hitler came to power in Germany. The Sudeten-German crisis started affecting home and international policy in 1933. "The Sudetendeutsche Partei" became obedient to Nazi Germany's rules under Konrad Henlein's leadership. Hitler allegedly suppressed the Sudeten Germans to obstruct domestic matters in Czechoslovakia and exert pressure on them to cede territory to Germany (Kephart, 1981:17).

Romania's main individual problem was Soviet Russia. Romania had a territorial dispute over Bessarabia with Soviet Russia. Bessarabia had been a part of the Moldavian principality of Romania for a long time and, as a result, came under the Ottoman Empire's rule in the sixteenth century. After taking control of the region from the Turks in 1812, Russia lost it to Moldavia during the Crimean War, only to reclaim it in 1676 through the Treaty of Berlin. On January 28, 1918, the Moldavians in Bessarabia established a temporary government and proclaimed themselves an independent republic following the Bolshevik takeover in Russia. This interim

administration decided in favor of joining forces with the Kingdom of Romania two months later. By the Paris Peace Treaty of October 28, 1920, the Principal Allied Powers—France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan—officially acknowledged Romania's right to conquer the region. Russia did not ratify this pact. The agreement stipulated that the Council of the League of Nations would arbitrate any disputes Russia could bring up over the annexation. Russia accepted neither the annexation nor the legality of the League of Nations. Rumania spent a lot of time and energy trying to convince others of her views (Arnold, 1958:194–195).

Yugoslavia had territorial conflicts with Italy. Despite being a winning nation, Italy was unhappy with the peace accords because her territorial demands had not been fully met. In the secret Treaty of London in 1915, in which Britain, France, and Russia promised Italy a large chunk of Slovenia and the northern part of the Dalmatian coast, Serbia, it was hinted, would get the rest of Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, perhaps even part of Croatia, in return for joining the war on the side of the "Allies" (Macmillian, 2002:160; Rene, 1939:364–390).

Italy intended to turn the Adriatic into an Italian lake. Hence, she opposed the establishment of a powerful Yugoslav state. The Peace Conference rejected Italian colonial aspirations and claims to the whole Dalmatian coast of Yugoslavia. Italy, as a result, always felt that her old allies had treated her unfairly. Italy's ties with the Little Entente passed through several stages, but underlying all of the shifting stances was the resolve to not let any one country or group of nations establish political or economic dominance in the Adriatic or Danube region (Arnold, 1958:6).

Each Little Entente member state looked for security differently in response to their large neighbor's concern.

The Little Entente was an intriguing development due to the involvement of a significant Great Power during that period. Following the devastating war and the subsequent depletion of France, its leaders were resolute in preventing any future German invasions. Consequently, France adopted a strategy of fostering alliances and providing assistance to Eastern European countries. These nations sought to strengthen their bonds with France and sought guidance on various matters, including preserving the existing order in the face of revisionist ambitions. Through the signing of friendship and arbitration treaties, the Little Entente countries consistently deepened

their alliance. France entered into bilateral agreements with Czechoslovakia (1924) and Romania (1926) to become part of the Little Entente. Additionally, although more of a political than a military alliance, France signed an agreement with Yugoslavia in (1927) (Bilman, 1998:2).

Many Western Powers opposed the new state structure established by the peace accords. Great Britain more strongly agreed with the revisionists' contention that some unfair peace treaty terms need modification or rectification (Arnold, 1958:7).

Expressions of grief about the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's demise came from various sources, and requests were made for its economic restoration. These detractors said that the entire area had now been “Balkanized,” divided into a jumble of little governments that were weak, envious, scared, economically dependent, a target for intrigue, and prone to problems. In response to these concerns and threats of modification, The Little Entente was established. However, it could not offer a defense against the Great Power's threat of revision (Arnold, 1958:7).

Germany was the main revisionist during the 1930s, and when Germany ultimately became a Great Power and the League of Nations ceased to be a useful tool for maintaining peace, there was not much that three minor governments could do to counter the danger. Everywhere there was room for consensus with the revisionists, The Little Entente retained its structure and pursued a shared policy. However, the Munich Pact of 1938 dealt the alliance its fatal blow (Arnold, 1958:7).

During the events leading up to World War II, there was significant pressure from Hitler's Germany to implement the notion of self-determination for Sudetenland Germans. This was accompanied by the appeasement policy of Great Britain and France, which led to complex diplomatic discussions (Bilman, 1998:2).

The Little Entente's cornerstone, Czechoslovakia, was shattered, which led to the collapse of the entire building (Arnold, 1958:7).

The nations of the Little Entente were the offspring of a revolution. By preventing the “Old Order” from being reinstated, they effectively maintained the benefits of that revolution for years. They lacked the skills necessary to combat Hitler's “New Order.”

2. THE FORMATION OF THE LITTLE ENTENTE ALLIANCE AND THE HUNGARIAN REVISIONISM, 1918-1929

The Little Entente Alliance was born out of various political acts during the 19th century. In the Austrian part of the Hapsburg Empire, many representatives of the smaller nations in the parliament in Vienna consolidated their ties and protested against the Empire's decentralized system, which oppressed the non-Germanic people. In the Hungarian part of the Empire, in 1848, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, and Romanians protested against the oppression of their people under the Magyar imperialistic regime. However, in 1905, some of the non-Magyar deputies of the Budapest parliament established a group to protest against non-Magyar oppression (Bonacich, 1951:3).

In 1917, representatives of the Austro-Hungarian nations met in Kiev, Russia. They created a special committee to fight against German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism. The Czechs, Yugoslavs, and Romanians played a major role in all these measures and were supported by the Poles, Ukrainians, and Italians. The cooperation between the three Little Entente nations was particularly close, and towards the end of the world war, they combined their efforts and jointly acted in various diplomatic actions. Furthermore, in the fall of 1918, a Central European Democratic Union was formed, and Thomas G. Masaryk, the Czechoslovakian president, was elected president of this union (Bonacich, 1951:3).

After the breakdown of the dual monarchy, especially during the Paris Peace Conference, the governmental crisis emphatically agitated the internal situation in Hungary, by which the demarcation of the new Hungarian frontiers was greatly affected. On November 16, 1918, Hungary declared itself a republic, and under Count “Michael Karolyi”, a provisional government was shaped. In March 1919, the Hungarian Partition was decided by allied powers. At the same time, the allies ordered Romania to occupy Transylvania. After the war, Hungarians who returned from Russia spread communist doctrines among the Magyar masses.

Consequently, after Karolyi resigned on March 21, 1919, “Bela Kun” came to power and organized his government on the Russian-Soviet model. From April to June 1919, Bela Kun attacked the Czechs and then the Romanians to sweep Hungary's Czechoslovak and Romanian annexations and internally integrate Hungary by the time-honored means of proceeding against a foreign enemy. The situation had become

so critical. On June 13, the peace conference intervened and forced Bela Kun to withdraw from Slovakia. However, fighting with the Romanians continued, who occupied Budapest on August 8, 1919. Finally, the Supreme Council of the Big Four at Paris forced Bela Kun to come to a final decision regarding Hungary's boundaries, which the peace conference had decided for Hungary, and the announcement of their demarcation was made on June 13. In August 1919, Bela Kun's regime collapsed, and on August 2, a moderate Socialist Government took office. Other governments followed this until, in November 1919, Admiral Horthy, as Regent, took over the affairs of Hungary, and he has remained at least nominally head of the state ever since (F.P.A., 1928:278- 280)[1].

After the renounced war between Czechs and Hungarians over Slovakia and the defeat of the Bela Kun communist regime, "Archduke Joseph" of Habsburg was appointed governor of Budapest. His appointment alarmed the states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, which vehemently protested Archduke Joseph's accession to the throne. They feared that this would presage the Hapsburg restoration and that the stability of Central Europe would be threatened. On August 21, 1919, Benes appealed to the Supreme Council, and the Council dispatched a note to Budapest, stating that no Hapsburgs would be allowed to enter the country. This led to the resignation of Archduke Joseph. However, the growing danger of the Habsburg restoration prompted the smaller successor states to realize that some form of closer cooperation was inevitable (Vonderecek, 1937:163).

There are various versions of when the preliminary negotiations for the Little Entente alliance began. According to Thomas G. Masaryk, first Czechoslovakia's president, the outlines of the alliance were agreed upon in Paris in December 1918:

"Following the existing situation, we contemplated a close understanding with the Southern Slavs and the Poles, as well as with the Romanians and Greeks, who, since the Balkan War, had had a treaty of friendship with the Serbs. Though we were fully aware of the obstacles in our path, particularly the territorial disputes between the Southern Slavs and the Romanians, we agreed to clear the ground for ulterior

[1] Foreign Policy Association

cooperation during the impending Peace Conference, the idea of the Little Entente Alliance was in the air" (Masaryk, 1927:330).

In addition, the first document in the White Book on the Little Entente alliance conventions was issued by the Czechoslovak foreign ministers, dating to the first meeting of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav representatives in Paris on December 30, 1919. When "Osusky," the Czechoslovak representative in France, informed Benes that he had a conversation with "Trumbitch" that evening, a defense arrangement approved by our government and President Masaryk and Benes himself had been discussed with the Yugoslavs during their last visit to Paris. He pointed out to Benes that the Yugoslav delegation at the Paris Peace Conference had advocated collective action in the event of a Hungarian attack (Czech. Documents-Alliances, 1923:13-14, no.1, as cited in Arnold, 1958:70-71)[2]

In the second document, dated January 5, 1920, Benes corresponded with Romanian Prime Minister "Vaida Voivod," while both states had identical interests in the Hungarian problem; it was not too late for the two states to take joint action against the Hungarian threat. Benes also indicated that he was sure that Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania could easily reach an agreement to avoid the Hungarian threat (Czech.Documents-Alliances, 1923:15–16, no. 2, as cited in Arnold, 1958:73).

As the Hungarians were not satisfied with the border demarcation of June 13, 1919, and had not obtained peace terms, several Hungarian peace delegations came to Paris in January 1920 to take care of the case. However, at the conference in London from February to March 1920, French delegations were unwilling to consider changes in Hungarian territorial peace terms, unlike the British and Italians. Therefore, a group of Hungarian businessmen was brought to Paris not so late after the Hungarian delegation (Orde, 1980:477).

On March 29, Count Imeric Csaky and representatives of this Hungarian peace delegation, including "Charles Halmos", who was a Hungarian lawyer and member of the businessmen's group, began intensive negotiations with the French Ambassador "Paleologue" and Saint-Sauveur, Director of the Economic Schneider-Creusot group,

[2] République Tchécoslovaque, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères(1923), Documents Diplomatiques Relatifs aux Conventions d'alliance Conclues par la République Tchécoslovaque avec le Royaume des Serbes, Croates et Slovènes et le Royaume d Roumanie: Décembre 1919-août 1921.

to discuss economic ties between the two countries. During the meeting, Hungarians suggested that Hungary might make various economic concessions to that French economic group that could be attractive to French business interests (Doc. HFR, vol. 1, 1939:909–9010)[3].

By offering these economic concessions, the Hungarians sought to gain French support in Paris for their claim that the terms of the "Treaty of Trianon" were too harsh.

On April 13, Halmos presented to Paleologue an outline of Hungarian claims upon economic facilities that the country had to offer and territorial demands, which included Transylvania, Bratislava, Southern Slovakia, Ruthenia, etc (Doc.HFR, Vol. 1, 1939:252-254, no. 242).

Paleologue responded by giving Halmos a note to be sent to the Hungarian government stating that the French were aiming at a reconciliation of Hungary with her neighbors, above all its relations with Romania. He also said that the French would sign military and economic treaties with Hungary when their government accepted the note (Doc. HFR, Vol. 1, 1939:235-237, no. 226).

After a discussion among their peace delegation members, the Hungarians agreed that a settlement with Romania was urgent. This would allow them to ally with Poland. Italy, for its interest in Southeastern Europe, had previously supported the Hungarian-Romanian reconciliations, and its main purpose was to prevent an agreement between Romania and Yugoslavia (Doc.HFR, vol.1, 1939:225, no. 214; Doc. HFR, vol.1, 1939:227, no. 215).

Therefore, with support from the French and Italy in pressuring Romania for a settlement with Hungary, the Hungarians hoped Romania would be forced to make territorial and economic concessions.

However, the results of the negotiations were not fruitful for Hungarian revision claims. The Hungarian representative in Paris, "Csaky," reported the French position as it was outlined to him by Paleologue, stating that the French government

[3] Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of Hungary

was ready to support in every way the agreements between Hungary and her neighbors as long as the peace structure was not disturbed (Doc. HFR, vol. 1, 1939:279–280, no. 259).

On May 6, 1920, the Hungarians received an Allied reply to their protests against the terms of the peace treaty, and on January 15, minor changes were made to the Treaty's original terms, but these were insufficient to warrant the discussion. The Allies refused to modify further territorial terms of the peace treaty (Deak, 1942:277–278).

"Albert Apponyi" and the entire Hungarian peace delegation resigned in protest, but the Hungarian government revealed that there was no choice but to sign the Treaty. On June 4, 1920, the ceremony for signing the treaty took place at the Grand Trianon Palace, but the Hungarian Parliament did not officially ratify the treaty until November 13 (Arnold, 1958:87).

From the point of view of the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, the agreements reached with the French were unacceptable because they violated the provisions of the peace treaty, in particular the reparations clauses. In addition, he confidentially informed the Hungarians that French statesmen had made political promises to the Hungarians, particularly territorial concessions, but these promises were incompatible with the Hungarians' real intentions of the French government, and according to him, the French were playing "a shady game" with the Hungarians (Doc. HFR, vol. 1, 1939:415, no. 409).

On March 12–13, 1920, the so-called "Kapp Putsch" coup attempted to gain monarchists in Germany to control the government. Benes was closely monitoring the monarchist movements in Hungary and Austria. He was also worried that the reactionary putsch in Germany would support these movements. Benes could not foresee that the "Kapp Putsch" would be a fiasco in three days. On March 14, he sent a telegram to his representative in Belgrade to warn him about the situation in Austria and Hungary. He was afraid the reaction would cause the Hungarian and Austrian military reactionaries to react, which could lead to an attack on the other successor states. When this was communicated to the Yugoslav government, it replied that the great powers should be informed of the dangerousness of the situation and that the Yugoslavs would act with the great powers on this matter. The Yugoslav government

pointed up merely the project for defensive measures against Hungary. It was later revealed that Czechoslovakia failed to get the other Little Entente states to share her concern over the German Problem, again identifying their alliance system's more anti-Hungarian nature in its roots (Arnold, 1958:80–81).

During the Soviet-Polish War in the spring of 1920, Poland started to use military forces to resolve territorial disputes with Soviet Russia. A month later, they launched an offensive in Ukraine, which was initially very successful (Leuştean, 2014:33).

The Hungarians were eager to take advantage of the Soviet-Polish War. In May 1920, the Polish Foreign Minister was informed by Halmos that Hungary should be willing to aid Poland against the Bolsheviks as well as against Czechoslovakia. In return, Hungary could obtain full military equipment from Poland (Doc. HFR, vol. 1, 1939:332-333, no. 321). At the same time, the Poles were reserved but pledged to help Hungary with military equipment and predicted the advantages of a Polish-Romanian-Hungarian Alliance (Leuştean, 2014:33).

In June, Russia also undertook counter-offensive measures against Poland, and it made efforts for Hungary to aid Poland. Moreover, the French were also frightened, which led to the Russian expansion. “Fouchest,” the French Higher Commissioner in Hungary, expected that, contrary to Czechoslovakia, Hungary would be a better barrier towards Germany and the Soviets (Leuştean, 2014:33–34).

On July 27, 1920, Prague sent correspondence to Belgrade, asserting that the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received information from a French source that Hungary had a plan to seek permission either from the Supreme Council or directly from the Czechs to occupy four mountain passes in Eastern Slovakia and Ruthenia. They were to use the pretext of defending Poland against Soviet Russia, but it was unsuitable for Czechoslovakia's interests (Arnold, 1958:91).

Moreover, crossing these Hungarian divisions into Slovakia and Ruthenia was precarious for Czechoslovakia since some Hungarian minorities lived there and had nationalist tendencies toward Hungary (Crane, 1931:176).

While the Russian troops moved forward, Hungary could not send effective aid to Poland because of strong resistance from Czechoslovakia. On August 7,

Czechoslovakia declared neutrality and impeded arms shipments to Poland. However, the Hungarian government requested arms from the French and sent Halmos to Paris. Millerand and Paleologue expressed their interests in Hungarian rearmament, but only to the extent that the peace treaty permitted (Orde, 1980:483).

The Hungarian ambassador in Paris reported that the French did not consider the resistance of the Czechs a threat to Hungarian rearmament. They would even be willing to drop the Czechs if it seemed inevitable (Wandycz, 1962:192).

Indeed, the "Treaty of Trianon" did not harm the interests of the Little Entente countries, the critical Polish situation, prolonged Hungary and French negotiations, the "Kapp Putsch" in Germany, the intensive Hungarian revision campaign, as well as the rumours of Hungarian divisions to defend Poland, while crossing Czechoslovak territory; all those developments had vigorously affected negotiations between Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania (Wandycz, 1 1962:193–194.

Although the formation of the alliance between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia was delayed due to various political issues, such as governmental changes in Yugoslavia, which influenced the country at that time, Yugoslav politicians had already entered the partial debates between centralists and federalists that would plague Yugoslav domestic politics for the rest of the period. In March 1920, the Protitch Government replaced the Davidovitch Cabinet with whom Benes had conducted negotiations (Arnold, 1958:90–91).

Soon the Czech representative in Belgrade, "Kalina," was able to report that: "the new Yugoslav government considers the need for a common defense not only for a formal agreement but also as a defense of Slavic solidarity" (Arnold, 1958:91).

However, on July 30, 1920, from Belgrade, the Yugoslavs said they were determined to conclude their alliance when Benes arrived in Belgrade: "the conclusion of the negotiations was necessary due to the news coming from Hungary" (Arnold, 1958:91).

On August 14, 1920, Benes arrived in Belgrade, and the treaty of defensive alliance between the two countries was signed the same day. This treaty was marked as the first stage in the formation of the political foundation of the Little Entente alliance.

The treaty declared that the two nations were steadfastly committed to upholding the peace that had been won through numerous hardships enshrined in the League of Nations Covenant. The "Treaty of Trianon," signed on June 4, 1920, between the Allied and allied nations and Hungary, was another goal of the accord. It created the current state of affairs. If Hungary launched an unprovoked assault against one of the signatories, the other was required to defend it, according to Article 1 of the pact. The mode of aid was to be decided upon by a subsequent consensus amongst the competent bodies that were qualified or by a military agreement, according to Article 2. However, in Article 3, both countries agreed not to ally with the third country without prior notice. Article 4 stipulated two years for the treaty and that it could be renewed. If revoked before the expiration of the period, it would still be in force for an additional six months. The treaty had to be registered under Article 5 with the League of Nations. Article 6 coordinated the earliest possible exchange of treaties and agreements in Belgrade (L.N.T.S., vol. 6, 1921:211-213)[4].

From Belgrade, Benes traveled straight to Bucharest, arriving on August 16. He communicated the news of the convention signed in Belgrade between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia to Take Jonescu and invited Romania to join the Little Entente alliance against Hungary (Arnold, 1958:95).

While Benes desired a treaty that would apply only against Hungary, Romania feared not only Hungary but was frightened much more by her eastern enemies, Russia and Bulgaria. To safeguard her eastern frontiers, Romania requested Benes extend the scope of the Little Entente alliance, by which Greece and particularly Poland joined the Alliance (Jonescu, 1921:700; Arnold, 1958:168).

Certainly, in the "Journal of the Living Age (311)" under the title "The Future of the Little Entente" on December 17, 1921, Take Jonescu had had such a project in mind for a long time, for both he and President Masaryk spoke of having discussed it. Masaryk has already been quoted in this discussion. Jonescu says: "A memorable conversation occurred when Professor Masaryk, elected president of the Czechoslovak Republic, visited Paris. During this encounter, I spoke on the topic of expanding the

[4] League of Nations Treaty Series

Entente with a proposal to include Poland and Greece, effectively creating a coalition from the Baltic to the Aegean Sea. I asked him to meet Venizelos, and he offered to see him. The great man, as the Cretan is, preferred to visit President Masaryk, so we three met at the Hotel Meurice" (Jonescu, 1921:700).

But the participation of these two countries was unacceptable to Benes. Despite her own problems with Poland, Benes did not want Poland's problems with her eastern neighbors to be included in the Little Entente alliance, particularly her problems with Russia, which were also shared by other Balkan states. Although Benes was concerned about Romanian and Yugoslavian relations with Greece or Bulgaria, he stated that the inclusion of Greece would give the alliance rather a Balkan character, and any attempt to build up a strong bloc, undoubtedly, would lose its strength if too many questions were involved (Vonderecek, 1937:168–169).

On the other hand, while the French opposed the Little Entente Alliance, the Romanians were more careful not to offend the French, mainly because Paleologue played an important role in convincing the other great powers to recognize Bessarabia as part of Romania. Meanwhile, Russia categorically refused to recognize the Romanian claim to Bessarabia and waved for its return at any time, which became Romania's main concern. Therefore, Romania believed France was its greatest supporter in this critical situation (Adam, 1993:92).

Jonescu desired an agreement through which the security of Bessarabia was protected. Paleologue understood Romanian intentions and demanded the formation of a Romanian-Hungarian-Polish Bloc with an anti-Russian character. However, a Hungarian-Romanian Alliance met significant resistance in Romania by taking Jonescu himself (Adam, 1993:92).

Neither regime was entirely satisfactory for Romania. On the one hand, despite her interest in an alliance with Poland, Romania did not want to involve the country in an anti-Soviet military adventure or an alliance that would result in Hungarian territorial gains. On the other hand, due to the obvious Slavic predominance, Romania did not find the Czech alliance scheme very attractive. In these very complex positions, the Romanian leaders neither accepted nor categorically rejected either of the proposed alliance plans. Instead, the Romanian foreign minister persisted in a "wait and see" policy (Leuştean, 2014:35).

Finally, Take Jonescu, the Romanian foreign minister, only accepted the oral promise of mutual assistance with Benes. If Hungary attacked any of the three states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, or Romania without provocation, they would offer reciprocal military assistance in defending the attacked states (Adam, 1993:92).

However, Romanian delegations went to Hungary to study the possibility of creating a tripartite bloc, as Paleologue suggested (Adam, 1993:92). However, there was no significant commitment to the results of these activities.

As we can see, negotiations between Romania and Hungary took place in July 1920 to normalize the two countries relations. At the same time, Take Jonescu attempted to reconcile with the Little Entente Alliance on the one hand and with Hungary on the other. The Romanian King, "Ferdinand," advocated rapprochement merely with Hungary. However, the negotiations with Hungary failed to reach a successful conclusion due to Hungarians being preoccupied with boundary ratification and territorial issues (Leuştean, 2014:34).

On September 25, 1920, the Allies put strong pressure on Hungary to ratify the "Treaty of Trianon." Then a formal request was sent to Hungary by the conference of ambassadors for urgent ratification, which prompted Regent Horthy to ratify the treaty on November 15, 1920 (Arnold, 1958:99).

While the personnel of the French Foreign Office changed radically in September, there was a definite shift in French public opinion, which was now favorably inclined toward the Little Entente Alliance. Paleologue was dismissed and was replaced by Berthelot, who had a reputation as a friend of the Czechs, and the Magyars regarded him as the irreconcilable enemy of Hungary. Others soon replaced the Pro-Hungarian group in the Quai d'Orsay, and Hungarian hopes for a rapprochement with Romania continued their negotiations with France and Poland. Winning her from the Little Entente Alliance and the Anti-Hungarian Alliance was ill-founded (Arnold, 1958:99).

In October, the Romanian statesman Take Jonescu traveled to Rome, London, and Paris, where he discussed the Little Entente Agreement with the leaders of the Great Powers. In another joint memorandum drawn up by Benes and Jonescu on October 30, it was stated that Jonescu, in his meetings with "Giolitti" and "Sforza" in Rome, "Millerand" and "Leygues" in Paris, and "Lloyd George" and "Curzon" in

London, had cleared up the mistaken ideas of these men towards the Little Entente Alliance. Furthermore, he reported that all proposals that might or would favor the Hungarians were dead (Arnold, 1958:100).

On October 12, 1920, the preliminary "Peace of Riga" treaty ended the Polish-Russian war, in which Poland's eastern frontiers with Russia had been agreed upon, and the Hungarians could no longer maneuver diplomatically by offering armed assistance in that conflict (Arnold, 1958:100).

Right after signing this treaty, in the "Journal of the Living Age (311) under the title "How the Little Entente Began" on December 10, 1920, Romania also concluded a treaty of mutual guarantees with Poland to safeguard their frontiers in the east, those borders that Poland agreed upon with Russia at Riga, and for Romania, the border of the Dniester, which France recognized with Great Britain, Italy, and Japan in October 1920. This defensive alliance treaty, accordingly, aims to counter any attack that might come from the Soviet Union (Jonescu, 1921:627).

Italian thoughts had also changed towards the Little Entente Alliance when the defensive "Treaty of Rapallo" settled between Italy and Yugoslavia on November 12, 1920, and after negotiations between Czechoslovakia and Italy on February 8, 1921, both countries exchanged notes for their mutual interests. In its negotiations with Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, Italy agreed to respect the treaties of "Saint-Germain and "Trianon" and take common-sense precautions to avoid a Habsburg restoration (Arnold, 1958:102–103).

Though both France and Italy have now improved the Little Entente Alliance, Romania still has not signed a formal agreement. It took the actual attempt of King Charles to return to Hungary and shock the Romanians into action.

On March 14, 1921, a very important meeting was held between Benes and Count Teleki, the Hungarian Prime Minister, at "Bruck" in Austria, which attempted to affect a rapprochement. However, little progress was made, mainly because ex-King Charles made his first attempted coup during the negotiations (Protheroe, 2006:75).

In the beginning, mention has been made of the return of Archduke Joseph of Hapsburg in August 1919 and his withdrawal at the instance of the Allied Supreme Council. However, in February 1920, the Conference of Ambassadors publicly

declared that “any restoration of the Habsburgs in Hungary would jeopardize the bases of peace and could not be accepted or acknowledged by the main Allied Countries.” Moreover, on January 27, 1921, in the Czechoslovak parliament, Benes also declared that the restoration of the Hapsburgs by ex-King Charles was a real “casus belli” for some of Hungary's neighbors (F.P.A., 1928:281).

King Charles had officially renounced his crown on the Hungarian and Austrian thrones in November 1918 and then in March 1921, but he had not made a formal abdication. On March 28, 1921, the King returned to Hungary in the greatest secrecy. In Budapest, the Hungarian Government was protested by representatives of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, and the Allies (F.P.A., 1928:281-282).

The King had declared that he was acting with Briand's consent, but the Regent Horthy did not trust these remarks and summoned the French High Commissioner in Hungary, Fouchet, to apprise Briand immediately concerning the French position on the restoration of the Habsburgs (Simon, 2000:144).

Briand's response to the French diplomatic representatives was denial. He stated: “The allusion to a consent that I would have given to the restoration of the Emperor Charles' is entirely invented and does not rest on the slightest foundation” (Hohward, 2008:78–84).

On March 30, Benes ordered the Czechoslovakian representative in Budapest to inform the Hungarian Government that King Charles should immediately leave Hungary unless Czechoslovak diplomatic relations with Hungary were broken off. Moreover, according to the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Treaty, Hungary would be surrendered by military demonstration.

On March 31, the Hungarian Government replied that the matter was further considered Hungarian internal affairs. Meanwhile, all necessary steps had been taken to ensure King Charles' departure from Hungary. Later, on April 1, this action was approved by the Hungarian Parliament (F.P.A., 1928:282). However, Benes was not convinced of Hungary's goodwill and menaced Hungary with an ultimatum that it would take immediate measures if King Charles was still in Hungary until April 7 (F.P.A., 1928:282; Vondracek, 1937:170). Both Romanian and Yugoslavian officials approved Benes's ultimatum and agreed to take measures unanimously (Arnold, 1958:111).

On the other hand, the declaration of February 1920, confirmed by the Conference of Ambassadors, pointed out that any extraordinary situation in Hungary would have disastrous consequences. The note from the Conference of Ambassadors forced Hungary to retire King Charles to Switzerland on April 4, 1921 (F.P.A., 1928: 282). King Charles' attempt to regain the Hungarian throne hastened to complete the Little Entente Alliance.

On April 23, 1921, under the "Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Treaty" terms, Czechoslovakia and Romania signed their treaty of alliance. Nevertheless, this Treaty included one more article that stimulated common action against any attempt to restore the Habsburgs. Article (four) stated that the two states agree to communicate with one another on all foreign policy matters about their ties with Hungary to ensure effective efforts to uphold peace (L.N.T.S., vol.6, 1921:217-219).

The Treaty between Romania and Yugoslavia remained to be concluded. When the negotiations between Yugoslavia and Romania began, both countries were disturbed by raids on their territories by Macedonian "Comitadjis" from Bulgaria. It is unclear whether the Bulgarian Government was unable or did not intend to prevent these raids. In any case, Yugoslavs and Romanians were sceptical and apprehended by Bulgaria's unwillingness to comply with the disarmament and reparation requirements of the "Treaty of Neuilly." Therefore, in the convention that Yugoslavia and Romania finally signed on June 7, 1921, both pledged against Hungarian and Bulgarian attempts to abrogate the Treaties of "Neuilly and "Trianon" (Arnold, 1958:219). As specified in Article One, If Hungary, Bulgaria, or all of those Powers launched an attempted assault against many of the High Contracting Parties to destabilize the condition caused by the Trianon or Neuilly-sur-Seine Treaties of Peace, the other Party agreed to support that Party's defense following the setup outlined in Article 2 of the current Convention (L.N.T.S., vol. 54, 1926:259-265).

In conjunction with these political negotiations, economic discussions were also initiated. As a result, on October 18, 1920, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia signed a trade treaty. (L.N.T.S.,vol,17,1923:9-29). However, on April 23, 1921, a commercial treaty was signed between Czechoslovakia and Romania (L.N.T.S., vol. 15, 1923:235–227). Commercial agreements stipulated reciprocity and most-favored-nation treatment, which facilitated trade between member states.

Apart from economic conversations, the Little Entente states also settled military conventions. On August 1, 1921, the military conventions were signed between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. On July 2, 1921, Czechoslovakia and Romania followed the Treaty between Romania and Yugoslavia on July 23, 1922. These conventions stipulated the reciprocal obligations of the signatories against unprovoked attacks from Hungary or Bulgaria. In the event of war, they mutually undertook to prepare their military assistance to defend their territorial integrity. They had also reaffirmed the mutual guarantees of the treaties of “Trianon” and “Neuilly” (Vondracek, 1937:172–173).

Interestingly, this convention between Yugoslavia and Romania omitted any reference to the League of Nations Covenant since Czechoslovak treaties had given a prominent position to reference to the League as a factor in maintaining peace.

The Little Entente was eager to claim that the League of Nations' ideals were not opposed by, but rather supplemented by, its alliance structure. Its members were adamant that their agreements complied with the League's Covenant (L.N.T.S., vol. 6, 1921:217). One of the important features of the League was its development as a place where the small nations could make their opinions and interests known to the world and, if need be, protest against the policies of the Great Powers.

As per Article 18 of the Covenant, no treaty was enforceable until it was registered with the League. Thus, all of the agreements were recorded there. Jonescu compared the Little Entente to a little League of Nations within a bigger one, both motivated by a shared desire for peace, in high language on October 25, 1920, at the Sorbonne (Arnold, 1958:198).

It is well to note here, too, that in all these conventions, which were the basis for the Little Entente alliance, there was no mention of supporting Yugoslavia against Italy, Romania against Russia, or Czechoslovakia against Germany.

The second effort by King Charles of Habsburg to reclaim the Hungarian throne quickly put the Little Entente partnership agreements to the test.

On October 20, 1921, King Charles broke his promise to stay away from Hungary, which had elapsed since his first attempt in Switzerland, and flew to Hungary and landed near Sopron, Burgenland. At that time, this region was in dispute

between Austria and Hungary, and its situation was disturbed. Therefore, King Charles traveled to Budapest with several irregular armed bands to avoid being transferred from Hungary to Austria as required by the conditions of the Trianon Treaty (F.P.A., 1928:282).

Like the first King Charles coup, the representatives of the allies and the Little Entente alliance on October 22 again demanded the King's prompt expulsion. On October 23, Horthy agreed to send his forces to oppose him. Royalist forces defeated King Charles and his followers. The day later, the Hungarian government captured King Charles (F.P.A., 1928:282).

Benes sent a circular to all Czechoslovakian legations in foreign countries and claimed that the King's return constituted a “casus belli.” More violent than during the first attempt, Benes said this time he was determined to “settle the Hungarian question once and for all” and, in concert with his Yugoslavian ally, went so far as to decide on the mobilization of the army while the actual mobilization was begun on October 27 in Czechoslovakia (F.P.A., 1928:282).

The Little Entente coalition came together on October 24 and sent a letter to the Paris Conference of Ambassadors. Along with King Charles's overthrow, they also wanted the forfeiture of the Habsburgs and the complete fulfillment of the Treaty of Trianon, particularly the disarming of Hungary (Arnold, 1958:115; Hohward, 2008:78–84).

In fact, on October 26, “Count Banffy,” the Hungarian foreign minister, also received a similar warning from Benes (Vondracek, 1937:185). In reply, the Conference of Ambassadors issued an ultimatum to Hungary, warning her that she alone would be responsible for the consequences if she refused to comply with the demands of the Little Entente Alliance (Vondracek, 1937:185; Arnold, 1958:125).

Furthermore, Benes asked the Great Powers that the Little Entente Alliance be given representatives of the “Disarmament Commission of Hungary” and that indemnity be given by Hungary for the costs of the mobilization (F.P.A., 1928:283).

