

Main Problems of the Post-war Period

France's territ. gains from the Paris treaties (Alsace-Lorraine, mandates in Africa and the Near East) gave her a position of hegemony in Europe; Belgium, Denmark, Poland, Roumania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia had an interest in seeing France's position preserved, for they too had received Ger. territories.

Apart from the domestic power struggles, caused by the proportional system of representation, Fr. domestic politics came under addit. severe pressures:

1. The areas devastated by war had to be restored (cost: over 100,000 mil. francs).
2. Because of the large war debts owed to the U.S.A. and Britain (\$5,000 mil.), the franc lost in value—a development intensified by the rising domestic debt ceiling (by 1925, 300,000 mil. francs). Impressed by the phrase: '*L'Allemagne paiera tout*' ('Germany will pay all'), the French counted on Ger. reparations payments; but these did not materialize in the expected amounts.
3. Impoverishment of the bourgeoisie because of the loss of movable properties, caused by the war, the decline of the currency, and the tax burden.
4. A significant decrease in pop. with the encouragement of immigration (1931: 3 mil.) and increased flight from the countryside to the cities hastened soc. changes.

Problems in for. affairs:

1. The attempt to conclude with Britain and the U.S.A. treaties to safeguard the position of France failed.
2. Tensions developed with Britain over Fr. Rhine policy and the reparations question.

Fr. Politics (1919–31)

1919 Elect. vict. of the '**Bloc National**' (CLEMENCEAU, POINCARÉ, p. 105) over the '*Cartel des Gauches*' under Édouard Herriot (1822–1957). Defeat of CLEMENCEAU in the presid. election; PAUL DESCHANEL [Feb.–Sep. 1920] became president.

1920 The MILLERAND Cabinet (Jan.–Sep.): support for Poland during the Russo-Pol. war through the delivery of munitions and the dispatch of General WEYGAND. Conclusion of a milit. convention with Belgium.

1920–24 Presidency of ALEXANDER MILLERAND (1859–1943), who strongly influenced the BRIAND Cabinet (1921–2) and the

1922–4 Poincaré gvt, which had replaced the former because of its moderate policies of concession and the reparations question. POINCARÉ incurred strong opposition because of the

1923 occupation of the Ruhr (p. 149), which was carried through despite Brit. disagreement. His approval of the Dawes Plan (p. 135) and his fiscal policies (economies to strengthen the franc) increased his unpopularity. These factors, and the fear of excessive power in the presid. office and changes in educ. policy (abolition of secular schools), led to the

1924 elect. vict. of the '**Cartel des Gauches**'. MILLERAND was forced to resign. GASTON DOUMERGUE (1924–31) became president.

1924–5 The Herriot Cabinet. Recognition of the U.S.S.R.; acceptance of the Dawes Plan.

1925 The Locarno Pact (p. 135).

The attempt of the anti-clerical HERRIOT gvt to break off relations with the Vatican failed, as did

the endeavour to enforce secularizing laws in Alsace-Lorraine, which was still subject to the Napoleonic 'concordat'. The gvt fell over its fiscal policy: HERRIOT was forced to resign (Apr. 1925); the subsequent Cabinets of PAINLEVÉ, BRIAND, BRIAND-CAILLAUX and HERRIOT, were, for the same reason, of brief duration. Complicated by the

1925–6 uprisings in Morocco (ABD EL-KRIM, p. 179) and Lebanon (the Druses, p. 168), the domestic polit. situation worsened and a serious crisis threatened (power struggles of the parties and associations, esp. of the Left, the Catholics, and Action Française (p. 105).

1926–9 As prime minister Poincaré at first formed a gvt of 'nat. union' with BRIAND as for. minister; later he formed several coalition Cabinets. The fiscal crisis was overcome (the budget balanced and the franc stabilized).

1927 Efforts were made in Alsace and Lorraine to obtain autonomy within the Fr. republic. The Alsace-Lorraine 'Home Rulers' demanded a separate representative body and budget for the provinces. Strict measures against the autonomists were taken. After the

1928 elections for the Chamber of Deputies, the effort to stabilize the economy was crowned by the Currency Law (devaluation of the franc); however, the ministers of the Rad. party left the Cabinet.

Jul. 1929 Following the resignation of POINCARÉ (for reasons of health), France was governed by a number of short-lived Cabinets. When he was not prime minister, Aristide Briand remained in the For. Office. His policies of reconciliation with Germany, initiated at Locarno, amplified in the talks with STRESEMANN at Thoiry (Sep. 1926) and Lugano (Aug. 1928), failed because of the domestic polit. situation in both countries. The animosity between their respective peoples did not cease even after France had agreed to the evacuation of the Rhineland (1929). The French began the construction of the Maginot Line. In the end, BRIAND was forced to resign from the For. Office (1932). The plan for an Austro-Ger. customs union (p. 193) increased Fr. suspicions of Germany, as did the growth of radicalism on the Right. BRIAND's proposal for the establishment of a '**United States of Europe**' was hardly noticed.

1930 The Fr. occupation troops left the Rhineland (p. 151).

1931–2 Presidency of PAUL DOUMER (assassinated by a Rus. émigré in May 1932).

