LEAGUE OF NATIONS

PREPARATORY COMMISSION FOR THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Memorandum submitted to the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference by the Greek Government.

QUESTION 1.

A. In Time of War.

In addition to the armed land, sea and air forces, which constitute the main armament, the following factors should also be taken into serious consideration, in order to determine the extent of the armaments and their value, and the power of the country in time of war:

1. Financial resources and national wealth;
2. Raw materials which are, or can be, used for war purposes;
3. Industry, trade, war manufactures, and works and factories which could, by any kind of adaptation, be converted into war factories. On this point we may make a few observations which are highly important from our point of view.

It is obvious that an industrial country, rich in raw materials, can very easily and speedily obtain, in the event of war, armaments and war material of every kind. Supplying all needs of this kind from its own resources, without having to import anything, such a country is in an incomparably stronger position than a non-industrial country which is poor in raw materials. A country of the latter class, being obliged to import everything required for the defence of its territory, would always be threatened by the tragic eventuality of finding itself disarmed and unable to arm in time against an impending danger.

To take our own case, Greece is almost completely without national industries, and has to import all her raw materials. This is particularly unsatisfactory as regard the navy, which requires enormous quantities of raw materials owing to the complexity of modern naval equipment.

At the same time, a reduction of armaments, whether in peace or in war, could not in practice be imposed on any countries but those which have no war industries and no raw materials, and even then it could only be done by strict control and, if necessary, by a blockade to prevent all exports to the country concerned. On the other hand, it would probably be very difficult, if not impossible, to enforce such a control against countries which are well provided.

This fact, which gives rise to a striking inequality between States which produce arms, etc., and States which do not, is specially deserving of close examination, and should be regarded at the same time as a vital factor and as a basis in estimating the extent to which, and the proportion in which, the armaments of each country are to be limited.

As was stated in the course of the discussions which took place at the Conference on the Trade in Arms and Ammunition and in Implements of War, unless due weight is given to this fact, any convention which might be concluded would not be founded on equality and justice, but would create a privileged class among the Members of the League of Nations, and would consequently fail to attain the goal at which the League is aiming. Such are the observations which we, as a non-producing country, feel bound to put forward.

4. The road and railway systems, and maritime communications, which, in the event of mobilisation and war, could be used for concentrating troops when mobilised, and for transporting material.

Publications of the League of Nations

IX. ARMAMENTS

1926. IX. 4.
There can be no doubt that the nature and the security of these lines of communication are a highly important factor in the prompt and easy arming of a country. The more exposed the communications and the more remote the producing countries, the more difficult do concentration and arming become. On the other hand, a country which borders on producing countries or is in their neighbourhood, and whose lines of communication are secure, can arm, concentrate and carry out transport operations in general with ease and rapidity.

In Greece, which is an essentially mountainous country and almost completely devoid of railways, traffic is carried almost entirely by sea. Greece must therefore secure her maritime lines of communication at all costs.

(5) Facilities for producing chemicals and gases (chemical and bacteriological warfare, which, we trust, will never occur again);

(6) The geographical situation of the country (as contemplated in Article 8, paragraph 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations), the countries which border upon it, the length and nature of its frontiers and the directions from which it might be exposed to attack, as also the extent of the danger from each direction and each possible attack.

Greece, having an immense number of islands, is in a unique geographical situation. As the country is not self-supporting, the maintenance of its food supply would be highly problematical if its maritime lines of communication were not secured.

(7) Fortifications;

(8) The military divisions of the country.

B. In Time of Peace.

The military strength of a country in time of peace would appear to depend principally upon the following factors:

(1) Method and system of recruiting;

(2) Length of service with the colours;

(3) Length, system and methods of instruction for recruits;

(4) Military schools for officers and non-commissioned officers;

(5) Staff Colleges, technical schools, and general training of officers and N.C.O.s;

(6) Important manœuvres held from time to time, when reserve classes are called to the colours;

(7) Arms and material of every kind in service, in store, in process of manufacture, or on order, and the value and power of such arms and material;

(8) Training of youths in schools and colleges where preliminary military instruction can be given.

QUESTION II.

(a) Assuming that the object of reducing armaments is to preserve peace and, as far as possible, to avoid armed conflicts and solutions by violence of disputes arising between two countries, it is clear that, if this object is to be practically and effectually attained, the instrument—that is to say, the armed forces which a country could control for this purpose—should be reduced to a minimum. That is what we understand by the reduction of armaments. As to the practicability of reducing war strength or peace strength, we consider that the two things are the same, the latter being the nucleus of the former and the former the complement of the latter. As these forces are based on the military training of the population by the peace establishment of the army, and on the preparation in peace-time of the material needed for the war establishment, it follows that the initial objective of the reduction of armaments should be the limitation to a minimum of: (i) the number of men receiving military training; and (ii) the quantity of arms and war material in general manufactured and purchased.