On October 30, the Conference of Ambassadors declared that it would be a legitimate demand to ask Hungary to depose the entire Habsburg dynasty, but they refused Benes's request for giving the Hungarian disarmament commission to the Little

Entente Alliance representatives and informed them that the control of Hungarian disarmament was its concern. The ambassadors accepted only to exchange information on this subject with the Little Entente Alliance. The ambassadors further stated that, since the government had succeeded in putting an end to the ex-King Charles' enterprise, the Allied Powers could not consider the demand for an indemnity. The Conference of Ambassadors also stated that military intervention would be unjustified since the Hungarian government had already taken the necessary measures. Finally, the conference invited the Little Entente Alliance to demobilize (F.P.A., 1928:283).

In November 1921, under the combined pressures of the Allies and the Little Entente Alliance, the Hungarian Parliament adopted the "dethroning law," which proclaimed King Charles's forfeiture and restored the Hungarian Nation's right to elect its King. In exile on the island of "Madeira," King Charles of Habsburg passed away on April 1, 1922 (Hohward, 2008:78–84). This did not satisfy Benes. He protested to Budapest and Paris that the law only mentioned King Charles and that other Hapsburgs could regain the throne through a free election (Arnold, 1958:117).

Further exchanges of letters took place between Prague and Paris, leading to another request from the Conference of Ambassadors that Hungary explicitly state that no House of Hapsburg member would be eligible to be elected to the throne and no election of a king was to be held without a previous understanding with the Conference of Ambassadors. Budapest eventually issued a formal declaration that satisfied the Conference of Ambassadors (Arnold, 1958:117). At the request of Benes, in order to give this declaration an "international juridical character," on November 15, 1921, it was officially communicated to the Czechoslovak Government by the Conference of Ambassadors on behalf of the Allied Powers; Czechoslovakia was then demobilized (F.P.A., 1928:283).

The Little Entente Alliance had stood the test and emerged with a diplomatic victory. Recognition had been gained from the Conference of Ambassadors, and the Habsburg question was solved. Had the Habsburgs gained the Hungarian Throne, they would, undoubtedly, have aspired to regain the Austrian imperial crown. Certainly, this would have threatened the successor states of the old Habsburg monarchy. Benes and the Little Entente Alliance had thwarted the Hungarian attempts to gain revision of the treaty by allying themselves with French interests. The Little Entente Alliance

states had refused to be pawns of the Great Powers. Even Yugoslavia's unfriendly neighbor, Italy, had been won over to the Little Entente side, at least concerning any move in Central Europe that might call up the ghost of the old Habsburg Monarchy. While much was achieved, much bitterness also resulted from the diplomatic struggle. Hungary remained convinced that she had been unjustly treated. Czechoslovakia loomed more than ever as her mortal enemy. The Magyars believed they were on the verge of winning France, Italy, and Poland to their side but had been prevented by Czech pressure and propaganda. Hereafter, whoever was Czechoslovakia's enemy was Hungary's friend. Later, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany offered vehicles of revenge, but, unfortunately for Hungary, it was revenge that destroyed not only Czechoslovakia but also Hungary (Arnold, 1958:119).

The Little Entente states proclaimed to Europe that their alliance was more than a defensive alliance; it was an answer to these criticisms; it would provide security and lead to reconstruction in Central Europe. Benes, in a report to the Czechoslovak Parliament on the Little Entente agreements on September 1, 1920, pointed out that the whole of Europe was still in a state of unrest and confusion, resulting in insecurity, nervousness, and a sense of fear and anxiety. He believed this could only lead to complete moral ruin and the destruction of all political, social, and economic order (Arnold, 1958:129). “We wanted to begin reconstruction and to begin it in agreement with those with identical interests, aims, and feelings similar to our own.” He envisaged the Little Entente as not only a harbinger of the security and peace of mind of its peoples but also as an answer to the charge of “Balkanized Europe: We shall give a sufficient guarantee to Europe that we can maintain political order, build up necessary economic relations, and make possible a general European consolidation” (Arnold, 1958:129; Bonacich, 1951:12–13).

As early as January 1921, in a report to the Czechoslovak parliament, Benes spoke of the desirability of the establishment of economic relations with Hungary. “It is unthinkable that we should not, as speedily as possible, renew economic and political connections with Hungary, to avail ourselves economically of the conditions prescribed by nature, conditions which compel us to seek a market in Hungary for our manufactures, to supply Hungary with various raw materials and necessities, and to get in return the agricultural and other products of that country. The substance of things confirms all this: geographical proximity and a long tradition coming to us from the

past, history teaches us that the Magyars and we cannot live in permanent opposition and hostility to each other" (Machray, 1929:142).

The attempts to renew connections with Hungary met with little success. However, the Hungarians still had not given up their other ideas about the future.

In 1922, Hungary was on the verge of financial and economic collapse. Hungarian diplomacy worked hard to secure Hungary's admittance to the League of Nations since Bethlen knew there was only one approach to strengthening the country's dire economic situation: acquiring a western loan and reducing or deferring reparations. As a result, Hungary was required to join the League of Nations (Adam, 1993:254).

Without the aid of Western Europe and the restoration of regular commerce with the successor states, Hungary would not be able to accomplish the essentials of economic stability and reconstruction (Sakmyster, 1978:5).

Initially, the Great Powers did not approve of Hungary's membership in the League due to its intrigued attitude toward Habsburg restoration and the rejection of the peace treaty. The Little Entente States approached Italy because, among the great powers, Italy increasingly opposed Hungary's membership in the League and because the Little Entente and Italy both supported Austria's membership in the League, and they both opposed the membership of Hungary. The Italian and Little Entente Governments employed all diplomatic techniques against Hungary in London, Paris, and Geneva, especially by using the Burgenland situation to postpone Hungary's entrance. Ultimately, the Hungarian premier, Bethlen, was compelled to withdraw the application. A year later, near the conclusion of the "Burgenland crisis," the Hungarian application was revived. By then, Italy had warmed up to Hungary and supported its membership application. The Little Entente was left alone as all the Great Powers allied with Hungary. However, during the League of Nations' second General Assembly in September 1922, the Little Entente asked that the League of Nations register all the responsibilities Hungary had accepted following the Habsburg Restoration of Hungary's accession. Then, Hungary's foreign minister, "Banffy," protested, saying that the Little Entente could not demand that promises that Hungary had already negotiated with the Great Powers be registered. The Little Entente asked the Great Powers to reconsider, but they chose not to do so because they were reluctant

to rekindle the Habsburg Crisis that had been raging between Hungary and them. Consequently, Hungary's League of Nations admission was approved by the Little Entente and the Great Powers (Adam, 1929:255–256).

In order to free up these assets as collateral for an external loan, the Hungarian government publicly asked on April 22, 1923, that the Reparation Commission remove the charges placed on them under Article 180 of the Treaty of Trianon. However, while not rejecting the request in principle, the Reparation Commission laid down conditions that proved to make the negotiation of loans impractical. Following these terms, the Commission could only release these assets in connection with certain loan plans that were presented in advance, and the Hungarian government was required to designate a specific portion of whatever loans it collected for the reparation obligation (Arnold, 1958:225; M.S.L.N[5]., 1924, May: 1-13).However, the proposal of an international loan, which the Hungarian government applied to the League of Nations, was one of the principal topics discussed at Sinaia. On July 30, 1923, the conference reported that it was the joint desire of the Little Entente States to facilitate an outlet for Hungary from her difficulties in the shape of an international loan, but on the condition that the proceeds of the loan were used neither for new armaments nor irredentist propaganda. This condition was necessary because Hungary had not yet disarmed and her government had shown itself powerless to prevent irredentist propaganda from leading to violence against the neighboring States. Therefore, the conference decided to obtain practical guarantees on these points (Machray, 1929:220).

As the League's Financial Committee had been unable to discuss Hungary's economic rebuilding without prior Council approval, the accredited delegates of the Little Entente wrote to the League's Fourth Session of the Assembly on September 29, 1923. They suggested that the Council give the Financial Committee and Secretariat Permission to launch the process necessary to initiate Hungary's rebuilding (A.L.N.[6], 1924:10; M.S.L.N., 1924, May: 13).

The league council immediately approved the proposal. This was accomplished with the agreement that discussions over Hungary would take place in the Council

[5] Monthly Summary of the League of Nations

[6] Agreements of the League of Nations

with a representative from the Little Entente. On September 29, 1923, the League's Council issued a resolution. On October 17, the Reparations Commission approved it, but only on the premise that the states with complaints against Hungary would collaborate with the League during the reconstruction effort (A.L.N.,1924:10; M.S.L.N., 1924, May:14).

The ideas for Hungarian reconstruction were enshrined in two protocols dated March 14, 1924, following more examinations and talks along the lines of the Austrian plan. The first political Protocol was identical to that signed by Austria. The four Little Entente nations—Britain, France, Italy, and the three others—promised to maintain Hungary's political independence, geographical integrity, and sovereignty. They also pledged not to pursue any unique or special economic or financial benefit that might jeopardize that independence (M.S.L.N., 1924, May: 35-36).

According to the terms of the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary was obligated to promise that, at the request of the Little Entente, it would faithfully and scrupulously carry out all of the obligations set down in the said Treaty, particularly the military condition (M.S.L.N., 1924, May:35; Sakmyster, 1978:5).

The steps to repair the Hungarian economy were specified in the second Protocol, signed exclusively by Hungary, which defined her financial obligations as a friendly neighbor (M.S.L.N., 1924, May: 36–59). Commissioner-General Jeremiah Smith, Jr., a famous Boston business mogul, was appointed on May 1. In June, a loan of 11,000,000 pounds was provided, effective in the same way and for the same purposes. There was, however, one key distinction. Hungary's national resources were deemed secure enough to eliminate the need for a foreign guarantee (Vondracek, 1937:207–208).

While the League was successful in the reconstruction process, relations between Hungary and the Little Entente improved. The Little Entente certainly gained recognition and added respect for its actions in helping to bring about the reconstruction of southeastern Europe. Stability and reconstruction in that area meant security for the peace settlements and proof that the new system of states could work.

Following the signing of the “Locarno Pacts” with Germany on October 16, 1925, as we discuss it in the next chapter, the French and British encouraged Hungary to join her neighborhood in the “Eastern Locarno” agreement, in which the nations of

Danubian Europe agreed to overcome their problems amicably and usher in a new period of brotherhood and advantageous collaboration. In answer, Bethlen had declared, rather dishonestly, that he supported some sort of conciliation in Danubian Europe, even though he considered significant hurdles were in the way (Doc.BFP, ser.Ia, vol.1, 1966: 223-226, no.137).[7]

The idea of an "Eastern Locarno" received nothing but criticism from the Hungarian leader. He claimed it was mere speculation to suppose Hungary could strike an agreement with the Little Entente similar to the one Germany had with France, in which Berlin was obliged to give up the right to revise her western but not her eastern frontiers. Bethlen emphasized that France had made a deal with her out of fear since Germany was a strong nation. However, a Locarno-style accord in Danubian Europe was only feasible if Hungary pledged to never again change any of her borders, as made clear by Hungary's neighbors. This was plainly unthinkable since any politician who would sign a second Trianon would be hanged at the gate by the Hungarian people (Sakmyster, 1978:8).

Hungary, which seemed beyond reconciliation, continued to be the principal barrier to any post-Locarno adaptation, just as she had been rebuilding in the past. When Mr. Jeremiah Smith, the Commissioner-General, departed Budapest at the end of June 1926, Hungary's effective restoration had already been accomplished, but it had had less effect on the security of Central Europe than had been envisaged (Vondracek, 1937:271). The Scandal of the Hungarian Forgeries, which came to light in early 1926, would have stirred the Little Entente into a beehive of activity two years earlier, but it did not do so at this time.

The incident was significant, for it again called attention to the dangers inherent in Magyar patriotism, which continued to demand a complete repudiation of the territorial settlement of 1919. Significant too was the changing attitude of the Little Entente states toward the problem of Hungarian irredentism. In January 1926, three Hungarians were arrested in Amsterdam and charged with passing forged thousand-franc notes to the Bank of France. One of the three, Colonel Jankovitch, claimed that

[7] Documents on British Foreign Policy

the notes had been passed out of patriotic motives rather than for personal gain (Arnold,1958:371-372).

The International Repercussions of the Forged Bank Note Scandal in Hungary in the Survey of International Affairs of 1926, the Hungarian government denied any knowledge of the forgeries and agreed to investigate at once. Several prominent Hungarians were found to be implicated in the scandal. Among the leaders was “Prince Ludwig Windischgraetz,” a former minister and an intimate adviser to the late Emperor Charles. He and Nadosy, formerly Chief of Police of Hungary, were the avowed leaders of the group, which, according to the evidence presented at the open trial held by the Hungarian government, prepared the forged notes in an official government building, the Geographical Institute in Budapest. All claimed that their motives were entirely patriotic, and not one of them was to receive personal gain from the forgeries. The exact nature of these patriotic motives or their objective was not clear in the trial. Some contemporary accounts quote Prince “Windischgraetz” as saying that the money was to be used to restore the Habsburgs, while other accounts talk of irredentists' schemes that were to be advanced by the funds received through the forgeries (S.I.A., 1927: 178-190)[8].

The French government maintained a rather calm attitude toward the whole affair despite prodding from their Czechoslovak allies. Perhaps they saw that nothing could be gained by pressing the issue and much could be lost.

France had difficulty competing with Italy in Southeastern Europe as it was without deliberately throwing Hungary into Mussolini's net. There was also reluctance on the part of Briand to take any action that would be so embarrassing to Count Bethlen as to cause the downfall of his government, motivated by the worry that he would not be able to show that the Bethlen government was at fault. Hungary's economic situation and standing in the eyes of the rest of Europe have greatly improved because of Bethlen's foreign and economic policies. As far as France was concerned, fears of Habsburg restoration or Hungarian irredentist activities were no longer major foreign policy concerns. Briand's foreign policy was based on broader

[8] Survey of International Affairs

schemes of Locarno pacts and European unity, and economic considerations dictated a conciliatory attitude toward all the countries of Southeast Europe (Arnold, 1958:373–374; Vondracek, 1937:272).

Regarding the fake bank notes, Briand just said that his administration would draw the appropriate conclusions from this amazing case of brigandage at the appropriate moment, in collaboration with Czechoslovakia (Arnold, 1958:374).

The press and many members of the Czechoslovak parliament demanded that the Little Entente take joint action against Hungary. During the second week of January 1926, it was reported in the European press that Czechoslovakia had approached the other members of the Little Entente with suggestions for concerted action on the matter (Arnold, 1958:375).

However, Romania and Yugoslavia were not inclined toward overt action, and Benes announced to the Czechoslovak parliament that the government had decided to wait until the results of the official inquiry in Hungary were available before formulating a line of action to be taken (Arnold, 1958:375).

The Little Entente Foreign Ministers met at “Temesvar” on February 10 and discussed the question at length. They decided to wait for the results of the inquiry, but no further action was forthcoming from the Little Entente as a group even when the final results were known. Romania did not believe that it directly affected her. Yugoslavia had experienced some difficulties with counterfeiters but could not trace any of the trouble to Hungary. Numerous conventions of a commercial nature were then being negotiated between Yugoslavia and Hungary, and undoubtedly that influenced the Yugoslavs in their decision to take the passive attitude toward the affair that they did. There was more to be gained by the commercial agreements than any action taken against the Hungarian government. If the Bethlen government fell, so might the trade agreements (Arnold, 1958:375–376).

When two appeals, which were eventually taken to Hungary's highest court, failed to affect the initial conviction appreciably, public opinion in France and Czechoslovakia was furious at what they saw as the insufficiency of the consequences. Benes was unconvinced by the Hungarian Government's innocence. On June 5, 1926, France addressed the whole issue of international forgeries to the League of Nations with Czechoslovakia's agreement (Vondracek, 1937:273).

On June 5, 1926, the French Government wrote to the Secretary Broad of the League of Nations, requesting that the League Council study the general issue of combating the crime of counterfeiting currency and form a special committee to write a convention for this purpose (Vondracek, 1937:273).

The proposal was discussed on June 10 in the Council of the League. Paul-Boncour and Benes both spoke to the proposal and explained that recent experiences had proven the necessity for international reforms and controls over counterfeiters. Benes emphasized that the League of Nations was the appropriate forum for discussing a situation like this. He claimed that it was well known that currency forgery had been seen as a political tool in some circumstances. In fact, the Hungarian forgers bragged about their patriotism in front of the court. The answer to this topic is crucial to maintaining peace and foreign diplomacy. In his opinion, it was reasonable and important to show that concepts and practices of this nature were wholly unacceptable in foreign politics and that if such activities were perpetuated, an international power would be established to reprimand them severely (Arnold, 1958:378). After being sent to the Mixed Committee of the Council, a treaty was available for League members to ratify in December 1928 after months of negotiation (Arnold, 1958:378).

Given the presumptions and goals of his “active policy” in the late 1920s and the realities of international relations in Europe, it made sense for Count Bethlen to enlist the assistance of those countries and political parties that were unhappy with the Paris peace accord and could be interested in helping sabotage it. Early in the 1920s, Bethlen had the same starting idea as the pragmatists in the German Foreign Ministry: to help Hungary escape isolation by allying with Soviet Russia, the anti-hero of Europe. Early in the 1920s, Bethlen had the same starting idea as the pragmatists in the German Foreign Ministry: to help Hungary escape isolation by allying with Soviet Russia, the pro-government of Europe (Sakmyster, 1978:8).

The unforeseen consequence was a 1927 agreement reached with Italy, not Yugoslavia. Mussolini had taken note of Hungary's wish to make amends with her southern neighbor. He was trying to create an Italian sphere of influence in the Balkans and along the Danube at the moment to balance out France's dominance in Eastern Europe. “The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” thus commendably delivered the competing interests: Hungary proved that, despite being insufficient and lowered to the

prestige of a pawn, she could still contribute to the diplomatic chessboard; Italy obtained an East European alliance around which an Anti-French Bloc may be assembled.

Although the Treaty's provisions were relatively harmless and comparable to those Italy made with Czechoslovakia and Romania in the 1920s, Bethlen and Mussolini agreed to work closely together and confer beforehand on "any matters that may in any way impinge on the current cordial relationship" in a covert and synchronous interchange of letters" (Sakmyster, 1978:8–9).

The deal with Italy was Bethlen's greatest diplomatic achievement. It secured Mussolini's significant, if loud, backing for Hungary's revisionist push. The Duce, a loyal patron, never shied away from jokingly mentioning Hungary's case in his speeches and announcements. In real terms, Budapest's leeway for maneuver in areas like military rearmament and attempts to undermine the Little Entente was significantly strengthened by the development of tight Hungarian-Italian ties. The claim that Bethlen, although appreciating Italy's backing, did not believe the Treaty of 1927 alone could provide a sufficient foundation for a successful Hungarian revisionist strategy is supported by a wealth of data. He may not have fully overcome his underlying mistrust of Italy as an ally, which many Hungarians share and stems from what can be considered Italy's duplicitous behavior during the Great War (Sakmyster, 1978:9). Naturally, Yugoslavia and France were concerned about the treaty, although Czechoslovakia and Romania, as members of the Little Entente, were not. Yugoslavia was particularly affected because it found itself surrounded by states with which Italy had close treaty relations. The country now feels isolated and surrounded by actual or potential enemies (OGG, 1927:490).

Other violent and prolonged press developments reminded the Little Entente states of their common interests in preserving the territorial settlement of 1919. Such a circumstance arose with the so-called "Rothermere campaign" in June 1927. Lord Rothermere, owner of the London paper "The Dally Mall," had been very influential in British politics. On June 20, 1927, an article appeared in The Dally Mall over his name, entitled "Hungary's Place in the Sun." Expressing great concern for the Magyar minorities left in the Little Entente states, he took up the Hungarian arguments for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon and advocated a "reasonable rectification" of the

frontiers assigned to Hungary. Furthermore, he suggested that financial pressure be brought to bear on Hungary's neighbors by the European banking institutions with whom they dealt, encouraging them to agree to alterations in the frontiers (S.I.A., 1929:206; Adam, 1993:291).

The press promptly blamed revisionist ambitions resurgence in France and the Little Entente republics (Adam, 1993:292).

At the Czechoslovak National Assembly on October 25, 1927, Benes dealt at length with the incident. He declared that the propaganda being made was founded on different principles from Article XIX of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which provided for changes in the treaties where it was proven that the Treaty had become outdated. This attack was not characterized by a spirit of goodwill or good faith; Instead, It had a menacing tone, disturbed international political life, prevented consolidation, and placed obstacles in the way of ententes between interested states. He declared that the Czechoslovak government and the other members of the Little Entente, who remained steadfast in their diplomatic partnership, would resist any such campaigns with the utmost vigor (Arnold, 1958:393).

Following the Czechoslovakian protest, other Little Entente partners, such as Yugoslavia and Romania, protested against Hungary. They filed a protest against Great Britain as well. While Demanding that the action be expressly disapproved, they also demanded that the British government uphold the sanctity of the Trianon peace treaty and pledge the Little Entente States that Her Majesty's Government do nothing with the action but will do everything possible to protect the integrity of the treaties of peace (Adam, 1993:293).

Official British policy consistently opposed efforts, like those of “Rothermere,” aimed at revising or correcting perceived unjust provisions of the peace treaty. While some in the Foreign Office acknowledged the potential for partial revisions, the prevailing balance of power made such changes unattainable due to the determination of the victorious successor states to retain every inch of land, thereby risking military conflict. On the other side, the campaign generated an adversarial attitude in the Danube Basin, heightened tensions caused by the “Optants Case,” hampered Chamberlain's endeavors to resolve the situation, and harmed Franco-British ties, which had improved following Locarno (Adam, 1993:296).

Probably much more significant, it stretched Hungary's relations with the Little Entente to the breaking point, resulting in a global tangle of epic proportions. On January 2, 1928, at the St. Gotthard Austrian border train station, Austrian officials discovered five freight wagons filled with machine gun components. The cars were being routed from Italy across Austrian territory, and while they were consigned to Czechoslovakia, it was proved that they were intended for Hungary. The firm they were being shipped to was located at "Slovensko-Nove Mesto," and the firm itself was in Hungary. It was one of those towns where the Treaty of Trianon had assigned the railway station to Czechoslovakia, but most of the town was awarded to Hungary (Vondracek, 1937:73–74; Arnold, 1958:396).

The Hungarian firm denied any knowledge of the shipment. The discovery of the machine gun parts had been an accident and had resulted from the suspicions of the Austrian railway officials when they noted that the cars were connected to Hungarian engines in what seemed like unnecessary haste. Austria was solely concerned about the revenue shortfall, as armaments were taxed more than machines (Arnold, 1958:396-397).

On the other hand, the states of the Little Entente had a different perspective. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were deeply shaken by the tragedy and refused to take it lightly. Yugoslavia had been unhappy since the "Italo-Hungarian Deal of Friendship, Conciliation, and Arbitration Treaty" on April 5, 1927 (L.N.T.S., vol. 67, 1927:401-409; Vondracek, 1937:276). A treaty nearly encircled her with states under Italian power.

Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia stated that it breached Article 180 of the Trianon Treaty, which prohibited Hungary from importing any armaments, ammunition, or war material. Benes stated that Czechoslovakia did not want to create a controversial international issue but that the Little Entente could not remain dormant if it happened again (Arnold, 1958:397).

Romania's conduct at this time emphasized the dilemma of the Little Entente states. Moreover, Romania was in the international spotlight because of the Hungarian "Optants Case" (Arnold, 1958:398).

She had no desire to do anything that would offend either Italy or France. Titulescu's visit to Rome at the end of January, while the St. Gotthard incident was still

a controversial issue, was viewed by many as a sign of the complete severance of Romania from the Little Entente. However, the Romanian Foreign Minister declared that he was there to discuss the general international situation with Mussolini and arrange a commercial treaty with Italy. From Rome, Titulescu went to Paris and had talks with the French officials. He pointed out that Romania was an ally of France, Yugoslavia, and Italy and therefore was interested in seeing closer relations between all those states (Arnold, 1958:397–398).

On February 1, 1928, notes from Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania were sent to the Secretary General of the League, calling attention to the incident and requesting that the League Council exercise its right to investigate the situation. The notes were similar but not identical. After all, Romania's note had a more conciliatory tone than the other two. Italy was one of the parties involved in the incident. The Romanian note was softened by such statements as “Recognizing that, for the moment, no real conflicts have arisen in this respect between the states directly Interested, and without wishing to accuse or suspect anyone whatever in connection with this incident...,” and other such expressions of assurance of no ill-will. Italy did not consent to the incident at all. Instead, the Hungarians sent a note to the Secretary-General claiming that the five car loads of machine gun parts were addressed from Italy through Hungary, with their final destination being Warsaw in Poland.

When the March 7th meeting of the Council of the League of Nations discussed the incident, Titulescu spoke for the Little Entente and declared that he and his colleagues had acted in what they believed to be the general interest of peace, and any ill-will toward Hungary did not inspire them. Hungary, nevertheless, declared herself offended by the accusations.

The Council delegated a sub-committee to investigate and report the facts of the Incident. Its report was made to the Council on June 7. Unfortunately, by the time the investigating team reached the scene of the incident, the Hungarians had auctioned off the materials to private bidders, and many pertinent documents had been destroyed. The Council was dissatisfied with the sub-committee report's inconclusiveness, but the incident was closed without any definite ideas as to what had occurred (Arnold, 1958:398–399).

Given the acrimony that characterized Hungary's dealings with the Little Entente, particularly during this era of “incidents,” one may ask whether any efforts to preserve the new status quo would be fruitless and whether anything productive might be done (Vondracek, 1937:278).

The expropriation of Hungarian landowners who co-opted in favor of regaining their Hungarian citizenship after the war sparked a protracted and contentious dispute between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania.

According to the Hungarian Government's 1923 appeal to the League Council, the confiscation of the lands of Hungarian Optants in Transylvania was a flagrant violation of Article 63 of the Treaty of Trianon, which guaranteed Hungarians in territory ceded to other states the right to choose to become citizens of Hungary and to keep their immovable property in the region of the other province where they had their residence prior to defending their freedom (Bonacich, 1951:56–57).

This appeal stipulated that Romania be forced to act in conformity with the Treaties and that the injured parties should receive full compensation. In response to an appeal, the Romanian government, represented by M. Titulescu, defended its position by stating that the provisions concerning absentee owners were applied impartially. Titulescu argued that Hungary sought privileges for Hungarian nationals in Transylvania at the expense of Romanian landowners. Additionally, the Romanian government considered the property of Optants (individuals who chose to retain Hungarian citizenship after Transylvania became part of Romania) to be under its jurisdiction, as those laws were already in place before the signing of the Peace Treaties (Bonacich, 1951:57).

Additionally, Hungary asked that the case be sent to the Permanent Court of International Justice, but Romania declined. The basic argument for Romania was that certain political and social reforms were involved. Hungary argued that Romania's stand endangered the whole principle of arbitration (Bonacich, 1951:57).

In May 1923, in Brussels, negotiations were held between the Hungarians and the Romanians. Nevertheless, no agreement was reached, but an account of the conversations and a draft proposal were drawn up and signed by both parties. In the conversations, the Hungarian negotiators agreed: that the Treaty did not preclude the expropriation of properties belonging to Optants for reasons of public welfare; that the

period of absence was not unreasonable; and that the rate of compensation asked by Hungary would require an amount equal to three times the total Romanian budget. Rumania agreed that Optants whose lands had been only partially expropriated could keep the land they still possessed. Before this tentative agreement could be discussed in the League, Hungary disavowed the signatures of her plenipotentiary, saying that he had gone beyond his authority in signing it. Instead, Hungary again appealed to the Council with further arguments by "Count Apponyi." The Council decided to accept the Brussels document as binding and refused to hear further arguments; thus, they washed their land of the problem (Arnold, 1958:344).

Efforts in 1927 to solve the problem through the Romanian-Hungarian Mixed Arbitral Tribunal on the liquidation of ex-enemy property also failed. It was finally settled when the problem was merged into the agreements and settlements of the Eastern Republic and was ended by the Hague Agreement of January 20, 193. Under the arrangement set up by this settlement, Romania provided a special agrarian fund of 240 million gold crowns from which all agrarian claims of Hungarian nationals were to be met. The fund was made up of payments by Romania under the reparation agreement and shares of the Hungarian payments to the Allies for their reparation debt. There had been much propaganda and indignation stirred up about the Optants case. Actually, the number of people involved was small. However, among those receiving payment through the final settlement were Bethlen, the chief Hungarian delegate at the "Hague Meeting," Count Andrasy, and Count Karolyi (Arnold, 1958:345).

3. THE LITTLE ENTENTE RELATIONS WITH THE GREAT POWER COUNTRIES 1930-1935

3.1. The Little Entente and Germany

"During the twenties, the "Anschluss," the union of Austria with Germany, was one of the principal points of several other problems that concerned the Little Entente. Throughout those years, Czechoslovakia was able to gain the support of her allies in opposing this union of the German states, but Hungary and Hungarian Revisionism, not German Revisionism, remained the major basis for the Little Entente Agreement and common policy. To Czechoslovakia, however, the Anschluss problem was a major concern, and opposition to such a union was a crucial component in the conceptualization of Czechoslovakian Foreign policy. Such a union, it was believed, would surround the nascent Czechoslovak Republic of 14 million with 65 million hostile Germans who would control the Danube area and foster irredentism among the large German minorities of Bohemia, if unfriendly, such a unified German State would block the Czechoslovak State from the rest of Western Europe" (Arnold, 1958:419).

Before the Anschluss, there was strong support for unification from the Austrian and German people. In Article 1 of the Austro-German Protocol of March 2, 1919, the Governments of Germany and the German Austrian Republic agreed to quickly conclude a state treaty that confirmed their union (Low, 1974:193). Nevertheless, at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the Allies rejected proposals for the German States' Anschluss (Low, 1974: 376-396). France and Czechoslovakia had significantly stimulated the Allied resolution to veto and prohibit the Anschluss in the peace treaties (Temperley, 1921: 391-394).

During the twenties, large and Vociferous elements in Austria and Germany continued the agitation for the union. Out of fear that a weak Austria would lead to an Anschluss. The situation in Austria attracted the most attention in the European press. Of all the nations in Central Europe, the plight of the new Austrian State was the worst. The Austrian economy was insolvent. Vienna, with two million people, once drew food and supplies from a vast empire of fifty million people, and now it was isolated from its sources of food and materials. Even the new provinces of the Austrian

state erected barriers against the flow of supplies to their capital. Nowhere in Europe was the food shortage so critical. Kurt Schuschnigg wrote: “There was just a little too much for people to die on and not enough to live on.” This reflected unfavorably on European opinion of the new system created in Central Europe by the peace treaties. To gain acquiescence to the new system of states, something had to be done to reestablish Austria soundly (Arnold, 1958:136–137).

In 1925, a memorandum was included in the report of “W. T. Layton” and “Charles Rist,” under the title “Economic Situation of Austria,” Presented to the League Council at Geneva, that Austria's Government made an effort in order to join forces with a bigger economy, such as German or Danubian. Reconstruction of Austria's economic life can only be done in combination with some broader economic entity, the Austrian Chamber for Workers and Employees argued. Even though it served a purpose to collaborate financially with the Danubian States, the chamber said that the region's fragile political climate made “the requirement of unity with the German economic system necessary” (Abdelal, 2002:907).

The Little Entente recognized not only a chance for service in the Austrian crisis but also a serious political and economic threat to its own security. Because of the enmity produced throughout the partition, public opinion in Czechoslovakia remained opposed to Austria, which was most involved. Most Czechoslovaks were unaware that by assisting Austria, they removed the threat of Anschluss and created a potential consumer for Czechoslovak goods. Due to her position, Benes believed that Czechoslovakia was best positioned and should be most ready to assist Austria in economic, financial, and maybe even political matters. For this opinion, Benes received much criticism in his own country (Vondracek, 1937:174).

The Great Entente and Czechoslovakia's potential Little Entente partners welcomed Benes's stance because they feared Austria's predicament would force her into a union with Germany. During the discussions, however, even Benes appeared to lose patience when he stated on February 13 that Austria should assist herself to better her situation (Vondracek, 1937:175).

Between November 1920 and June 1921, Great Britain, France, and Italy made several recommendations to assist Austria, but only a few were successful. Finally, Czechoslovakia chose to deal with Austria directly (Vondracek, 1937:175–176).

Consequently, on May 4, 1921, a new commercial pact was signed in Prague. This pact was supposed to be the first step in reducing mutual control over foreign commerce. This pact was drafted in response to a significant shift in Czechoslovak public sentiment toward Austria. Benes had been chastised for his stance toward Austria in 1919, but his people had embraced his policies less than two years later (Vondracek, 1937:176).

On May 25, 1921, in answer to questioning before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, Benes asserted that his Austrian policy was directed to preserve the peace treaties and to prevent a plebiscite whereby Austria might unite with Germany. He also stated that he had clarified his position to the Austrian minister in Prague and the Czechoslovak representative in Vienna (Vondracek, 1937:176).

As a result, President Hainisch of Austria and President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia met at "Hallstatt" on August 10, 1921, and a Czech loan of 500,000,000 crowns was negotiated (Vondracek, 1937:177; Arnold, 1958:137).

Later in the year, Hanisch and his Foreign Minister, Schober, went to Prague, where the "Treaty of Lany" was signed on December 16, 1921. In case either state was invaded by a third power, the two states agreed to remain neutral and promised to act together in opposition to any attempted restoration of the Habsburgs. Furthermore, it was agreed that they would communicate the political or economic agreements with other powers (Arnold, 1958:137–138; L.N.T.S., 1922, vol. 9:249–251).

The Treaty of Lany did not make Austria a member of the Little Entente, but it signified an essential agreement between the policy of Austria and that of the Little Entente (Arnold, 1958:137–138).

The Treaty was well received in all the Little Entente countries. Yugoslavia and Romania were in complete accord with the Treaty. Austria had taken 70% of Serbian exports before the war and was one of the chief markets for the exports of the new Yugoslav state at this time. Yugoslavia had signed a commercial treaty with Austria as early as June 1920. In an interview published in the "Neue Freie Presse" in Vienna, the Rumanian statesman Take Jonescu said that he had instructed the Rumanian representatives to accord Austria all the advantages that Rumania had offered to the

states of the Little Entente. He said Russia would greet Austria with joy upon its entry into that organization (Arnold, 1958:138).