1931 Beginning of the econ. crisis. (For alliances, see p. 165.)

refusal to grant gvts the power to introduce rad. economies. Anti-parl. movements grew (the so-called Leagues ('Croix de Feu'); the Communists) As a result of the STAVISKY scandal (finan. corruption)

1934 the Leagues stormed the Palais Bourbon: the gvt of Édouard Daladier (1884-1970) resigned, even though it received a vote of confidence. The new

Feb.-Nov. 1934 gvt of 'nat. union' under the prime minister Gaston Doumergue failed because of its attempt to revise the constitution (strengthening of the executive, dissolution of the Chamber by the prime minister without consent of the Senate).

Nov. 1934-May 1935 Pierre-Étienne Flandin's (1889-1958) gvt of 'peace-at-home' abandoned the project of const. reform, but was also refused the necessary powers to overcome the fiscal crisis.

Jun. 1935-Jan. 1936 Cabinet of Pierre Laval (1883-1945 (executed)). Opposing REYNAUD's proposal to devalue the franc, LAVAL pursued deflationary policies (emergency decrees reducing the salaries of civil servants, lowering of wages and rents). The anticipated quickening of econ. life and a balanced budget failed to materialize. The ministers of the Rad. party left the Cabinet and a new gvt was formed under

Jan.-Jun. 1936 Prime Minister Albert Sarraut (1872-1962). To overcome the danger of Fascism, the Com. leader Maurice Thorez (1900-64) proposed the formation of a 'Popular Front', to be composed of the Socialist Repub. Union (est. 1935), the Communists and Socialists:

1936 vict. of the 'Popular Front' in the elections to the Chamber.

1936-7 The 'Popular Front' gvt under Prime Minister Léon Blum (1872-1950). Although the Com. party refused to cooperate in the gvt and staged strikes and sit-downs to support its demands, BLUM pushed through the Malignar agreements: the 40-hr week, holidays with pay, collective bargaining, increased wages (a minimum of 15%), binding arbitration, recognition of the right to unionize, workers' participation in the running of the factories, nationalization of the Banc de France and armament factories. The Leagues were dissolved, but continued their Fascist activities in organizations concealing their identity. The devaluation of the franc failed to lead to a revival of econ. life or the elimination of unemployment.

1937 Refusal of the Senate to grant BLUM the requested authority to eliminate the fiscal crisis. The Cabinet resigned. The subsequent Popular Front Cabinets of CHAUTEUPS (1937-8) and BLUM (Mar.-Apr. 1938) saw the gradual dissolution of the Popular Front.

1938-40 Daladier Cabinet. Worked to overcome the domestic crisis by emergency decrees, to lessen soc. and polit. conflicts; introduced the enabling law to restore the economy. Following the break with the Popular Front, a

Nov. 1938 general strike was called. It was broken off without achieving its objectives. During the remaining months of peace, family welfare and housing construction laws were passed. Industries were shifted to the provinces.

1939 General mobilization and declaration of war against Germany (2 and 3 Sep.).

1940 Fall of DALADIER (21 Mar.). Paul Reynaud

(1878-1966) became prime minister. After the invasion by Germany, Marshal PÉTAIN (p. 129) was included in the Cabinet. Requests for aid to the U.S.A. yielded no results. The gvt resigned on 16 Jun.

For. policy (1931-40): France continued the attempt to isolate Nazi Germany by a system of 'collective security'. Individual treaties were signed. After the conclusion of the Geneva 5-Power Agreement (p. 193) and the hardening of Fr. attitudes, Fr. diplomacy under the for. minister LOUIS BARTHOU (1862-1934 (assassinated)) supported the conclusion of the Balk. Pact (p. 165) to aid the Little Entente and denounced Ger. rearmament in a verbal diplomatic protest (Apr. 1934).

1934 HITLER rejected the Fr. proposal for an 'Eastern Locarno' agreement. As a result, France supported the admission of the U.S.S.R. to the League of Nations.

1935 Colon. agreement with Italy and Mutual Aid Pact with the U.S.S.R.

During the Abys. conflict, the prime minister, LAVAL, took up an ambiguous position: France participated in the sanctions of the League of Nations, but also submitted a proposal to mediate (the HOARE-LAVAL agreement). For all practical purposes, Franco-Ital. relations were finished by the conclusion of the Ger.-Ital. Pact (p. 197). Although disillusioned by Britain's hesitation during the Ger. occupation of the Rhineland (p. 197) and the annexation of Austria (p. 197), France moved closer to Britain. The improvement of relations between Poland and Germany (p. 197) and between Yugoslavia and Italy (1937) weakened the Fr. alliance system in Eastern Europe.

1938 Visit of the Brit. royal couple to Paris (emphasis on Brit.-Fr. friendship). After the visit of the prime minister, DALADIER, and the for. minister, BONNET, to London (peaceful settlement of the Sudeten crisis), France took part in the Munich Conference (p. 197). A Ger.-Fr. declaration of non-aggression followed in Dec. Tense relations with Italy prevailed because of Ital. annexationist intentions in Tunisia and Corsica and cancellation of the Franco-Ital. colon. agreement (Dec.). Close polit. cooperation with Britain (proclamations of guarantees, p. 190).