If, however, any country is to carry out such a reduction with complete thoroughness—if, in particular, it is to abolish military training—it must at the outset be able to take its stand firmly on these facts: (1) that its independence and the integrity of its territory will always be secured and respected; (2) that, if danger threatens, speedy and effectual help will be forthcoming; (3) that, if attacked, it will not be surprised in a position of inferiority to the attacking country; and (4) that the reduction of armaments will take place in all countries without exception, and on a principle of equality as defined in the reply to Question I above.

The point then arises: Could these four fundamental assumptions easily be realised and secured? In our opinion, the problem of reducing armaments is very closely bound up with the provision of mutual assistance under the Covenant of the League of Nations, or under special defensive treaties which have been or may be concluded with that object.

It is perfectly true that the Covenant specifies the measures to be taken against unprovoked attack. At the same time, it is worth noting:

(1) That the relevant clauses of the Covenant are binding only upon the States Members of the League, and in particular that they refer only to possible disputes between States Members;
(2) That, while the geographical situation and other special circumstances of one State regarded as an aggressor and a Covenant-breaker might be such that the League of Nations could promptly take against that State all the measures provided for in Article 16 of the Covenant, there might be other States whose geographical situation and special circumstances would prevent the League of Nations, however good its intentions might be, from taking those measures promptly against them, and being in time to afford adequate protection to the attacked or threatened State and to secure its independence and territorial integrity.

This awkward but undeniable fact is clearly worthy of close attention and careful examination. If a country is to disarm, it is essential that it should be given absolute confidence—in other words, should be unshakably convinced that, in sacrificing its armaments to the ideal of peace, it is not at the same time sacrificing its freedom and its very existence to the greed of another country, and to its own credulity.

(b) Assuming, then, that the peace establishment of an army is nothing but the nucleus and the school of the war establishment, and approaching the question from a purely technical point of view, we are of opinion that, in order to secure a genuine reduction of armaments, it is essential:

(1) To reduce the number of units in the land, sea and air forces;
(2) To reduce the establishment of each unit;
(3) To reduce the existing stock of material and to control its manufacture;
(4) To reduce military expenditure to a minimum;
(5) To put out of action, for military purposes, all arms and war material factories above a certain number to be fixed;
(6) To reduce the number of cadres and the number of civilians undergoing military training (recruits);
(7) To reduce the period of service with the colours and to limit the period of instruction mentioned above.

In the case of short-service naval forces, the period of service with the colours should not be reduced beyond certain limits, since the training of crews to use the complicated equipment of to-day is a long process. Moreover, if the period of service with the colours for naval recruits were reduced too far, this would lessen the value of the training, and would consequently increase the cost. In the special case of naval forces, therefore, it would be preferable to aim at a reduction in the number of units, rather than at a reduction of the period of service with the colours.

(8) To prohibit, as a general rule, the transfer of any warship from one Power to another, either as a gift or for a consideration (this provision is already made in the Treaty of Washington).

Exceptions to this rule might be allowed at the request of a country one of whose possible adversaries had not discharged its obligations in connection with the reduction of armaments.

(9) To abolish all secret expenditure and to maintain strict supervision over expenditure;
(10) To refrain loyally from all propaganda abroad and from all designs upon the territory of another country;
(11) To avoid all rivalries which might lead to a conflict of any kind.

But how and by what means could the realisation of these conditions and the loyal observance of these principles be ensured?

In the matter of naval armaments, it is easy to ascertain whether a country has genuinely carried out any decisions that may have been reached as to the reduction of armaments. This is made clear by the results of the Washington Treaty. The verification of naval armaments becomes still easier if the country in question has no national naval industry (shipyards, gun factories, etc.).

In regard to other armaments, however, on what lines should we proceed?

To resort to the system of supervision by special commissions would be to admit and demonstrate at the outset that good faith and mutual confidence do not universally exist. As regards the system of commissions to supervise the loyal execution of the clauses of a treaty or convention, it cannot be said to have been a complete success. Thus the aim cannot be attained except on the basis of mutual confidence, sincerity and good faith. As to the growth of sincerity and solidarity between the various States and nations up to the point at which they would be a guarantee of peace, that, we think, is a question for the future, and not for the very near future, because it depends upon the general moral improvement, in an approximately equal degree, of men and nations; and unhappily this process of evolution does not yet appear to have reached the level that might be desired.

As the same time, we are firmly convinced that the only way to arrive at practical solutions is to pursue undaunted the study of this complicated problem.
QUESTION III.

In order to measure the armaments of one country against the armaments of another, it is essential to examine and compare separately the following elements in each country:

1. Land, sea and air effectives;
2. Peace and war units of the land, sea and air forces;
3. Arms, ammunition and war material available for use;
4. War industries and war manufactures in general;
5. Budgets of the Ministries of War, Marine and the Air;
6. Extraordinary expenditure of the above Ministries;
7. Periods of service with the colours and military training;
8. Strength of cadres.

In comparing these elements and estimating their weight, however, it is absolutely essential to take into due consideration certain other factors which are very closely linked with the above:

a. Geographical situation;
b. Length and nature of frontiers;
c. Population;
d. Total area; and
e. Financial situation.

