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Forced Disarmament in the 1920s and After

PHILIP TOWLE

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ABSTRACT The forced disarmament of Germany and its allies contributed to the widespread revulsion against the 1919 peace treaties. By the mid 1920s British politicians and diplomats, such as Austen Chamberlain and Viscount d'Abernon, responded by advocating a political settlement with Germany and thus abandoning or weakening the disarmament measures. In contrast, the disarmament inspectors, led by General Morgan, believed in standing by the letter of the treaties and believed they were vindicated by Germany's behaviour in the 1930s. Forced disarmament has either to be accepted by the vanquished, as it was in Germany and Japan after 1945, in which case its significance gradually declines, or to be maintained by force, as the inspectors insisted in the 1920s.

KEY WORDS: disarmament, forced disarmament, Treaty of Versailles

The forced disarmament of defeated enemies is the 'Cinderella' of disarmament measures. Its long and varied history is forgotten even by those who are tasked to watch for evasions by vanquished enemies. Lieutenant Colonel Stewart Roddie, who served in the Military Inter-Allied Commission of Control in Germany in the 1920s, wrote in his memoirs:

When ... the scheme for disarmament was handed to the Germans ... every individual in the room realised that never in the world's history had a conquering nation to administer a cup of such inconceivable bitterness as the Germans had to drain to the dregs that cold, bleak morning.¹

Apparently neither then nor later did he recall the fate of the Athenians at the end of the Peloponnesian Wars in 404 BC, when the city was rendered indefensible because the Long Walls connecting it with the harbour were destroyed by the victorious Spartans; nor that of the

¹Lieutenant Colonel Stewart Roddie, *Peace Patrol* (London: Christophers 1932), 79.

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Carthaginians when they had to surrender their elephants and their ships to the victorious Romans after the Second Punic War; nor that of the inhabitants of Dunkirk, who had to watch the destruction of their port after every Anglo-French War in the eighteenth century, from the Treaty of Utrecht to the American war of Independence; nor that of the Prussians, who in September 1808 had to reduce their once proud army to a cipher; nor even that of the Russians who had to agree to the demilitarization of the Black Sea after the Crimean War. Similarly, there is little published evidence that the officials ordered to verify Iraqi disarmament in the 1990s looked back on these events or on Roddie and his colleagues in the 1920s to see whether their experience could offer any parallels to their own.

While the libraries were filled with volumes on negotiated disarmament and arms control measures in the 1960s and 1970s such as the Non Proliferation Treaty and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, forced disarmament was conveniently and rapidly forgotten. In part this is because, like treason, forced disarmament can never prosper since, if it is accepted by the defeated power, as it was by Germany and Japan after 1945, then it appears unforced, while, if it is not accepted, then it leads to constant friction between victor and vanguished and eventually to further enforcement.² Yet forced disarmament is the oldest form of disarmament and was used in the ancient world as a substitute for obliteration, the killing of the menfolk of a defeated nation and the enslavement of the rest of the population. If the Carthaginians had been able to satisfy the Romans by their disarmament, they might have left more than a few ruins outside Tunis as their contribution to world history.³ In modern times forced disarmament continues to represent one of the few ways in which victors can hope to perpetuate the fruits of their military success.

In 1919, 1945 and 1991, the victors' thoughts thus turned to forcing their defeated enemy to disarm. Had the international community studied closely the phenomenon, there might have been more agreement about the circumstances which surround successful examples of forced disarmament and, in particular, why the demilitarization of Germany and Japan in 1945 was so much more successful than the disarmament of Germany and its allies in the 1920s. This was, after all, the very opposite of what many well-informed contemporaries expected. For example, Robert Cecil gloomily concluded in 1949 that:

²Philip Towle, *Enforced Disarmament: From the Napoleonic Campaigns to the Gulf War* (Oxford: Clarendon 1997).

³B. Caven, *The Punic Wars* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1980); and S.L. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier* (Princeton: PUP 1985), 238ff.

the international situation [in 1919] was then more propitious for a world effort for peace than it has ever been since. Though the bitterness was even then great, it was not comparable to that which existed at the end of the Second World War. There had been... nothing like the organised torture and slaughter of millions of unarmed men, women and children which was perpetrated by the orders of the German High Command in this last war.⁴

Cecil's conclusion was not unreasonable. He knew that peace without reconciliation was impossible in the long run, and he imagined that the fury of the victors in 1945 and their contempt for the vanquished, who had killed millions of Jews, Chinese, Poles and Russians in cold blood during the last decade, would prevent such reconciliation. The prospects for a prolonged period of stability seemed particularly bleak. Yet, after more than half a century of peace between the victors of 1945 and their former enemies, we can see that he was completely wrong.

The moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the former Axis powers and the overwhelming military superiority of the victors made it possible to bend the defeated powers to the will of the leaders in Washington, Moscow and London, thus making forced disarmament not only possible, but actually easy. The only serious issues were between the victorious powers, not between victors and vanquished. Although the polls were crude by modern standards and the responses, no doubt, self-serving, they suggested that the German people shared the Allies' shock and horror at what their government had done. In December 1945, 70 percent said that they believed all the defendants at Nuremberg were guilty, and 84 percent said they had learnt from the trials about the concentration camps and the annihilation of the Jews. Seventy-one percent told pollsters in March 1946 that all the defendants took part in planning the war and, when the verdicts were given, 55 percent said they were just and 21 percent said they were too lenient.5

Over the years there have been many criticisms of the post-World War II settlement: Lord Hankey and Viscount Maugham tried to stop the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes trials; Victor Gollancz worried that Western values were being eroded by the occupation of the enemy states; years later Tom Bower exposed the way the Allies had sometimes ignored the complicity in war crimes of the German scientists whom they recruited to help develop their armaments;

⁴Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, *All the Way* (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1949), 149.