The pan-Germanic element in Austria expressed disapproval. Schober, the Austrian Foreign Minister, successfully replied to all protests by the pan-Germans. He reminded them that Austria in 1920 had several times already undertaken to execute the Treaty of St. Germain loyally and that the Treaty of Lany merely reaffirmed the undertaking. It introduced nothing new (Machray, 1929:181–182).

By February 1922, the condition of the Austrian economy was so grave once more that a collapse seemed imminent. Czechoslovakia's policy toward that country was to give financial and economic assistance and to promote further aid from the League of Nations and the Great Powers.

By extending public loans, the Allies and Czechoslovakia helped save the day. Austria, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia each received loans from Great Britain totaling 2,250,000 pounds sterling, 55,000,000 francs, 70,000,000 lire, and 500,000 crowns (Salter, 1923:117).

These funds did not solve the Austrian problem of economic reconstruction as well as financial reform (Arnold, 1958: 219). Therefore, Austria appealed to the Powers for further loans during the London Conference, August 7–14, 1922. However, the Allied countries responded that they could not expect Austria to receive more financial support (Salter, 1923:118).

On the other hand, the Allied Supreme Council decided to relate the Austrian issue to the League of Nations and notified the League Council that the Allied powers would no longer provide financial support to Austria except if the League could recommend a reconstruction plan with clear assurances that extra subscriptions would lead to appreciable advancements (Arnold, 1958:220; M.S.L.N., 1922, October: 3).

On September 6, 1922, the League Council met in Geneva to begin discussing the issue of the Austrian financial restoration, following the request of the Conference of Allies Prime Ministers held in London in July and August of last year. The answer to this extremely challenging challenge was ready to be shared with the Assembly and the rest of the world by the end of the month.

The Council's initial move was to request Austrian Chancellor “Monseigneur Seipel” to present his nation's case. “Monseigneur Seipel” accomplished this in a public meeting on September 6, at which time he and Benes joined the Council as members of nations with a particular stake in the issue in line with Clause 4 of the Covenant. Seipel concluded his statement by outlining the severe financial, economic, and political challenges that his nation is currently facing. Then he made the following request of the Council: “We pray that this time it is not with a view to additional inquiries, which will waste vital time, but with a view to speedy judgments, the London Conference has again brought the Austrian matter to the League of Nations” (M.S.L.N., vol.2, 1922, September: 195).

The Council established a special subcommittee on this topic the same day, inviting Lord Balfour (Great Britain), Hanotaux (France), Imperiali (Italy), Benes, and Seipel to join the Council (M.S.L.N., vol.2, 1922, September: 195).

The Financial Committee of the League accepted the statement of the Allied Supreme Council, which indicated that no more government credit could be anticipated to aid Austria after assessing the main contours of the many concerns requiring resolution. Moreover, the council envisaged a scheme that would attract new credits on a large scale from private capital that other states would have to subscribe to. Eighty percent was guaranteed by the governments of Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, Italy, and France, leaving just twenty percent for other nations to contribute (Arnold, 1958:221).

These financial arrangements were accompanied by political agreements that figure prominently in later diplomacy. There were in Austria, from 1920 to 1922, widespread movements in the provinces and on the part of important political elements for Anschluss with Germany of one kind or another (Arnold, 1958:222).

Benes, speaking on behalf of the Little Entente and Poland, emphasized the importance of the political dimensions of the issue in reestablishing public trust in the future of an independent Austria (Vondracek, 1937:194).

However, for the most part, this unrest and dissatisfaction with the new Republic were caused by the chaotic economic situation that the reconstruction program of the League was meant to alleviate. So that there could be no misinterpretation of the position of the Great Powers and Austria’s neighbors, the

political agreements should be made in conjunction with the reconstruction program, which forbade an Anschluss with Germany. In all, three separate agreements, or protocols, were signed to complete the arrangements for the League's reconstruction of Austria. These were called the Geneva Protocols. They were entitled "Protocols containing the scheme for the financial reconstruction of Austria, elaborated by the Council of the League of Nations and signed at Geneva, October 4, 1922" (Arnold, 1958:222).

They were signed on the one hand by the guaranteeing powers, France, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, and Italy, and on the other by the government of Austria. By protocol number I:

"Protect the political autonomy, geographical dignity, and sovereignty of Austria; as such, they would not strive to achieve any particular or exclusive economic or financial benefit designed implicitly or explicitly to undermine that independence," was the pledge made by the Guaranteeing Powers. That they will refrain from any action that would be at odds with the essence of the agreements drafted jointly to bring about Austria's economic and financial restoration... Furthermore, in order to ensure that all nations uphold these guidelines, they will, should the need arise, make an attraction to the League of Nations Council in conformance with its rules, either separately or jointly, so that the latter may decide what steps should be taken, and that they will abide by its choices" (M.S.L.N., 1922, October:23).

The Government of Austria, on the other hand, promises, following Article 88 of the Treaty of St. Germain, not to antagonize its autonomy; it will refrain from participating in any agreements or business or financial endeavors that are intended to explicitly or implicitly undermine this independence. Furthermore, Austria pledged not to sacrifice its independence and to refrain from discussions or enhanced capital engagement aimed implicitly or explicitly at doing so (M.S.L.N., 1922, October: 23).

The reconstruction plan consisted of Protocol II and its Annexes. Protocol III listed Austria's responsibilities and the Commissioner-Duties General's in implementing the reform agenda outlined in the plan (P.L.N., 1945:41)[9].

[9] Publications of the League of Nations

The Geneva Protocols had a remarkable effect on the monetary situation in Austria. As soon as the negotiations began, there was a return of confidence in the government and economy.

Benes saw security as the key concern during the next phase of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy, just as he had seen Central Europe's rebuilding as a serious challenge during his first five years as Foreign Minister (Vondracek, 1937:209).

Benes' plan was reportedly well received by his Little Entente allies, who likewise aspired to bolster their security in 1924 by forming tighter connections with the Western Great Powers. The three minor states believed they could forge such ties without being just instruments. They had hoped due to the obvious prestige they had gained due to their mutual collaboration and the moderating impact they had exercised on the numerous Central European problems. One of their greatest ambitions was to become one of the four major European blocs with the Soviet Union, Germany, and the Western Powers (Vondracek, 1937:220).

The Franco-British talks of 1921–22 made it plain that the United Kingdom was not interested in maintaining the status quo in Eastern Europe. The relevance of the Little Entente was realistically strengthened due to this (Adam, 1993:193). Since 1921, France has been the chief defender of the status quo and of the treaty settlements that created the new states in Europe, preserving the favorable status quo and preventing both the resurgence of Germany and the spread of Bolshevism. France made an effort to set up a security alliance system. Renewal of the prewar Russian alliance being out of the question, the only feasible alternative was to link up with the new succession states in Central and Eastern Europe (Stavrianos, 1958:733).

In April 1923, Plans were announced for a tour of the French Military Missions in Central Europe by Marshal Foch. A defensive alliance with the Poles had been signed by France as early as February 1921. On his arrival at the Polish frontier, Foch was presented with the baton of the Marshall of the Polish Army. Receptions in his honor were given throughout the country; everywhere he was received with enthusiasm (Arnold, 1958:180).

In the Times, Marshall Foch on the Polish Alliance in Cracow said: “My visit to Poland is an endeavor to strengthen the alliance between Poland and France, an

alliance which, I am assured, Poland will never abandon" (Marshall Foch, 1923:11). His next stop was Prague, during his stay in Prague on May 15, 1923, on which occasion the Marshal transmitted to President Masaryk a formal Invitation from President Millerand to visit Paris for coming to an alliance with Czechoslovakia (Marshall Foch, 1923:13). Masaryk accepted and promised that he would make a state visit within the course of the year as soon as the circumstances permitted (Arnold, 1958:181).

Neville Chamberlain, in his memorandum "French Loans to Little Entente" on November 5, 1923, stated that the French Senate on December 17, 1923, voted to offer large credits to Poland, Yugoslavia, and Romania Credits amounting to 800 million francs, 400 million francs to Poland, 300 million to Yugoslavia, and 100 million francs to Romania, for the purpose of keeping their munitions factories going on a big scale by means of these credits and to secure a virtual monopoly for the future equipment of the armies of the Little Entente. Poland and Yugoslavia accepted. Romania alone refused (TNA, CAB 24/162/41:384–385). No such offer was made to Czechoslovakia, and according to Benes, it was not their intent to ask for such loans (Arnold, 1958:184).

In October 1923, during a visit to Paris, the Czechoslovak president and foreign minister encountered serious differences of opinion while negotiating with the French Government. Poincare advocated for a political alliance and military convention between France and Czechoslovakia (Wandycz, 1962:297).

For various reasons, the military convention sparked instant opposition on the Czechoslovak side. Benes disliked the concept of being governed by France, as he perceived Poland to be. He was worried about Czechoslovakia being drawn into an armed conflict by French jingoism, and, lastly, the alliance would have been viewed as an attempt to surround Germany, reinforcing Poincaré's hard-line stance in the Ruhr, which was exactly what Benes wished to avoid (Wandycz, 1962:298; Bakic, 2010:108). The Czechs stood their ground and left Paris without signing any documents.

The European press was immediately filled with reports that the purpose of the visit was to arrange for a military pact between France and Czechoslovakia. A section of British public opinion despised the alliance as conveying a clear preference for

Czechoslovakia over France and as the latest French endeavor to encircle and crush Germany, given the tensions between Great Britain and France over the Ruhr question and the Separatist Movement within Germany (Vondracek, 1937: 216-217).

It signaled to Italy the approaching French dominance of Central Europe.

Italy's Chargé d'Affaires in Prague, “Francesco Barbaro,” believed that the motive behind the Franco-Czechoslovak Alliance was to present a united front against Italy, hindering Italy's aspirations for Mediterranean dominance (Bakic, 2010:110).

On January 13, 1924, Benes traveled to London to demonstrate that the planned alliance was not militaristic and did not contain any military conventions, but he did admit that the French General Staff had wished for such an arrangement. Finally, Benes indicated that he would have liked a combined Anglo-French guarantee, but that when that proved impossible, he had no choice since Czechoslovakia's instability demanded a military guarantee from any Great Power, which only France was ready to provide. 23 From London, Benes returned directly to Paris and signed the treaty of alliance on January 25, 1924 (Vondracek, 1937:213). Instead of holding a military convention, the foreign ministers of the two nations opted to exchange interpretive letters to allow continual interaction between the general staff (Vondracek, 1937:215-216).

The view was reached only after France, which saw Poland as militarily untrustworthy, exerted tremendous pressure. Moreover, Foch himself was dissatisfied with the outcome of the Military Treaty with Poland (Vonracek, 1937:216).

The preamble of the Treaty stated its purpose was to uphold the Peace Treaties and ensure mutual security against aggression. The parties agreed to consult on matters of foreign policy and take measures to protect their common interests in the event of threats.

They agreed on the following provisions: by Articles I and II, the parties to the Treaty agreed to consult one another on all matters of foreign policy involving a danger to their security or to the treaties signed in common and to come to an agreement as to the measures to be adopted to safeguard their common interest in the event of their being menaced. Article III said that Czechoslovakia and France were in agreement as to the importance for the maintenance of peace of the political principles

laid down in Article 88 of the Treaty of St. Germain and the Protocols of Geneva dated October 4, 1922 (these forbade Austrian Anschluss with Germany), and both agreed to consult one another on the measures to be taken should there be any danger of an infraction of these principles. The next two articles were agreements to do the same in case there appeared to be any danger of a Habsburg restoration in Hungary or a return of the Hohenzollern dynasty to Germany. A provision for the coming into effect of the arbitration procedures set up in the League of Nations Covenant in case any dispute should arise between the two parties that could not be settled by friendly agreement or diplomatic channels was a part of the general Treaty. The last article provided that they would communicate to each other all agreements affecting their policy in Central Europe, and they agreed to consult before concluding any further such agreements (Arnold, 1958:186–187; L.N.T.S., vol. 23, 1924:165–168).

By the end of 1923, the security issue, which had grown inexorably tied to the issue of disarmament, had become one of the Great Powers' primary concerns. France, which had pushed for the inclusion of Article 8 of the League Covenant, which called for armament reduction, had now presented it for consideration (Vondracek, 1937:209). “Lord Robert Cecil” and “Colonel Requin” collaborated on the “Treaty of Mutual Assistance,” formally drafted under League auspices. It stipulated that armaments would be restricted and permanently controlled, that signatories would assist any state attacked, that regional treaties would be recognized as the best means of providing such assistance, that the treaty would be differentiated between various corners of the world to allow for greater freedom in upholding the treaty, and that the League would have control over its operation (Vondracek, 1937:209–210).

While the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance incorporated the system of the Little Entente, or a system of regional groupings of states, into the League of Nations security system, the Little Entente, as a group, was not wholeheartedly for the Treaty as it was presented. Benes had worked with the committee forming the treaty and acted as rapporteur for that committee in submitting the Treaty to the League Assembly. Czechoslovakia was, therefore, firmly in favor of the proposition, but even they desired that some changes be made in the Treaty. In their letter of reply, they pointed out In the event of an attack, the League's Council must unanimously declare which party is to blame and what actions should be taken against that party. The Czechoslovak Government supports adopting the majority vote rule in such instances

without considering the fundamental concept behind this question, particularly the requirement of maintaining state sovereignty in matters of this magnitude (Arnold, 1958:238).

The Czechoslovak letter, however, was principally devoted to supporting the thesis of security through regional groupings and defending the idea, as it was laid down in the Treaty, against the criticisms that had been leveled against it. The other two members of the Little Entente, Romania and Yugoslavia, indicated by their replies that they were opposed to the Treaty because the guarantees were not strong enough. They believe the Treaty is too weak because it fails to identify the conditions that constitute aggression; it fails to give an adequate, prompt response in the event of aggression; and it does not give enough help in the event of attack because the military contingents are left to the council's discretion, which may even limit itself to taking just financial reforms (Arnold, 1958:238–239).

The “Treaty of Mutual Assistance” was never adopted because it was thought to assign too much importance to regional understandings, in the particularism of which many detected a menace to the peace of the world (Stefan, 1934:382). However, due to its objection to a universal accord, Great Britain rejected the treaty (Vondracek, 1937:227).

The Third Committee of the League Assembly tasked Benes with a plan to satisfy London's misgivings. Finally, on September 6, 1924, “The Geneva Protocol” was initiated as the result of the efforts of many politicians, particularly Benes, Politis (Greece), Herriot, and MacDonald, who desired to enable both the limitation and reduction of armaments supplied by Article 8 of the League Covenant by ensuring the security of each state through a peaceful settlement of every international dispute. All military interventions were to be avoided by compulsory arbitration, a proper understanding of an aggressor in future battles, and measures for sanctions and coalitions (Vondracek, 1937:228; M.S.L.N., 1924, October: 1-35).

As was their usual practice, the three foreign ministers of the Little Entente were in constant contact in Geneva during the development of the Geneva Protocol. Benes was credited as one of the chief authors, and the work of the Romanian Titulescu and the Yugoslav Marenkovich also greatly contributed to the plan's final form (Arnold, 1958:255).There were local reports in the press of Romania and

Yugoslavia that relations between those two members of the Little Entente were strained, but both foreign ministers denied this. Certainly, there was little evidence of discord either at the Little Entente Conference in “Ljubljana” at the end of August, before the League meeting, or at Geneva. On the contrary, statements were issued saying that the conference’s states were in complete accord on all questions before the League.

Furthermore, all the Little Entente delegations, including Romania, spoke out in the Assembly in favor of the Geneva Protocol. By the end of December 1924, seventeen states had signed the Protocol; among these were France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Poland. The rest of the nations claimed they waited for British approval before signing; theirs was a long wait. Only Czechoslovakia ratified this “Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of Disputes” (Arnold, 1958:255).

On March 12, 1925, Chamberlain rose in the Council to state his government's position. He complained that the Protocol did not supplement the Covenant but changed its spirit: The changes it makes to the original material go beyond clarifying ambiguities and filling in gaps. They upset its equilibrium and changed its spirit. The renewed focus on sanctions, the increased occasions for their application and the expansion of the military process imply that the League's main task is to keep the peace by planning war. Moreover, it is possible that the Protocol would speed up disarmament, but it would reduce the possibilities of global disarmament by expanding the territories that member nations must protect. He did not think security could be accessed by this means. As to arbitration, he said that it is sufficient to say that, rather than their objections to mandatory arbitration being lessened by the Protocol's regulations, they have been enhanced as a result of the Covenant's destabilization of those hesitations in clause 15, which were intended to avoid any League intervention in issues of domestic jurisdiction (Arnold, 1958:258–259).

Despite Benes' disappointment at the failure of the Geneva Protocol, Germany's Foreign Minister, Stresemanti, expressed an interest in participating in the discussions to solve the issue of security that worried Germany, like the other victorious states. This viewpoint was encapsulated in a German memoir dated February 9, 1925, which proposed a unique guarantee pact for the West, accompanied by a series of arbitration accords with Germany's eastern neighbors (Vondracek, 1937:230).

After numerous negotiations with Germany, France, and Great Britain, they declared their support for the German proposals' general ideas, followed by Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Czechoslovakia (Arnold, 1958:231).

Although, in the beginning, the Eastern Frontier question concerned Poland and Czechoslovakia, these two countries did not enter into direct negotiations with Germany until just before their meeting at Locarno on October 5, 1925. From the French ambassador in Germany, however, we hear that France kept her two eastern allies informed of the progress of the negotiation. It was with France that these two states reached an agreement on the matter. Poland at first seemed unwilling to sign any agreement for arbitration with Germany. The Polish Foreign Minister said in Parliament that no stone of Polish territory would ever be submitted for arbitration, and the Polish press was vehemently critical of the negotiations. In April, Benes notified Chamberlain that Czechoslovakia considered the “Geneva Protocol” the greatest answer to the security situation, but Czechoslovakia would look into the German proposals. However, he believed that the planned treaty should not infringe on the Peace Treaties and that the League of Nations should accept Germany as a member (Arnold, 1958:270–271). The Little Entente met in conference in Bucharest from May 9 to 11 and released a statement saying that they had discussed the Locarno pacts and would watch developments attentively. Any action taken by any member of the entente would be by common consent (Arnold, 1958:271). Benes was especially happy that his colleagues expressed remorse for the Geneva Protocol's failure and endorsed his varied security agreements; knowing that he could rely on their backing, he could negotiate with the Great Powers with far greater confidence (Vondracek, 1937:230).

As soon as Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Czechoslovakia had agreed on a unified approach, they delivered Germany two messages, dated June 16 and August 24, laying out the following guidelines as necessary to any accord: Both Germany and France consented to recognize the territorial status quo and the Treaty of Versailles, as well as the agreements reached to ensure its implementation, and to reject any use of force or war one against the other. They also agreed to establish the demilitarization and inviolability of the Rhine frontier. Exceptional cases in which military forces could cross this border will be ascertained definitively.

Great Britain, and eventually Italy, will assure the provisions; Germany will join the League of Nations and assume the duties and liabilities of a member; Germany will draft arbitration treaties with her neighbors; France will guarantee those with Poland and Czechoslovakia (Vondracek, 1937:232).

When the League Council failed to achieve a majority decision in any disagreement, Czechoslovakia and Poland complained under Article 15, paragraph 7, of the Covenant, leaving them with insufficient security. “The Locarno Conference,” held from October 5 to 16, 1925, sought to address these concerns by establishing separate treaties between Poland and France and Czechoslovakia and France, which provided prompt mutual help in all circumstances of unprovoked aggression (Vondracek, 1937:233). On the other hand, Germany agreed to have her arbitration treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia be comparable to those with France and Belgium, notwithstanding her initial objection to a French guarantee (Vondracek, 1937:233).

“Michael L. Hoffman,” in his Article “Town of Locarno” recalls 1925 Pact, etc., “special to the New York Times on October 16, 1950, stated that for the first time after World War 1, after meeting with Germans, “the ghosts of old hopes and failures in the search for peace walked briefly in this little town today.” He also said, “Twenty-five years ago, then great statesmen of Europe initialed here seven treaties, the Locarno Pact, renouncing for the first time the absolute right of sovereign states to make war” (Hoffman, 1950:15).

The seven agreements signed at “Locarno” included the Rhineland Pact, a reciprocal promise pact involving Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and France, an arbitration convention between Belgium and Germany, an arbitration convention between France and Germany, an arbitration convention between Poland and Germany, an arbitration proceedings convention between Czechoslovakia and Germany, A treaty between Poland and France, and an agreement between France and Czechoslovakia (Grenville & Wachserstein, 2001:144–145; Vondracek, 1937:234).

The major treaty was, of course, the first, the Rhineland Pact, the treaty of mutual guarantee between the Great Powers. This document embodied two basic principles: a guarantee of territorial integrity as set up by the peace settlement and a guaranteed arbitration process. Additionally, everyone committed to never attacking,

invading, or going to war with one another (Arnold, 1958:237; For the full text of the treaty, see Grenville & Wachserstein, 2001:145–147).

There are two important issues in the agreement. First, with this agreement, Germany got one step closer to restoring its position in Europe, which was damaged after Versailles. Secondly, while Germany made a commitment to its western borders with this agreement, its eastern borders were excluded. Germany recognized its western border with France and Belgium in the agreement. In this context, the recognition of Western borders was an important move, at least for France, and one aspect of the security problem has been resolved. However, Germany did not give any assurance regarding the eastern border. Thus, another chain of the Treaty of Versailles was broken (Özel Özcan & Tutuş, 2022:287).

While the affirmative guarantee of the existing eastern territorial status quo was noticeably missing and the arbitration schemes were not as fully developed. This was balanced, however, by the French treaties of guarantee. All the Locarno pacts made Germany's admission to the League of Nations a condition of ratification. As a result, Germany was granted permanent membership in the Council in 1926, and Stresemann took the "vacant chair" when the Council convened in September 1926 (Arnold, 1958:273-274).

Unquestionably, Locarno was an important achievement and an advance toward international cooperation and goodwill. This spirit of willingness to reconcile differences ushered in a new era, but unfortunately, it did not last long. For years, the Little Entente had been working for recognition by the Great Powers of the merits and values of regional understandings and groupings. Now there were the Locarno pacts based on this principle, but it was not what Benes and the leaders of the Little Entente had in mind. Locarno was not part of the League of Nations system. It was, instead, a rejection of the League of Nations as the agency for keeping the peace. The arbitration treaties signed were far from the security system detailed in the Geneva Protocol. Many ominous signs for the future were present in the deliberations leading to its acceptance (Arnold, 1958:274).

Locarno exemplified the British concept of maintaining Franco-German peace without taking on threatening commitments like an anti-German alliance or an assurance of the borders of the small Allied states of Central and Eastern Europe while

still providing proper protection for Poland and Czechoslovakia (Vondracek, 1937:238).

Chamberlain deliberately renounced British participation in the stabilization of Eastern Europe. In the German Reichstag, the Nationalists, the Nazis, and the Communists voted against the ratification of the pact, though the majority outvoted them (Arnold, 1958:274).

In conclusion, although the Treaties of Locarno had one happy result from the long search for security, their spirit of reconciliation was only temporary; however, their lasting result was the rejection of the search for security through the League of Nations, particularly by the foremost western power, Great Britain. This rejection was the first step in the failure of the League of Nations.

Opposition to the Anschluss was assumed to be not just a policy of Czechoslovakia but a policy of the Little Entente as a group. As late as the Little Entente conference in Bucharest, May 9th–11th, 1925, Rumania had categorically declared her opposition to the union.

In the next year, 1926, it will be remembered, Yugoslavia discussed the problem with Italy, hoping to find in common opposition to the Anschluss a focal point of agreement between the two quarrelling Adriatic states. In the early aftermath of the Locarno pacts, the spirit of Locarno became a part of Little Entente policy too, and the question of Anschluss was either avoided entirely or at least declared not to be a threat. After the meeting of the Little Entente at “Jachymov” in May 1927, the Romanian Foreign Minister “Mitllineu” responded to a newspaperman's question about the Little Entente's attitude toward the Austro-German union by saying that, while the Little Entente attitude had not changed, the question was not urgent (Arnold, 1958:421-422).

The following year, at the Bucharest meeting in June, Benes, when questioned on the Anschluss, remarked that the problem was not urgent. However, a month later, in Vienna, the biggest of the several Anschluss demonstrations that took place In Austria and Germany before the rise of Hitler took place.

In 1925, Neubacher[10] was a key figure in establishing two Anschluss organizations in Vienna. The Austro-German People's League (Sterreichisch-Deutscher Volksbund) and the Austria-German Action Society (Sterreichisch-Deutscher Arbeitsgemeinschaft) both were born out of the Berlin-based Deutsch-sterreicher Volksbund, founded in late 1918 to advocate for Austro-German unity based on national self-determination. “Paul Lobe,” the Social Democratic president of the German Reichstag, was the organization's founder (Ritter, 1975:352).

The biggest and best-attended protests the People's League organized between 1925 and 1933 took place in connection with the “Schubert Centennial,”a festival held in Vienna in July 1928 to mark the composer's 100th anniversary. The Schubert Festival, which drew performers, musicians, and tourists from all over Europe and beyond, was one of the most significant manifestations of German unification in the 1920s. The People's League organized protests in Vienna, Styria, and the Burgenland and established branches in Graz and Eisenstadt to capitalize on the festival's enthusiasm (Ritter, 1975:356). (The Austro-German People's League (Sterreichisch-Deutscher Volksbund) saw a period of fast expansion beginning with the Schubert Centennial, and by April 1929, it had reached its target of one million members. This comprised the main chapter from Vienna and the branches in Graz, Linz, Eisenstadt, Klagenfurt, and Salzburg, which were significant since they showed Anschluss support outside of “red”Vienna. In 1930, when the organization said that it stood for 1.8 million Austrians and represented two-thirds of the voters, it was at its greatest (Ritter, 1975: 356). These statistics are astounding for a nation with less than seven million people, although they are certainly exaggerated by Neubacher's practice of registering whole organizations—trade unions, social clubs, industry associations, etc (Ritter, 1975:356).

Löbe, the German Reichstag president, declared it the greatest Anschluss demonstration that had ever taken place. He continued by saying that the realization of

[10] Neubacher, who is most remembered for his work as a Third Reich ambassador in the Balkans during World War II, was also a significant player in interwar Austrian Affairs. He was a driven native who established a lucrative career in Vienna in the 1920s. His ability to establish relationships with many of the organizations trying to take control throughout the First Republic was his defining quality. His capacity to establish connections with and sustain support from many of the organizations vying for control during the First Republic was his defining quality (Ritter, 1975:348).

such an ardent and sincere desire by seventy million people could not be denied. If M. Benes and M. Marinkovich should desire to contest the right of the Germans, we shall tell them that they destroy with the same blow the “manga charta” of their evolution (Arnold, 1958:422-423).

To most Austrians at this time, the question was not whether there would be an Anschluss but when the Anschluss would occur. Chancellor “Seipel” was the least enthusiastic about the Anschluss of all the Austrian leaders. He expressed himself as favoring a tie with Germany only if it could be brought about by legal means and would maintain the goodwill of Austria's neighbors and the Great Powers. Among the Great Powers, Italy and France were still strongly opposed to the union, but MacDonald's Labor Government in Great Britain had indicated that they would not oppose it (Arnold, 1958:422-423).

Prime Minister MacDonald was asked for his views on the subject in a press interview in Berlin in October 1928. He stated that his government had no particular stand on the question, and he believed that it was a question to be solved by the two countries according to the desires of their people (Arnold, 1958:423).

On the other hand, despite his conciliatory policies, Briand let it be known that France would oppose any union of Germany and Austria, and he was confident that French opposition would prevent any merger of the two states. Moreover, since the Treaty of St.Germain stipulated that Austria could not renounce her Independence without the Council of the League of Nations' consent, France's one vote in the Council would be enough to prevent the unanimity needed by the tribunal. In stronger terms, he declared that there would be war if Germany attempted to annex Austria through a coup de force (Arnold, 1958:423–424).

While the Great Depression had a big effect, a huge global crop in 1929 resulted in a sharp drop in world cereal prices. The agricultural crisis reached its apex in the early 1930s, devastating the cereal-growing nations of Southeast Europe. It arose from the new governments' competing political and economic requirements. Only Austria and Czechoslovakia had a significant industrial base among the governments that succeeded the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. Hungary, Romania, the Baltic States, Poland, and Yugoslavia were mostly agricultural nations (Kaiser, 1981:17).

In the fall of 1929, Briand's plan for creating the United States of Europe appeared and provoked controversies in the League of Nations. According to the statement made by the Germans and Austrians, Briand's Memorandum immediately led them to propose their customs union of 1931 (see Doc.BFP, 2nd ser. vol. 2, 1947:5–10, no. 3; Arnold, 1958:424).

The Austrian-German Customs Union negotiations of 1931 took place at a time when the full tide of economic and financial depression was sweeping across Europe, and the situation in Germany and Austria had reached significant proportions, especially the internal situation in both countries, which undoubtedly called for immediate action and could not wait for prolonged studies. (Arnold, 1958:424-425).

Several conferences and meetings were held between various European countries to discuss the economic difficulties they had faced. However, it did not cause serious consideration when German Foreign Minister "Dr. Curtius" traveled to Vienna for five days to discuss the economic problems of both countries on March 1, 1931 (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser.vol.2, 1947:4-5, no.2; Doc.BFP, 2nd ser.vol.2, 1947, 7-8, no.3; Arnold, 1958: 425).

When German and Austrian authorities met in March, they both agreed that a suitable time had arrived for something more than an academic conversation about lowering tariffs and removing trade obstacles. A customs union had been discussed between the two nations for a while, and now one was required (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser. vol. 2, 1947:36, Enclosure in no. 28).

The announcement of the customs union detonated like a bomb. Great Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia viewed the idea with skepticism and as a potential precursor to political unity; they were being given a done deal (Doc. BFP, 2nd ser., Vol. 2, 1947:1-2, no.1).

On March 22, the ministers of France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia visited Chancellor Schauber in Vienna to warn him that the union would constitute a breach of the Geneva Protocols of 1922. The next day, the French, British, and Italian ambassadors in Berlin called on the foreign minister, Curtius, to ask for a full explanation of Germany and Austria's intentions. Germany and Austria declared that they had no political consideration at the back of their minds when the agreement was negotiated. (Arnold,1958:427). The Austrian government considered that the

agreement was fully compatible with the Geneva Protocols of 1922, and there was no intention of making a fait accompli (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, 1947:14, no. 8; Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, 1947:15, no. 9).

An immediate appeal was made that the negotiations between Germany and Austria not proceed further until the Council of the League of Nations could review the question (See Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, 1947:14, no. 7; Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, 1947:13–14, nos. 5, 6, 7). While France and Czechoslovakia were the only ones to attack the proposals, Italy and Great Britain only asked a legal question, but France and Czechoslovakia were not alone in their suspicions and opposition to the customs union (Arnold, 1958:431).

The League Council met in Geneva from May 18th until May 23rd, 1931. The signatories to the Geneva Protocol of 1922, Dr.Curtius, President of the sixty-third session of the Council, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Belgium, were invited to meet with the council. Contrarily, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia participated in the debates as delegate members of the Little Entente while being regular council members at the time. Arthur Henderson began the conversation by stating that while the Austrian-German proposals, in his judgment, addressed significant economic and political issues, the Council was primarily focused on the legal elements of the issue at this particular meeting (Arnold, 1958:431-432).

As a result, on May 19th, the Council of the League asked the Permanent Court of International Justice for an advisory opinion. When the International Court delivered its resolution, the Council subsequently submitted it in a contentious manner:

"Would a government founded between Germany and Austria based on and within the parameters of the fundamentals outlined in a Protocol of March 19, 1931... Be consistent with Article 88 of the Treaty of St. Germain and with Protocol No. 1, which was approved at Geneva on October 4, 1922…?" These were the questions posed by the International Court (P.C.I.J., ser. A/B, no. 41, 1931:227).[11]

[11] A Permanent Count of International Justice

In council discussions, Germany and Austria discussed the legal merits of the matter. They asserted that the customs regime was not violating the peace treaty or the Geneva Protocols because it did not alienate the independence of Austria. It became clear during the discussions that there was no debate about submitting the legal question to the International Court for an advisory opinion. They all pointed out that the real problem of disagreement was whether the Council had any right to study political aspects of the issue after the court had reached a decision. Benes agreed with the British, French, and Italian delegates who had spoken previously that the matter's political, economic, and legal aspects were inseparable. In his speech to the Council, he said that the customs union might threaten its constituent states' independence, especially the weaker state's independence. Although the two countries complete independence was specifically reserved in the Austro-German protocol, Benes reminded the council that without practical measures, political and social events could not be controlled (Arnold, 1958:432-433).

Yugoslav Foreign Minister Mariankovich endorsed Benes's speech that the council should have the right to examine the political consequences of the proposed customs union and criticized "Dr. Curtius" for asking whether Germany's prestige as a superpower would be impacted by such a discussion. He stated that no power, especially a superpower, should defend prestige to prevent discussions of any matter that might disturb international peace (Arnold, 1958:434).

The International Court was consulted when Mr. Arthur Henderson's proposal was approved, but the issue of the council's right to discuss political matters was left open. Germany and Austria had given up on the proposed plan for a customs union because of political and economic changes before the Court's ruling on the legal issue was published (Arnold, 1958:434).

Seven of the eight judges who made up the Court's thin majority in its conclusion ruled that the customs union was inconsistent with Article 88 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain and the Geneva Protocols of 1922 (P.C.I.J., A/B ser., no. 41, 1931:229).

The decision was vigorously contested in several legal circles and remained a controversial issue. Nevertheless, two days before the results of the court's

examination were announced, the two countries had relinquished their intention of forming a customs union (Arnold, 1958:434).

