

contre l'autre Etat, ou bien attendant à nos régimes politique ou social par la force ou bien incitant à des actes de terrorisme, préparant de tels actes contre ses représentants officiels, ainsi que des organisations s'attribuant le rôle de Gouvernement de l'autre Etat ou d'une partie de son territoire.

De même, ils s'engagent à interdire le recrutement ainsi que l'entrée de leur territoire et le transit par leur territoire de forces armées, d'armes, de munitions, d'équipement et de toute espèce de matériel militaire destiné à ces organisations.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Ministre, l'assurance de ma plus haute considération.»

(s) M. LITVINOV

Commissaire du Peuple aux Affaires Etrangères.

Rede des britischen Staatssekretärs des Auswärtigen über den Ostpakt, gehalten vor dem Unterhaus am 13. Juli 1934¹⁾

Die Rede Sir John Simons über den Plan eines Ostpaktes vor dem Unterhaus am 13. Juli 1934 ist — da der Paktentwurf sowie der Meinungsaustausch zwischen den beteiligten Regierungen noch geheim gehalten werden — die einzige zugängliche Äußerung einer amtlichen Stelle, die über den Inhalt und den Umfang dieses Planes ein zusammenhängendes Bild gibt. Es wird daher der den Wortlaut der Äußerung enthaltende Teil der Verhandlungen vor dem Unterhaus aus den britischen Parlamentsberichten nachstehend wiedergegeben:

Sir J. Simon: ... As everyone knows, the main subject upon which M. Barthou came to talk was the subject of the possible creation of a pact of mutual assistance which would embrace a number of countries in the Eastern parts of Europe. I want to present to the Committee a short account of the scheme as it emerged after the exchange of views which took place, the full explanations which were given, and the consideration which was paid by each side to the views of the other.

The plan in contemplation is one which would involve, in the first place, a pact of mutual assistance between the five elements (counting the Baltic States as one) — that is to say, between Soviet Russia, the Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany. That is the project which was put before us. The nature of the relation created by such a pact, if it could be negotiated and brought about, would be, as I have already described it, a pact of mutual assistance, and it would therefore follow the analogy of Locarno. In addition to that there is a further feature which I am right in saying that M. Barthou described as a condition, which would in a certain way connect Russia with the existing Locarno Treaty, in a form which may have to be considered by the statesmen of Europe if this matter is pursued; and it

¹⁾ 292 H. C. Deb. 5 s. pp. 691 ff.

will take the form of a guarantee on the part of Russia to France on the one hand and Germany on the other, in the event of conditions arising which bring the provisions of the Locarno Treaty into operation.

... Also, reciprocally, there would be an assurance offered by France in respect of the boundaries of Russia and the boundaries of Germany on Germany's Eastern side. That is the bare bones of what is no doubt a very ambitious and elaborate scheme. But, whatever may be the need for secrecy in diplomatic communications, there is no justification at all why the House of Commons should not have the frankest and fullest statement of what emerged from these discussions.

I would like the House at once to consider one or two matters which arise under that scheme. In the first place, it plainly is what the hon. and gallant Member opposite just now referred to as a pact of regional guarantees. I may say, incidentally, that I agree entirely with that part of his speech in which he laid down, I think with great good sense and objectivity, that if you can secure a really reciprocal pact of mutual guarantees between a suitable group of nations, you will, by that process, be contributing to a general building up of collective security. It may be that there are people so attached to the extreme expression of an abstract principle, that anything short of it is automatically rejected, and I hope that I may pay my tribute to the hon. Member opposite when I say that I recognise — and recognise very gratefully — the objective good sense with which he approaches this subject. The first point on which it is, therefore, necessary to be clear is this. We could not in this country — this Government could not, and I do not think any Government in this country could — lend any countenance, or any encouragement or moral support to new arrangements between States in Europe which would be of a definitely selective character in the sense that they were building up one combination as against another. I made it my business in the discussions during the two days when M. Barthou was here, to make that proposition entirely clear, and it is due to that distinguished French statesman to say that he accepted the proposition and confirmed it without any qualification at all.

While, therefore, on the one hand, we could not encourage or lend our moral support to an arrangement which would appear to be in the nature of a selective alliance against any country, quite a different situation arises if what is really proposed is of a genuine reciprocal character. If, therefore, Russia is prepared to offer the same guarantee to Germany as she has now offered to France, and if France is prepared to offer the same guarantee to Germany as she has offered to Russia, then it does appear to me that any objection on the score that what is contemplated is not in the true sense a mutual guarantee, is entirely met. That point, so far as discussion between M. Barthou and myself is concerned, is completely established.

The second point is this — and I wish to repeat it again most plainly and bluntly to the House and the country. We have made it entirely plain from the beginning, whatever may be the interest or encouragement which this country may be prepared to offer in this new pact, we are not undertaking any new obligation at all. That is quite clearly and definitely understood, and there is no possible question or challenge about it. In relation to the original Locarno Treaty, our position corresponds to the position of Italy. In the original Locarno Treaty, in which both we and Italy are partners in the combination, we are only there to lend our support as guarantors and we are not getting ourselves, directly, protection for our own boundaries.