⁵Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, *Public Opinion 1935–1946* (Princeton: PUP 1951), 1036, 1037.

Nikolai Tolstoy castigated the British for handing over anti-Soviet elements to the Eastern bloc; and James Bacque asserted that the allies had starved German civilians and particularly prisoners of war. Grave though many of these accusations undoubtedly were, none of them lessened the enormity of Axis crimes.⁶ Moreover, awareness of the degradation of the Axis has grown with passing years. The construction of the Holocaust Museum in Washington and the Holocaust sculpture in the middle of Berlin, the demonstrations by former British prisoners of war against the Japanese Emperor, the continued emphasis by the Chinese on the massacre of Nanking, the rediscovery by the Koreans of former comfort women, the vociferous protests by many Asian nations at Japanese attempts to whitewash the massacres carried out by the Imperial Japanese Army in their history textbooks: all these show that there has been no 'retreat from Versailles' after 1945.⁷

The situation was very different in the 1920s. The Germans and their former allies never accepted their delinquency and the Leipzig trials of alleged war criminals turned into a farce.⁸ Neither did they believe that the military superiority of the Allied powers would, or should, endure and so they never willingly acquiesced in the disarmament measures imposed on them. They argued bitterly against reparations and protested the boundaries laid down at Paris in 1919, and John Maynard Keynes and other non-German writers added their voices to these protests.⁹ Keynes's analysis of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* was a devastating blow for the Allies, because it encouraged German resistance and seemed to undermine the morality of the Allied

⁶Lord Hankey, Political Trials and Errors (Oxford: Pen-in-Hand 1950); Viscount Maugham, UNO and War Crimes (London: John Murray 1951); Victor Gollancz, Our Threatened Values (London: Gollancz 1946); Tom Bower, Blind Eye to Murder (London: Granada 1983); id., The Paperclip Conspiracy (London: Paladin 1988); James Bacque, Crimes and Mercies (London: Little Brown 1997); Nikolai Tolstoy, The Minister and the Massacres (London: Century Hutchinson 1986); and Carol Mather, Aftermath of War: Everyone Must Go Home (London: Brassey's 1992).

⁷The title of Ch.3 in R.B. McCallum, *Public Opinion and the Last Peace* (London: Oxford UP 1944). For recent analysis of the Nazi phenomenon, see Richard J. Evans ed., special issue of *Journal of Contemporary History* 39/2 (Apr. 2004).

⁸James F. Willis, Prologue to Nuremberg: The Politics and Diplomacy of Punishing War Criminals of the First World War (Westport: Greenwood 1982). For a sympathetic account of German feelings about the peace, see Apex, The Uneasy Triangle: Four Years of the Occupation (London: John Murray 1931), 59–65, 138–50. ⁹John Maynard Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe 1920). See also Violet R. Markham, A Woman's Watch on the Rhine (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1921) Ch.16. For French views of Keynes and his book, see André Tardieu, The Truth about the Treaty (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1921).

position.¹⁰ Gradually the Allied case for the war itself appeared less convincing to the American people and to many members of the British elite. Former soldiers became embittered that their idealism in the war years had been dismissed as naive. Already in 1920, Violet Markham, then with the British occupation forces in Germany, concluded that 'at no moment in the history of the world has a spirit of disillusion been so widespread', while C.E. Montague commented gloomily two years later on the attitude of former soldiers:

It seems hardly credible now, in this soured and quarrelsome country and time, that so many men of different classes and kinds, thrown together at random, should ever have been so simply and happily friendly, trustful and keen. But they were and they imagined that all their betters were too. This was the paradise that the bottom fell out of.¹¹

The extent of this disillusionment varied considerably from country to country and between the different classes. It appears, from the earliest and very unscientific Gallup polls, that some 66 percent of the British people still believed in May 1937 that it had been right to go to war in 1914, while 64 percent of Americans regretted their subsequent decision to become involved.¹² But, if the mass of British people were not as disillusioned as much of the contemporary writing suggested, it had become very difficult by the 1930s, according to one well-informed Oxford professor, to gain a hearing amongst the elite for the proposition that the war had been justified and the peace had been far more reasonable than many now supposed. History seemed for once to have been written by the vanguished.¹³ To such an extent had British anti-war feeling appeared to foreigners to predominate that, in September 1939, 45 percent of Americans apparently believed that most English people disapproved of their government's decision to declare war to protect Poland.14

The disarmament negotiations held in the 1920s paradoxically contributed to the disillusionment amongst the educated elite. Many British leaders, including David Lloyd George and Edward Grey, both

¹⁰Sir Charles Petrie, *Twenty Year's Armistice – And After* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode 1940), 29.

¹¹Markham, Woman's Watch, 275; C.E. Montague, *Disenchantment* (London: Chatto and Windus 1929), 12.

¹²Public Opinion Quarterly (1940) 4/77; (1941), 5/155.

¹³McCallum, *Public Opinion*, Introduction. See also Leopold Schwarzschild, *World in Trance* (London: Hamilton 1943).

¹⁴Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, 1108.

shaped and accepted the emerging conventional wisdom that disarmament, meaning the forced disarmament of the enemy followed by the voluntary disarmament of the victors, was a good in itself. Grey famously argued in his memoirs, published in 1925, that it was the arms race which had led to war in 1914.¹⁵ Thus the Allies declared that a general disarmament agreement would complement the measures imposed on Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria.¹⁶ As Grey put it: 'Allied exclusive alliances and armaments will produce countercombinations and armaments. The notion that Germany can be kept permanently disarmed by temporary expedients, such as foreign missions of control is an illusion.'¹⁷ The League of Nations and the disarmament of Germany and its former allies, to be followed by general disarmament, represented the core of the new world order into which Woodrow Wilson, Cecil and Lloyd George were hesitatingly trying to lead the nations.