The Austro-German customs union proposal had caused tension and a crisis in the Little Entente. While Czechoslovakia was bitterly opposed to the plan from the beginning, her Little Entente partners had to be won over. Yugoslavia and Romania were in search of markets and feared becoming the dumping grounds for Czechoslovak manufactured goods. Since Czechoslovakia was predominantly industrial and had a well-developed agricultural system, her interests were opposed to those of Romania and Yugoslavia. On the other hand, Germany's huge and hungry population appeared to be a viable market for Romanian and Yugoslav agricultural products. As a result, Yugoslavia and Romania welcomed the proposed Austro-German customs union since it would eliminate tariff obstacles against their agricultural exports. Nonetheless, trading with the planned union would be more beneficial in both directions than trade with Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union, which had less demand for agricultural goods (Vondracek, 1937:34).

One year before, Yugoslavia and Romania moved toward closer economic cooperation with Hungary on July 21, 1930, in Bucharest to seek a solution and create an agricultural bloc in Central Europe. Nevertheless, the conference ended when Hungary claimed the solution was to centralize an export monopoly of grains through Budapest because Romania and Yugoslavia feared that Hungary might control the agency (Arnold, 1958:415).

Representatives from Romania and Yugoslavia met two days later in Sinaia, Romania, to make the Little Entente as effective economically as it was politically. They advocated for a more comprehensive partnership between their farmers and Czechoslovak manufacturers, including forming a joint marketing board, tripartite trade treaties, and tariff agreements (Arnold, 1958:415; Crane, 1931:158–159). Nevertheless, as we have said, “the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party” was unwilling to let the government make such agreements with the agricultural states of the Little Entente.

Furthermore, of greater importance was the Conference of Warsaw, which met on August 28, 1930, the conference of the agrarian states of Central Europe, attended by representatives from the Little Entente states, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, the observers from Finland, and the League. As a result, a series of

international agreements between agricultural and industrial governments and accords based on collaboration between countries with comparable economies were signed. The meeting did, however, urge advantageous mutual tariffs on European agricultural exports and the rapid elimination of export bounties and discriminations that aimed to safeguard them indirectly. These recommendations were sent to the League of Nations for consideration, but they were rejected due to objections from non-European states and the industrial states' unwillingness to grant concessions to agricultural states, preventing the formation of a successful economic organization that could spread throughout Europe (Crane, 1931:159–160; Vondracek, 1937:321).

The regular 1931 Little Entente conference was convened in Bucharest early in May, at Benes' request, before the League Council meeting in May, to assess the three states' opinions on the planned Austro-German Customs Union. Benes was surprised to receive an evasive response from Rumania, with the excuse that discussions on it might touch on sensitive economic issues, and the new Rumanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, “Ghika,” stated that no definite policy on the matter had been developed in light of the recent cabinet emergency in Romania. The Bucharest Conference was held from May 3 to May 6, and, contrary to usual proceedings, the discussions were conducted in almost complete secrecy behind closed doors. The Conference's goal, announced at the close of the first day's session, was to win Hungary over to the side of the Little Entente and prevent her from joining the projected Austro-German customs union by providing Hungary with significant tariff rate reductions. For the Little Entente, the situation was dire.

Rumors of cooperation with Hungary were denied since the Little Entente was primarily a defensive alliance against Hungary and such a move would negate the union's “raison d'être” (Vondracek,1937:322).

The secrecy of the meetings made it obvious that there was a clash of interests on the customs union question. The unexpected “Temsevar Meeting” of Kings Alexander and Carol during the Conference revealed that there was a crisis and that Yugoslavia and Romania were aligned against Czechoslovakia. Benes won over the two faltering partners, but not without difficulty. This meeting caused concern not only in Czechoslovakia but also in France. Political considerations outweighed the

economic advantages that Yugoslavia and Romania expected from the customs union (Arnold,1958:437).

Rumania and Yugoslavia were unjustly forced to make a fateful choice. They had to choose between friendships and policies of the war, which were of known value, or a new policy that might lead to economic advantages for the moment and possible consequent political disadvantages. Benes had to use all his diplomatic skills to commit Rumania and Yugoslavia to the Franco-Czechoslovak orientation. The difficult situation for France and Czechoslovakia was well illustrated by the fact that Yugoslavia received a French loan of £8 million and Romania £10 million to interrupt trade negotiations with Germany. France and Czechoslovakia eventually averted the threat, and after the conference, Romania and Yugoslavia suspended economic talks with Germany. Thus, the German government was defeated and renounced the German-led Central and South Eastern European economic bloc in 1931 (László, 2015:103-106).

On October 20, 1931, Benes proposed a tentative customs union between Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. According to his plan, this bloc of states was to be joined later by Yugoslavia and, perhaps, by Russia. Benes clearly stated that such a plan would gain the approval of France, Italy, and Germany but warned that the Great Powers would impose any plan of economic consolidation on the small states of Central Europe without the latter's consent (László, 2015:101-109).

The Austro-German Customs Union defeat prompted German anger, particularly towards Czechoslovakia and France. Therefore, Benes's plan did not increase its popularity in Germany and was vehemently opposed (Arnold, 1958:438).

Benes's ideas received a cool reception even in the other Little Entente states. However, Austria, Hungary, and Italy let it be known at once that they were also violently opposed to the scheme (Arnold, 1958:438; László,2015:104–106).

Germany came up with a counter-plan, granting preferential tariffs on wheat to the agricultural countries of Central Europe to alleviate the economic crisis. In summer 1931, Germany concluded two preferential tariff treaties, one with Romania and the other with Hungary. In order to take effect, consent needed to be given by all countries that had trade treaties with Germany containing a “most favored nation” clause. Of the twenty-three countries involved, only Czechoslovakia, Argentina, and Turkey

protested. However, since these countries demanded concessions similar to those offered by Germany to Hungary and Romania, the project was dropped (Vondracek, 1937:318).

By early 1932, Austria's financial and economic plight had grown so great that the Chancellor of Austria once again felt compelled to demand that the great powers take political and economic steps to enable Austria to achieve some measure of self-support. In response to this appeal, French Foreign Minister Tardieu handed a memorandum to the German, Italian, and British governments calling for Danubian member states of the Little Entente, Austria, and Hungary. According to the Tardieu Memorandum, those countries should seek and study ways of economic cooperation based on the mutual arrangement of preferential tariffs and special quotas. After an agreement was reached, the countries involved would work out an understanding with the great powers. Furthermore, France expressed its desire to provide the necessary funds in agreement with the other great powers to reconstruct the five Danubian states (Arnold, 1958:439).

From April 6 to 8, 1932, representatives of Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and France met in London to discuss the Tardieu Plan. It was clear from the outset that the project would not receive approval from these powers.

France and Great Britain Proposed that the five Central European countries reduce their preferential tariffs and abolish trade and exchange restrictions among themselves. Although Yugoslavia, Romania, and Hungary could never consume the food and resources of Czechoslovakia and Austria, the powers would cooperate by renouncing their “most favored nation” rights and giving unilateral preferential advantages to the five countries' main exported agricultural products. This is to be supported by a common currency and a loan from the four great powers. Germany and Italy refused. Their position was that the plan would not really relieve the Danube countries and would only increase the economic problems that Germany and Italy faced in their territories (Arnold, 1958:439-440).

Germany and Italy were certainly not satisfied with a scheme that might give Czechoslovakia and the Little Entente a dominant position in the Danube region. Both Germany and Italy expressed concerns that the plan was designed only by the French

foreign minister to consolidate French hegemony in the Danube region (Arnold, 1958:440).

By 1932, the Peace Settlement of 1919 was crumbling. International disrespect for treaty obligations had become common. Economic problems dominated international politics, and the tendency was for the small states of Central Europe to become the objects of European diplomacy and less and less the makers of that diplomacy. Therefore, it was natural for the economic burdens faced by all the European states to focus attention on reparations and the war debt problem. Relief from these obligations and debts was proclaimed to be the only hope for saving Europe's economy (Arnold, 1958:440–441; Easum, 1952:86–94).

Austrian reparations to Poland and Czechoslovakia had been abrogated by the agreement at the Hague Conference of January 20, 1930 (Arnold, 1958:441).

In 1931, the Hoover moratorium suspended payments for a year on all reparation and war debts. The Little Entente had welcomed the moratorium since it meant relief for the rapidly diminishing treasuries of the member states. The moratorium did not, however, improve the general economic situation. Therefore, the Great Powers called a conference on reparation problems in Lausanne, Switzerland, in June and July 1932. In the convention signed on July 9, German reparation obligations were reduced from 34,000 000,000 to only 3,000,000,000 gold marks. This virtually amounted to the cancellation of German reparations. In effect, the reparation clauses of the peace treaties were wiped out, as were the Hague agreements of January 20, 1930 (Arnold, 1958:441).

The Lausanne Conference referred the problems of the Danube area to a special committee set up to study and submit to the European Union Commission the measures necessary to restore the economies of the countries of Central Europe. For this purpose, a general Economic Conference met at “Stresa,” Italy, from September 5 to 21, 1932. His plan, presented by the economic-agricultural committee of this conference, proposed the gradual abolition of restrictions on exports and imports and the establishment of a system of preferential agreements through bilateral treaties. The committee also recommended a revalorization of wheat and other cereals. A common fund was to be established for this purpose. The crux of the project was this fund, which never really came into existence. Great Britain rejected the idea of contributing

to such a fund, and none of the Great Powers, save France, was interested in setting up the project proposed by the "Stresa Conference." At the conference, Germany indicated a willingness to go along with the idea of a preferential system, and this raised hopes in some quarters for the eventual establishment of such a system. Later documents show that the Germans considered the Stresa plan merely a revision of the Tardieu scheme and were glad to see it buried (Arnold, 1958:442-443).

The German point of view on the preferential system was expressed in a memorandum of the Foreign Ministry four months later to the German legation in Romania: "Under such a system, Czechoslovakian Industrial exports would be given preference over German exports in these countries. As a result, this system becomes unacceptable to us for the same reasons that led us to reject the "Tardieu Plan." It was unacceptable because it would push German goods out of the markets of the Danube area" (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol.1, 1957:13, no.5).[12]

Throughout 1932, economic problems were not the only concern of the Little Entente. The growth of revisionist sentiment among the members of the revisionist bloc further concerned the Little Entente.

On February 2, due to economic problems, the League of Nations called the World Disarmament Conference. Present were some sixty nations, including representatives of the United States and Russia. The Conference was long, drawn out, and scheduled to cover several months of work (Arnold, 1958:443).

Before the disarmament Conference to be held in Montreux on February 1, 1932, the Little Entente foreign deputies made statements to the Politics newspaper published in Belgrade. According to the document sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Belgrade Embassy on February 17, 1932, the Little Entente deputies will focus on the general situation and the discussion of the issues that concern them at the conference. The Little Entente deputies agreed on the decisions taken beforehand to ensure peace at the conference.

In addition, Yugoslavia's Deputy Foreign Minister Marinkovich made the following statement to the newspaper Siyah: "We are allies in not delaying the

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disarmament Conference. The gravity of the international situation is not suitable for this postponement; on the contrary, it is imperative to try to reach as constructive a result as possible. Little Entente will do its best in this regard. If unacceptable proposals are made, the conference will fail. The aim to be followed is to find quick and practical solutions. If all countries show goodwill, we can achieve these goals." Benes, on the other hand, stated that the three deputies of the foreign ministers agreed on the issues related to the conference. Prince "Ghika" also stated that their states have confirmed the issue of ensuring peace based on the agreements in force in Europe (Arslan, 2021:260).

Many areas of disagreement arose. France and her allies argued for establishing International control over disarmament, but the other states rejected these arguments and held that such a system could not be worked out because an effective disarmament program had to depend on the good faith of the nations involved.

Germany refused to approve any limitation on the number of armies of trained reserves counted in the limitations and rejected the idea that existing treaty stipulations on disarmament should remain in force. During the preceding months of the conference, Germany had been clamoring for general recognition of her right to equal status with the other Great Powers in the matter of armaments. German representatives said on July 27, 1932, that their country would stop participating in the Disarmament Conference unless the general concept of legal equality was acknowledged to apply to Germany. When the Disarmament Conference resumed its meeting in September, Germany did not appear. This resulted in direct discussions between Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain and the United States, and, on December 11, 1932, the so-called "Five Power Declaration" was issued. By this declaration, Germany won equal rights, and the peace treaty stipulations on armament limitations were abrogated (Arnold, 1958:443–444).

The governments of Italy, France, and the United Kingdom have declared that one of the fundamental tenets of the Disarmament Conference must be to grant equal rights to Germany and the other Powers removed from power by the treaty, and that

this idea should be illustrated in the Convention that contains the Disarmament Conference's inferences (Doc.USFR, 1932, vol.1, 1947:527).[13]

These developments caused the Little Entente countries to call a second special conference in 1932. The three Foreign Ministers met in Belgrade on December 18th. The peace treaties and the status quo they had worked together to maintain had been altered. The reparation and financial clauses of the treaties had been cast aside, and now the military clauses were revised. Only the territorial clauses were untouched, but the threats of revisionism were becoming louder. All the Great Powers were disregarding international obligations, and if there had previously been any "Concert of Europe," by the fall of 1932, it had collapsed. Threats of territorial revision seemed to be growing, and the reaction of the Little Entente at the Belgrade meeting was to tighten the bonds of alliance between the three states. It was announced that A Permanent Council of the Little Entente had been created to represent the interests of the three states. This Permanent Council was composed of the three Foreign Ministers and would meet at least three times a year to discuss current questions of foreign policy as well as problems of special concern to the three Ententes. In addition, a Secretariat was to be formed to prepare material concerning all general foreign and economic policy questions (Arnold, 1958:445).

On February 16, 1933, the "Pact of the Organization of the Little Entente" was published, embodying the decision of the Belgrade conference. (For the text of the treaty of the pact of organization of the Little Entente, see D.I.A., 1934:415–418)[14]

Following the Pact's stipulations, in addition to the organizations already stated, an Economic Council was to be established to gradually coordinate the three states' economic interests. The Pact further stipulated that every political treaty of each Little Entente state, every unilateral act shifting the actual political situation of a Little Entente state concerning a third party, as well as every economic agreement entailing Important political repercussions, will necessitate in advance the unanimous approval of the Council of the Little Entente. Furthermore, the Little Entente states' current

[13] Foreign Relations of the United States

[14] Documents On International Affairs

political agreements with other countries must be made gradually and as uniformly as possible (Arnold, 1958:417).

These were strong words, but they were only words, and the bonds of the Little Entente had loosened up despite Czechoslovak efforts. The territorial guarantees of the Little Entente treaties concerned Bulgaria and Hungary. There were no guarantees against territorial encroachments by any of the Great Powers. In the relations of the Little Entente states to the Great Powers, each state pursued its policies as dictated by its own interests. This continued to be the policy of the Little Entente states (Arnold, 1958: 446-447).

After the "Pact of Organization" was published, Ministers representing the Little Entente states in the various capitals of Europe called on the respective Foreign Offices to explain the nature of the new agreement. From reports of the interviews with the Czechoslovak and Romanian Ministers by members of the German Foreign Ministry, one can more clearly see not only the divergent interests of these two members of the Little Entente but also the perfidy of the Romanians (Arnold, 1958:447).

On February 21, 1933, "Mastny," who served as the Czechoslovak Minister to Germany, visited "Von Neurath," the Foreign Minister, to convey Czechoslovakia's stance on "German-Czech relations in connection with the recent tightening of the Little Entente," as Mastny phrased it. "Mastny" informed "Von Neurath" that the recent treaty did not alter the relationship between the three Little Entente states. However, due to repeated efforts to depict Romania's position within the Little Entente as uncertain and the small states being sidelined at crucial discussions on issues of concern to the Little Entente, the governments of these states deemed it necessary to establish a formal basis for joint action to demonstrate their solidarity. The Czechoslovak Minister clarified to Von Neurath that the alliance was not aimed at Germany. On the contrary, Czechoslovakia considered maintaining good relations with Germany of the utmost importance.

"Von Neurath" replied to the Czechoslovak in harsh tones, reminding him that Germany had not forgotten the Little Entente's attitude toward the German-Austrian customs union. According to Von Neurath's own analysis of events, it was the Italian

attitude toward Yugoslavia and Hungary that prompted the step taken by the Little Entente in signing a pact of organization (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:67–68, no. 31).

Contrary to what Czechoslovakia said the Little Entente had set out to prove, Romania's position within the Little Entente was uncertain. In an interview with the German State Secretary, von Bulow, on February 22, 1933, the Romanian Minister's explanation of the new Little Entente arrangement differed somewhat from the Czechoslovak version.

The Romanian Minister, during his meeting with von Bulow, explained that the Little Entente's actions were not driven by recent events but instead by the neglect they had endured from the Great Powers over many years. Despite fighting and protesting against this neglect, the Little Entente failed to receive adequate attention. For Romania, two key factors had contributed to their decision to act: firstly, their disappointment in Poland's stance towards the "Non-Aggression Pact" with Russia and their concern that other Little Entente states might follow Poland's lead; and secondly, the internal political situation in Yugoslavia, where it was evident that external influences were at play. In these troubled times, Romania wanted to assure the Yugoslav public that they could rely on their allied countries in any situation. The Romanian Minister also admitted that the Little Entente's action was intended as a demonstration against the revision of boundaries. This was particularly necessary since it had been openly stated in Hungary that 1933 was the year of boundary revisions (Arnold, 1958:448-449).

Furthermore, a report on the Little Entente Pact was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 7, 1933, by the Ambassador of Bucharest, "Hamdullah Suphi." Mr. Suphi conveyed the information he obtained from his meetings with the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Titulescu. Mr. Suphi asked Titulesco, If Italy and Yugoslavia go to war, will Romania go to help? And if Romania goes to war with Soviet Russia, can you imagine Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia coming to your aid?

In the case of Yugoslavia, Titulescu said that he would never throw the entire country of Romania into the fire of such a war, and he did not believe Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia would come to her assistance in the case of war with Soviet Russia, and he even did not want to. He also asserted that, Considering these possibilities, he was completely excluded from the new alliance program. According to "Article 6,"

Titulescu said: “The nature we gave to the Little Entente Pact was only economic and political. We can be extremely beneficial to each other in these two wide areas” (BCA, 30.10.0.0.246.667.16, 2).

Mr. Suphi’s evaluation considered the same factor Titulesco explained to Von Bulow. He reaffirmed the importance of this policy for Romania. He believed that Romania wanted to prevent Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia from pushing Romania into isolation by agreeing with the Soviets, such as the one Poland made with the Soviets. Titulescu's wish was to settle the Bessarabia issue with the Soviets (BCA, 30.10.0.0.246.667.16:2–5; Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol.1, 1957:69, no.32).

Romanian perfidy and the fact that she did not intend to feel bound by her alliance with Poland or the Little Entente became obvious in the closing statements of the Romanian Minister to “Von Billow.” Von Billow reports these remarks as follows:

“In conclusion, he spoke at length about the economic and political harmony of Germany and Romania, which should not and could not be disturbed by any agreements of the Little Entente. He also indicated that Rumania would disinterest herself completely in our revisionist’s wishes if we, on our part, could declare ourselves disinterested in the state of affairs in the Southeast” (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:69–70, no. 32).

When the Nazi Party took control of Germany in January 1933, the Germans made overtures to cooperate with the fascists in South-Eastern Europe. While there were divergent interests between the two states, especially in Austria, both shared a common desire to break up the Little Entente and the French system of alliances (Arnold, 1958:450).

Before the publication of the new pact of the Little Entente on February 7, 1933, von Neurath had instructed his representative in Rome to express to Mussolini Germany's desire to develop a cooperation policy with Italy. The German Embassy was informed that it should clarify to Signor Mussolini that Germany had no idea of political expansion toward the southeast. Germany has no intention of joining any political organizations or developing unique political ties with the nations in the Danube Basin (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:29, no. 14).

Von Neurath expressed Germany's goal in the area: “The general objective pursued by us in that region is mere to work for a gradual loosening up if possible, the eventual complete breakup of the Little Entente” (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:30, no. 14). He also assumed that “Italian political conceptions agreed with this aim and indicated that Germany would...even be glad if Italy's future efforts in this direction, e.g., Concerning Romania, should be successful” (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:30, no. 14).

Germany was not fooled. Cooperation with Italy was limited, and the German Foreign Ministry was aware of the limits. After the signing of the Little Entente Pact, Ministerial Director “Köpke” wrote to Ambassador Hassell in Rome on February 20: Italy's concern about her Brenner frontier will determine her position on the Anschluss question also in the future, at least for the foreseeable future, and while we are looking for a clear path for our economic growth to the Southeast, Italy is considering building a wall to keep us out of this region (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:59, no. 27).

Italy had political ambitions in the Danube area, while Germany's Interests were at this time only economic. The Germans believed that the strengthening of the Little Entente by the Pact of Organization had been brought about by Italy's political blundering in the region. In a letter to Hassell, “Kopke” expressed that both Italy and his country were interested in loosening the Little Entente and the French system of alliances. However, their efforts to achieve this through economic means faced challenges due to Italy's political aspirations, which heightened tensions and strengthened the Little Entente instead (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:59, no. 27).

Mussolini was receptive to the German overtures as long as no mention was made of Austria. He indicated to the Germans that investigations by Italian diplomats into the new developments in the Little Entente alliance showed that nothing new had happened and that Russia already seemed to the Italians to regret her policy. Furthermore, Mussolini said that the Rumanian Ambassador to Italy, Ghika, constantly called with assurances of friendship and goodwill (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:134, no. 68).

As is obvious from the above quotations from the German documents, Germany and Italy agreed on the necessity for the breakup of the Little Entente, not only to clear the obstacles to German and Italian economic and political goals in

Southeast Europe but also to destroy French hegemony and break the French alliances. Romania was the weakest link in the chain and the prime target for Italy. Germany concentrated on the control of the area through economic penetration. While the rise of the Nazis was viewed with misgivings in the Little Entente countries, Benes' chief concern from January to March of 1933 was Italy (Arnold, 1958:452).

When Hitler came to power, he instructed his officials at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva to work toward a positive conclusion, which was to be preferred to rearmament without a treaty. The League of Nations, he believed, should be utilized as a tribune for the German point of view (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol.1, 1957:175–176, no.94). By the summer of 1933, world opinion concerning Germany had so changed that the Nazis were left with little hope of achieving rearmament through the Disarmament Conference. The coming of the Nazis to power in Germany weakened the enthusiasm of others, such as the United States and Great Britain, for the Conference. Moreover, Germany's claim for equality in armaments would mean German rearmament (Arnold, 1958: 464). Even Mussolini, at this time, had no desire to see Germany rearm (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser. vol. 5, 1956:655, no. 424).

Negotiations among the Great Powers continued throughout the summer while the Disarmament Conference was adjourned. The results were unsatisfactory, and by October 4, Germany had decided to withdraw from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:887, no. 479).

On October 14th, when the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference was set to resume, the German government issued an official statement expressing their commitment to a peaceful policy. However, the statement also emphasized that Germany was being denied real equality of rights, which left them with no choice but to leave the Disarmament Conference and withdraw from the League of Nations. At the same time, Hitler addressed the German people and justified the government's decision by highlighting the humiliation Germany had experienced due to the denial of equal rights (D.I.A., 1934:285-294).

This decision to withdraw from the League of Nations was a significant shift from the Nazi attitude expressed earlier in the "Minutes of the Conference of Ministers" on April 7th, 1933. At that time, the Nazi officials acknowledged that they

often appeared in Geneva as claimants and that withdrawing would only worsen their position (Doc. GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:260, no. 142).

Hitler's accession to power and the Nazis were strengthened in German politics, and this was accomplished by the rapid growth of the Austrian National Socialist Movement in Austria, which began its meeting in Vienna given the idea of Anschluss (Arnold, 1958:470–471).

After Hitler's accession to power in 1933, Germany started to take up arms and increase its political and economic influence; it used its rapidly developing economic power to realize its political ambitions (Dağlı, 2023: 25). The Nazis were strengthened in German politics, and it was accomplished by the rapid growth of the Austrian National Socialist Movement in Austria, which began its meeting in Vienna given the idea of Anschluss (Arnold, 1958:470–471).

Moreover, he demanded the immediate resignation of Dollfuss and his cabinet. Government forces confiscated the manifesto at once. Dollfuss met the Nazi threat with utilitarianism. The Austrian parliament had been suspended after the resignation of its officers, and Dollfuss ruled by decree. He assumed dictatorial powers to meet the threat of Hitlerism; a coalition of the Christian Socialists supported his government, as did the Peasant Party "Landbund," and the fascist militia "Heimwehr," and the Socialists and the Nazis were in opposition (Arnold, 1958,:471). Political events in Austria in 1933 and 1934 became of international concern, and the crisis in Austria led to a crisis in European diplomacy. The Nazi terrorist activities, propaganda, and fifth column tactics experienced by most of Europe had their tryout in Austria (Arnold, 1958:471).

On January 17, 1934, the Austrian Minister in Berlin sent a complaint letter to the German Government, accusing them of meddling in Austria's domestic affairs and requesting that they stop and respect Austria's independence. If Germany refused, a request to the League of Nations was threatened (Doc.BFP, 2ndser., vol. 6, 1957:304–306, no. 201).

When Austria submitted her complaints to France, Britain, and Italy, France and Czechoslovakia were convinced that they must support the Dollfuss government in Austria as the last guarantee against the danger from Germany, despite the weakness of

the Dollfuss regime and the internal policies of his government (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 6, 1957:424, no. 286).

Britain was convinced to follow suit as well. The Austrian Government inquired of the governments of France, Great Britain, and Italy as to their outlook regarding the dossier it had arranged to establish German intervention in the internal affairs of Austria and discussed it with them. On February 17, a joint protest against German intervention in Austria was conveyed. The discussions on this topic between the three Governments have demonstrated that they share a similar perspective about the imperative of preserving Austria's independence and integrity in line with the applicable treaties (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 6, 1957:425–426, no. 288).

The Austrian Nazis tried to take over the land on July 25, 1934. The execution of Dollfuss during the assault was the culmination of the effort, notwithstanding its failure. Because of this, his successor, “Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg,” believed he had to pursue a conciliatory strategy in order to preserve Austria's independence. This implied that it all had to be done to ensure that Hitler could tolerate the status quo and that nothing had to be done that would provide Germany with a reason to intervene. This claim gives the impression that Schuschnigg was already certain of the best course of action for Austrian foreign policy and had discovered it in Hitler's good graces, which, if upheld, would guarantee Austrian independence for all time (Komjathy, 1972:49–50).

The Nazi Putsch caused immediate action by Italy, indicating that Mussolini had no intention of permitting Germany to take this occasion to intervene in Austria. Four Italian divisions were sent to the Austrian border, joining the two corps already stationed there. On July 26, Mussolini said in a telegram of condolences on Dollfuss' death to Vice Chancellor Von Starhemberg: In these very challenging times, Italy has protected and will continue to protect the independence of Austria, for which he was killed (Arnold, 1957:478–489).

The Little Entente expressed concern not only over the Nazi threat In Austria but also indicated apprehension concerning the possible effects of independent action by Italy. Italy’s quick action alarmed both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, which took prompt military measures. The extension of Italian control over Austria would be intolerable. The situation became critical and complex. Yugoslavia sought to prevent

Austria from falling into the hands of Italy, and Czechoslovakia wanted to save Austria from Italy and Germany (Vondracek, 1937:390-391).

Yugoslavia had moved more troops to its Austrian frontier in Carinthia and let it be known that the Yugoslav Army would invade Austrian Carinthia if the Italian Army entered Austria (Arnold, 1958:479) On July 30th; the French Minister attended a meeting of the Little Entente Ministers in Austria. It was agreed that any possible assistance should be given to the Austrian government in its struggle against terrorist activities. Furthermore, France agreed with the Little Entente states that if there were to be intervention in Austria, it could be international and not just Italian (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 6, 1957:880-881, no. 543).

The united opposition of the Little Entente to any threat of Anschluss is interesting, if not surprising, because of previous attitudes toward the Anschluss expressed by the individual states. Titulescu the Romanian Foreign Minister, told Von Neurath in June 1933 that, while he was opposed to revision in general, he did not object to Austria and Germany joining together. According to Vonor to Austria. Neurath's account, “As long as Germany did not actively support the Hungarian revisionist aspiration, M. Titulescu saw no reason to oppose the German revisionist aspirations” (Doc.GFP,ser.C,vol.1, 1957:585–586, no.328).

Earlier that same month, the German Minister to Yugoslavia visited King Alexander. Among other things discussed were the current rumors of a customs union between Italy, Austria, and Hungary. “The King thereupon told me,” says the German Minister, "that he would prefer a customs union of Germany and Austria. To have Germany as a neighbor would suit him quite well” (Doc.GFP, ser.C,vol.1, 1957:509, no. 279).

Czechoslovakia alone had held steadfast in opposition to the Anschluss. Benes rallied his allies to oppose it in 1934 because of the threat that the German coup would lead to the Italian occupation of Austria and possibly conflict between Italy and Germany. In March 1934, Benes outlined the Czechoslovak view on Italian-German rivalry in Austria: “If we are in favor of a compromise that excludes Anschluss, it is because we do not desire that there should develop in our proximity serious conflicts that can bring bloodshed upon Europe, and because we wish to live in cooperation and friendship with the two Powers, mainly Germany and Italy” (Arnold, 1958:480–481).

The Little Entente had opposition to Hungarian revisionism as its bond of common agreement. The principal threat was now from Italy and Germany, and there were no guarantees in the Little Entente treaties against aggression from any of the Great Powers. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the three Little Entente states to agree on international issues.

Benes had long realized that the Little Entente would last only if its basis could be broadened to include economic unification. The Pact of Reorganization of the Little Entente included plans to create an Economic Council. The World Monetary and Economic Conference was to open on June 12, 1933, in London, and once again, as it had done before the 1927 World Conference, the Little Entente prepared for the conference by making plans that would appear to set its own economic problems in order. In early June, the Permanent Council of the Little Entente met in Prague to create its Economic Council. The Economic Council was composed of three sections for each country in the entente and was to meet four times annually. This organization was concerned about general commercial policies, agriculture, industry, credits, banking, finance, and transportation. The goal set for it by the Permanent Council was the creation of a preferential tariff system for the three states and the institution of a quota system that would increase the exchange of goods between the Little Entente countries (Arnold, 1958:481-482).

In London, the World Economic Conference died a lingering death when it was discovered that no agreement could be made on stabilizing the currency (Arnold, 1958: 482). A startling Incident for the Little Entente during the Conference was the memorandum presented by the German delegation, which said that the German economic problems could be solved only if Germany, the "Volk Ohne Raum," were given an area into which it could expand its economy (Arnold, 1958:482; Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol.1, 1957:567, no.312).

The Little Entente and most of Europe interpreted this to mean that Germany wanted control of the raw materials of Southeastern Europe and Southwest Russia. The German government withdrew the memorandum at once, so adverse was the reaction it produced (Arnold, 1958:482).

The German plan was to destroy the Little Entente with an aggressive economic policy. It had been agreed in the German Conference of Ministers on April

7, 1933: We must attempt to support Romania and Yugoslavia economically, in the first place, to gain political influence and preserve this important market for our exporta (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol.1, 1957:259, no.142).

However, neither Germany nor Italy gave much significance to the new organizational attempts of the Little Entente because of the economic divergence of its members (Arnold, 1957:482).

In January 1934, the first meeting of the Economic Council took place in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. The meetings' discussions made it clear that no sensational results would come from the Council (Arnold, 1957:483).

Neither Czechoslovakia, which had attained a degree of self-sufficiency in agriculture, nor either of the other two Little Entente states, which were in the process of industrialization, was in a position to absorb the surpluses of their partners. Rumania and Yugoslavia were also busy trying to establish economic cooperation with their Balkan neighbors, but cooperation did not solve their problems (Arnold, 1957:483).

Due to German penetration in the Balkans countries on June 11–13, 1936, Dr. Schacht, the economic wizard of Nazi Germany, visited Yugoslavian Prime Minister Stoydinovitch as Yugoslavia's economic policy was vitally dependent on the German export market in the previous years. This visit to Belgrade undoubtedly produced a more rapid and lasting benefit to favorable development in the economic relations of both countries (Doc.GFP, Ser.C, vol. 5, 1966: 630–631, no. 376).

One day after, on June 12, 1936, “Milivje Pilvja” Yugoslav Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed a treaty with Germany, greatly reducing Yugoslavia's trade with the Netherlands, Great Britain, the United States, and other uncertain cleaning countries in favor of encouraging trade with Germany (S.I.A., 1937:530; Nash, 1972:35–36).

Between 1934 and 1937, the proportion of Yugoslavia's exports going to Germany experienced a steady increase, from 15.4% to 18.6%, 23.7%, and finally 21.7–25%. During this same period, Yugoslavia's imports from Germany also grew significantly. German imports accounted for 13.9% of Yugoslavia's total imports in 1934, increasing to 16.2%, 26.7%, and 32.4% in 1935, 1936, and 1937, respectively.

Any disruption in trade between the two countries would therefore have had a greater impact on Yugoslavia than on Germany (Kephart, 1981:69).

Although Germany did not have the same level of economic dominance in Romania as it did in Yugoslavia, Germany had still made substantial inroads into the Romanian economy and was willing to offer even more economic benefits in exchange for political concessions (Kephart, 1981:72; Doc. GFP, ser.C, vol. 5:938, no. 523).

During previous years, economic relations between the two nations improved as Germany began to purchase much of Romania's agricultural products and raw materials. In exchange, Romania received German machinery with which the Romanian government sought to expand the country's small industrial sector, especially After the German-Romanian Commercial Treaty of March 1935, Germany was obliged to import almost 30 million marks worth of agricultural produce, plus seven million marks worth of raw materials in exchange for German goods (Haynes, 2000:20).

While Romania pursued an even more pro-German foreign policy during the Antonescu ministry, the economic importance of Germany to Romania also increased. On December 9, 1937, an economic agreement was signed, increasing trade volume between countries by one-third (Haynes, 2000:21).