But in the present case, in the position that this country takes up, we go further. We undertake no obligation at all. If we are asked what view we should take of such a new pact of mutual guarantee in Eastern Europe, we are bound to give a frank answer, but before giving that answer it should be established, without any possible doubt, that we are doing so on the understanding that this is not a case in which we are extending our own commitments in any way whatever.

There is a third thing which is involved, and with which I wish now to deal. If Soviet Russia is going to take up this new position, if she is going to become a party to this new arrangement in Eastern Europe, well, then, it is absolutely essential that Russia should come within the League of Nations. That is the view taken by the French Government. It is the view, I believe, taken by the Russian Government, and in the course of the last few days, I have made it entirely plain to M. Barthou that it is the view taken by His Majesty's Government. I have no difficulty whatever in facing critics in this country, if critics there be, on the proposition. There you have this immense powerful State with 160,000,000 of people inevitably destined to exert its influence profoundly on the history and development of the world. Now which do you prefer — that this immense power should be inside or outside the collective system of the League of Nations? I cannot doubt what is the answer.

I cannot share all the partialities and dislikes of the hon. Member opposite. I do not pick and choose. I neither wish to proclaim that Japan is the King's enemy nor that Soviet Russia is my special friend. But this I do say, that if we sincerely desire to lend our support to the new system which we have tried to develop since the war, if we are really and truly going to do our utmost to stabilise world forces and bring within the common council of the world all the important Powers we can, then there is no doubt whatever that it would be an immense gain that Soviet Russia should be brought in. I am not complaining of these matters being raised, but, in fact, I do not think that His Majesty's Government have always been treated quite fairly about this. We have never made any secret of our position. I have stated it myself here in the House more than once; Soviet Russia knows it quite well, and I therefore have great pleasure in answering the question which the hon. Member opposite put to me in terms which I think will satisfy him, and the answer is this. Certainly, we are prepared to welcome Russia warmly to the League of Nations if Russia makes that application. We are satisfied that it would be a contribution to the peace of the world, if that result came about. It is necessarily a matter for Russia to decide whether she makes that application or not, but His Majesty's Government would welcome that result if that result were obtained.

There is a fourth thing that is very necessary to this new arrangement and which, so far as I have observed, has not been mentioned in the two interesting speeches which have just been made. It is a matter to which His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance. The argument about the relation between security and agreement about armaments goes on continually. At one time it is the one element which is being pushed forward; and at another time it is the other. But in fact these two things are necessarily related, and, if there is going to be brought about by this new Russo-French initiative a new pact of mutual guarantee in which Germany is going to be included, it would appear to His Majesty's Government extremely necessary to realise that the conclusion of such a pact and Germany's partic-

ipation in this system of reciprocal guarantees that would be given — which mark you would operate for the security of Germany as well as of her neighbours — would afford the best ground for the resumption of negotiations for the conclusion of a Convention such as would provide for a reasonable application of the principle of German equality of rights in a regime of security for all nations.

As a practical matter, Germany must be a member of the new combination if it comes about. Germany would indeed in such a combination, if she were prepared to take part in it, receive very valuable additional assurance under the head of security. But it appears to His Majesty's Government, and I think it will appear to the House of Commons, that we ought not to allow this occasion which has emerged, principally through the consideration of problems of security, to pass without endeavouring to take advantage of it for the immediate purpose of promoting the objects for which the Disarmament Conference was called, and I am very happy to be able to tell the House that as a result of the conversations which took place between His Majesty's Government and the representatives of the French Government during Monday and Tuesday of this week, the French Government agree with His Majesty's Government in holding that view, and have authorised me to make that communication as being a communication of their view to the German Government, which I have already done.

It appears to me that if you put all these matters together this is at any rate a very hopeful suggestion. We must not treat it as more than a suggestion. There is a vast deal to be done before it can emerge in the form of solid content. My right hon. Friend the Member for West Birmingham (Sir A. Chamberlain) knows very well, nobody knows better, how many were the goings and comings, the concessions here and the persuasions there, which had to be accomplished over a considerable space of time before he had the pride and satisfaction of feeling, with Mr. Briand and Herr Stresemann, that they had produced the original Pact of Locarno. I would not wish to represent to the House or to the country the account which I am now giving as an account of something positively achieved. But at least it is a very encouraging sign.

I recapitulate the points in the arrangement which appear to me to be fundamental and of the greatest value, for the adhesion, I trust, of all parties and schools of thought in this country. First that the new arrangement if it comes about is in the truest and most complete sense reciprocal. It cannot by any possibility be represented as being a select combination between certain Powers joining forces, or at any rate joining forces hypothetically, against the possibility of resisting another Power. The thing is completely mutual in its structure, and the poison of suspicion which undoubtedly might be produced by such a suggestion in other circumstances, is completely eradicated, and removed by the fact that it is a genuinely mutual proposal. Secondly there is the point that we ourselves, and I am sure the opinion of the country would support His Majesty's Government in this, have said, and nobody invites us to do other, that it must be entirely clear that this country is not undertaking any new responsibilities. Thirdly, we have made no sort of secret of our view as to the desirability and importance of bringing Russia within the circle of the League of Nations, and we welcome this opportunity of promoting that object.