But they conjured up exaggerated hopes because diplomacy could not be revolutionized so suddenly and fundamentally: nations still had interests, disagreements and fears. Forced disarmament led to arguments between victors and vanquished; negotiated disarmament led to disagreements amongst the victors. Certain elements in the society of nations might have changed but the totality looked very similar. A good illustration of the consequent disillusionment outside politically active circles can be found in the sermons given at the time by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson. In September 1922 he told the congregation at St Peter's Cathedral in Geneva:

The League of Nations, though it touches only a portion of the Christian faith and life can claim unhesitatingly, both for its purpose and policy, the surest Christian sanction. Its key-note vibrates in harmony with the key-note of the Christian Faith itself.¹⁸

¹⁵Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years 1892–1916* (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1925) Vol.2, 271.

¹⁶Major-General A.C. Temperley, *The Whispering Gallery of Europe* (London: Collins 1939), 46. The argument was reiterated by German spokesmen. See [Cambridge, Churchill College, the Noel-Baker papers], NBKR 4X/82, Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, 4th Session, speech by Count Bernstorff, 3 Dec. 1927.

¹⁷Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 272. Grey's point was reinforced by Richard C. Richardson, 'The Conservative government of 1924–1929 and the Disarmament Problem' (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1983), 483.

¹⁸Archbishop Randall Thomas Davidson, Occasions: Sermons and Addresses Delivered on Days of Interest in the Life of Church and Nation (London: Mowbray 1925), 1ff.

Davidson went on to denounce 'the awful, the horrible, the devildevised barrier of war...We may surely say that militarism has fashioned its own coffin. We are here to clinch the nails...It is, or ought to be, unthinkable that we fail'. This might seem unremarkable today, if a trifle idealistic, in an age when Archbishops are expected to denounce war and act as the conscience of the nation, but it is easy to forget that this was the first time an Anglican Archbishop had spoken in this way. Davidson's nineteenth-century predecessors had left to Caesar the things which are Caesar's and remained mute in the House of Lords through the Napoleonic Wars and the limited conflicts which ensued. It was a measure of the trauma society had suffered that he had been encouraged to speak out. Two years after his Geneva sermon, the Archbishop's preaching in Westminster Abbey showed how the popular optimism had ebbed and realism had reasserted itself:

Grave and controversial treaties had inevitably to be drawn and then debated by our statesmen, and comments on the terms led to full rejoinders to those comments and replies to the rejoinders. Treaty followed treaty, the very names of some of them are by most people half-forgotten. Is it a wonder that weariness led to bewilderment, and bewilderment to something like apathy. Had our hopes of an outcome in a worthier England, or worthier Europe been a vain delusion?¹⁹

Thus the atmosphere of disillusionment spread within the British elite and the broader American public.

The hopes had withered because of arguments about the peace settlement and because political leaders had failed to appreciate the technical problems inherent in the disarmament measures they proposed as a panacea. Article 8 of the League Covenant laid down that 'the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety'. But what was that lowest point? What did national safety mean? And who would define these crucial terms?²⁰ Political disagreements between nations are relatively simple, if often intractable, concerning, for example, frontiers, ideology or access to raw materials. Arguments about force levels between potential enemies are vastly more complex, as Major-General A.C. Temperley wittily demonstrated in his account

¹⁹Davidson, Occasions, 67ff. For Davidson, see G.K.A. Bell, Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury (London: Oxford UP 1952).

²⁰The obligation was accepted by British governments and made them more careful about taking on League of Nations commitments. See NBKR 4X 66, reply by Ramsay MacDonald, 5 July 1924, 235.

of the time he spent on the British disarmament delegation in the 1920s. How is a conscript or a reservist to be compared with a regular soldier? Which weapons, if any, can be described as inherently aggressive? Should colonial troops be included in comparisons? How could agreements be verified? Disagreements over these questions were not political arguments dressed up in uniform; they had a logic of their own. In the end, Temperley concluded that they were so intractable that disarmament might be better achieved through budgetary limitations, but that was merely passing the problem to the economists, since a country which pays its conscripts little or nothing can buy far larger armed forces than a rich state with an all-professional force.²¹

The situation was further complicated because the traditional attempts to create a balance of power were supposed to have been discredited by the August 1914 crisis, and so strategists had to pretend to ignore the issue even though it was the core of the problem. Instead, reliance was to be placed on the League of Nations, but the French tried to turn attention away from the size of their army by arguing at the Geneva disarmament talks that it was inherently benign because it would be used to support the League. In practice, while Germany was potentially much the strongest European power, its disarmament left the French with the predominant usable power and misled them into embarking on their invasion of the Ruhr in 1923 in a futile attempt to force the Germans to pay reparations.²² What they actually did was to demonstrate clearly how difficult and expensive enforcement of the treaty provisions would be, a revelation which had a major influence on diplomacy for more than a decade. Not surprisingly, the French government insisted that it would be delighted to reduce the burden of armaments after the terrible suffering their people had undergone, but was unable to do so because of the extent of its obligations in Europe, Syria and Turkey.²³ The British replied to this claim that in proportion to the extent of their territories they had the smallest armed forces of any country but the US.²⁴

²¹Temperley, Whispering Gallery, Chs 3, 9, particularly p.69. See also the French comments on disarmament proposals by Lord Esher, NBKR 4X 68, 1923.

²²See d'Abernon's comments on the disappearance of the balance of power in Viscount d' Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, Vol.2, diary entry for 20 March 1923, 184–6 (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1930).