Romania and Yugoslavia were also busy trying to establish economic cooperation with their Balkan neighbors, but cooperation did not solve their problems. Cooperation among the Balkan states had been developing rapidly since the first of the Balkan Conferences in 1930. A Balkan Chamber of Commerce and Industry was set up in Istanbul in 1931. A project for a political pact was formulated in 1932. In 1933, a Balkan Medical Union and an Agricultural Chamber were established, and the draft of a Balkan Customs Union was formulated (Kerner and Howard, 1936:21–68).

Albania and Bulgaria had participated in these conferences but would not sign the “Balkan Pact” of February 9, 1934. This Balkan Pact, signed by Greece, Turkey, Romania, and Yugoslavia, provided for a mutual guarantee of each and all of their Balkan frontiers (L.N.T.S., 1934, vol. 153:155–159).

The Balkan Pact, similar to the Little Entente, was not directed against any specific country, and there were no obligations to take action in case of aggression by

any Great Power. It aimed to protect the Balkan borders against attacks initiated by a Balkan country, as stated in the annex protocol to the pact (Doğar, 2022:53; Arnold, 1958:484).

The main reason for Bulgaria not to join the Balkan Pact was the Status Quo, because it would mean renouncing all claims for treaty revision and was not suitable for Bulgaria's interests. Albania, because of her peculiar relations with Italy, was also not even asked to sign. Since 1926, Albania's military has been under the influence of Italy, which economically had a great impact on its non-participation in the pact. In addition, the geographical distance of Albania from Turkey and Romania was another factor (Ertem,2010:1-24).

The Balkan Pact resulted in the formation of the Balkan Entente in November 1934. This entente was modeled on the reorganized Little Entente in its plans for a broad program of political, social, and economic cooperation in the Balkans (Kerner & Howard, 1936:234–236).

In Czechoslovakia, Benes hailed the signing of the Balkan Pact as putting into practice the principles of the Balkans for the Balkan peoples. He said the Balkan states were organizing themselves by peaceful means and demanding of the Great Powers that they leave the Balkans to themselves. "There will be no war in the Balkans if there are no rivalries there among the Great Powers" (I.C, 1934:246-247).

Hitler's blueprint for the rise of German armed might and power was well on its way to fulfillment by 1935.

On January 13, 1935, Hitler won a moral victory for his Nazi regime when "Saar", in a plebiscite held under the League of Nations, overwhelmingly voted to return to Germany rather than France (A Vote for Germany, 1935,:12; For talking about the issue of Saar, see Ranke, 201:116–118).

This success and Hitler's announcement of "rearmament and a universal compulsory military service system" on March 16, 1935, caused great concern in Europe (Arnold, 1958:494).

A summit of the leaders of Italy, Great Britain, and France was convened in "Stresa" on April 11–14, 1935, to arrange a unified response to Hitler's declaration of Germany's rearmament. The French and Italian governments have reintroduced their

ideas for a non-intervention treaty to avoid foreign influence in Austria's internal affairs. Great Britain did not inherently disagree with these proposals but was hesitant to intervene militarily in Central Europe. A compromise was struck as a result of these discussions. A similar declaration from September 17, 1934, was released, reiterating the significance of Austria's autonomy for maintaining European peace. Strategies are also developed for a follow-up conference to go into greater detail about protecting the independence and territorial sovereignty of the Danube Basin states (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 4, 1962:9–82, no. 46).

While Italy, France, and Great Britain denounced this unilateral repudiation of the peace treaties by Germany and filed their protests. The Council of the League formally condemned the German action. Hitler scorned the protests and condemnations, and his war machine continued to grow. The next big step in Hitler's plan for a rearmed Germany came with the remilitarization of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936. France was the excuse for the reoccupation of this demilitarized zone by the German forces.

The Franco-Soviet deal, which was signed in May, and an alliance agreement between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia were linked simultaneously (Doc.GFP,ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:12, no. 3).

Hitler stated: "The new Franco-Soviet pact has violated the Locarno, whose ratification by the French Parliament is now beyond doubt, and is for us a matter of indisputable fact" (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:23.no.7).

According to the memorandum of the German government, "this pact markedly destroyed the political and military position of Germany. Germany has a primal right to protect its borders and safeguard and increase its options for Rhineland defense (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:17–18, no. 3).

The world waited to see whether France would mobilize. The French turned to see whether support for such a move would be forthcoming from other Great powers. The British strongly opposed military action against the Germans in the demilitarized zone. Prime Minister Baldwin told the French that any military response would result in another great war with Germany (TNA, FO 37/19892).

Militarily, France was no more prepared for war than Great Britain, and French public opinion was not inclined to support military measures against Germany without British support since their military was purely defensive and its army was not sufficiently organized (Nere, 1975:190).

The Czechoslovak Government assured the French Government that, where her political attitude towards Germany was concerned, Czechoslovakia would go hand in hand with France since the whole Franco-Czech security system in the East and the Danubian region would be seriously threatened if the German action were to meet with success. Benes was willing to follow France's lead in pursuing a tougher stance against Hitler, especially in economic sanctions. He had taken the view that the internal situation in Germany was extremely critical and that economic and financial masseurs might suffice to induce Germany to withdraw or even overthrow the régime in Germany (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:118, no. 86).

Yugoslavia declined to jeopardize the German market and take part in economic sanctions against Germany since Yugoslavia had lost the Italian market, which induced a considerable sacrifice due to Italy being subject to sanctions (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:302, no. 216).

Yugoslavia was therefore linked to Britain's accommodative stance toward Germany. While the growing position of Germany's power, evident to all in the events of the Rhineland, unequivocally confirmed that the League of Nations had become less suitable as a purely French instrument against Germany, France was compelled by force of circumstances to depend on the principle of collective security and inform the League of Nations about the issue (Doc.GFP, ser. C, vol. 5, 1966:462, no. 289).

Wherein a Rhineland situation had prompted the Council of the League of Nations to convene. Under Titulescu's leadership, the States of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente met in Geneva on March 11, 1935. The policy that both groups of States perused was that the Council should require rigorous adherence to treaties in the same way France has demanded that the Locarno Treaty not be violated and that the Rhineland not be reoccupied (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:106, no.78).

However, if the Council rejected collective action, both groups of states would dissociate themselves from the League of Nations and look for guarantees of their security elsewhere. While Germany’s reoccupation of the Rhineland and the

abrogation of the Locarno treaties were discussed in the League Council, it was only a debate, and the League responded to the German aggression with appeasement and made a pledge of faith to seek security through collective action in the League of Nations (Arnold, 1958:496-497).

Following Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland, it became clear that an Italian-German reconciliation was necessary (Zuber, 1973:67). Rome appreciated the German intervention as it diverted international attention from Italy's actions in Ethiopia. The fact that Britain and France did not strongly object to Germany's move only confirmed Mussolini's belief that these countries lacked the political will to stop German expansion even when their own interests were at stake. As a result, Italy declined to work with its former "Stresa Front" partners against Germany during the subsequent Locarno Pact conferences on Hitler's conduct in the Rhineland. (Doc.GFP,ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:65–6, no. 41). Mussolini used the German victory in the Rhineland to urge the Austrian Government to accept his demands for Austro-German reconciliation. At the Rome Pact meeting on March 21, 1936, Mussolini emphasized the importance of an agreement with Germany to Schuschnigg, citing Italy's involvement in the Ethiopian conflict and Austria's best chance of remaining independent with an agreement in place (Zuber, 1973:66). The "Gentlemen's Agreement," signed on July 11, 1936, aimed to eliminate tensions between Germany and Austria and establish a new era of friendship between the two German states. The agreement recognized Austria's independence, promised non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and stated that Austria would regard itself as a German state in its foreign policy (Doc.GFP, ser.D, vol.1, 1949:281-282, no.153).

This pact was a significant step in Hitler's gradual penetration of Austria. Despite Schuschnigg's view that the agreement represented maximal concessions to Germany, it only served to further embolden Hitler's ambitions towards Austria (Zuber, 1973:72-73).Since Austria was no longer an obstacle, rapprochement between Hitler and Mussolini began in the summer of 1936. In July, the Spanish Civil War began and soon developed into a testing ground for the war machines of the Fascists and Nazis, who aided the rebels against the Russian-supported Royalist forces. The other states looked at the growing might of these armies and agreed with Flandin's opinion that they would have to make the best terms with Germany they could to protect their own lands and leave the rest of Europe to its fate (Arnold, 1958:497–498).

3.2. The Little Entente and Italy

In the secret "Treaty of London" in 1915, Britain, France, and Russia promised Italy territorial gains in Slovenia, the northern part of the Dalmatian Coast, and a potential share of Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and even part of Croatia if Italy joined the Allies during World War I. However, the agreement was never formally ratified as a treaty but served as evidence of the promises made to Italy by its Allies (Macmillian, 2002:160; also see Rene, 1939:364–390).

The events taking place in Russia, which culminated in the accession of the Bolsheviks to power and the complete withdrawal of that country from the War, and the fate of Asia Minor came up for discussion during the peace negotiations in 1919. The agreement was never ratified as a formal treaty but remained as evidence of the promises made to Italy by her British and French allies (Rene, 1939:369).

The early developments of the Peace Conference reveal that there is practical unanimity concerning the Fiume negotiation. It was supposed that Austria would still be in existence at the end of the war, and Fiume was left as her only port on the Adriatic. So the extreme demand of either Italy or Yugoslavia would leave nothing for the other country on the east coast of the Adriatic.

At the present moment, the dispute has narrowed down to the question, which is almost as much of a controversy between "Orlando" and "Sonnino" as between Italy and Yugoslavia. The two converging Italian statesmen are absolutely opposed to each other. Their conflicting policies, clearly stated, are these: Orlando would take Fiume for Italy and give to Yugoslavia the entire Dalmatian Coast except Zara and some of the principal islands. Sonnino, who is now convinced that he cannot get everything, would give Fiume to Yugoslavia but keep the entire Dalmatian Coast for Italy. That is, he stands strictly for the Literal observance of the London treaty, yielding Fiume with regret, simply because it was not put in the treaty (Dalmatian Coast, 1919:2).

On February 2, 1919, in the New York Times under the title "Dalmatian Coast Likely to be Slav...." France and England, the signatories of the London Treaty, refused to take sides, although it is well known that they thought the treaty should be abrogated. So The USA comes in as the umpire. America sees great justice in the Italian claim to Fiume because the population of Italians predominates in this city, although the outlying country is Slavic. On the other hand, America has no sympathy

whatsoever with the Sonnino policy, which would deprive the new Yugoslav State of its entire coast line. The USA pressed for the treaty to be annulled as a violation of the principle of self-determination (Dalmatian Coast, 1919:2). The new agreement drawn up at the conference reduced the territorial gains promised by the London Treaty. It denied all the Upper Adige, Eastern Istria, and all the Dalmatian coast and islands to Italy, and the Yugoslavs would get their coast (Rene,1939:371).

In the early 1920s, Italy initially engaged with the Little Entente but later withdrew, maintaining an anti-French and anti-Slav stance to weaken potential adversaries in the Balkans, particularly Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Italy opposed the Slav-dominated alliance in the Danube Basin as a threat to its Balkan plans, and it also reinforced Yugoslavia's position. Instead, Italy focused on improving Hungarian-Romanian relations, which shared its concerns about the Slav danger, and preventing an agreement between Hungary and Yugoslavia. In August 1919, Italian Foreign Minister “Tittoni” wrote, “The main line of our policy is to prevent by any means an agreement between Hungary and Yugoslavia. All our efforts must be concentrated on the establishment of a Hungarian-Romanian alliance” (Adam, 1993:220).

Tittoni's successor, “Scialoja”, followed a similar line, preferring an alliance consisting of Hungary, Romania, and eventually Poland that followed Italy's line instead of an alliance between Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia under the influence of France (Adam, 1993:220).

In 1920, when Sforza became foreign minister, Italy intervened, along with Great Britain, against the Franco-Hungarian rapprochement and the ex-King Charles' return attempts (Adam, 1993: 221).

In the same year, Italy and Yugoslavia signed a treaty at “Rapallo” on November 12, 1920, to settle the Fiume problem. The treaty agreed to respect for all time the independence and liberty of the Free State of Fiume. Italy was given a strategic frontier at the Monte Nevoso line and was also given sovereignty over the city of Zara on the Dalmatian Coast (Burgwyn, 1997:16).

Until 1925, Italy opposed the revision of the Peace Treaties of Saint-Germain and Trianon and also rejected the Anschluss. It disapproved of Hungarian revisionism and was cautious in its relations with Hungary. Italy's seemingly friendly policy

towards the Little Entente was partly due to its consideration of Hungary as a potential ally (Adam, 1993:221).

Mussolini's rise to power brought significant changes to Central and South-Eastern Europe. Although Italy's direction towards expansion was clear before Mussolini's takeover, his leadership caused a radical shift in the approach to achieving Italy's goals. Italy, which had previously presented itself as a guarantor of the status quo, now emerged as a supporter and champion of revisionism.

Mussolini initially collaborated with the Little Entente and maintained an anti-Hungarian policy. Mussolini saw an opportunity in the international events of 1923 to continue its amicable approach towards the alliance. The discord between Britain and France during the Ruhr crisis allowed Mussolini to hinder the realization of agreements that were against Italian interests and impede French ambitions in Central and South-Eastern Europe (Adam, 1993:221).

Mussolini initially gave his approval to Sforza's Rapallo Treaty of 1920, which established Fiume as a free state. However, he later took up the nationalist viewpoint that Rapallo was a treaty of renunciation. In 1923, Mussolini proposed that Yugoslavia accept Italy's annexation of Fiume in exchange for the “Delta region” of that city and “Port Baros.” The Yugoslav government hesitated to respond, and Mussolini impatiently appointed General “Gaetano Giardino” as the military governor of Fiume. This brought the city firmly under Italian control, and the Yugoslavs were too weak to challenge the Italian coup. The Yugoslavs ultimately accepted Mussolini's terms on Fiume due to the lack of French diplomatic support at the time (Burgwyn, 1997:24–25).

Profiting from the isolation of France after the Ruhr crisis and in order to counteract the threat of French preponderance through control of the Little Entente, he decided to use similar methods. As a result, France and Italy developed keen competition in favor of the Little Entente members and Poland (Vondracek, 1937:222).

At the time of the Belgrade Conference, the announcement of a pact of friendship and collaboration between the two disputants caused surprise. “The Pact of Rome” which they signed on January 27, 1924, contained two protocols: one recognizing the Italian annexation of Fiume and giving to Yugoslavia the Adjoining Porto Baros, and one the pact of “Friendship and Cordial Cooperation.” By the pact,

each of the two states pledged neutrality in the event that the other was attacked but promised political and diplomatic support in the case of external threats to the safety and interests of the other. It was agreed that they would consult together in cases where both agreed that their common interests were threatened.

There was a common guarantee in the Peace Treaties of St. Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly, and the pact specifically stated that the agreement contained nothing contrary to Yugoslavia's alliances with the Little Entente states. The Yugoslavs were pleased that Italy had finally closed the books on the Adriatic statutes of the 1915 Pact of London; the signs seemed propitious for an era of friendly relations between Rome and Belgrade (Burgwyn, 1997:25; Arnold, 1958:190–191; L.N.T.S., vol. 24, 1924:33–49).

The Yugoslav Treaty with Italy was interpreted abroad as a rebuff to the Czechs for their agreement with France. Benes assured his parliament that he had been kept informed of the negotiations from their very beginnings (Arnold, 1958:191).

Benes welcomed the Italo-Yugoslav Treaty, and on April 16, 1924, he went to Rome to propose Czechoslovakian accession to the Italo-Yugoslav Pact. Meanwhile, Poincare sent a telegram and informed Czechoslovakia that "French public opinion viewed the Trilateral Italian-Yugoslav-Czechoslovak Pact as an attempt to reduce France's influence in Central and South-Eastern European affairs. It is not in the interests of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia that Italy's influence should grow at the expense of France. However, France was considered the only great power the Little Entente states could rely upon" (Adam,1993:216).

Thus, instead, a separate treaty between Italy and Czechoslovakia was negotiated. In March and May of 1924, Benes visited Rome, but arrangements were delayed by the April election in Italy, and it was not until July 17 that a final draft for a "Pact of Friendship and Cooperation" was agreed upon, which binds them to examine all questions that exist or may arise between them in a spirit of friendship and mutual toleration. Further, "Both countries then bind themselves in the interests of maintaining peace and of preserving the present equilibrium in Central Europe established by the Treaties of St. Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly and to fulfill the obligations specified therein" (Arnold, 1958:192; Italy and Czechs, 1924:3; L.N.T.S., vol. 26, 1924:23–25).

While the Treaty strengthened Mussolini's rivalry with France, it obviously was not as close an alliance as that between Czechoslovakia and France (Arnold, 1958:192–193).

In the New York Times on May 18, 1924, under the title “Italy and Czechs Agree to a Compact,” At the time the treaty was announced, Benes outlined his policy, which aimed to consolidate Czechoslovakia's position by creating a network of treaties to guarantee her independence and status. He believed that peace in Central Europe was ensured through Czechoslovakia's membership in the Little Entente and its treaties with France and Italy (Italy and Czechs, 1924:3).

Italian-French rivalry was sustained, which threatened the Little Entente status quo. While Italy was one of the guaranteeing powers under the Treaty of Locarno, the spirit of Locarno did nothing to alleviate the antagonism between France and Italy. By 1926, the clash of interests in Central Europe and the Balkans had become clear. Such an incident would jeopardize both Benes' hopes for the new status quo and one of the Little Entente's key goals: preserving the Little Entente's diplomatic freedom from any of the Great Powers. While the members of the Little Entente formed friendly ties with both France and Italy, they did not need to be the satellites of either power (S.I.A., 1927:146–147; Vondracek, 1937:265).

Mussolini persisted in dismantling the Little Entente group and severing its members' ties with France, with Yugoslavia as his major objective. The most serious threat to Yugoslavia was the so-called “Tirana Treaty,” which Mussolini signed with Albania on November 27, 1926, effectively making the small country a political protectorate. The treaty required the two countries to take joint action against any threat to Albania's political, legal, or territorial status quo (Adam, 1993:297).

During 1926 While Yugoslavia had a reconcilable policy towards Italy, the Tirana Treaty was interpreted as establishing a new frictional relationship between the two countries. This treaty was in direct contradiction to the Treaty of Rome of January 27, 1924, by which both countries had bound themselves to consult each other before taking any action likely to affect the interests of the other (Arnold, 1958:381). The Tirana Treaty gave Italy the authority to deploy military forces to Albania in a crisis, implying that Albania might attack Yugoslavia at any moment (Adam, 1993:297).

Having regard to the new situation, to secure her advantages and alienate Yugoslavia from France, Italy persuaded a friendship policy with Yugoslavia by extending the Italian-Yugoslav Agreement of 1924 and by sharing Albania with Yugoslavia through the Tirana Treaty. He employed two diplomatic methods to achieve his goal: on the one hand, he made efforts to encircle Yugoslavia, and on the other, he attempted to prevent Yugoslavia from reaching an agreement with France (Adam, 1993:298).

Yugoslavia was caught in a tough dilemma. It was clear that any accord with Italy would be short-lived, and Mussolini could not be trusted. Belgrade could not embrace the new Italian terms or Italy's demand that Italy and Yugoslavia split Albania between one another because this would have come at a tremendous cost. On the other hand, Yugoslavia made a firm request to join the Italian-Albanian Alliance, which France also supported. Furthermore, Yugoslavia attempted to strengthen its bargaining position with Rome by promoting the “Tripartite Agreement” (Yugoslavia, Italy, and France), which proved to be completely unachievable in 1924. This Tripartite Arrangement may reduce Mussolini's opposition to a Franco-Yugoslav accord. Yugoslavia, on the other hand, did not believe Mussolini's assurances and wanted them backed by France. Mussolini, in reality, rejected the Tripartite Agreement, preferring instead to sign a bilateral treaty with Yugoslavia, which, along with agreements with Romania and Bulgaria, would have guaranteed him a dominant position in the Balkans. Yugoslavian Foreign Ministers Ninchich and Briand were disappointed by Mussolini's disapproval of the plan. On February 24, 1926, Ninchich went to Rome for a series of long conversations with Mussolini (Adam, 1993:298).

At the same time, agitations for an Anschluss between Germany and Austria had become active again in 1926 with the prospect of Germany's admission to the Council of the League of Nations. Since Italy's views on Germany and the Anschluss were in agreement with those of Yugoslavia, her Little Entente partners, and France, Ninchich seized upon this as the opportune time to open negotiations for reconciliation with Italy (Arnold, 1958:381).

The focus of Ninchich's discussions in Rome was on the extension and revision of the Italian-Yugoslav Agreement of 1924 and Yugoslavia's commitment to the Tirana Treaty. Although “Duce” offered everything if Yugoslavia abandoned France

but rather signed a bilateral pact with Italy to resolve the points of contention and avert the Anschluss, The Yugoslav foreign minister quickly realized that Mussolini intended to complete an arrangement that gave Italy even more benefits. Mussolini proposed a military and arbitration accord. They eventually settled on an arbitration agreement. To minimize the significance of an Italian-Yugoslav Agreement, Yugoslavia was urged to resume the "Franco-Yugoslav Treaty" of 1924, which had been broken off, because they feared the increasing enmity of Italy. Ninchich, from Rome, immediately flew to Paris to meet with Briand and press for the Franco-Yugoslav Pact to be signed before the Geneva Summit without interrupting discussions with the Italians. France declined to sign the pact but pledged to do so in Geneva. However, after a debate with Chamberlain and Grandi in Geneva in March 1926, Briand declined to sign the agreement again and did not keep his commitment. As a result, the Yugoslav foreign minister found himself in a difficult situation, believing he had no option but to quit (Adam, 1993:299–301).

In the Letter of Yugoslav Prime Minister Marinkovich to the Yugoslav minister in Paris, July 18, 1927, the international position of Yugoslavia deteriorated further. Efforts to restore relations with Hungary and Bulgaria were unsuccessful. Italy thwarted its aims. The Italian-Hungarian accord of April 1927 put Yugoslavia in a hazardous situation, and Italy used the Macedonian issue to stabilize Yugoslav-Bulgarian ties. Contacts with Albania were effectively cut off, and confrontations between the two nations involving these issues were provoked and controlled by Mussolini (Adam, 1993:310).

In another letter to the Yugoslav minister in Paris on July 28, 1927, Marinkovich pushed for the signing of an agreement with France. Despite referencing the issues at hand, Marinkovich emphasized that the real struggle was not between Italy and Yugoslavia but rather between Italy and France. He argued that Yugoslavia served as an advanced bastion of France and that attacking it would be the best way to weaken the French European system. Marinkovich reminded the French Government that protecting Yugoslavia was in its own interests, as a capitulation to Italy would upset the European status quo. An "Italo-Yugoslav Bloc," along with Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, could destroy the Little Entente (Adam, 1993:310).

Marinkovich appealed to France to free Yugoslavia from Italian coercion and laid out bleak scenarios to emphasize the urgency of the situation. He proposed signing a defense pact that would be published in Geneva to put a stop to Italian speculation that Yugoslavia would stay isolated if attacked. Marinkovich warned that these suspicions could drive Yugoslavia and France into war and instructed the Yugoslav minister to find a method to sign the agreement in Paris immediately (Adam, 1993:311). However, the French Government remained inflexible. According to Briand, Mussolini's position was extremely precarious, and signing the treaty would give him a reason to act and claim that the accord was intended to harm Italy. Though such occurrences were possible, they would lead to the League of Nations turning against Italy (Adam, 1993:312).

So Marinkovich had no other choice but to accept French dissatisfaction, and finally, after delaying the Franco-Yugoslav Treaty for many times, France agreed to sign two treaties with Yugoslavia on November 11, 1927, one of arbitration and the other of friendship (Adam, 1993:312)

While the treaty elicited a massive worldwide response, it had a dual impact on events in Central and Southeast Europe. It maintained the status quo and the Little Entente's position, but it also encouraged cooperation among the opposing factions, who became more active in advocating for revision of the postwar treaties (Adam, 1993:313).

In 1926, Romanian diplomacy appeared puzzling, as Romania seemed willing to play both sides of any diplomatic game to align with the winning side. Romania signed a treaty of friendship and a convention for the pacific settlement of disputes with France on June 10, 1926, but did not publicize it until January 18 of the following year. On the other hand, Romania also signed a treaty of cooperation and friendship with Italy (Arnold, 1958:387).

The “Franco-Romanian Agreement,” signed on June 10, 1926, in Paris, stated that both parties would comply with the League of Nations' obligations. The preamble of the agreement emphasized that international obligations as per the Covenant of the League of Nations would be respected. The first paragraph of the agreement emphasized a mutual non-aggression pact, while the second focused on the arbitration convention. Additionally, it specified that the parties would cooperate if their security

or peace treaties were threatened, if there was aggression against either party, or if any European state attempted to change the status quo, all in accordance with the decisions of the League of Nations. The agreement had a convention and two protocols annexed to it, one referring to Romania's non-aggression obligations towards Soviet Russia, undertaken in 1922 at Geneva based on the status quo, and the other dealing with consultations of the general staffs in specific cases. However, unlike the treaty with Czechoslovakia, the agreement did not grant France the right to intervene in the national defense of Romania (Adam, 1993:302).

Although the Italian Government was not willing to passively regard French diplomatic actions in Central and South-Eastern Europe, they were also unwilling to abandon Romania even after the conclusion of the Franco-Romanian Agreement. Mussolini harbored resentment against Romania despite substantial improvements in relations between the two countries.

The defeat of Bratianu in the general election resulted in General Averescu becoming the new prime minister, who was known for his pro-Italian feelings. Despite this, Averescu could not disregard the fact that the Franco-Romanian Agreement was ready to be signed and that public opinion supported it. Additionally, he could not ignore the views of his allies within the Little Entente. Benes, who initially thought that the Franco-Romanian and Franco-Yugoslav agreements of 1924 were out of time, supported them in 1926, given Italy's increasing aggression against Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Benes only requested that the Franco-Romanian Agreement not include any term that could provoke the Soviet Union (Adam, 1993:304).

Averescu’s rise to power provided Mussolini with the opportunity to establish close contacts with Romania without becoming too opposed to the Soviet Union. The conclusion of an Italian-Romanian Agreement was still being hindered by Mussolini’s unwillingness to ratify the convention on Bessarabia; Britain and France had done so. The question had been discussed at length for more than two years and was the reason for the sluggishness of the negotiations, which had resumed in February 1926. Averescu's accession to power was necessary to resolve the deadlock in the talks, as he was willing to conclude an agreement with Italy even before the Bessarabian convention had been initiated. He departed from the political line represented by Bratianu, whose primary aim was the recognition of Romania within its existing

borders and the subordination of all international relations to this objective. Averescu was content with promises from Mussolini, who assured the swift ratification of the so-called Bessarabian protocol (Adam, 1993:34).

The “Italo-Romanian Agreement,” signed in Rome on September 16, 1926 Paragraph 1 aimed to strengthen cooperation between Italy and Romania in maintaining the international order established by the peace treaties.

According to paragraph 2, the agreement allowed for the possibility of meeting and agreeing on precautionary measures in the event of an international crisis threatening their common interests. Paragraph 3 was identical with Paragraph 4 of the Franco-Romanian Agreement, which had a broader scope for possible actions in case of mutual assistance, which could include military assistance within the framework of the League of Nations' Covenant. Paragraph 4 of the agreement included provisions for an arbitration convention. However, an annexed protocol dealt with the establishment of a joint commission to explore expanding economic relations between the two countries. Additionally, there was an exchange of letters between Mussolini and Averescu regarding Bessarabia, and Italy committed to ratifying the convention of October 28, 1920, when it would not adversely affect Italy's overall interests. The Italian-Romanian Agreement was formulated more carefully than the Franco-Romanian Pact, which concluded for a term of 5 years with fewer obligations and "backdoors" open for Mussolini. However, Averescu's acceptance of Mussolini's conditions over Bessarabia caused dissatisfaction in Romanian political circles, particularly among the opposition. The situation only improved when Mussolini ratified the Bessarabian protocol in March 1927, effectively recognizing the Romanian-Soviet frontier (Adam, 1993:305).

Following the agreement's conclusion, Italy and Romania increased political, economic, and military cooperation. Marshal Badoglio of Italy visited Bessarabia. He discussed the Italian-Romanian brotherhood in arms during World War 1 in a speech in “Kishinew,” and he expressed the hope of standing together in the same camp in the event of a new war. The Soviet Government protested against the Italian-Romanian Agreement and Badoglio's speech. After Badoglio's visit, Italy started delivering arms and ammunition to Romania (Adam, 1993:305–306).

As we discussed in the previous chapter, during the 1930s, while the rise of the Nazis was viewed with misgivings in the Little Entente countries, Benes' chief concern from January to March of 1933 was Italy.

The issue of illegal weaponry supplies to Hungary emerged once more. On January 9, 1933, forty carloads of weaponry were brought from Italy to "Hirtenberg," Austria (50,000 rifles and 200 machine guns). Because the guns were pre-war Austrian equipment, they were purportedly rebuilt in Austria to provide jobs for jobless machinists. On January 8, 1933, according to the disclosure of "Arbeiter Zeitung," the weapons were not fixed at Hirtenberg but were put into trucks and transshipped into Hungary with the help of the Austrian government in the illicit arms traffic between Italy and Hungary (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:157, no. 81).

The Little Entrance was stirred almost immediately. Following this new occurrence, many people began to suspect that Italy, Austria, and Hungary had formed a secret alliance. Benes warned against any propaganda aimed at changing the peace treaties. The Little Entente's protest against the supply of weaponry from Italy to Hungary was endorsed by France and England.

The Austrian Government at first assumed an attitude that was as irresolute as it was unclear. This went so far that the account of the matter given to the individual ministers differed in essential points, a contradiction that could not but become evident immediately and cause a great deal of annoyance. Dissatisfied with the explanations obtained in Vienna, which denied, probably due to confidence in getting Italian support, that there was any violation of the peace dictates and characterized the matter as a purely private transaction in which other states were far more interested than Austria. Benes, acting as spokesman for the Little Entente, urged Paris and London to demand action by the League of Nations Council for an investigation against Austria, but France and Great Britain could not seem to agree that the League of Nations should take any action. France had no interest in further straining relations with Italy through a dispute in the Council of the League of Nations; however, Great Britain was frightened that it would create a new difficulty for the disarmament conference. Therefore, they promised the Little Entente to take a strong measure, particularly in Austria (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:157, no. 81).

At the Benes' request, on February 11, 1933, Great Britain and France unanimously dispatched a memorandum to Austria requiring that the armaments in Austria be either transferred to Italy or eliminated and that the Austrian Government offer assurances “under oath.” The Anglo-French note was forwarded by Austrian Prime Minister “Dollfuss” to Rome, where it was used by the Italians to arouse public opinion against Great Britain and France. Dollfuss transmitted the Anglo-French message to Rome, where the Italians exploited it to incite public opinion against the United Kingdom and France. The Italian government subsequently expressed its willingness to take back the arms, and although this was never done, both the British and French governments, not desiring to irritate the Italians any further, let the matter drop (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:157–158, no. 81).

On March 17, 1933, Benes told the British Prime Minister that he feared Italy's real aim was to take advantage of political unrest in Yugoslavia, abetting the breakup of the unity of that state, take Dalmatia for Italy, and allot Croatia to Austria and Hungary. The little nation's anxieties and suspicions were heightened when Italy proposed a “Four-Power Pact” involving Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. However, if nothing else, the Italian move strengthened relations between the Little Entente countries (Doc.BFP, ser. 2, vol. 5, 1956:63, no. 43).

By March 1933, the League Disarmament Conference was on the verge of failure. French resistance to Germany’s claims for equality in spite of the “Five Power Declaration” of the previous December appeared to doom Europe to a schism of French and German camps. France and Italy were privately negotiating for a settlement of their differences, which were also holding up the Disarmament Conference. Great Britain's fear of the breakup of the Conference over French differences with Italy and Germany and Mussolini's claim that Europe was faced with another Anglo-French Entente led Prime Minister MacDonald to propose a trip to Rome in mid-March. In preparation for the meeting with MacDonald, Mussolini drafted a plan for the four Great Powers that would bring about a detente. Mussolini, being desirous of promoting the alliance of Italian Fascism and the German Nazis, communicated this plan to the German Reich Chancellor on March 14 with the message that only if it were agreeable to Germany would he approach Great Britain and France with the project (Arnold, 1958:453; Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:160–162, no.83).

The Germans indicated that they were willing to enter into negotiations about the draft sent by Mussolini. In general, the German government was pleased with the Italian proposals, but they expressed the desire to see the section of the draft pact on treaty revision presented in a different way. As the German Aide Memoire for the Italian Ambassador said:

In the first sentence of Article II of Mussolini's draft plan, there is a clear acceptance of the idea of revising the peace treaties. The League of Nations is charged with realizing this idea in the second sentence, but the provisions of the League of Nations Covenant that apply to the problem are inadequate. Therefore, the draft may need a more definite wording on this part, possibly stating that the contracting powers shall seek realization of the revision through mutual agreement and avail themselves of the cooperation of the League of Nations' organs (Arnold, 1958:454; Doc. GFP, ser. C, vol. 1, 1957:163–164, no. 84).

The Italian version of Article II in Mussolini's draft plan states that the four powers reaffirm the principle of revising the peace treaties in accordance with the League of Nations Covenant's articles in circumstances that could lead to conflict between nations. However, they declare that such a principle can only be applied within the League of Nations framework and through mutual recognition of the common interests involved (Doc. GFP, ser. C, vol. 1, 1957, Enclosure of no. 83:162).

Mussolini believed that the French would find the Italian text more acceptable and urged the Germans to read Article II in light of Article I of the Italian Four Power Pact. Article I states that the four Western powers, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy, undertake to establish an effective policy of collaboration to maintain peace in accordance with the Kellogg pact and the “No Force Pact.” They also agree to follow a line of action in the European sphere that will induce third parties, if necessary, to adopt a policy of peace (Doc. GFP, ser. C, vol. 1, 1957:162, Enclosure of no. 83).

Mussolini informed the German government that his idea was to carry out treaty revision through an agreement of the four Powers and merely have it confirmed by the League. Then, in the event of the failure of the League of Nations, the four Powers were to combine to shape European policy (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 1, 1957:177, no. 95).