Fourthly, we must not allow this occasion to pass as though it were solely confined to the structure of a pact of security, however good in itself that may be, but that we must recall the formula of December, 1932, which

now takes on it not a new meaning at least a new application and a new hopefulness. What we are all working for is the realisation of the principle of German equality of rights in a system of security for all nations.

Sir Stafford Cripps: As regards the question of mutual assistance, will these contemplated conferences be through Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations or some fresh device?

Sir J. Simon: I have heard of no suggestion of a fresh device, but I must not allow the hon. and learned Gentleman or anybody else to suppose that the matter has travelled further than it has. Remarkable progress was made in the course of what was a very short visit, but, of course, there is a vast deal of working out to be done. And especially as we are in the position of benevolent well-wishers and not of actual contracting parties, I must be very careful not to go further than I am authorised to go in any statement that I make.

I was going to make an observation about Belgium. As I understand it, the proposal is one in which France and Germany would be reciprocally interested in the Russian guarantee, and that, of course, operates indirectly to the advantage of the immediate neighbour of both. But I would rather use the occasion to point out how Belgium itself is an illustration of the enormous advantages of this new method of reciprocal engagements as compared with the old method of selective alliances. I conceive the difference very much as though one were to say that in the post-war architecture of the world, the wise architect is the man who is trying to construct a building in which there will indeed be stresses and strains between its various parts, but in which the combination of the various parts takes up the stresses and the strains of the whole and keeps it, therefore, safe and secure.

The whole conception of this collective system in the post-war world is the conception that mankind will be best sheltered and most secure if we live in a building which, by means of a suitable combination of the parts, will cancel out strains and dangers because every part is making a suitable contribution to protect the whole. Of course, the integrity of the territory of Belgium is no less vital to the interests and safety of this country to-day than it has been in times past. It is a geographical fact which nothing can change. Indeed, changed conditions, especially in connection with the air, have not altered that historic fact at all; they have only served to emphasise it. That is the point of view of our own national security. But here again it is the mutual character of the original agreement signed at Locarno, dealing among other things with the frontier between Belgium and Germany, which constitutes its essential feature and makes it so valuable a guarantee of European security as a whole. His Majesty's Government cannot but think — I hope the House and the country will agree — that an extension of this system of assurances, so long as they are mutual in expression and reciprocal in intention, should make for the strengthening of the foundations of peace and the restoration of confidence in Europe.

In these circumstances, as I have said, His Majesty's Government have decided that they would make public their view that an Eastern pact of mutual guarantee, based on the strictest principles of reciprocity and conceived with the genuine purpose of strengthening the foundations of peace in Europe — I will go further and say strengthening the foundations of peace in the world — by creating a further basis for reciprocal guarantees, is well deserving the support of the British Government and of the British people. Our part or responsibility in this matter is not, of course, the same as that of those States

which would undertake the new mutual responsibility, but none the less we have a part to play. Let those who are disposed to suggest that British influence in the world has been diminished observe the importance that is attached by the world to the part that we do play. We have a part to play, for peace all over the world remains the first of British interests, and it is the first object of our international policy.

These discussions only took place at the beginning of this week, and I wish to inform the House that we have already put ourselves in communication with certain other Powers, explaining the true character of this mutual guarantee pact as it has emerged from the London conversations, and urging that those with whom we have communicated should do all in their power to secure the success of the negotiations. In the case of some Powers, such as Germany and Poland, that would involve an actual participation in the proposed pact. We are merely, therefore, in the position of a friendly Power offering to them, in all good will, the views which we have been led to form for their consideration. The responsibility and decision is naturally with them, not with us.

The position of Italy is different. Just as, in the case of the original Locarno Treaty, Italy and ourselves occupy corresponding positions, so I apprehend that it is improbable that Italy would become personally responsible for this Eastern Pact. I am very happy to say that I have received, only a few moments before the House sat to-day, a communication from Signor Mussolini, which I understand is to be made public in Italy to-day, and which Signor Mussolini authorises me to communicate publicly here to the House. It is in the following terms:

“The attitude of Italy, as a signatory to the Pact of Locarno, is similar to that of the United Kingdom. On the clear understanding that the Eastern pact of mutual guarantee does not imply any fresh engagement on her part, Italy regards with sympathy proposals which are made on a basis of absolute reciprocity between all the countries concerned. This is particularly the case when such proposals offer fresh possibilities in the field of a limitation or reduction of armaments and as regards the implicit recognition of equality of rights.”

I shall be very happy if, at the conclusion of the Debate, I find that the views expressed by those who take part in it in this House are such that I am able to inform the head of the Italian Government that not only the British Government, but the British Parliament, find themselves in entire agreement with the views which he has expressed, and which we welcome warmly. I have made a faithful report to the House of what has happened. I do not pretend that more has happened than I have said, but it appears to me that this new opportunity is one which we should wish to see seized with both hands. I would earnestly beg the House of Commons to give it their full support and encouragement.