²³NBKR 4X 39, Report of the Temporary Mixed Commission on Armaments, 7 Sept. 1922. For French disarmament policy, see Maurice Vaïsse, 'Security and Disarmament: Problems in the Development of the Disarmament Debates in 1919–1934', in R. Ahmann, A.M. Birke and M. Howard, *The Quest For Stability: Problems of West European Security* 1918–1957 (Oxford: German Historical Institute London and Oxford UP 1993) Ch.9.

²⁴NBKR 4X 39, British government comments of 24 July 1922.

In some discussions the French reverted to the traditional idea of balance but in a more sophisticated form. They stressed their demographic and industrial weakness in comparison with Germany. Accordingly, in their view a reasonable balance had been achieved by Germany's disarmament and their retention of a substantial army.²⁵ On the other hand, the British stuck to the view that force levels should be based on requirements, as they told the Japanese at the Washington negotiations in 1922, when they pointed out that Britain had far more territory and sea lanes to defend and thus needed a larger navy. Not surprisingly, many Japanese naval officers were unconvinced by this logic.²⁶ Plainly, assessment of needs or obligations was controversial and offered no easy solution to the reduction of armaments. To try to solve the problem, the Hoover administration produced a complex formula in 1932 calling for a reduction of a third in existing armaments and, subsequently, a limitation on force levels in proportion to domestic and colonial populations.²⁷ Appealing as it was for its simplicity, this initiative would have led to further disagreements if Hitler had not come to power in Germany and undermined the whole disarmament process.

Naval disarmament was more successful in the 1920s. There were fewer naval than land powers, the powerful units – such as battleships and aircraft carriers - were more important than manpower levels, verification was easier than on land and, above all, the US, potentially the strongest power, offered to make the greatest reductions in its new fleet. The Washington Treaty of 1922 is thus usually taken as one of the most successful agreements because it greatly reduced the size of the US Navy and froze the Royal Navy's battleship force. But it led to periodic arguments between Washington and London, even though there were no fundamental political disagreements between them. In December 1924, for example, The Washington Post published an article claiming that the Royal Navy was cheating on the Treaty. (It had fitted blisters against torpedo attacks on its battleships. These added considerably to displacement and thus were a formal infringement of the tonnage limitations. The blisters also could be flooded to increase the elevation of the guns and enable them to fire at 30,000 yards.) The article was studied in the Foreign Office and dismissed by the rising diplomat,

 ²⁵General E. Réquin, 'The Armaments and Military Power of Germany', *Foreign Affairs* 11/2 (Jan. 1933) 230–244. For the Germans' inability to see the logic in the French argument, see d'Abernon's diary entry for 9 Apr. 1923, *Ambassador of Peace*, Vol.2, 190.
²⁶For the Washington Treaty system, see Stephen E. Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1974); and Christopher Hall, *Britain, America and Arms Control 1921–1937* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1987).

²⁷Temperley, Whispering Gallery, 210.

Robert Vansittart, who claimed that the campaign had been stirred up by US Naval Secretary Curtis D. Wilbur for political purposes. Wilbur, a former judge was a 'very pernicious person' according to Vansittart. The Admiralty agreed that 'official utterances of an inaccurate or misleading nature are made not from ignorance but with a set purpose'. Britain could have protested at the conversion of US battleships from coal to oil boilers but had decided not to do so in order to avoid exacerbating relations.²⁸

In the Anglo-American case, political relations were fundamentally so strong that technical military arguments could hardly corrode them. As the naval journalist Hector Bywater presciently argued in the 1920s, it was the US-Japanese naval relationship which might lead to war, not the Anglo-American.²⁹ Conversely, idealists, like the young Franklin Roosevelt, hoped that the new internationalist spirit was so pervasive that the Japanese would accept it, while the Labour government in Britain cancelled the development of the Singapore naval base in March 1924, because it 'would hamper the establishment of that confidence and lay our good faith open to suspicion. We should inevitably [otherwise] drift into a condition of mistrust and competition of armaments in the Far East'.³⁰ Anglo-American niggles over cruisers and battleship tonnage and Anglo-French arguments over conscription at Geneva were as nothing compared to the fundamental clashes of interest which Bywater foresaw, but they helped to destroy the optimism initially expressed by Earl Grey, Violet Markham, Archbishop Davidson and Franklin Roosevelt.

If disarmament negotiations caused military friction even between the victorious powers, which were otherwise politically attuned, the disarmament imposed on the vanquished peoples, who resented the whole international structure established in 1919, led to more intense arguments. The reductions imposed on Germany in the 1920s and Iraq in the 1990s show that, if the losers are determined to resist or to pretend to resist, the disagreements between victors and vanquished accentuate the bad feeling between the two. French Marshal Ferdinand

²⁸[Kew, The National Archives], FO [Foreign Office records]/371/10633, folio a 10. See also Salvador de Madariaga, *Disarmament* (New York: Coward-McCann 1929), 102.

²⁹William H. Honan, *Bywater: The Man Who Invented the Pacific War* (London: Macdonald 1990). See also Hector C. Bywater, *Navies and Nations: A Review of Naval Developments since the Great War* (London: Constable 1927); and *Sea-Power in the Pacific: A Study of the American-Japanese Naval Problem* (London: Constable 1934). Similarly, Anglo-French bickering over land armaments frustrated proceedings at Geneva but never seriously threatened a war between the democracies. See Temperley, *Whispering Gallery*, 60.

³⁰Honan, *Bywater*, 106. [Kew, The National Archives], CAB[inet papers]/23/47, 'Statement of policy in regard to Singapore', 8 Mar. 1924.