The Italian draft proposal of the Four Power Pact was presented to the British and French on March 18, a few hours after Prime Minister MacDonald arrived in Rome. At the meetings held in Rome between the British and Italian Ministers, the British expressed their Interest in the draft proposals but suggested certain amendments. The most important thing they considered was a modification of Article II to make it more acceptable to the French (Doc.BFP, ser. 2, vol. 5, 1956:68, Enclosure of no. 44). On their way back to London, the British Ministers stopped in Paris to report and discuss with the French the results of their conversations with the Italians. The French were concerned to know how far the proposals contained in the agreement went beyond those already found in the Covenant of the League and, further, how the interests of states other than the four Great Powers would be represented and safeguarded (Arnold, 1958:456).

These were the points on which the French repeatedly pressed the Italians throughout the course of the negotiations during the next two months and a half.

The French were slow in drafting a memorandum on the project, but the trend of French thought and opposition to the plan was obvious. In a speech on foreign policy to the Chamber of Deputies on April 6, M. Daladier said: “There is no question of giving our adherence to a sort of directory of the Great Powers which would impose their wills upon the rest of Europe... a Holy Alliance which would decide upon territorial revisions and more or less extensive changes on frontiers and would thereby show itself even more ambitious than the original Holy Alliance” (Arnold, 1958:456).

The new Permanent Council of the Little Entente met on March 25, 1933, and on the same day issued a statement in which the Council applied to the Great Powers the formula that the British had so long used with regard to the smaller states. The British formula was that the smaller states were taking too much upon themselves in calling the dances in which the Great Powers had to pay the piper, but that, on the other hand, they had a fair right to be consulted whenever their special interests were concerned.

The Little Entente observed that the Great Powers were now going to call the tune and expect the smaller nations to pay dearly. The Little Entente found it difficult to agree that the cause of good relations between countries was being served by agreements having as their object the disposal of the rights of third parties.

“Agreements of this nature belong to the past and certainly predate the formation of the League of Nations” (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 5, 1956:109, Enclosure of no. 54).

On that same day, March 25, Benes called on Sir “John Simon” in Geneva and expressed the concern of his country and that of the other Little Entente countries with the recent talks in Rome. Benes objected to Mussolini's desire to establish a Directorate of the Four Powers, which would dictate policy to the rest of Europe. Secondly, he objected to the special emphasis given in the Italian plans to the revision of the peace treaties: “In Dr. Benes's view, there were three Treaties of Versailles. There was the original treaty; there was the treaty as it now existed on paper, which was very different from the original treaty seeing that many of the provisions, e.g., reparation, had already been abandoned or revised; and, thirdly, there was the treaty that existed in fact. If one were to subtract from the original treaty all the parts that had been revised or abandoned and all of the parts that were in fact not observed, there remained literally only the provisions regarding frontiers, and, therefore, to speak now of revision necessarily implied a revision of frontiers” (Doc. BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 5, 1956:106–108, no. 54).

Representatives of the other Little Entente states protested to Sir John Simon the next day. Both expressed, as Benes had, the complaint that by advancing a theory of revision, cooperation in Europe would not be promoted but hindered, for the inevitable and immediate reaction was to emphasize in other states their resistance to all revision (Doc. BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 5, 1956:110–111, no. 56; Doc. BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 5, 1956:113, no. 57). In his conversations with the ministers of the Little Entente, John Simon tried to thwart the fears and suspicions they expressed. He stated that collaboration between the four western powers, according to the British point of view, aimed merely “to secure cooperation between the four Great Powers, not as a combination against other states but as a means of preventing them from separating into opposite camps” (Doc. BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 5, 1956:132, no. 70).

It was further the British view that the question of frontier revision could not be disposed of by merely refusing to mention it, for it was much in the minds of many people eager to reach a detente with Germany and Italy in order to save the Disarmament Conference (Arnold, 1958:458).

But the fears of the Little Entente Powers were deeply resented when Mussolini and the German government continued to emphasize the revisionist nature of the pact despite the adverse response that this caused the pact to receive in other European states. In a series of articles in an Italian paper, Mussolini chided the Little Entente for its claim that the Little Entente Pact had created a new Great Power. The raison d'etre of the Little Entente, he wrote, was a negative one of conserving “the booty” and opposing the idea of revision (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol.5, 1956: 145, vol. 5, 1956:145, no. 80).

When German Vice Chancellor von Papen visited Rome in early April, he said that he had read with the greatest interest the articles of the Mice on the Little Entente and was in complete agreement, especially with the phrase: “The Revisionist idea is on the march and no futile bulwark of protocol can arrest it” (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser, vol.5, 1956:145, no. 80).

Benes did not waver in his opposition to revisionism, and he was rewarded by being harshly hated by the Nazis and the Fascists. He delivered a violent attack on the proposed Four Power Pact in a speech to the Czechoslovak Parliament on April 25. Mussolini's project, he said, embodied the essentials of Italian foreign policy during the previous ten years (Arnold, 1958:460).

He summed up Italian policy and aims in the following terms: Italy and Germany are to have equality of status within the concert of the four Great Powers; the exceptional position of the Great Powers is emphasized as opposed to the remaining states, especially In Central and Eastern Europe. 2. A new balance of power is to be created, which will involve the military weakening of France and her friends and the military strengthening of the defeated states. 3. The revision of the peace accords will alter the current power balance in Central Europe to a new one, putting the Little Entente and Poland in a worse position. 4. Italy will receive satisfaction in the colonial question (S.I.A., 1934:215).

Benes saw the truth so clearly that it is little wonder that he was subject to repeated attacks by the Germans and the Italians.

As the negotiations for the Four Power Pact continued, all four countries presented suggested drafts, and there was an exchange of revisions and amendments until the final result bore little resemblance to Mussolini's original proposal. France

would not agree to a final version of the Pact until she received approval of the text from her allies, the Little Entente and Poland.

On May 30, the Permanent Council of the Little Entente announced that it accepted the French amended text of the Pact. The Little Entente in its statement gave as reasons for the acceptance of the Pact: 1. The original version, which had been contrary to the principles of international law and the rights deriving from the covenant of the League of Nations, had been abandoned; 2. Satisfactory assurances as to the limits of action contemplated by the pact had been given; 3. Formal guarantees had been given by the French government against all attempts at revision (Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 5, 1956:281, no.178).

On the day that the Four Power Pact was finally initialed by the "Four Western Powers," June 7, 1933, identical notes were handed to the Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Romanian Ministers in Paris, giving them the French guarantee that there could be no Particular attention for introducing any question of treaty revision outside the rules fixed by Article 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and permitted by Article 2 of the Pact. The Polish government was sent a similar declaration on the following day (Doc.BFP,2nd ser., vol. 5, 1956:282, no. 178).

The French declaration diminished the value of the Pact for Italy and Germany. It was commented at the time that there was more of Paris and Prague than there was of Rome in the final draft of the Four Power Pact. The new tone of the document was exemplified in Article I: The High Contracting Parties will consult together as regards all questions that appertain to them. They undertake to make every effort to pursue, within the framework of the League of Nations, a policy of effective cooperation between all Powers with a view to the maintenance of peace (Doc.BFP,2nd ser.,vol.5, 1956:328, Enclosure of no.204).

Germany tried to rally Italy and Britain to deliver a joint protest against the French declaration to the Little Entente and Poland, but without success. The Germans issued their protest alone. Germany was, on the whole, pleased with the signing of the Pact despite the modifications and changes in the original Italian draft. According to Von Neurath was not what Germany was after, but even so, it represented "political progress." Even though the changes introduced by the French placed the functions of the Pact under the League of Nations, Von Neurath said, "the four Western Powers

were left with having assigned to them the de facto role of political leadership in Europe." More important for the Nazis than the content of the Fact itself was the fact that a general political treaty of this kind had been concluded at all. In Von Neurath's words: "It disavows all attempts at isolating Germany and gives expression to the idea that Germany can be, not an object, but only the participating subject of European policy" (Doc.GFP,ser.C,vol.1, 1957:532-33, no.291).

Considering the changing views in the West about the new Germany, Von Neurath could well be pleased that such a treaty had been signed. The isolation which von Neurath said had been disavowed became more and more pronounced as the summer of 1933 wore on.

In 1933, Germany sought an Anschluss, while Italy opposed it. Germany aimed to collaborate closely with Hungary to dissolve the Little Entente and destroy Czechoslovakia, whereas Mussolini aimed to reorganize the Danube Basin by reconciling and understanding with France. Both Germany and Italy opposed the possible restoration of the Habsburgs. These factors influenced Hungarian foreign policy, which aims to create a future understanding between Hitler and Mussolini while retaining its freedom of action without offending either power (Komjathy, 1972: 133). Hungarian prime minister "Gombos", however, did not commit Hungary to follow either the Italian or German political lines unconditionally. In 1934, Hungary pursued a two-sided policy by signing a new German-Hungarian commercial treaty. On February 21, 1934, putting Hungary under the German economic orbit while asserting its own political independence. Gombos stressed the common revisionist interests of Germany and Hungary and urged Hitler to instruct German minorities in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia to cooperate with Hungarian minorities and not to adopt an anti-revisionist stance under any circumstances.

The German reaction to Gombos' letter was reflected in the negotiations between "Kanya" and "Hans Georg von Mackensen," the German minister in Hungary. Kanya stated that while Hungary would not participate in any agreement against Germany, the Hungarian government would closely monitor the alienation of Germany and Italy regarding the Austrian question.

Although there was no reason to assume that Mussolini was unaware of the German-Hungarian negotiations, he sent his political director, "Fulvio Suvich," to

Hungary. Suvich found reassuring and disheartening forebodings, and Hungary followed Mussolini's recommendation. Hungary was willing to cooperate fully with Austria and Italy on trade but desired to stay out of any anti-German formation. During their meeting, Gombos explained to Mussolini the basic axiom of his foreign policy: Hungary relied on Italy for the area south of the Danube and Germany for the area north of the Danube. This statement stunned Mussolini, who perceived it as a declaration of independence. Gombos also expressed doubts about Dollfuss's trustworthiness, who wanted to keep the door open for an understanding with France and the Little Entente while only appearing to maintain a connection with Italy (Komjathy, 1972:136–39).

Ironically, due to the Social Democratic uprising in Vienna, It was brutally suppressed, and the Social Democratic Party outlawed actions that alienated the public. The Little Entente states, as well as Western democracies. As a result, the isolation was brought about by domestic developments in Austria, not by German diplomatic actions. The proclamation of the "Rome Protocols" the following month appeared to compensate for the loss of Western backing (Komjathy, 1972:49).

On March 17, 1934, The Rome Protocols are signed by Mussolini with Austrian chancellor Dellfuss and Hungarian Prime Minister Gombos based on a plan similar to the Little Entente. The first protocol was political, and the other two protocols were exclusively economic. The purpose of these protocols was to promote political collaboration and improve economic relations between the three signatories (Doc.GFP,ser.C,vol.2, 1958:619-627, no.332).

In the case of Austria, however, the Rome Agreements are essentially an attempt to ensure certain economic aid to Austria in order to eliminate the imminent danger of the Anschluss. It is true that another object of these agreements is to assure Italy of its future political influence and economic advantages in Central Europe. But the signatories officially declared that the Rome Protocols were an answer to the threat of the rise of National-Socialist ideology in Central Europe and a reaction to the consequences of the German departure from the League of Nations, which posed a direct threat to Austrian independence (Stojar, 2006:77; I.C, 1934, 247–248). From the Turkish point of view, these protocols, which elicited a strong reaction from the

Turkish press, were designed to counterbalance not only the influence of Germany over the region but also of France (Doğar, 2022:48-49).

Italy provided military equipment for the Austrian army under very favorable financial conditions. These agreements, to a certain degree, have occasioned relief in Europe (Stojar, 2006:77). Mussolini's offer for economic cooperation in the second of the three Protocols of March 17 indicated that the agreements were intended to lead to a broader arrangement in which other countries would participate. Czechoslovakia declared immediately that she was ready to collaborate in this line of action. Benes referred to it in a conciliatory manner and expressed the opinion that conditions were favorable for a determined attempt to settle the problem of Central Europe (S.I.A., 1935:500).

The French encouraged the Little Entente to pave the way for a closer understanding with Italy against Germany (Doc.GFP,Ser.C, vol. 2, 1958:625, no. 332). However, such cooperation met with strong opposition from the Hungarian Government. G. Gömbös, who did not intend to resign from the demands for territorial revision, explained clearly to the Italians that "Hungarians would consider an agreement with the Little Entente on economic rapprochement only if the Little Entente were to come to recognize the Hungarian position on territorial revisions without reservations" (Doc.GFP,ser.C,vol.2,1958:624, no.332).

Thus, Mussolini regarded Hungary's territorial ambitions with sympathy and renounced the participation of the Little Entente in their association. While the Hungarian interest also demanded the preservation of an independent Austria, Gombos stated that Hungary needed Germany's cooperation against Czechoslovakia.

For that reason, he asked the Duce to keep the Rome Protocol an open treaty, allowing Germany to join it (Komjathy, 1972:140). Mussolini agreed, and Kanya (on March 20, 1933) hurriedly instructed the Hungarian ambassador in Berlin to call the attention of the German government to that article of the Rome Protocols. He hoped that Hitler would agree and that the protocols would be transformed into a wider cooperation among Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Germany (Komjathy, 1972:140).

Gombo's triumphant feeling disappeared with the Hitler-Mussolini meeting (June 14–15, 1934), which instead of creating a favorable atmosphere for the promotion of a Rome-Berlin-Budapest-Vienna understanding, brought disaster. While

Mussolini sympathized with Hitler's revisionist policy, he firmly asserted his opposition to an Anschluss (Doc.GFP,ser.C,vol.3,1959:63-68, no.26) At the same time, Hitler expressed his view that an Austrian-German reconciliation could not take place until Dollfuss held power in Austria (Doc.GFP,ser.C,vol.3,1959:18-19,no.10).

After the "Nazi Putsch" in Vienna on July 25, 1934, and the consequences of the murder of Dollfuss France, in her efforts to isolate Germans, negotiated a rapprochement with Italy. After the meeting of the Little Entente Permanent Council on September 14, 1934, it was announced that the Little Entente welcomed this rapprochement (Arnold, 1958:485). Mussolini had already indicated in the summer of 1933 that he would like to see reconciliation with France. Gombo's did not believe that this reconstruction was possible on the part of Italy without giving up the support of Hungarian revisionism, while Mussolini believed that he could convince France to give up the support of the Little Entente and win her consent to some kind of revision (Komjathy, 1972:143).

Barthou's visit to Romania and Yugoslavia in June 1934, his speeches in the two capitals, and his final declaration upon his arrival in Paris proved, in Gombos' eyes, that a French-Italian rapprochement would mean the end of Hungarian revisionist hopes. Barthou said:

"My travel has underlined the importance of the Little Entente, which is more united and stronger than ever before. Benes, Titulescu, and Jevtic demonstrated their solidarity with us, with the League of Nations, and with peace. Respect for the existing treaties seems to all of us to be the right precondition for peace. The revisionist policy is not only unjust and contrary to the desires of peoples, but also magnifies the danger and carries the germs of war" (Komjathy, 1972:143; Le voyage de M. Barthou, 1934).

Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, was working hard to affect reconciliation between Yugoslavia and Italy. This reconciliation was to be discussed by King Alexander during his visit to France in October (Arnold, 1951:485).

King Alexander's imminent visit to Paris was expected to set the stage for Franco-Italian Yugoslav relations. Instead, it led to the tragedy of Marseille on October 9, 1934, when a member of the Croatian terrorist organization "Ustasha": which is harbored and supported by Italy and Hungary, killed both the King and Barthou, making the situation ever more mysterious (Arnold,1958:485).

On October 19, the Foreign Ministers of the Little Entente, who had attended the funeral of the King, met in Belgrade on October 14 and issued a statement calling for international action to put an end to organized terrorism. The meeting was also attended by the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers, who signed an identical statement in the names of the Balkan Pact States. France requested a further postponement in order to negotiate with Italy, but despite this, Yugoslavia filed a protest to the League of Nations on November 22, requesting that the Secretary of the Covenant place the question of the assassination, as well as Hungarian responsibility for granting asylum to terrorist émigrés, on the agenda of the League of Nations' next ordinary session (Bonacich, 1951:120).

The situation was made worse when Yugoslav soldiers pushed thousands of Magyars, who had lived in Yugoslavia before the war but had not been naturalized, over the border into Hungary. On December 7–10, 1934, the League debated the issue and eventually reached an agreeable agreement with the Little Entente and Hungary (Bonacich, 1951:120).

To avoid jeopardizing the possibilities of a deal between Rome, Paris, and Belgrade to protect Austria, the League Council avoided mentioning Italian responsibility (Bakic, 2017:140). However, the League accepted that it proved that the Hungarian authorities were at least guilty of negligence in connection with the actions of the Croatian terrorists. The Council expressed the expectation that the Hungarian government, aware of its international responsibility, would punish the authorities whose guilt had been established (Arnold, 1958:486). After rejecting revisionism, Titulescu, speaking for the Little Entente, stated that Hungary's national honor was not challenged. Both Hungary and Yugoslavia eventually signed the French-sponsored draft treaty, which established a permanent international investigative body with five members to combat terrorism.

All border deportations ended immediately. When he arrived in Prague, Benes defended his firm stance by emphasizing that the goal of revisionism was to destabilize the status quo in Central Europe and that revisionism could never achieve its goals peacefully (Bonacich, 1951:121).

With the League of Nations weakened by the withdrawal and contempt of Japan and Germany and with France eager to maintain good relations with Italy

because of the fear of Hitler, Mussolini saw his opportunity to take over the only Independent area in Africa, Ethiopia. Border incidents on the frontier between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland, in an area where the boundary was not clearly defined, gave Mussolini his excuse. Claims for reparation were made by the Italians. Ethiopia asked for arbitration under a 1928 treaty, but Italy refused (Arnold, 1958, 488–489).

On January 3, 1935, Ethiopia appealed to the Council of the League under Article 11 of the Covenant, which gave members the "friendly right" to bring to the attention of the League any circumstance threatening to disturb the peace. Italy did not believe that the situation was suitable for Italy to reach a peace agreement with Ethiopia and asked that the Council postpone discussions of the Ethiopian request. Further requests were submitted to the Council by Ethiopia, but Europe was preoccupied with Hitler's announcement in March 1935 of the creation of the "National Defense Forces", and the League listened to Italian assurances that the matter in Ethiopia would be settled by arbitration. Mussolini was appeased because Britain and France wanted, above all, to have his friendship when they were faced with a rearmed Germany (Arnold, 1958:489).

On January 4–8, 1935, a conference was held in Rome between Mussolini and Pierre Laval, the French foreign minister. The new Franco-Italian "Rome Accords" stipulated: a counseling accord between the two nations in which they consented to consult each other on all European issues, especially if Austria's independence was threatened;

Austria's neighbors, Italy, Hungary, the Little Entente, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, and France, sign a non-intervention pact with each other, called the "Danubian Pact." Prohibiting any state from meddling in its internal affairs or backing any group inside its borders promotes such aims; France would cede her rights in certain territories to Italy (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 3, 1959:790-792, no. 417; Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 3, 1959:792-795, no. 418).

Benes was in favor of the Rome conference for two reasons: Firstly, because he hoped it would bring about reconciliation between Italy and Yugoslavia, and secondly, because it would maintain Austria's independence. He knew very well, of course, that Czechoslovakia could not by itself maintain Austria's independence; he himself was more in favor of a multilateral pact (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 4, 1962:161, no. 89).

On the occasion of the German military measures, the question of a possible rearmament of Bulgaria, Hungary, and Austria became the subject of international discussions. The military equality demands of the three states were supported by Italy, but as was to be expected, they met with strong resistance from the Little Entente (TNA, GFM 33/3467/9608/3, E678244, 015).

In this sense, Titulescou, as reported by the Belgrade Legation, stated during his last stay in Belgrade that the German military measures, since they are based on the allegation of non-fulfillment of the Versailles Treaty by the Allies, should be regarded as a special case and therefore (TNA,GFM33/3467/9608/3, E678244,015).

The Hungarian Foreign Minister "Kanya" wrote in one of his articles in the "Pester Lloyd" of March 24 under the heading "Mr. Titulescu as a peace saver." He wrote there: "Hungary is not planning a unilateral step on the German model, and Bulgaria has no such intentions either, to our knowledge. For us, the form of our military equality is in principle regulated by the declaration of punishment of December 12, 1932, in which it said, "One of the guiding principles of the disarmament conference must be to grant Germany and the other disarmed powers equal rights within the framework of a regime that is for all states to hide security." This means, in other words, that all the great powers participating in today's international negotiations subscribe to the principle that the granting of military equality by Germany automatically seeks the realization of the legal equality of the other disarmed powers. The great powers have clearly and unequivocally agreed on this basis, and Hungary has every reason to calmly and without rushing to rely on the natural development of things (TNA, GFM33/3467/9608/3, E678245, 016).

In addition, Hungarian Prime Minister Gombos declared on March 25 that Hungary could not follow the German example; Hungary is a member of the League of Nations and will therefore turn to the League of Nations with the relevant request.

On the Bulgarian side, according to a report by the Anatomical Telegraph Agency in Ankara on March 27, the Bulgarian envoy made a statement to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Chairman of the League of Nations Council "Ruschadi Aras", saying that his government had never considered unilaterally annulling the military articles of the Neuilly Peace Treaty. She will not think about it in the future.

With regard to Austria, whose correct attitude Benes is said to have emphasized, the governments of the Little Entente consider this to be harsh, but they should be of the opinion that the present forces of Austria are sufficient to maintain internal order. They assume that the forces of Austria would not be sufficient against a German attack even after rearmament and that, in other cases, Austria could be provided with temporary reinforcements, as was already the case at the time with regard to the police troops. Accordingly, the governments of the Little Entente are said to have decided to demand that France and Italy strictly reject universal conscription for Austria. Should the question become acute, the governments of the Little Entente were likely to point out that the rearmament of the smaller ex-enemy states would force them to adopt new arms measures in order to maintain the present balance of power and to fulfill the obligations arising from the signing of the Danube Pact (TNA, GFM33/3467/9608/3, E678246, 017). However, the Little Entente states agreed upon a common declaration at their "Ljubijana" Conference. They stated their conditions for access to the Danubian Pact. They demanded the exemption of the question of Habsburg restoration from the general operation of the non-intervention principles. They were more anxious to keep the status quo concerning Hungary. They demanded the renunciation of revisionism by the Hungarian government as a price of recognition of Hungary's right to rearm; they demanded the Hungarian government give up its protection of Magyar minorities on their territories; they wanted the firm pledge of Hungary against a possible Habsburg restoration; and finally, they wanted Hungary to sign with them not only a non-aggression treaty but a mutual assistance treaty (Komjathy, 1972:167–168).

On April 15, 1935, At the permanent council meetings of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente in extraordinary session in Geneva, under the chairmanship of Mr. Titulesco. The representatives of the five States examined the general European situation in light of recent events. Having taken note of the results of the Stresa conference, they recorded with satisfaction the effort that had just been made with a view to the next achievements in the work of organizing European peace. They hope that this will result in a détente that can be extended to international cooperation and peacebuilding. Regarding the revision of the military status of the signatory States of the Treaties of St. Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly, the representatives of the Little Entente and Balkan Entente note the details given by Mr. Pierre Laval, in particular,

“the British, French, and Italian Governments have willingly abstained from making any assessment on the substance of the rearmament question, which must be decided freely by the Governments most directly concerned.” Since the “Stresa Conference” had decided to bring negotiations towards the question of Germany’s violation of the Treaty of Versailles by rearming before the League of Nations, the only recommendation that the three Governments, meeting in Stresa, have thought it necessary to formulate is precisely to preclude any seeking to regulate other than contractual rules by proposing a procedure of free negotiation, the possibilities of which must be closely conditioned by new security guarantees.

At Laval’s forceful pleading, any rearming of the small former enemy states would have to await an effective peace and security agreement negotiated under the contemplated Danubian pact (TNA,GFM33/3467/9608/3, E678248,019; TNA,GFM33/3467/9608/3, E678249,020).

On June 18, 1935, the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was signed. The British act, which was made without addressing her Stresa allies, effectively legitimized German rearmament and signaled to Mussolini that Britain was a “weak and untrustworthy friend,” solely concerned with her own security (Zuber, 1973:56).

In October 1935, The Austrian independence question receded into the background, and it could not be tackled anew along the futile lines of the previous schemes owing to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (Abyssinia). It could not be dealt with again along the same lines as earlier designs, and it sparked a crisis that pitted her against London and Paris and the entire notion of collective security centered on the League of Nations (Bakic, 2010:224).

Since it destroyed the so-called “Stresa Front” of the three western Great powers against German aggression, it also signified again the weakness of the League: that the League could not impose its decision against the will of a Great Power. Following Japanese aggression in Manchuria throughout 1935, the League did little to stop such a course of action. At the instruction of Great Britain, the League had taken the issue seriously. Mussolini made a mistake when he assumed he would have free reign in Africa following the Rome Accords with France on January 7, 1935 (Vondracek, 1937:421).

Eden advocated a moderate option in which Italy would receive the province of "Ogaden" and some economic concessions in Ethiopia. Mussolini, however, opposed these ideas because they included significantly less than Italy had hoped (Arnold, 1958:492-493).

On October 11, 1935, The League Council declared Italy an "aggressor" for violating Article 12 of the Covenant by a unanimous decision. Even though, despite the dissenting votes of Austria, Hungary, and Albania, the League Council also demanded the imposition of economic sanctions on Italy (Zuber, 1973:60), and the formation of a "coordination committee" to organize these sanctions. As a result, a gradual system of sanctions was imposed on Italy. The most successful were the arms embargo, financial sanctions, and forbidding imports from Italy (Spencer, 1937:625–626).

France faltered much earlier than supporting Great Britain because she required both Great Britain and Italy to back her up over Germany. Nevertheless, members of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente, such as Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, committed armed support to Great Britain against Italy if sanctions pushed her to declare war on Great Britain. After the annual military conference of the Little Entente at Belgrade, like Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia had also tentatively agreed to back up Great Britain against Italy. Even though Benes was elected president of the League Assembly when the League was grappling with the Italian-Ethiopian issue, However, Czechoslovakia now saw the issue as crucial to the Republic's future: "If Czechoslovakia should refuse to support the League against Italy, what right would she have to invoke League assistance against German aggression in the future"? As a result, Benes notified the League that she was prepared to implement an oil, coal, and steel embargo on Italy (Vondracek, 1937:422-423).

Italy responded by refusing to purchase from some of the countries that had imposed sanctions on her. It had caused bitter appreciation in the Balkan countries whose economies were suffering from sanctions; among them were Romania and Yugoslavia. This was difficult for their economic ties with Italy, whose trade represented a large proportion of their total exports. On the other hand, Austria and Hungary increased their trade with Italy (Arnold, 1958:492).

On December 6, 1936, the abrupt Hoare-Laval proposal halted any future sanctions. The governments of Great Britain and France suggested to Italy and Ethiopia a solution tailored to give Mussolini the most contentment without considering other members of the League. Despite this, they were unable to stop Italy's triumph. In May 1936, Italy annexed Ethiopia.

Throughout the whole affair, the principal aim of Britain and France was to keep Italy on the Western side against German aggression, even though public pressure at home and abroad demanded collective action through the League of Nations. This attempt to play both games at once failed, and as a consequence of this failure to stop aggression,

In July 1936, the League Council put an end to the sanctions against Italy. It led to the League's political demise as a viable peacekeeping route (Spencer, 1937:641). This league's failure also caused apprehension in the Little Entente countries since it was a first step in the breakup of the collective security system. Mussolini rewarded the British and French for their efforts by joining with Hitler in the "Axis" agreement on October 25, 1936 (Arnold, 1958:493).

3.3. The Little Entente and USSR

Throughout the post-war period, Romania was seriously concerned about its relations with Russia. In the previous chapter, we discussed that the Fear of Russia was the reason for Romania's alliance with Poland as well as the conflict with the other Little Entente states. As a result, the Little Entente could only agree to pursue individual policies about Russia, but to be sure, the other two states would not pursue any Russian policy that would offend Romania (Arnold, 1958:194).

Romania's relations with Soviet Russia did not progress very well because the unification of "Bukovina" and "Bessarabia" caused tension in Romanian-Soviet relations. Romania thought that it was natural for Bessarabia, whose population was mostly Romanians, to join the "motherland." The Soviets believed that this decision would mean occupation. As a result, rumors began to circulate that the Soviet Government had massed its troops on the Romanian border in early 1920 to prevent this unification. Upon this, the Dniester, the border between the two countries, was

closed to sea transportation in 1923. Europe could not decide for a long time on the unification of Bessarabia and Bukovin, but in March 1920, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan signed the “Paris Protocol” with Romania, as we discussed it in the first chapter. They wanted this protocol to be signed by Soviet Russia as well, but the USSR did not. Diplomatic relations between Romania and Soviet Russia could only start on July 9, 1933 (Acar Kaplan, 2022:193).

In January 1922, an Allied Conference was held at “Cannes” to draw up the Genoa Conference’s agenda (Doc. BFP, 1st ser., vol. 19, 1974:99, no. 20). The Genoa Conference’s major goal was to lessen the terrible political and economic effects of the war and the peace accords; to reintegrate the two Great Powers that had been excluded from European political and economic life, Germany and Soviet Russia; and to take urgent and essential steps towards the reconstruction of Central and Southeastern Europe regardless of a particular state’s position as one of the victors or the vanquished (Adam, 1991:188).

Unlike the French, Britain was rumored to be ready to recognize Soviet Russia and enter into discussions over reducing Germany’s reparations, which would have entailed political concessions. Although all the members of the Little Entente considered these concessions inadmissible, the intensity of their resistance was not uniform. Czechoslovakia was the least opposed to concessions; Romania was most strongly against them. On the other hand, all agreed to the economic reconstruction of Europe since they all wished to obtain loans from the West to overcome their serious economic problems (Adam, 1991:188).

In fact, all three Little Entente countries viewed the Soviet question somewhat differently, and there was no harmony within the Little Entente from the very beginning. Their attitudes toward Moscow were shaped in part by their dread of Bolshevism and by other political, economic, and geographic considerations that varied greatly throughout the three countries. Because Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were not Soviet Russia's neighbors, they had no territorial disputes with it. Also, unlike Romania, whose acquisition of Bessarabia had not yet been acknowledged by the Allies, the Bolshevik menace was not just next door. Furthermore, industrial Czechoslovakia was significantly keener than agrarian Romania or Yugoslavia to forge business links with Soviet Russia. Romanian Foreign Minister “Bratianu” was opposed

to any kind of connection. Yugoslavia, although neutral toward commercial contacts, was opposed to political recognition because of the large number of Russian emigrants inside its borders. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, thought that economic cooperation with Soviet Russia was not only possible but also necessary and even indicated an inclination toward political recognition. It showed that they were all opposed to any concession regarding the recognition of Soviet Russia (Adam, 1991:188–189). In spite of their differences and in order to prevent their exclusion from the talks on the reconstruction of Europe, the members of the Little Entente thought it important to take a united stand and create a common front toward the outside world.

Although the early negotiations for the conference by Briand's government had been a part of his plan to cooperate with Great Britain in the reconstruction of European trade in return for an Anglo-French security pact, Briand's foreign policy had provoked opposition from French conservative circles, which had forced his resignation. His successor, the diehard Poincare, did not agree with Britain's appeasement policy and strove for French hegemony in Europe. He let it be known that France would not attend the conference unless there was no discussion of reparations or the peace treaties, since it contemplated a drastic revision of the peace treaties in which France would be expected to give up the greater part of her reparation claims as a contribution toward general European economic recovery. France also wanted it understood that the participation of Soviet representatives at the conference did not imply recognition of the Soviet Government (Arnold, 1958:145).

On February 11, 1922, Curzon proposed a preliminary conference before the Genoa meeting to iron out the problems and work out the details with economic experts from the principle allied governments (Arnold, 1958:145).

According to Lord Curzon, on February 13, 1922, the French had no intention of making obstructions in the way of the Genoa conference but were, on the contrary, prepared to do everything to ensure its success. Although The French government accepted his proposal of February 11 but had several suggestions, the last two points of the suggestions were important: the commission should meet in Paris rather than London; the inclusion of representatives from the Little Entente and Poland (Doc.BFP, 1st ser., vol. 19, 1974:139–140, no. 27).

This did not meet the approval of the British Government, since the work of interpreting and giving precision to the agenda already drawn up by the Supreme Council is a matter in which the principal Allied Governments, responsible as they are for the summoning of the Genoa Conference, are exclusively concerned (Doc.BFP, 1st ser., vol. 19, 1974:141, no. 27).

Curzon did not believe that the direct interest of these countries in the settlement of the Russian problem was reason enough for their invitation to the preliminary conference. “Should it be found desirable, during the course of the preliminary discussion, to ascertain the views of other European governments, it should not be difficult to do so by invading the attendance of their representatives in London, who would doubtless act upon instructions from their governments.” He further argued that it would arouse jealousies among other small European powers if the Little Entente and Poland were invited into the discussions (Doc. BFP, 1st ser., vol. 19, 1974:141, no. 27).

While the dispute was going on between Britain and France as to Little Entente representation in the preliminary meetings, Benes spent some fifteen days visiting Paris and London (Arnold, 1958:146–147). Benes proceeded to negotiate in the name of the victorious successor states; he wished to mediate between the two countries to reach a possible compromise (Adam, 1991:191).

When Benes returned from the west in March, he conferred in Bratislava with Nincich and expressed approval of the results of the “Conference of Bucharest.” The two partners decided to broaden the program of the Little Entente for the coming Genoa Conference. They were very interested in recommending the participation of the League of Nations in the coming deliberations, in opposing any discussions regarding the revision of the Peace Treaties, and in reopening commercial and economic relations with Russia, regardless of the question of political recognition (Adam, 1991:191).