Foch had warned Lloyd George how difficult it would be to ensure German disarmament, but the Welshman refused to see the technical problems involved and never ceased to call for disarmament as the panacea for international problems.³¹ In such situations, bad blood is often most intense amongst the inspectors. It is their safety which is threatened and they, naturally, have a professional interest in the success of the operations in which they are engaged. The military lawyer, Major-General J.H. Morgan epitomized this tendency amongst the inspectors of the 1920s; Richard Butler, the head of UNSCOM, in the 1990s.³² That is not to claim that all inspectors come to dislike the defeated nation or its government; this depends on their preconceptions. Stewart Roddie and Francis Bingham, for example, sympathized with the German predicament in the 1920s.

Nevertheless, the general tension between the Allies and the Germans at that period was evoked by Morgan's description of the first meeting between an advance party of inspectors and the German authorities. The inspectors agreed to convene in the German Foreign Office to discuss how their colleagues would be accommodated. They were kept waiting in a small annex and then summoned to meet their German counterparts. The officer in charge of the Allied party refused to enter the conference room until the Germans had left it. Eventually, the Germans agreed to leave but filed in at the same time as the inspectors and tried to dominate the proceedings, not least because 12 Germans were present against four inspectors. The senior Allied officer insisted that the Allies should state their requirements; the Germans maintained that, as it was their Foreign Office, they should receive the inspectors. The inspectors refused and withdrew, leaving the Germans to their cigars.³³ The inspectors could have afforded to be more sensitive: some of their number later admitted how much they would have hated to see German inspectors wandering round British military establishments.³⁴ Instead, it became a struggle of wills and an opportunity for the exchange of complaints.

The same antagonistic personal relationships developed between some of the UN inspectors and the Iraqis in the 1990s, because the inspectors believed, as passionately as their predecessors in the 1920s,

³¹Tardieu, Truth about the Treaty, 17, 127.

³²Richard Butler, Saddam Defiant: The Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Crisis of Global Security (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2000).

³³J.H. Morgan, Assize of Arms: Being the Story of Germany and her Rearmament 1919–1939 (London: Methuen 1945) Vol.1, 18. Firmness did not always lead to a deterioration in relations. See Roddie, Peace Patrol, 13, 78.

³⁴Roddie, *Peace Patrol*, 13. See also the comments by Lord Newton, *House of Lords Debates*, 1 Apr. 1925, col.883.

that it was vital to keep the defeated enemy disarmed if war were to be averted.³⁵ Just as the French and British inspectors often disagreed in the 1920s, the arguments with the Iraqis split the inspection teams, with several of the UNSCOM inspectors making personal criticisms of Maurizio Zifferero and others employed by the International Atomic Energy Agency for not being tough enough on the Iraqis.³⁶

The practical difficulties which faced the inspectors in the 1920s are underlined by comparison with the 1990s. In the 1920s, inspectors were attacked: a French officer had his clothes torn in Bremen and an NCO was killed, inspectors' cars were stoned, they were forced off trains and refused food in restaurants. Newspapers encouraged such actions.³⁷ Their informants were murdered or imprisoned. Hitler boasted later:

There's no doubt that at this moment the spirit of treachery was rampant in Germany. Why didn't our rulers all treat the traitors as Pöhner and Frock did in Munich? As a matter of fact, thanks to the microphones installed in the seats of the enemy disarmament commissions, they sometimes succeeded in catching the traitors at work. When they did so, they at once had them hauled in by officials of the criminal police (who passed themselves off as French), and at one arrested them.³⁸

These comments are, to an extent, confirmed by Roddie's own:

The genuine informer was paid the amounts agreed upon with the Commissary, but a system of terrorism started and the informer seldom had an opportunity of enjoying the fruits of his labour. Sometimes he was found afterwards – when the flies drew one's attention to the body. Often it was members of the secret police who in the course of their duty reported the discovery of concealed stores of war material, and who were, therefore, murdered... Such informers as were not 'removed', were later tried in open court and sentenced to varying terms of hard labour.³⁹

Nor did these practices stop in the early 1930s. The War Office wrote to the Foreign Office in February 1933, 'it will be remembered that during the last few years there have been several cases in which

³⁵Butler, Saddam Defiant, 1.

³⁶Gary Milhollin, 'The Iraqi Bomb', The New Yorker, 1 Feb. 1993.

³⁷Roddie, Peace Patrol, 100; Towle, Enforced Disarmament, Ch.4.

³⁸Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's Table-Talk: Hitler's Conversations Recorded by Martin Bormann* (Oxford: OUP 1988) diary entry for 5 Apr. 1942, 406.

³⁹Roddie, *Peace Patrol*, 82.

discoveries by Germans of alleged breaches of the Versailles Treaty have been followed by heavy sentences of imprisonment for high treason by German courts'.⁴⁰

Even while they still remained in Germany, the inspectors could offer informers no protection or indeed do much to defend themselves. As Morgan put it, 'We ourselves were quite unarmed and the nearest Allied troops were hundreds of miles away. It was a long way to Cologne, almost as long as to Tipperary, for we had no "lines of communication" and, indeed, no base'.⁴¹ Clearly many of them did feel threatened, though it is difficult to tell how much this was a question of perception. The senior British officer, General Sir Francis Bingham, told the RUSI in 1924: 'when travelling over the whole of Germany, meeting all classes and ranks of soldiers, civilians and employers of labour, I never had anything but the most polite and correct reception'.⁴²

If Bingham had been wrong and a senior inspector had been murdered, a major diplomatic incident would have occurred, but would Britain and France have gone to war? In the end, with all forced disarmament measures which are resisted by the defeated, this is the crucial question, and the French had made enforcement much harder by their precipitate and divisive occupation of the Ruhr.