At the “Belgrade conference,” which was adopted on March 9–12, the delegates from the Little Entente were again joined by their Polish counterparts. The meeting afforded these states an opportunity to set up concrete proposals and express their separate interests in a plan for the economic reconstruction of Central Europe. The four nations emerged from their various conferences determined to act together at

Genoa on all financial, economic, and commercial matters (Adam, 1991:149–150). The respect that the Little Entente Bloc and Poland gained was due to their solidarity.

Despite this, many observers believed that such tight coordination was just temporary. Poland had only sent an observer to the Belgrade Meeting, and while Poland was eager to engage with the Little Entente on issues of shared interest, it seemed wary of a too-close relationship. Yugoslavia's Nincich spoke of a "Quadruple Entente." But Poland refused to consider the affair a Quadruple Entente. There were still many disagreements between Warsaw and Prague. Besides the difficulties with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the Polish policy of alliance against Russia Poland was convinced that no solution to the Russian problem was possible without the involvement of her territory and possibly the loss of some of it (Vondracek, 1937:199–200).

Once Poland learned it could not rely on the Little Entente's support, it ceased pursuing membership in the alliance and worked for an accord with its eastern neighbors. On March 17, the foreign ministers of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland signed an agreement in Warsaw on a common platform for the Genoa Conference. But in response, deeming it indispensable for Soviet Russia to secure its western borders, "Chicherin" proposed a follow-up conference. After a short hesitation, the four Baltic States convened at Riga, where they signed an agreement with the Soviets on March 29–30, 1922 (Adam, 1993:197).

The delegates of Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and the Russian Soviet Republic, assembled at Riga on March 30, 1922, after examination of certain economic and political questions of common interest to their countries, have agreed that it would be desirable to coordinate the action of their representatives at the Genoa International Conference as regards these questions. Starting from the principle of respect for the political and economic sovereignty of their states and the necessity of having recourse to foreign loans for the reconstruction of the economic life of Eastern Europe, the above-mentioned delegates are of the opinion that it is important to endeavor to grant full liberty to arrive at financial and economic agreements either with particular states or with financial corporations or private financiers.

The main importance of the Genoa Conference and the preparatory conferences that preceded it for Central Europe was that the small countries explored the prospect

of renewing relations with Russia while sticking to the French position of treaty inviolability (Vondracek, 1937:200–201).

After a long discussion on February 25, 1922, Benes's mediation was highly influential, and Poincare and "Lloyd George" agreed to meet at Boulogne (Vondracek, 1937:194; Doc.GFP, 1st ser., vol. 19, 1974:146–156, no. 29).

In any case, Benes succeeded in getting the British to agree to the semi-official participation of representatives from the Little Entente and Poland on the economic commission of the preliminary conference to be held in London from March 20–27. In his memorandum on the forthcoming conference at Genoa issued on February 20, he wisely incorporated points from both the French and British positions. With the French, he agreed that neither reparations nor the peace treaties should be discussed, and the participation of the Soviet Government could not mean its political recognition. But he agreed with Lloyd George in envisioning the prompt resumption of economic relations with Russia and the adoption of a non-aggression pact by the members of the Genoa Conference (Arnold, 1958:147–148).

Indeed, Benes's Mediation between France and Great Britain for the compromise strengthened Poincare's rigid course and also strengthened the role of the Little Entente in European diplomacy and international affairs (Arnold, 1958:147-148).We could consider the Genoa Conference an important milestone in the history of the Little Entente.

While Benes was in the Great Allied Capitals, preparations were under way for the collaboration of the Little Entente countries and Poland at the "Bucharest Conference" for the Conference at Genoa. The betrothal of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and Prince Marie of Romania became the occasion for the first of these preparatory meetings. At this conference, Romania and Yugoslavia solved their problem with the boundary dispute in the Banat of Temesvar, and from February 20 to 24, the representatives of the Little Entente and Poland met in Bucharest while the betrothal festivities were in progress. A communiqué was issued by the four governments, affirming the solidarity of their stand on the issues of the conference (Vondracek, 1937:198; Arnold, 1958:149).

During the "Rapallo Conference" in 1922, the Soviet-German agreement was signed, which marked a significant economic and political recovery for both countries.

The Little Entente states immediately joined France in signing a protest note addressed to Germany, but they rejected French Foreign Minister Barthou's proposal to leave the conference room with the French delegates (Adam, 1993:224).

The Little Entente States were hesitant to provoke an open clash with Great Britain, and they were also fearful that Hungarian Prime Minister Bethlen might possibly come to terms with Soviet Russia. To allay their concerns, Bethlen tried to make them believe that he was ready to follow Germany's example. He welcomed the Rapallo Convention and expressed his pleasure in the press, although it is unclear how much of his reaction was genuine and how much was simply tactics (Adam, 1993:225).

The Rapallo Convention served as a warning that states could not be kept in political and economic isolation at will, as the possibility existed that the victims would break out. As a result, Czechoslovakia sought to normalize its relations with Soviet Russia and showed more understanding in regard to Hungary's efforts at rapprochement. Initially, this plan was supported by Yugoslavia, and talks were initiated with Chicherin about the possibility of economic cooperation. However, the Romanian minister did not follow their example, and Yugoslavia also eventually opposed the ideas of Benes. The attacks both at home and abroad were so severe that Benes was forced to abandon the political part of his plan, i.e., the establishment of diplomatic relations, and instead focus on developing commercial relations. Commercial agencies were established in both Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia in 1922 (Adam, 1993:225).

In 1924, the question of recognizing the Soviet Union entered a new phase. The Great Powers were considering de jure recognition of the Soviet Union, and Benes thought it was vital to explain the Little Entente's position on that nation since the issue could not have been ignored without jeopardizing the three nations' unity. Benes opposed quick recognition of the Soviet Union not out of principle but because he believed it was premature. However, he was prepared to do so if Moscow agreed to cease spreading foreign misinformation. Yugoslavia viewed the Soviet issue as a matter for each country to solve alone, while Romania required Russian acceptance of her title to Bessarabia as a condition for recognition (Vondracek, 1937:221).

Romania remained steadfast in her opposition to Soviet recognition, and even when Yugoslavia's Nincich emphasized the shared Czechoslovak and Yugoslav interests in the strong Soviet Union, Benes did not pursue the issue any further. To do so would have alienated Romania, which was already suspicious that, in the case of a conflict between her and the Soviet Union, her allies' assistance was uncertain. Poland would be her lone ally in such a fight (Vondracek, 1937:221-222).

However, Poland did not attend the Belgrade Conference because she feared that she might be called upon to commit herself to this touchy situation. As a result, the conference decided that each nation should maintain its independence when dealing with the Soviet Union. This was the only way to ensure that collaboration would continue in the future (Vondracek, 1937:222).

In 1926, the diplomacy of Romania was puzzling. A treaty of friendship and a convention for the pacific settlement of disputes were signed with France on June 10, 1926, but Romania did not make this public until January 18 of the next year. Always willing to play both sides of any diplomatic game in hopes of being on the winning side, Romania also signed a treaty of cooperation and friendship with Italy on September 16, 1926. After the publication of the Italian-Romanian treaty on September 16, 1927, copies found their way to the various Foreign Offices. In early October 1926, Russia sent notes of protest to France and Italy over the signing of the treaties (Arnold, 1958:388).

In a note from “Rakovsky,” the Soviet Envoy in Paris, to the French Foreign Minister on October 2, 1926, France was told that the Soviet Government regarded the conclusion of the treaty as an unfriendly act. “In promising Romania its help in the event of war and in proclaiming the community of French and Romanian interests without mentioning Bessarabia, the French Government is supporting the aggressive and grasping tendencies of the Romanian ruling circles” (Doc, SFP[15], vol. 2, 1952:137; Arnold, 1958:388).

Furthermore, in a note from “Kerzhentsev,” the Soviet Envoy in Rome, to the Italian Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs on October 6, 1926, the protest

[15] Documents on Soviet Foreign Policy

was to the letter appended to the treaty stating that Italy would in the future ratify the Bessarabian Treaty. From the Soviet point of view, the Bessarabian Question was not a proper subject for agreement between Italy and Romania or any other third power. The Soviet Government had always maintained that "no decision on the Bessarabian Question could be accepted without the participation and agreement of the Soviet Union" (Doc.SFP, vol. 2, 1952:138; Arnold, 1958:388).

The Russian failure to recognize the legitimacy of Romania's claim to Bessarabia continued to be a source of vexation, and it held a prominent place in the evolution of Romania's foreign policy. When it came to the Russian issue, Romania and her Little Entente allies remained at odds. As the Romanian Foreign Minister, "Mitilineu," told the press at the "Jachymov Conference" of the Little Entente on May 15, 1927, "the question is precisely on the same footing as we adopted before, that is, each state of the Little Entente can freely negotiate regarding the possibility of the recognition of the Soviet Government, but this question in the last resort remains a subject for agreement on the part of all three states forming the Little Entente" (Arnold, 1958:388–389). None of the Little Entente states had accorded the Russians de jure recognition, although Czechoslovakia had given de facto recognition through a trade agreement with Moscow on June 30, 1922 (Vondracek, 1937:143–146).

Trade between Russia and Czechoslovakia never became important to the economies of either state. From 1922 to 1923, the amount of trade increased annually, but after that, it declined steadily. In 1928, the Soviet Union began efforts to get new trade agreements. After long, drawn-out negotiations, however, no definite accord was reached, mainly because the Russians hesitated to agree to the Czechoslovak demand for strict export and import quotas, which would commit the Soviets to purchasing as large a quantity of Czechoslovak goods as Czechoslovakia did of Soviet products. The question of de jure recognition of the USSR by common consent was not raised during the negotiations. Even though no definite convention was signed, contacts between the two improved, and by June 1928, nearly 200 of the leading manufacturing and exporting concerns of Czechoslovakia had established business contracts of some sort with Russian firms. In August of 1926, Russia had proposed to the Polish government a non-aggression pact; negotiations followed the proposal but with no results (Arnold, 1958:389–391).

When the “Pact of Paris” and the “Kellogg-Briand Pact” were drawn up in 1928 as a multilateral agreement renouncing war, Russia pressed Poland and Lithuania for a supplementary protocol that would put the Pact of Paris into immediate effect between those states, whether the Pact of Paris was later ratified by all the countries adhering to it or not (Easum, 1952:155).

Poland suggested, in reply, that the protocol also be signed by Romania, Estonia, and Latvia. As a result, at Moscow on February 9, 1929, the so-called Litvinov Protocol was signed by Russia, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Romania (L.N.T.S., vol. 89, 1929:369-379).

The Soviets made it clear in their negotiations that, while they realized that the signing of the special protocol and their adherence to the Pact of Paris meant the exclusion of the methods of war for the settling of disputes, as Litvinov said in a note to the Polish charge D’Affaires in Moscow, January 11, 1929, in Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, in regard to Russia's relations with Romania, “this is far from implying that the questions in dispute are settled.” They had not renounced their claims to Bessarabia but had only agreed to use “pacific means” in advancing these claims. It did signify progress in international politics and the lessening of antagonisms between Russia and Romania (Doc.SFP, vol. 2, 1952:362; Arnold, 1958:391).

Benes, who had hoped to follow the example of Paris immediately after the establishment of Franco-Soviet contacts but whose political position at home was considerably weakened by the events, was again forced to abandon his plan, this time for almost a decade. The members of the Little Entente eventually established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. Thus, the ambivalent diplomacy surrounding the recognition of the Soviet Union came to an end, and the same applied to Hungarian-Soviet and Little Entente-Soviet relations.

The threat of the noisy Nazis in the West and the aggressive Japanese in China drove communist Russia out of isolation. With the emergence of Germany came the emergence of Russia as a participant in western diplomacy. When Hitler came to power in Germany, Russo-German collaboration became strained. After the Reichstag Fire of February 28, 1933, Hitler began a merciless campaign to stamp out the Communist Movement in Germany. By May, Russia, which had until that time condemned the Peace Settlement of 1919, indicated a willingness to join the Western

Powers in preserving the status quo in order to block German expansion eastward as plotted by the Nazi leaders and expounded in “Mein Kampf.” Russia was also motivated by her fears of Japan, which was fast overrunning China. In early 1933, Russia expressed its desire to join the League of Nations (Benes, 1934:248–250). Non-aggression pacts were signed by Russia with France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Turkey (Arnold, 1958:469).

In September 1933, the Soviet Union initiated discussions with France regarding new security arrangements. This was prompted by Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference, which made French Foreign Minister Paul Boncour more receptive to the Soviet overtures. On October 31, after consulting with his officials, Paul-Boncour raised the question of a possible alliance with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Litvinov, during a meeting in Paris.

However, Paul-Boncour emphasized that no alliance could be formed unless the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations. This was because, according to the Locarno Treaty, France could not engage in war with Germany without a decision by the League Council. France could only promise to assist the Soviets in European conflicts, and any Franco-Soviet agreement would also have to be coordinated with the existing Franco-Polish alliance. Despite these constraints, Litvinov expressed interest in the proposal, and in the following weeks, “Valerian Dovgalevsky,” the Soviet ambassador in Paris, confirmed Moscow's interest in mutual-assistance pacts not only with France but also with Poland and the Little Entente countries. However, progress was hindered by the Soviet Union's refusal to join the League of Nations. It was only after Barthou became the French foreign minister in February that the negotiations saw further advancement (Kaiser, 1980:113–114).

The so-called Ten Year Peace Pact, signed by Germany and Poland on January 26, 1931, not only disturbed the Russians but did much toward consolidating Franco-Russian relations. There was fear in France that Hitler’s motivation in signing the pact with Poland was not only to disturb the French alliance system but also to free his hand in the east to concentrate on Austria (Arnold, 1958:469).

The Polish non-aggression treaty was a great diplomatic victory for Hitler. Just a few months prior to this, Pilsudski had been talking in terms of waging a preventive war against Germany. The French Foreign Minister “Barthou” was forced to journey

to Warsaw in hopes of preserving the French Alliance System. Barthou proposed to Pilsudski a French-Russian-Polish Alliance. Apparently not wanting to arouse the fear of Germany, which had long coveted the return of the Polish Corridor, Pilsudski refused to consider the alliance. Barthou moved to Prague while Czechoslovakia's policy was a strict pro-status quo policy; they enthusiastically received the French Alliance (Komjathy, 1972:36–37).

Barthou, as the French Foreign Minister, aimed to reinvigorate the Franco-Polish Alliance, but he was more interested in forming an alliance with the Soviet Union. He believed that only the Soviets could effectively serve as the Eastern counterbalance needed against Germany (Kaiser, 1980:115).

In late May and early June of 1934, Barthou met with Litvinov during a session of the Rump Disarmament Conference in Geneva and secured agreement on two new pacts. The first pact was the Eastern Pact of Mutual Assistance, which was intended to include Germany, the Soviet Union, the Baltic States, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. The second pact was a separate Franco-Soviet Agreement, in which France pledged to assist the Soviets against aggression by any signatory of the Eastern Pact, and the Soviets assumed the obligations of a signatory of the Locarno Treaty towards France. Barthou was willing to proceed with the treaties even without Germany's participation if Berlin refused to join (Kaiser, 1980:115).

When the French officially informed the British about the proposed Eastern Pact and Franco-Soviet Agreement on June 27, 1934, the initial reaction from the British Foreign Office, led by Simon, was not very enthusiastic. Simon was skeptical, suspecting that Barthou might exploit any British approval to create Anglo-French cooperation against Germany. He also questioned whether the French policy in this matter was aimed at transforming the League of Nations into an anti-German organization (Kaiser, 1980:117). However, after further discussions with Barthou and officials from both foreign ministries in London on July 9 and 10, Simon agreed to support the proposed Eastern Pact.

The British rejected Barthou's focus on containing Germany and instead sought an agreement with Hitler. However, they found Barthou's proposed instrument of containment, the Eastern Pact, relatively unobjectionable because it did not require any new British commitments. Merely endorsing the pact was far easier for the British to

grant compared to French requests for military staff conversations or British military contributions to a new security system.

The British agreed to recommend the project to other involved parties on the condition that French and Soviet guarantees were extended not only to each other but also to Germany. Additionally, the Eastern Pact had to be linked to the conclusion of a new disarmament agreement. Barthou agreed to offer the Germans new guarantees, but he warned that he might pursue a Franco-Soviet Alliance if the Eastern Pact failed. However, he refused to discuss the legalization of German rearmament until after the new pact was signed. Ultimately, the two governments agreed that the pact would be a starting point for the resumption of negotiations for the conclusion of a convention providing for a reasonable interpretation of German equality of rights in relation to armaments in a regime of security for all nations (Kaiser, 1980:117–118).

With British assistance, the French began seeking the approval of other signatories to the Eastern Pact. The Czech Government was enthusiastic, and Benes aimed to involve the Soviet Union in European politics. He endorsed the pact, sought to improve relations between the Soviets and his Little Entente partners, and expressed willingness to sign a bilateral Czech-Soviet Pact if the Eastern Pact failed. The Baltic States responded cautiously but showed willingness to sign the pact if Poland and Germany did so. However, the crucial factors depended on Berlin and Warsaw (Kaiser, 1980:118).

It is unlikely that the Germans would have accepted the pact. When British Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps discussed the pact with Neurath on July 13, Neurath stated that Germany would have to receive equality of rights in armaments before entering into any such arrangement. He even denied that Germany needed anything like the Eastern Pact. The pact could not have appealed to Hitler, who always insisted on dealing bilaterally with other nations and avoided long-term commitments that would tie his hands. On July 16, the “Wilhelmstrasse” informed German diplomatic missions abroad that Germany would reject the pact, but Berlin delayed a formal reply to avoid blame for the project's failure (Kaiser, 1980:119).

In Warsaw, Beck quickly made up his mind to reject the Eastern Pact, but he chose not to give a direct and immediate reply to avoid appearing too negative. In early July, during talks with French and British diplomats, Poland refused to take on new

obligations towards Lithuania or Czechoslovakia, as their inclusion in the pact would involve Poland in "Danubian Questions." Beck had committed to maintaining good relations with Germany and assured the Germans during the summer of 1934 that he would not take any actions to disturb their new relationship. The Polish government was not particularly interested in mutual-assistance pacts with either Germany or Russia. Diplomatic reports suggested that in the event of war with one of its two powerful neighbors, Poland hoped the other would remain neutral instead of offering assistance (Kaiser, 1980:119–120).

During the German rearmament process in 1935, Russia replied by signing mutual assistance pacts with France on May 2, 1935, and with Czechoslovakia on May 16, 1935 (L.N.T.S., vol. 159:347–361). According to Blum, Litvinov informed him that if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia and France went to war with Germany to defend Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union would declare war on Germany immediately (Doc.USFR 1937, vol. 1, 1954:94, no. 62).

But "under the terms of the Franco-Russian Treaty, the decision in any conflict between Germany and Russia as to which was the aggressor would in practice depend on the French Government alone, so that Czechoslovakia, as clear from the terms of her treaty with Russia, has in fact undertaken to accept any French decision." Czechoslovakia would not be obligated to assist Soviet Russia if France refused to do so (Doc.GFP, ser.C,vol.4, 1962:197–198, no.105).

On June 6–7, 1936, after the Rhineland Crisis, one of the periodic Little Entente conferences was held in Bucharest between the three presidents of the Little Entente countries: President Benes of Czechoslovakia, Prince-Regent Paul, and King Carol II of Romania. A great deal of political importance was negotiated at this conference (Küçük Antant, 1936). Benes proposed a single alliance pact between France and the Little Entente, directed against any aggressor. "There will be no more tête-à-tête, which would get Czechoslovakia into an inferior situation vis-à-vis Germany, Yugoslavia vis-à-vis Italy, and Romania vis-à-vis Russia." After his return from Bucharest, Benes told the French Ambassador De Lacroix (Hochman, 1984:70). Titulescu supported Benes's proposal and added his own. He proposed to conclude a pact with Russia, similar to the one already concluded by Czechoslovakia with Russia (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:629, no. 374).

Yugoslavia rejected every proposal that Benes and Titulescu brought forth. According to the Yugoslav Regent, Prince Paul, Yugoslavia could not alter her obligations against Germany because of the uncertainty about the attitudes of the new French Government and the British Government following the Rhineland Crisis (Kephart, 1981:48–49).

In 1935, the idea of establishing relations with Soviet Russia emerged when Titulescu expressed his political orientation in a conversation with Sargent. He revealed his intention to negotiate with the Soviets for a pact similar to the recent Czechoslovak-Soviet model. The purpose was to allow the Soviet army to pass through Romanian territory on their way to Prague, excluding Bessarabia. Additionally, Titulescu was concerned about Yugoslavia's aversion to recognizing the Soviet Union and even requested British assistance to influence Prince Paul to cooperate with Moscow. Despite a non-committal reply, Titulescu misled King Carol by conveying that the British were supportive of Romano-Soviet and Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement (Bakic, 2010:240).

Yugoslavia's attitude towards Germany and the Soviet Union became crucial, as it had the potential to affect the Little Entente's stance and substantially influence Central Europe's future events. Historically, Yugoslavia was an opponent of any official relations with the Bolshevik Regime, given the large and influential body of White Russian refugees in the country and the royal house's detestation, which had close ties with the Romanoff Dynasty. Conversely, Yugoslav opinion showed a propensity to look for a rapprochement with Germany. Marinkovich had often expressed that it was not the Little Entente's business to prevent the Anschluss, and the Little Entente did not depend on France but the other way around. Aligning with Germany would protect its interests, as Germany had not taken a single village in the peace settlement, and Berlin would seize such an opportunity enthusiastically, providing Germans with an exceptionally favorable position in Central Europe.

Moreover, King Alexander had pronounced German sympathies, admiring Hitler and his works, and would like to ally himself with Germany. Prince Paul embraced his predecessor's foreign policy legacy, was deeply sympathetic to Germany, and was a rabid Anti-Bolshevik.

Fearful of communism, “Prince Paul” postponed establishing diplomatic relations with Moscow and was not supportive of the French policy of alliance with the Soviets. The French policy of rapprochement with Yugoslavia's arch-enemy Italy was also unpalatable to Belgrade. General “Göring's visits” to Budapest and Belgrade in mid-1935 marked the beginning of a sustained effort to bring about a rapprochement between Hungary and Yugoslavia as a preliminary step to breaking up the Little Entente and eventually dismembering Czechoslovakia. Henderson predicted this German initiative in December 1934.

Weighing carefully the prospects of a closer understanding between Belgrade and Berlin, Henderson was not unduly alarmed. Despite Germany's potential usefulness as a form of insurance against Italy, responsible political and military authorities realized the great menace that a dominant Germany would pose to Yugoslav interests. They were unlikely to proceed to a definite German Alliance unless driven to the extreme by abandonment by France or further pressure from Italy.

Indeed, the British Military Attaché, Colonel Denis Daly, discovered that the Yugoslav General Staff believed that the Little Entente could not count on effective military assistance from France. However, there was still no indication of any tendency to abandon the French Alliance in favor of an arrangement with Germany (Bakic, 2010:240–241).

Henderson underscored that Britain had an important role and great weight at Belgrade: “Even today, it is to a great extent the more sympathetic attitude of His Majesty’s Government towards Yugoslavia that is the chief drag on the Berlin drift, and it was always British goodwill rather than French backing that the late King sought as the most essential guarantee for any Italian-Yugoslav Agreement.” The Oxford-educated Prince Paul, whose “whole outlook is essentially English,” was expected to be particularly amenable to British advice (Bakic, 2010:41–43).

The Foreign Office chose to offer that advice in order to prod Yugoslavia towards adhering to an anti-German Danubian Pact. When Henderson wondered how to influence the Yugoslavs in that direction, pointing out Britain’s inconsistency in declining to involve herself in anti-German combinations and her disapproval of the Balkan Pact, Gallop brushed aside his considerations: “I think, therefore, we must reply that Sir N. Henderson is to “urge Yugoslavia to come into a combination directed

against Germany" but that he must use what he himself calls "the language of collective security" and wrap his advice in such euphuistic language as will best commend it to the anti-Russian and pro-German Prince Paul."

In contrast, the question of Yugoslavia's recognition of the Soviet Union, which lay at the foundation of the wider dilemma of the eventual conclusion of mutual assistance pacts between all the members of the Little Entente and Moscow, presented a notable but unutilized opportunity for exercising British influence.

In reply to Henderson's inquiry as to what attitude he should adopt when the Little Entente conference met in Belgrade on June 20, 1935, in order to discuss the question of their relations with the Soviet Union, "Vansittart" instructed him to refrain from giving advice unless pressed for it. But Vansittart's musings clearly demonstrated that the Foreign Office, or rather, he himself, had some definite views on the subject. Although the reappearance of Russian influence in Central Europe and the Balkans was deprecated as a matter of principle, it was admitted to be an inevitable consequence of German penetration of the region; "the necessity for the Little Entente to devise a common stand was understood accordingly: Also, it is probably better in the long run that the Little Entente should have in this matter a common policy than that they should break up over it, with the result that Czechoslovakia and Romania would fall into the orbit of Russia and Yugoslavia into that of Germany." This essentially favorable attitude towards pacts with the Soviet Union stemmed from the conviction that it may fairly be said—as things are at present without looking too far ahead—that Russian influence is causing less apprehension as to stability and peace in Central and Southern Europe than German influence, for the latter is generally interpreted as being directed towards territorial expansion and political domination, whereas Soviet foreign policy, at present at any rate, is ranked as purely defensive or anyhow not immediately dangerous (Bakic, 2010:23–44).

Titulescu's negotiations with the Soviet Union were also causing him problems at home. He was alone among the Romanian leadership in advocating a Romanian-Soviet Alliance similar to the Soviet-Czech Alliance (Kephart, 1981:49).

Many of Titulescu's negotiations with the Soviets were done without the knowledge or consent of King Carol and Premier Tatarescu (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:736-737, no. 432).

Members of the Romanian Government later alleged to representatives of the United States that Titulescu had tacitly agreed to allow the passage of Soviet troops through Romania to aid Czechoslovakia in case of war with Nazi Germany (Doc.USFR 1936, vol. 1, 1953:369–370, no. 287). It is not entirely clear if these allegations were true, but Titulescu had been working to conclude a Romanian-Soviet alliance, and the passage of Soviet troops would be a logical extension of such an alliance. According to the Romanian Minister to the United States, Carol and Ttarescu were unhappy about Titulescu's unilateral negotiations with Romania's powerful and mistrusted neighbor (Doc.USFR 1936, 1953, vol. 1: 369–370, no. 287; Doc.GFP, ser. C, vol. 5, 1966: 735–736, no. 432; Kephart, 1981: 50).

In addition to Titulescu's problems with others in the Romanian government, Romanian public opinion was becoming increasingly anti-Soviet. Unlike the rest of the Romanian elite, Titulescu had failed to realize how violently anti-Soviet the vast majority of Romanians were (Doc.USFR 1936, vol. 1, 1953:369–370, no. 287).

The "Iron Guard[16]" and other rightist groups were increasingly influencing the Romanian public and intimidating members of the government. They had threatened the life of Carol if he allowed the government to make any new commitments to the Soviet Union (Doc.USFR 1936, vol. 1, 1953:369–370, no. 287). As Titulescu became increasingly identified with the Soviets, his unpopularity with the public grew. Carol, who had never liked Titulescu, seized the opportunity to rid the government of the most serious rival to his personal power. Using Titulescu's unilateral negotiations with the Soviets as a justification, Carol failed to include Titulescu in the new cabinet that took office on August 29, 1936 (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:949–953, no. 528; Kephart, 1981:51).

The new Romanian Foreign Minister was Victor Antonescu. Antonescu was a former Chief of the Romanian General Staff and had been the Minister of Finance

[16] The Iron Guard was originally known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael or the Legionary Organization. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu founded it in 1927 as a militant revolutionary fascist organization and political party in Romania. It was vehemently conservative, chauvinistic, anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, anti-capitalist, and anti-communist movement (Payne, 1995:394; Gunther, 1940:446-448; Rothschild, 1974:307–309).

prior to his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was generally regarded as a protégé of Titulescu, but he had little of Titulescu's international influence and prestige. In contrast to Titulescu, Antonescu and all subsequent foreign ministers were ultimately dependent on King Carol in the execution of foreign policy. While Antonescu assured France and Romania's Little Entente allies that Romania's basic foreign policy would not change under his direction, he favored a more neutralist policy (Kephart, 1981:51–52; Haynes, 2000:19). Antonescu also indicated a desire to conduct a rapprochement with Poland (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966: 652-653, no. 528).

By the mid-1930s, Romanian foreign policy had to be realigned due to the failure of the French-backed collective security system and the reemergence of Germany as an aggressive Great Power. After the dismissal of Titulescu and under a policy of informal neutrality between the Great Powers, King Carol and the new foreign minister Antonescu sought to establish closer relations with Germany while remaining an ally of France (Haynes, 2000:950–951).

On September 6, Antonescu confirmed to Fabricius that Titulescu's links with the Soviet Union were one of the main reasons for his fall from power. Antonescu continued that no alliance would be concluded with Soviet Russia, “and added that Romania wished to avoid being active in European affairs, owing to the danger that she would become the theatre of war between Germany and Russia” (Doc.GFP, ser.C., vol. 5, 1966:950, no. 528).

With the removal of Titulescu, both Czechoslovakia and France lost their best friend in Romania. Since Titulescu's foreign policy was Francophile, concerned with the maintenance of close relations with France and the Little Entente against Germany, under Antonescu, Czechoslovakia had lost any hopes for furthering good relations between Romania and Soviet Russia (Kephart, 1981:52–53).

4. THE DISINTEGRATION AND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE LITTLE ENTENTE, 1936-1938

Throughout the years 1935–1937, Europe was shaken by a series of international crises. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War, and the German remilitarization of the Rhineland altered relations between the great powers of Europe. The small nations of Eastern Europe began to see Germany and Italy as powerful and active powers, while they began to doubt the ability and will of the democracies to act during an international crisis.

In the eyes of the leaders of the small Eastern European nations, France and Great Britain had not stood up to the dictatorships. The failure of the League of Nations to enact any effective and lasting sanctions against Italy following her Ethiopian adventure had shattered the faith of many in the effectiveness of the League (Gathrone-Hardy, 1960:412-418). After the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936, Czechoslovakia was in a position to be absolutely absorbed by Germany. In threatening her existence, Benes represented its efforts to maintain the Little Entente and reinvigorate the alliance for the defense of Czechoslovakia (Kephart, 1981:47).

After the failure of the Bucharest Conference, at the meeting of the Permanent Council of the Little Entente at Bratislava on September 13–14, 1936, Benes made another effort to protect Czechoslovakia from German aggression. He proposed to transform the Little Entente Alliances, which were directed solely against the threat of Hungarian revisionism, into a "Mutual Assistance Pact" against any aggressor. This would oblige Romania and Yugoslavia to come to Czechoslovakia's aid in the event of a German attack upon her (TNA, FO-954-4A-7).

Benes also proposed to France that, following the Little Entente mutual assistance pact, France should also conclude a defensive alliance with the member states of the Little Entente, in which the three separate treaties between France and the Little Entente members would be consolidated into a single treaty of alliance against the German aggressor (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 5, 1966:972, no.540).

Such plans would have effectively brought Romania and Yugoslavia into the Czechoslovak-Franco-Soviet security system. Although the French Government was in favor of such a pact, which they hoped would result in some “soulagement” of their

present commitments in Central Europe, “Stoyadinovich” and Antonescu’s reactions were not favorable. They did not give a final answer and indicated they would study the proposal and consult with their respective governments (TNA,FO-954-4A-7).

The last French attempt to strengthen its declining position in Central Europe by forming a joint alliance with the Little Entente came on January 9, 1937. France, through “Yvon Delbos,” made an effort to purpose a mutual assistance pact with the Little Entente, which presupposed the prior conclusion of Benes's plan for the Little Entente mutual assistance pact. The French made some modifications to the plan and suggested that “each member of the Little Entente should undertake to go to the help of France in the event of her being attacked, while France would undertake reciprocal engagements towards each member of the Little Entente individually” (TNA, FO, 954-4A-7; Stojar, 2006:133).

The League's failure in the Ethiopian Question, as well as Italy's intervention in the Spanish Civil War, had left a lasting impression on governments in Central Europe, and there was considerable skepticism in Yugoslavia about whether France would truly come to the aid of Czechoslovakia, notwithstanding the treaty between the two countries, if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia (Doc.USFR 1937, vol. 1, 1954:70, no. 48).

Due to these events, the Italians were engaging periodically in military exercises on the Yugoslav border; thus, the Yugoslavs were uncertain whether France could also aid Yugoslavia against Italy (Kephart, 1981:48). From Stoyadinovich’s strategic point of view, Yugoslavia lacked a common border with Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslav troops would have to pass through a hostile Austria or Hungary to aid Czechoslovakia. At the moment when Yugoslav forces attacked Hitler through Hungary and Austria to defend Prague, Italian forces may have occupied Zagreb, while the French would only watch from a distance (Stojar, 2006:135).

The Romanian Government objected to the proposed Franco-Little Entente pact not only because Romania's defense of Czechoslovakia could lead her into war with Germany. The proposed pact also brought up the issue of the Soviet Union's right of passage through Romania to help Czechoslovakia in the event of a German attack. Not only was this unacceptable to Romania herself, but it was also abhorrent to her Polish ally. The Polish Government placed pressure on the Romanian Government

throughout the winter of 1936–1937 to forbid the Soviets right of passage in any future conflict (Haynes, 2000:25–26).

Aside from the fear that the Romanian and Yugoslav governments had of German or Italian military aggression, a primary reason for both nations rejection of the Mutual Assistance Pact was fear of German economic retaliation. As we illustrated in the previous chapter, the economies of Romania and Yugoslavia were heavily dependent on German trade. Yugoslavia, in particular, was extremely vulnerable to German economic retaliation (Kephart, 1981:68).

In an interview with Antonescu on January 21, 1937, Anthony Eden stated that Antonescu believed that Czechoslovakia should come to terms with Germany. It was because he held these views that Antonescu had argued, while in Paris, that if France was in favor of mutual assistance pacts, she should sign one with England rather than trying out the idea on her Little Entente allies (TNA, FO 954/23B/307).

In Prague in November 1936, German diplomacy presented its proposal for the settlement of these tense relations and conflict issues. Like Poland two years ago, it offered a ten-year non-aggression pact but demanded a number of concessions, including a declaration of neutrality in the event of a Soviet-German conflict, which would mean terminating the one-year-old treaty with the Soviets and the collapse of French Eastern diplomacy. However, Dr. Benes rejected the German proposals because he did not intend to leave the French camp, which had been the guarantor of Czechoslovak existence since its inception (Stojar, 2006:134).

British disapproval was another reason for Romania's and Yugoslavia's rejection of the pact. Romania and Yugoslavia suggested that, since France alone would not be strong enough to protect us, if Great Britain would join the pact with France to guarantee us against Germany, we could also give some sort of guarantee to the security of Czechoslovakia. But it was regrettable for France because Great Britain refused to make further commitments in Eastern Europe, at least until Britain was fully rearmed (Doc.USFR 1937, vol. 1, 1954:89; Doc. BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 17, 1979:800–801).

British diplomacy was thus able to sabotage the French initiative, which contradicted its ideas of how to avoid a European conflict, without much difficulty. In an interview with Antonesco on January 21, 1937, Eden commented that such a pact

would be considered a provocation by Hitler and that its real value would be minimal, as France was already bound by the Allied Treaty with Czechoslovakia and the expansion of her commitments in Central Europe and the Balkans was beyond her means. At the beginning of February, Eden also interpreted the British position on the possibilities of effective cooperation with the Little Entente to the French ambassador in London. In the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia, which is the most likely focus of the conflict, any effective assistance from its Little Entente allies is ruled out. The strategic situation is such that Yugoslavia could only help Czechoslovakia by attacking through Hungary and Austria, which would result in the immediate entry of Italy into the war. The same situation would occur in the event of a Romanian intervention: if the Romanian army went west, the USSR would take the opportunity to invade Romania in the east, opening the way for Bolshevism in the Balkans. The only result of concluding this treaty would thus be to irritate Germany, which would feel surrounded, which would have the effect of strengthening its alliance with Italy and sharpening the tension between the Western democracies and the Axis. The British were more determined opponents of the French proposal than the Empire itself, and their persistent efforts to prevent its implementation between December 1936 and February 1937 were finally crowned with success (Stojar, 2006:134).

On the other hand, the British believed that the Italians would see the Mutual Assistance Pact as a direct threat to Italian interests and that it would push Germany and Italy into each other's arms (Kephart, 1981:76). While Britain had been working to separate Italy from Germany during late 1936, it would either destroy the Anglo-Italian Gentlemen's Agreement of January 2, 1937 (for the text of the Anglo-Italian Gentlemen’s Agreement of January 2, 1937, see Doc.BFP, 2nd ser., vol. 17, 1979:754–755, no. 86).

In 1937, Yugoslavia, to maintain its security, pursued a policy of independent “Neutrality.” On January 24, 1937, the United States signed a Treaty of Friendship and Perpetual Peace with Bulgaria. Stoyadinovich regards the pact as an important step on the road towards fulfilling his aspiration to transform the Balkan Entente from being a defensive alliance directed against Bulgaria into a political entity of all the Balkan States under the slogan “The Balkans for the Balkan peoples.” The main feature of this treaty was that the two countries promised never again to make war on each other. This nullified Yugoslavia’s commitment, which obliged her to protect other members of the

Balkan Entente against an unprovoked Bulgarian attack. The pact's signing pleased the Germans since it undermined France and the Little Entente's position (Doc.GFP, Ser.C, vol. 6, 1983:264–265, no. 132).

Count Ciano, the Italian minister of Foreign affairs, worked with new energy on the Yugoslav-Italian rapprochement, reassured Stoyadinovich of Italian friendship in January 1937, and did not give up the idea of a military alliance that would limit German influence and compensate for the elimination of Italian influence in the region in the event of the Anschluss. Italian armaments began in January to compete with the Czechoslovaks and offered the Yugoslav army a wide range of weapons (Stojar, 2006:134).

A bombshell was dropped on March 25, 1937, when Stoyadinovich signed a Non- aggression and Arbitration Pact with Italy. Stoyadinovich, who was Yugoslav premier from June 1935 to February 1939, pursued a pro-Axis foreign policy and was considered by the Italians to be a good Fascist. According to the Treaty, Italy promised to aid the Yugoslavian minorities living in Istria; however, it respected mutual borders between both countries, and Italy also recognized the independence of Albania, preventing Italian support for Hungarian revisionism and restraining Italian assistance to Croat terrorist organizations (Doc.USFR 1937, vol. 1, 1954:71, no. 49; Doc.GFP,ser. C., vol. 6, 1983:593, no. 291; Doc.GFP, ser.C., vol. 6, 1983:633-635, no. 309).

The treaty signed between Yugoslavia and Italy fundamentally changed the substance of the Little Entente. Cordial relations between Yugoslavia and Romania continued, but relations with Czechoslovakia were reduced to empty formalities.

On April 9, 1937, in a conversation with William Philips, the United States Ambassador in Italy, Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, remarked that “French power in the Balkans, particularly in the Little Entente, has substantially weakened,” adding that the Little Entente was “broken” and as such was no longer a unit. In addition, he stated that “the Little Entente at least is now dismembered, and Yugoslavia has thrown in her lot with Italy, while Germany regards Czechoslovakia as within her sphere of influence” (Doc.USFR 1937, vol. 1, 1954:71, no. 49).

In February, the Belgrade Conference of the permanent council of the Little Entente would have taken place immediately after the conclusion of the Yugoslav-

Bulgarian Pact of Friendship. The conference met at a moment when the reorientation of Yugoslav foreign policy towards Italy was already an accomplished fact. The Franco-Czech Alliance plan seemed thereby to have been deprived of its last prospects of success. To the disappointment which Prague and Paris necessarily felt about this was added their indignation at Yugoslavia's arbitrary action in the negotiations with her Bulgarian and Italian neighbors and, last but not least, their anxiety lest this method, which is regarded as an infringement of the Statute of Organization of the Little Entente and of the Pact of Friendship with France, might possibly now be continued vis-a-vis Hungary and Germany as well (Doc.GFP, ser.C, vol. 6, 1983:634, no.309).

The failure of the project of a new Little Entente Alliance with France was related to the ongoing Czechoslovak-German negotiations. The British, Yugoslavs, and Romanians believed that Benes did not intend to show reconciliation towards a powerful neighbor and that the new alliance should serve as a support for his intransigence.

In Prague in November 1936, German diplomacy presented its proposal for the settlement of tense relations and conflict issues. Like Poland two years ago, it offered a ten-year non-aggression pact but demanded a number of concessions, including a declaration of neutrality in the event of a Soviet-German conflict, which would mean terminating the one-year-old treaty with the Soviets and the collapse of French Eastern diplomacy. However, Dr. Benes rejected the German proposals because he did not intend to leave the French camp, which had been the guarantor of Czechoslovak existence since its inception (Stojar, 2006:135–136).

Hitler’s aggressive foreign policy encouraged the growth of the National Socialists among the Germans of Czechoslovakia, and the German problem acquired renewed intensity. The economic depression had hit the Sudeten area with great severity, resulting in unemployment and hardship among the Germans who inhabited this mountainous border region.

The Sudeten Germans suffering from the depression were ripe for recruitment by the various pan-German and National Socialist organizations. Agitation by these groups for union with the Nazi Reich became common. The leaders of the “Volkssport,” a youth organization modeled on the Nazi Storm Troops of Germany,

were arrested by the Czechoslovak Government in 1932 on the charge of planning rebellion on behalf of a foreign power. Nazi propagandists at once made use of this incident to claim that Czechoslovakia had adopted a policy of repression against the German minority (Arnold, 1958:502).

In late 1933, the National Socialist Party in Czechoslovakia voluntarily dissolved, but it was replaced in October 1938 by a new German party, the

'Deutsche Helmatfront' led by Conrad "Henlein." In order to win the "activists", those Germans who had been cooperating with the Czechoslovaks, Henlein repudiated both Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism and declared that Fascism and Nazism had no place in Czechoslovakia. He said that his party was against treaty revision or Habsburg restoration and would support the maintenance of liberalism in Czechoslovakia (Arnold, 1958:502).

After a vigorous campaign in 1935, Henlein's party won 62% of the votes of the German electorate in Czechoslovakia and was given 44 of the 72 seats allotted to the Germans in parliament. Henlein's party now claimed to represent all the Germans and changed the name of its organization to the Sudeten German Party (Arnold, 1958:503).

Henlein's methods and actions did not match the soft tone of his speeches or his party platform. He refused to seek office himself but instead directed his party from outside parliament. He received support from Hitler and the German Nazi Party, but during his visits abroad to the western democracies in 1935, he said that there was no question of the German districts of Czechoslovakia uniting with Germany or even of the possibility of separating the Czech and German areas in Bohemia. By 1937, Henlein had changed his tune, and he was demanding complete Sudeten autonomy (Arnold, 1958:503).

In early February 1938, the Nazis were busy in Austria, while France was in the midst of another of her periodic ministerial crises. Hitler summoned Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden. Schuschnigg hoped to gain Hitler's cooperation in the repression of the terrorist activities that were disturbing relations between Germany and Austria. Instead, he received a list of German demands. The most important of these demands was the demand for special privileges for the Austrian Nazi Party and the inclusion of its leaders in the Schuschnigg Cabinet.

Hitler's list was accompanied by an ultimatum to accede to the German requests or face invasion by the German armed forces. Schuschnigg, on his return to Austria, made the Nazi Seyss-Inquart Minister of Interior and granted full amnesty to the Austrian National Socialists, who had been imprisoned for activities against the Austrian Government (Arnold, 1958:52–53).

Germany was not satisfied with Schuschnigg's action, and Nazi-inspired riots and disorders broke out all over Austria. Schuschnigg called for a plebiscite on March 9 to let the Austrian people decide whether they wanted the Anschluss with Germany for which the Nazis were clamoring (Arnold, 1958:63). With renewed threats of invasion, Hitler forced Schuschnigg to cancel the projected plebiscite. On March 11, Schuschnigg resigned and left Austria. Seyss-Inquart became chancellor, and on March 12, 1938, Hitler annexed Austria in the name of self-determination for German-speaking Austrians. So the Anschluss was carried out without Austrian resistance (Arnold, 1958:65–69). The Little Entente was powerless to act because the great Western Powers, France and Great Britain, had decided on a policy of appeasement and because only Czechoslovakia of the three Little Entente powers feared Anschluss (Bonacich, 1951:165). The annexation of Austria, which the Austrian National Socialists aided, provided the Sudeten Germans with a new political paradigm. After the fall of Austria, German pressure on Czechoslovakia increased at an alarming rate. In a talk on March 28, 1938, Henlein promised Hitler "always to demand so much that we can never be satisfied" (Suppan, 2006:23).

Henlein's Nazi-supported party stirred up continual disorder among the Sudeten Germans. The Prague Government made concessions to meet the Sudeten demands, but the government concessions were only greeted by more demands and cries of persecution. Nazi Germany filled the airwaves with radio broadcasts reciting the tortures and suffering that Germany claimed the Sudeten Germans were experiencing at the hands of the Czechoslovak Government. Clashes between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechs grew in intensity and frequency (Arnold, 1958:505).

In the worsening situation of the Czechoslovak crisis, the member states of the Little Entente unanimously desired to pursue a policy of appeasement with Hungary. The Permanent Council of the Little Entente met at Bled, Yugoslavia, on August 23, 1938. Preliminary agreements were initialed between the states of the Little Entente

and Hungary. They mutually agreed to sort out some particular problematic issues: the question of minorities, renouncing resort to force in the resolution of disputes, and recognizing Hungary's equal rights in the matter of armaments. The announcement text, which included these clauses, had not been ultimately agreed upon. Subsequent statements made by Hungarian Premier “Dr. Iraredy” and Hungarian Foreign Minister Kanya during their visit to Berlin showed that the signing and implementation of the agreements, in particular the renunciation of the use of force clauses, were determined by the conclusion of the agreements on minorities.

Although such agreements were signed with Romania and Yugoslavia, some issues concerning the Hungarian-Czechoslovak minorities remained to be settled later due to the fact that Czechoslovakia was a “Nationality State” (E.P., 1938:762).

Hungary wanted to take advantage of the Czechoslovak crisis and militarily engage in a German-Czechoslovak War in order to regain former Hungarian Slovakia. But she was worried by the Yugoslav-Romanian attack on her because the Hungarian invasion of Slovakia was the joint casus belli specifically formulated in the Little Entente Pact (Bonacich, 1951:165).

Stoyadinovich and Romanian Foreign Minister Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, during the Little Entente meeting in May in Sinaia, promised Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Kamil Krofta that: “In the case of a Hungarian invasion, Yugoslavia and Romania would fulfill their duties, but in the event of a German-Czechoslovakian confrontation, they would not provide military aid.” Hungary asked German help to request on her behalf a reconciliation with Yugoslavia. However, in April, Hungary offered permanent recognition of its frontier with Yugoslavia if she would come to an agreement.

Germany recommended that Hungary await Yugoslav reaction in the case of a German-Czechoslovakian conflict. Meanwhile, Germany advocated for cooperation between Hungary and Yugoslavia, but Yugoslavia's reaction every time was the same: if Hungary attacked Czechoslovakia, then under the obligations of the Little Entente Pact, Yugoslavia would intervene. Since the Hungarian position was still uncertain in the event of war, in September, Stoyadinovich, on the recommendation of “Petrescu Komneno,” ordered the Yugoslav minister in Berlin to call on Göring to reject all armed Hungarian intervention against Czechoslovakia. Also on August 31, Herren

approached Stoyadinovitch, after being reassured by Yugoslavian attitudes towards a possible German attack on Czechoslovakia from Hungarian territories, to know whether it would be regarded as a cause for war in Yugoslavia. But Yugoslavia had deliberately avoided giving a clear answer (Jovancic, 2020:67).

The Romanian Minister in Berlin, "Radu Djuvara," sent "Weizsäcker" an even stronger message on September 9, telling him that any use of Hungarian territory for an attack on Czechoslovakia would constitute a "casus foederis" for Romania and would force Romania and Yugoslavia to act. The Romanian Foreign Minister demanded guarantees that Germany would not take such action (Doc.GFP, ser.,D, vol. 2, 1950:725-726, no. 447).

Finally, at the height of the crisis before Munich, in order to allow Romania and Yugoslavia to remain neutral in a possible war and evade their treaty obligations, Germany decided to reject all of the Hungarian interference and concluded that Hungarian assistance would be of no value when the mutual assault by Germany and Hungary had not caused the isolation of Czechoslovakia from its Little Entente partners (Jovancic, 2020:67).

Throughout the second half of the 1930s and especially in 1938, The French were keen to restrict the expansion of Germany, as any growth in Germany was seen as a threat to France. However, she insisted that without British support, she could not preserve a policy of collective security. The French reluctantly followed the British policy of being conciliatory toward Germany. The Great British were highly hesitant to intervene in continental wars and believed that Germany justified requesting some modification of the Treaty of Versailles (Wildermuth, 1973:33).

In the case of the Sudeten Germans, on September 19, 1938, France and Great Britain made Anglo- French proposals to Benes: Czechoslovakia should cede to Germany the areas that constituted at least fifty percent of the population of the Sudeten Germans and create an international commission with a Czech member to adjust the final boundaries. If such a general guarantee against unprovoked aggression superseded the present treaties of mutual military obligations, Britain decided to meet an international guarantee for the new Czechoslovak boundaries (See D.I.A., vol. 2, 1943:213-214; also See the third meeting of the Anglo-French conversations, 1938, September 18, in Doc.BFP, 3rd ser., vol. 2, 1949:397–399).

France and Britain threatened Czechoslovakia that if it rejected the proposals, the Czech Government would be responsible for Germany's recourse to violence. Although it breaks the Franco-British unanimity that had been created, it also withdraws all practical French support for Czechoslovakia (Shirer, 1969:367).

The Czechoslovak Government stated on September 21 that it had accepted the Anglo-French proposals. Under pressure, the Czechoslovak Government accepted French and British suggestions on the assumption that the two governments would do all possible to carry them out in order to protect the important interests of the Czechoslovak State, as evidenced by British correspondence dated September 21 (Doc.BFP, 3rdser., vol. 2, 1949:444–445, no. 1004; D.I.A, vol. 2, 1943:214).

On the 22nd and 23rd of September, Chamberlain flew to "Godesberg," Germany, to see Hitler and suggest this option. The British delegation was uncomfortably startled to hear Hitler reject the terms he had provided at Berchtesgaden as now untenable when they provided their peace plan for the handover of the Sudetenland (D.I.A., vol. 2, 1943:225–231).

Hitler wanted a speedy handover involving German soldiers occupying the Sudetenland and released the "Godesberg Memorandum" to explain his public position (For the memorandum handed by Hitler to Chamberlain on September 23, 1938, see D.I.A., vol. 2, 1943:232–233.)

During the night of September 24–25, the British Legation in Prague, acting as an intermediary, transmitted to the Czechoslovak Government the Memorandum of the German Chancellor, Hitler. This Memorandum was received by the Czechoslovak Government on the understanding that it was based in principle on the Anglo-French proposals of September 19 (D.I.A., vol. 2, 1943:246).

A communique published on September 26 by the Czechoslovak Government declared that "Hitler's memorandum fundamentally goes far beyond the framework of the Anglo-French proposals... and represents further demands on Czechoslovakia in a manner which shows no desire to reach agreement but merely a nakedly brutal design to destroy the viability and independence of the Czechoslovak State" (D.I.A., vol. 2, 1943, p. 246).

After a month of negotiating with Hitler and convincing the Prague Government to yield to the insatiable demands of the German government, Chamberlain and Daladier met with Mussolini, and Hitler then signed the fateful "Munich Accord" of September 29, 1930. The resolution to authorize the partition of Czechoslovakia was made without consulting the Czechoslovak Government (For the text of the Munich Treaty, see D.I.A., vol. 2, 1943:289–290; Appendix B to no. 1227 in Doc.BFP, 3RD ser., vol. 2, 1949:634-635).

The Munich surrender did not preserve the peace. It only convinced the aggressors that Great Britain and France wanted peace at any price. As can be seen in t "Figure 3" Czechoslovakia was soon partitioned between Germany, Poland, and Hungary. In March 1939, the Nazi military force seized control of Bohemian lands, creating the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia as an independent Nazi-administered territory. In contrast, Slovakia remained under the control of the Soviet Union (Danihelka et all, 2017:49). Surely the only democracy in Central Europe deserved a better fate.

The revisionists remade the map of Europe, but their solution certainly did not solve the problems of Central Europe. The Little Entente was not able to meet the revisionist threat of Mussolini and Hitler. These two dictators did not want to revise the 1919 settlement; they wanted to completely obliterate all memory of it. Left to their fate by the Great Powers, who were the authors of the treaties and the League of Nations' idea of collective security, each member state of the Little Entente tried to get the best terms it could from the aggressors. The Nazis and Fascists would accept only complete submission.

Figure 3: Eastern Europe after Munich Accord and during the Second World War (Crampton, 1997: 278).

CONCLUSION

From the end of World War, I until 1938, Central Europe saw only one stable and enduring alliance: the Little Entente. Comprised of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, these countries united in 1921 with a single goal in mind: to preserve the status quo established by the Peace Treaties. Through bilateral treaties, they ensured military protection against any aggression by Hungary, and they worked together to resist any threats to the existing order. Their efforts were especially pronounced in opposing the reinstatement of the Hapsburgs in Hungary and preventing the economic collapse in Austria that could have led to foreign intervention.

The Czechs, Yugoslavs, and Romanians recognized that a reinstatement of the Hapsburgs would bring about German-Magyar absolutism and tyranny and ultimately destroy the freedom achieved through the political revolution of 1918. They understood that solely relying on defensive measures would not be enough to sustain the new regime, especially without creative forces, a high level of political and economic solidarity, mutual trust, and cooperation within Central Europe. The ultimate goal of the Little Entente was to cultivate a mindset in Central Europe that recognized the benefits of peace and European consolidation.

During its developmental phase, the Little Entente cemented its position in European politics and grew increasingly influential. It successfully thwarted any attempts to make significant alterations to the situation in Central Europe resulting from the Peace Treaties. The Little Entente's growing significance was demonstrated by the permanent seat it secured on the Council of the League of Nations. Moreover, it twice prevented ex-King Charles from regaining the Hungarian throne. The active assistance provided by the Little Entente, notably Czechoslovakia, played a crucial role in the economic and financial rehabilitation of Austria and Hungary.

During its early period, the Little Entente primarily focused on political activities, but as the global economic depression intensified, economic concerns became increasingly significant. Consequently, political negotiations were combined with economic negotiations, leading to a series of commercial treaties, initially among Little Entente member states and later with neighboring countries. In 1934, the Economic Council of the Little Entente was established to foster closer economic collaboration among Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, recognizing that

progress would be gradual due to the agrarian economies of Romania and Yugoslavia and the well-balanced agricultural and industrial structure of Czechoslovakia. Despite cautious expectations, progress was slow and disappointing due to the severity of the depression, the nationalistic economic policies of the small Central European states, and Nazi Germany's economic and political penetration of Central Europe and the Balkans.

Although the Little Entente struggled with its economic efforts during its middle period, it enjoyed political success under the leadership of Dr. Benes and Dr. Titulescu. The Little Entente, along with Poland, protested successfully against the Four-Power Pact of March 1933, which would have set up a four-power directory to revise treaties without consultation with smaller European states. The Little Entente was represented at the London Economic Conferences in June and July of 1933 and signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union on July 4. The following year, Czechoslovakia and Romania began diplomatic negotiations with Moscow, but Yugoslavia did not. In February 1934, the principles of regional security projected by the Little Entente were extended when Yugoslavia and Romania joined Turkey and Greece to form the Balkan Entente.

However, the true value of the Little Entente did not lie solely in its initial bond. The alliance itself was insufficient to guarantee security in Central Europe, given that each of the three member states had a powerful neighbor to contend with: Romania with Russia, Czechoslovakia with Germany, and Yugoslavia with Italy. Its only significant contribution to peace came when it operated alongside the Western Powers and within the framework of the League of Nations.

Hitler’s accession to power in Germany in January 1933 transformed European politics. One manifestation of German foreign policy was increased pressure on Austria by subversive means, and its effects were immediately and acutely felt further down the Danube valley. The accumulating signs of the determined and coordinated German efforts to expand her economic and political influence in the direction of South-Eastern Europe appeared in July 1935. The increasing threat posed by Nazi Germany prompted the formation of a Czechoslovak-Soviet alliance in May 1935, following a similar French-Soviet alliance two weeks earlier.

France's feeble foreign policy and disagreements with Great Britain on matters involving Italy and Germany had a detrimental impact on the unity of the Little Entente when Germany reoccupied the Rhineland. France lacked the ability to compete with Germany's economic dominance in Eastern Europe and realistically protect the Little Entente against Germany and Italy without the support of Britain or the Soviet Union. The leaders of Yugoslavia and Romania were cognizant of the threats posed by Germany and Italy and felt compelled to find common ground with these two dangerous Axis powers. While Yugoslavia's Stoyadinovitch displayed greater willingness to collaborate with the Axis compared to the Romanian leadership, both nations were affected by the new European balance of power following the Rhineland crisis. Moreover, France's inaction during the crisis drastically shifted the balance of power in favor of Germany, eliminating France's relatively painless opportunity to counter the Nazi threat. Subsequently, the Germans felt at liberty to intimidate Eastern European countries and were secure from the risk of invasion by France's defensive army. The lack of interest by the Chamberlain Government in Eastern European affairs significantly contributed to the failure of France's post-Rhineland crisis diplomatic efforts in the region.

Although the Little Entente displayed surprising unity during the Ethiopian crisis and the early phases of the Spanish Civil War, it was already showing signs of decline. The Japanese aggression against China since 1931 had thrown Europe into crisis, and the assassinations of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and Jean-Louis Barthou, France's Foreign Minister, dealt a heavy blow to the Little Entente.

In 1936, after the Rhineland crisis, Yugoslavia determined to pursue its independent course. Its new Regent Prince Paul was weaker and pursued a policy of rapprochement with Italy, Bulgaria, and Germany, which undermined the purpose of both the Little and Balkan Ententes.

In spite of attempts to consolidate and generalize the obligations of member states against aggression, the Little Entente was in its last stages. When Germany seized Austria in March 1938, it brought Germany to the border of Yugoslavia and surrounded Czechoslovakia. In September of the same year, the Munich Agreement allowed Germany to annex the Sudeten regions of Czechoslovakia. Just prior to this, the Little Entente had offered Hungary equality of armaments in exchange for a

peaceful policy in an effort to conciliate Hungary. During the Munich crisis, Yugoslavia and Romania warned Hungary not to attack the republic in accordance with the terms of their alliance with Czechoslovakia, but the outcome was never in doubt because of the attitude of France and Great Britain. The Munich Agreement destroyed the Little Entente by sacrificing Czechoslovakia, its most important member.

Due to the “Munich Accord”, in late 1938, Czechoslovakia gave in to military pressure from Germany, Poland, and Hungary and agreed to give up territory to Germany according to the Munich terms. Poland's territorial demands were accepted in October, while in November 1938, the First Vienna Award separated largely Hungarian-inhabited territories in southern Slovakia and southern Subcarpathian Ruthenia from Czechoslovakia. Further, Czechoslovakia ceded small portions of land in the “Spis” and “Orava” regions to Poland by the end of November 1938. The First Slovak Republic, a puppet state, proclaimed its independence in March 1939, after which Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and established the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. This resulted in Germany obtaining full control of what was left of Czechoslovakia, including its military arsenal. Ultimately, Czechoslovakia disappeared as a result of these events.

By 1936, internal developments had changed the orientation of the foreign policies of the other Little Entente states, Yugoslavia and Romania, and each was determined to make peace with the aggressors as best it could. Nazi and Fascist movements grew rapidly within Yugoslavia and Romania during this period. But eventually it influenced the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the loss of territories gained by the peace treaties by Romania.

King Alexander had unified the Yugoslav state by declaring his dictatorship on January 9, 1929. It was his declared intention to make his dictatorship a transition to democracy, but it was only a transition to tragedy. Alexander's Constitution of September 3, 1931, discarded the conception of a parliamentary government and left Yugoslavia a police state with strict censorship and serious abridgements of Individual liberties. Croatian particularism continued to be a major problem, and the activities of the Croatian terrorist organizations aided and supplied by Italy and Hungary increased. The reasons behind the murder of King Alexander I were actually based on the rivalries of the European states with each other. As a matter of fact, the establishment

of a large Serbo-Croat-Slovene Kingdom in the Balkans, which would have the Adriatic coasts after the First World War, pleased neither Italy nor Austria or Hungary. All three states were uncomfortable with the establishment of a great state on their borders, and they also claimed rights in some parts of this state. The disintegration of the said kingdom and the satisfaction of their own territorial demands were the main objectives they prioritized. Among them, Austria did not pay much attention to the issue due to its own internal issues, but since some people and groups in the country secretly cooperated with Italy and Hungary, it indirectly intervened in the developments. Hungary wanted to take back Voivodina from the kingdom's lands. Italy, on the other hand, wanted the Croats to separate and establish an independent state so that by taking Croatia under control, it could realize its ambitions on the Dalmatian Coast.

Apart from the fact that the new status established after the First World War caused such polarization among the European States, there are also different reasons fed from the same source. Germany, which wanted to find new markets for its goods boycotted by Europe, made a trade agreement with Yugoslavia at this time, and other European countries reacted to this. Germany put pressure on Italy and Austria due to Italy's influence on Austria; even the murder of Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss by a group of Nazis in July 1934 is the main indicator of this rivalry and negative attitudes in interstate relations.

France, which wanted to improve its relations with the Little Entente countries, was not indifferent to current developments. French Foreign Minister Barthou was trying to keep his relations with the Balkan states by visiting the Little Entente countries, especially Yugoslavia, against the German influence in Europe by making treaties of various qualities. Likewise, King Alexander I of Yugoslavia was a firm supporter of the Little Entente, as he wanted the alliance with France to continue.

Another factor affecting Yugoslavia was the Italy-France rivalry. Italy could not digest the influential position that France created in Europe, especially due to the Little Entente. In addition, Italy had various ambitions on the Eastern Adriatic, that is, the Dalmatian coast, and a part of the Italian public could not accept the establishment of a strong Yugoslav state on the other side of the Adriatic; moreover, the fact that this state was under French influence caused serious discomfort to Albania and Dalmatia.

Mussolini, who had an eye and therefore shaped the Balkan policy according to the divide-rule principle, wanted to dissolve Yugoslav unity by encouraging the separatists in Yugoslavia and supporting especially Croatian separatism and Hungarian revisionism. King Alexander I, who tried to stand by the Croats and Slovenes against these threats from Italy, was mostly trying to act together with his ally France in foreign policy.

In fact, it can be said that the internal developments also contributed to the external reasons mentioned because the internal turmoil in Yugoslavia offered important opportunities for states like Italy that wanted an unstable and fragmented Yugoslavia. Undoubtedly, the most important among them were the Croats and Macedonians, who were among the Yugoslav people and who were constantly disturbed by their current situation since the 1921 Constitution and attempted separatist movements. In particular, the most important organization established by the Croats was the “Ustahsa” (Rebels) organization, which was established in Zagreb on January 7, 1929, one day after the suspension of the constitution. Its official name was “Croatian Revolutionary Organization.” Its aim was to establish an independent Croatian state.

In fact, the Croats, who had a great distrust of the Serbs during this period, were trying to get rid of the Serbian domination with hatred and hostility. While many joined the Croatian Peasants' Party for this purpose, others displayed different political formations along the same lines. Some of these groups went to Italy, Germany, and Hungary and decided that the only way for Croatia's independence was to fight violently against Serbian rule. They trained together with the separatist Macedonians in the countries they went to and carried out many bombings, uprisings, and conspiracy actions. Already in the research, it has been understood that the Ustasha organization received financial aid from the Italian Fascist Government during its activities, received support from Hungary, and that there were training and training camps in various regions of Italy and Hungary. It is seen that Macedonians, like the Croats, were negatively affected and disturbed by the administrative regulations of 1929 and even earlier practices, so they organized for independence and cooperated with Ustasha.

After King Alexander’s murder by one of the Croatian terrorists, the country was governed by a Regency Council headed by Prince Paul, a cousin of the late King. Under the Regency of Prince Paul, democratic opposition was tolerated, and unsuccessful efforts were made to reconcile the Croat and Serb differences.

Stoyadinovich, who was Yugoslav Premier from June 1935 to February 1939, pursued a pro-Axis foreign policy and was considered by the Italians to be a good Fascist. However, Germany's economic stranglehold on Yugoslavia continued to grow.

By 1937, Stoyadinovich had turned completely away from the French and the Little Entente alliance. “A Friendship and Non-Aggression Pact” was signed with Italy on March 25, 1937. Cordial relations between Yugoslavia and Romania continued, but relations with Czechoslovakia were reduced to empty formalities.

The beginnings of an autonomous Croatia came with the granting of complete cultural and economic autonomy to that area in August 1939. Croatian autonomy at this time solved no problems; it only encouraged the Axis conspiracy to divide and destroy Yugoslavia. By this time, Germany had absorbed Austria and annihilated Czechoslovakia, while Mussolini had annexed Albania. Yugoslavia was wedged between the two Axis Powers. For their policy of collaboration with the Axis, the Yugoslavs were rewarded by the German and Italian invasions of 1941 and the complete dismemberment of the state.

In Romania, King Carol II, after his restoration in June 1930, was tired of the political strife that had kept his country in a constant political uproar and prevented economic progress. Carol was determined not to owe her crown to any party or group. Imitating the Fascists, he dissolved all political parties and formed his own “Front of National Rebirth.” In his war against the old political parties, the King found the Iron Guard helpful and tolerated its existence. The Iron Guard expanded to enormous proportions between 1934 and 1936. Its increase in strength was aided by the general popularity in Romania of the Iron Guard's anti-Semitic campaign, the spread of Totalitarianism, and the collaboration of the Pan-German League. As King Carol's regime became more unpopular, dissident groups joined the Iron Guard because it was the most powerful opposition organization.

Tatarescu, who was Carol's Premier from 1934–1938, was regarded by the German Nazis as a fellow National Socialist. From the very beginning of his regime,

Tatarescu attempted to give Romanian foreign policy a German rather than a French orientation.

He was frustrated in his early efforts at establishing better relations with Germany because the Nazi leaders would not trust Titulescu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister. This problem was solved by King Carol's dismissal of Titulescu in August of 1936. Fearful of the strength of the Iron Guard, King Carol began an all-out effort to suppress that organization in 1938. Codreanu and several of the top leaders in the Iron Guard were killed, and thousands of their followers were sent to concentration camps. The dictatorship of King Carol served only to prepare the Romanian soil for the Nazi seed. Germany Infiltrated Romania through economic control and political propaganda. When France fell in June 1940, Carol decided to cast his lot with Germany, but he was not able to do business with Hitler and maintain his own dictatorship. In September 1940, King Carol fled into exile and left Romania under the military dictatorship of General Antonescu, who established the Iron Guard as the only recognized political organization. General Antonescu’s government signed the Axis Tripartite Pact on November 23, 1940.

After Carol fled into exile, the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Bulgaria carved up Romania and amputated one-third of Romania's territory. At the Second Vienna Accord in August 1940, northern Transylvania was incorporated into the Kingdom of Hungary, despite the region's predominantly Romanian and Hungarian ethnic population.

However, during World War II, the Soviet Union occupied Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from June to July 1940, after an ultimatum situation with Romania. Nazi Germany had agreed to the Soviet interest in Bessarabia but did not inform the Romanian authorities and was willing to provide support. The fall of France, which was a guarantor of Romanian borders, to Nazi advances on June 22 was a significant factor in the Soviets' decision to issue the ultimatum.

All in all, small states are often assumed to require the support of powerful allies, either militarily or diplomatically, to achieve security in the international political arena.

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