The treatment of Iraq in the 1990s offers both uncanny parallels and marked contrasts. Immediately after World War I, the Allies had tried to coerce Germany into signing the Treaty of Versailles and implementing its provisions by maintaining the blockade which continued to starve the German people.⁴³ The UN imposed a similar blockade on Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and both the Iraqis and UN officials protested that it led to the deaths of tens of thousands of children. The great difference was that military force had become much easier to employ in a more controlled fashion and was, therefore, a far more precise weapon than blockade and easier to defend before world opinion. In the 1990s the British and Americans had aircraft ranging over the north and south of Iraq. They could attack Iraqi barracks and the palaces of its leader, Saddam Hussein, at any

⁴⁰[Kew, The National Archives], WO/32/4091, Letter from the War Office to Foreign Office, 14 Feb. 1933.

⁴¹Morgan, Assize of Arms, 16.

⁴²Major General the Hon. Sir Francis Bingham, 'Work with the Allied Control Commission in Germany: 1919–1924', lecture at the Royal United Services Institution, 8 October 1924, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* LX1X/476 (February– November 1924), 749–50.

⁴³For contemporary estimates of the effects of blockade, see Maurice Parmelee, *Blockade and Sea Power* (London: Hutchinson 1925); and Louis Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 1914–1919 (London: Philip Allan 1930).

moment with cruise missiles. They had overwhelming military dominance compared to the situation in the 1920s and had a much better chance of enforcing the treaties, though not of protecting informants. The temptation, which they failed to resist in March 2003, was to employ all their forces in an invasion, thereby losing the advantages of flexibility and finding themselves in a more violent and dangerous situation as invaders than the French and Belgians had been with the occupation of the Ruhr just 80 years previously.

The 1920s inspectors had 7,000 factories to search because they were suspected of producing weapons.⁴⁴ Theirs was a wider remit than their successors in Iraq in the 1990s, who were only looking for weapons of mass destruction and missiles. In the 1920s, the inspectors were interested in artillery, aircraft and submarine parts, as well as chemical weapons. They had to carry their reports back to their embassies or to safety in France. Their modern counterparts could send documents back electronically to their headquarters from anywhere in Iraq and had U2 reconnaissance aircraft and satellites to observe what the Iraqis were doing. Yet they failed in the 1990s to reassure US political leaders that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had been destroyed, just as their predecessors had been unable to convince the French and their smaller allies in the 1920s that Germany was no longer a threat. Even the most intense inspection will not provide reassurance if political suspicions are too deep and justified by the manners of the vanquished and their apparent determination to overthrow the settlement.45

Within the right political framework, disarmament measures, whether forced or agreed, act as a confidence-building measure. Minor infractions are overlooked. Thus, in the nineteenth century, the British ignored US breaches of the Rush-Bagot agreement of 1817, demilitarizing the Great Lakes between the US and Canada.⁴⁶ Similarly, as pointed out above, both the US and Britain sometimes ignored minor improvements in naval equipment during the 1920s, even if they might constitute technical infringements of the Washington Treaty. The issue is both practical and political: do such infringements change the correlation of forces and are protests worth the political friction which they create? On 7 February 1923, the British ambassador in Berlin, Viscount d'Abernon, recorded in his diary:

The year 1922 has brought the operations of the Commission of Control to a point not far from the complete execution of their

⁴⁴Morgan, Assize of Arms, 19.

⁴⁵For arguments at the League over inspection in negotiated disarmament agreements, see Temperley, *Whispering Gallery*, 64.

⁴⁶For the negotiation of the agreement, see FO/115/28, FO/115/29 and FO/115/30.

programme – certainly far beyond the point where any danger need be feared by England from undue military or naval strength of Germany.⁴⁷

For him and for Roddie, though not for Morgan or for most of the French inspectors, that was sufficient. Roddie and d'Abernon believed press reports of German evasions of the Treaty were exaggerated, and so did many British politicians.⁴⁸ In a House of Lords debate in March 1925, Asquith asked the government when it would publish the report by the Control Commission. Lord Curzon replied that it was 'hardly suitable for publication in its entirety', since technical quibbles might cause considerable embarrassment. A month later, Lord Parmoor raised the same issue in the House of Lords for the Labour party and complained about the irritation the Commission caused amongst the Germans.⁴⁹ No doubt, at the back of all their minds, was the knowledge that, even if infringements were discovered, forcing the Germans to end such practices would be extremely difficult. None of these debates suggested that the Control Commission had strong political backing in Britain, but this made it all the easier for the government to argue the case for détente with Germany in the autumn of 1925.

If the 1920s saw examples of both forced and negotiated disarmament measures and of their political impact, in the Locarno Treaty it also saw a classic example of what, after the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, would be called a 'confidence-building measure'. D'Abernon, whose diaries were published in 1929 and 1930, stressed the changes which came about after the Treaty was signed:

Anyone who will contrast the condition of public opinion in Western Europe today with that which prevailed from 1920 to 1923 will realise how vast the progress has been. It would be rash to assert that permanent pacification has been ensured; but a real improvement of the immediate situation has been achieved, while the prospect for the more distant future is far less menacing than it appeared a few years ago. A stronger claim might indeed be advanced without overstatement.⁵⁰

The historian Sir Charles Petrie later insisted that the Locarno Treaty was 'the greatest achievement of British diplomacy in the period

⁴⁷D'Abernon, Ambassador of Peace, Vol.2, diary entry for 7 Feb. 1923, 167.

⁴⁸Roddie, *Peace Patrol*, 83.

⁴⁹House of Lords Debates, 3 Mar. 1925, col.349 and 1 Apr. 1925, col.876.

⁵⁰D'Abernon, *Ambassador of Peace*, Vol.1, 2.

between the two wars'.⁵¹ Progress only started to be made in the 1920s when the focus of diplomatic attention moved away from specific disarmament measures towards a guarantee of the demilitarization of the Rhineland by Germany, Britain, France, Belgium and Italy and an arbitration convention between Germany and her neighbours. Germany had an incentive to agree to demilitarization because this would expedite the removal of allied troops from the Rhineland and make it less likely that the more powerful French forces would return. But the agreement appeared to show that Berlin was prepared to accept some aspects of the status quo established in 1919, and thus increased confidence between France and Germany. While the initiative for the agreement came mainly from the German statesman Gustav Stresemann, the British Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain sensed from the beginning that confidence building was likely to be more important than disarmament in restoring Europe to tranquillity, and he left Cecil to deal with the latter problem at the League talks in Geneva.⁵²

To its critics on the left, the main failing of the Locarno Treaty was that it did not include general disarmament measures reducing the forces of the victorious powers. Opposition MPs, led by Lloyd George for the Liberal party and Tom Shaw for Labour, made this the centre of their case in the debate on the agreement in the House of Commons on 18 November 1925. According to the former prime minister, 'the spirit of Locarno has gone right through to the question of armaments. Unless it goes through to that, Locarno will be simply regarded in history as a slobbering melodrama.⁵³ He went on to complain in February 1926, 'the Treaty of Locarno, without disarmament is simply a steel trap with very tricky springs which may any day snap with crushing teeth'.54 Presumably, he foresaw what was indeed to come to pass in 1936, when Britain was asked to fulfil its obligation to maintain the demilitarization of the Rhineland. But, if this was the case, it is difficult to see how the disarmament of Britain and the other victors was going to help.

Conversely, Morgan and some other members of the Internal Commission of Control attacked the Locarno Agreement because they saw that it would undermine the enforced disarmament of Germany.

⁵¹Petrie, Twenty Years' Armistice, 86.

⁵²Temperley, Whispering Gallery, 54. See also Carolyn Kitching, 'Locarno and the Irrelevance of Disarmament', in Gaynor Johnson ed., Locarno Revisited: European Diplomacy 1920–1929 (London: Routledge 2004) Ch.9, 161–77. For a general attack on British policy, see Richard C. Richardson, The Evolution of British Disarmament Policy in the 1920s (London: Pinter 1989).

⁵³House of Commons Debates, 18 Nov. 1925, cols419–523.

⁵⁴House of Commons Debates, 2 Feb. 1926, col.34.

Morgan wrote a second volume of memoirs to cover the Locarno years. It was never published, but was clearly to include a denunciation of the 'notorious' and 'fateful' Locarno agreement. His views were made clear in the introduction to volume one:

The price exacted by Stresemann for that pact was not only withdrawal of the Control Commission... but silence. He got it. It became 'bad form' for anyone to question whether Germany was, or was not, in a state of grace in the matter of disarmament... The only course open to the author was therefore to abandon his unfinished task. Such a book at such a time would only have been stigmatised as 'conduct calculated to provoke a breach of the peace'.⁵⁵

Morgan quoted Marshal Foch and General Maxime Weygand supporting his suspicions of German evasion of the Treaty of Versailles and of Berlin's intentions. And it was true that German breaches of the treaties continued after the Commission of Control had disappeared. In June 1928, for example, a phosgene explosion occurred in Hamburg, which was somewhat at odds with German claims to have destroyed all their stocks of chemical weapons by 1924.⁵⁶

Morgan was encouraged to write to *The Times* in November 1933 by another former member of the Control Commission, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Hordern, to warn that Germany had never disarmed. Hordern himself would have liked to publicize his fears but was prevented from doing so because he was working in the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence. In his view:

No one who served in Germany on the Control Commission can fail to know that Germany never did fulfil the Disarmament provisions of the Treaty and that she never disarmed materially or morally. The plain facts are that Germany has never acknowledged her responsibilities, has never accepted defeat, is determined to re-arm in any event and is merely biding her time.⁵⁷

The language Hordern used was revealing: Germany had never disarmed morally as well as materially. Like Iraq 70 years later, it

⁵⁵Morgan, Assize of Arms, Vol.1, xi. The draft of volume 2 was used by John P. Fox in 1969. See John P. Fox, 'Britain and the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control, 1925–26', Journal of Contemporary History 4/2 (Apr. 1969) footnote 4.

⁵⁶W.N. Medlicott, Douglas Dakin and M.E. Lambert, *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939*, Series 1a, Vol.5 (London: HMSO 1973), 116, 'Mr Henderson (Paris) to Sir A. Chamberlain', 19 June 1928.

⁵⁷Morgan, Assize of Arms, Vol.1, xv.

had, in fact, vastly reduced its armed forces, though not as completely as it had agreed to do or as some of the inspectors wished. This reflected the Germans' failure to disarm morally or to be convinced of the intellectual case for the restrictions which the Allies imposed.⁵⁸ This was the crucial difference with Bonn's behaviour after World War II and the similarity with Iraqi behaviour after 1991.⁵⁹ If a country appears to be resisting its forced disarmament so that it can rearm as soon as opportunity arises, then suspicions will obviously fester, particularly amongst the inspectors employed to discover such evasions. It was for this reason that the British Admiralty maintained in the interwar period that intrusive verification was useless either in forced or negotiated disarmament: 'If a convention is signed in good faith, supervision of this kind is unnecessary, but if good faith is not present supervision...would be useless and ineffective'.⁶⁰

Thus the central 'failure' of the Locarno Treaties and the subsequent European détente were not, as Lloyd George argued, the omission of far-reaching disarmament measures. Nor was the main deficiency the tendency to undermine the verification of German disarmament because, even if breaches are discovered, this leaves hanging the question of enforcement. It was the Allies' inability to win the moral and intellectual debate and to persuade the Germans that the reduction in the size of their armed forces in 1919 was not just intended as a deliberate humiliation and revenge for 1871, but could be seen as a genuine and constructive attempt to enhance European security. It is now a commonplace that the French were right to claim that German demographic, industrial and military power unbalanced the continent in the absence of US involvement. This had already caused three wars, each one more ferocious than the last. The Germans were, not surprisingly, proud that their armies had, with Austro-Hungarian help, held off four of the Great European Powers from 1914 to 1917. They had to be persuaded that such strength was the source of the problem.⁶¹

⁵⁸J.H. Morgan, 'The Disarmament of Germany and After', *Quarterly Review* (October 1924), 415ff.

⁵⁹For the Iraqi experience, see Steven Mataija and J. Marshall Beier, *Multilateral Verification and the Post-Gulf Environment* (Toronto: York University 1992); Michael V. Deaver, *Disarming Iraq: Monitoring Power and Resistance* (Westport, CT: Praeger 2001); Jean E. Krasno and James S. Sutterlin, *The United Nations and Iraq: Defanging the Viper* (Westport, CT: Praeger 2003); and Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq* (New York: Pantheon 2004).

⁶⁰[Kew, The National Archives], ADM[iralty Papers]/116/3275, 'Supervision and Control', 1933. See also the comments by Lord Newton, *House of Lords Debates*, 1 Apr. 1925, col.883.

⁶¹D'Abernon, *Ambassador of Peace*, Vol.1, 6.

In the Far East, Japanese statesmen had been similarly persuaded at the Washington conference to accept that their naval forces should be limited to six-tenths of the British and Americans. Admittedly, as pointed out above, this was hardly popular with many Japanese naval officers, but it illustrated the sort of agreement which was needed in Europe and which Lord Esher, in fact, suggested to the League in 1922.62 The Esher plan would indeed have capped the forces of the Allies, but, by ignoring colonial forces, equipment and reserves, it would have left France and its allies with military predominance. At the same time, it would have appeared to go some way to meet the disarmament commitments made in the League Covenant and, if presented in the right way, might have reduced German resentment at the settlement. This would have been all the more plausible if it had been combined with the permanent demilitarization of the Rhineland negotiated at Locarno in 1925 and a French commitment only to use their standing army in Europe in the most extreme of emergencies. This would have paralleled the 1925 Geneva Protocol, under which states agreed not to use chemical or biological weapons. The modern equivalent is the tacit, and sometimes explicit, commitment by the nuclear weapon states that they will not use their nuclear forces against non-nuclear powers.

The British and American publics were hardly aware of such missed opportunities, but the failure of forced disarmament measures in the 1920s no more turned them against such measures after World War II than the failure of appeasement turned them against diplomacy. Rather it made many determined that Germany and Japan should be completely *demilitarized*, so that it would be much more difficult for them to hide evasions of such orders.⁶³ In January 1944, 77.2 percent of those Americans polled were in favour of demobilizing the German army 'and keeping them from having an army again'. By March 1945, this had risen to 84.7 percent. This contrasted with under 30 percent who believed in January 1944 in splitting Germany up into small states and just over 30 percent who favoured stopping the Germans from rebuilding their heavy industries. Thirty-seven percent of Americans believed it would take more than 20 years for Germany 'to become a good nation' and 30 percent said they would never do so. The public appreciated that the aggressors' plans might have been foiled but that prolonging the security which victory provided would be much more

⁶²Philip Towle, 'British Security and Disarmament Policy in the 1920s', in Ahman et al., Quest for Stability, Ch.7.

⁶³Morgan, Assize of Arms, 251.

difficult. Hence, the importance of enforced disarmament.⁶⁴ What they did not foresee was the unique moral and intellectual victory that they were achieving and which would make demilitarization so easy.

The German radical Leopold Schwarzschild wrote in 1943:

If one lost World War did not suffice to cure the Germans, a second lost war will not, in all human probability, suffice either... There is no hope of really and effectively demilitarising Germany as long as she is left with a nucleus in which her militaristic traditions can be continued and rebuilt at the first opportunity. Before Germany can be called demilitarised generations will have to pass in which no one has ever held a gun in his hand, or served a cannon or a tank or an aeroplane.⁶⁵

Schwarzchild's gloom, like Cecil's, was fortunately not to be vindicated by events. The vanquished can be persuaded to accept disarmament measures imposed on them if they are morally disarmed or convinced that the victors have made a case for creating an asymmetrical correlation of forces. In the 1950s and 1960s, Japan and Germany only rearmed reluctantly and slowly under pressure from the former victors, led by the US. The restrictions on German acquisition of missiles and submarines were gradually eased because they were never evaded or resisted. The military officers who had formed the inspectorate of the Western European Union, which was tasked to verify German disarmament, retired not embittered as Morgan and Hordern were, but with the feeling that they had presided successfully over the harmonious reintegration of Germany into world affairs. The Germans could not have been convinced in the 1920s that their moral case for war in 1914 was fraudulent, but they might have been persuaded in the right circumstances that an asymmetrical military balance was stabilizing. As Lieutenant Colonel Hordern warned Morgan in 1933, moral and intellectual disarmament has to parallel the enforced reduction of armies if further enforcement action or another war is to be avoided.

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⁶⁴*Public Opinion Quarterly*, 9 (1945), 91. US people believed both Germany and Japan should be permanently disarmed, see 95.

⁶⁵Schwarzschild, World in Trance, 276.

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