In the matter of naval armaments the following points should also be considered:

a. Number of ships of each type;
b. Age of ships;
c. Armament of ships (guns, torpedoes, mines, etc.);
d. Defensive armament against gun-fire, aeroplane bombs, and torpedoes, mines, etc.;
e. Speed;
f. Ratio of expenditure on new building to total naval budget;
g. Auxiliary craft (tugs, trawlers, etc.), and auxiliary craft requisitioned in time of war.

Further, in examining the above elements, account should be taken of the following factors in each country:

a. Geographical situation;
b. Length and configuration of coastline and islands; naval bases;
c. How far the country is dependent upon overseas trade;
d. Mercantile marine and commercial ports;
e. Aptitude of the population for navigation and trade;
f. General financial position of the country, and extent to which its economic life depends upon sea communications.

To compare armaments on this basis is a highly complicated and detailed task, but it is essential if a fair idea is to be obtained. A superficial comparison in which the special circumstances of each country were not adequately considered would yield incorrect results; it might lead to the conclusion that the armaments of a certain country were adequate or excessive, where a more thorough investigation might have demonstrated the contrary.

QUESTION IV.

Of all the armaments of a country, none can be regarded as purely and exclusively defensive except defensive works, such as forts, fortresses, entrenched camps, blockhouses, etc., and coastal artillery (so far as it is stated and known to be for use as such).

All other armaments, such as arms in general, war material, etc., can be used either for defensive or for offensive purposes. It would appear that their description as defensive or offensive armaments depends entirely upon the use to which the country intends or is obliged to put them, and not on their nature or process of manufacture, since the same armaments could be used both for defence and for attack.

In the case of naval armaments, there are none which are either purely defensive or purely offensive. Mobile defence flotillas, and even submarines, are defensive armaments no less than coastal batteries, mines, and anti-aircraft defences. The submarine, which might at first sight be regarded as an offensive weapon, is really only one weapon of the strategic defence. It is essentially the weapon of the weaker party—one of the most effectual defences of a country which
has to protect its vital interests at sea, but which is surrounded by neighbours with powerful
fleets and unable to compete with them in the matter of surface vessels. Consequently, it would
be unfair to make such a country do away with its submarines or limit their number. On the
other hand, mines—in themselves a purely defensive weapon for the protection of coasts and naval
bases—become, when carried by mine-laying cruisers or submarines and sown in the open sea or
off the enemy coasts, a weapon of the strategic offensive.

Only by a comparative study of the naval forces of the different countries, having regard to
the factors mentioned in the reply to the previous question, is it possible to decide whether the
number of vessels of each type which a country possesses exceeds the limits of purely defensive
armament.

It is thus impossible to lay down any definite rule for deciding whether armaments are offen-
sive or defensive, and how they are likely to be used, unless we are thoroughly acquainted with
the private ideas, intentions and views of their owners. Yet could we ever say that we were so well
acquainted with the intentions and the private ideas of a country that we knew how its armaments
would be used and could accordingly proceed to reduce our own unreservedly on that basis, in the
certainty that these armaments were intended for defence? It would be extremely risky to answer
in the affirmative.

QUESTIONS V AND VI.

A. As we have already pointed out in examining the previous questions, in order to lay down
principles on which a scale of armaments permissible to the various countries could be drawn up,
it would be advisable, after consideration and detailed investigation, to take into account:

(i) Geographical situation and special circumstances of each country from the point
of view of security;
(ii) Contiguous States, relations with them, their probable ideas and intentions;
(iii) Length, nature, and vulnerability of frontiers, e.g., unique vital points dominated by
positions in the neighbouring State, lines and centres of communication situated close to
frontiers and in exposed positions, important districts or towns and vital centres open to
attack in any form, etc.;
(iv) Armed forces of contiguous countries;
(v) National wealth and financial, commercial and industrial resources of the country,
with special reference to raw materials and war industries, particularly as compared with the
neighbouring countries;
(vi) Area and population;
(vii) Nature, length and density of lines of communication;
(viii) Nature and value of the assistance which the country might expect, either from other
countries under existing conventions or treaties, or from the League of Nations under Article 16
of the Covenant.

B. In the special case of naval armaments, it should be granted as a principle that the arma-
ments allowed to each country must be adequate:

(a) To protect it against any attack by neighbouring naval Powers;
(b) To protect its maritime communications and trade, provided that a thorough
investigation has shown that maritime trade is a vital factor in the economic life of a country;
(c) To provide for the concentration and transport of the army by sea in the event of
mobilisation;
(d) To secure the country's food supplies even if the adversary has so great a superiority
at sea that he can, without risk, enforce a close blockade.

We cannot emphasise too greatly how important it is for us to protect our communications
and our maritime trade, which is one of our principal sources of wealth and is vital to our existence.

It should be observed that the countries bordering on Greece have no appreciable oversea
trade. In the event of war, if one of those countries had a few swift warships (whether surface
vessels or submarines), it could quite easily attack our oversea trade, and so dislocate our national
economic system that we should be obliged to surrender.

It is therefore only fair and reasonable that Greece, who has no aggressive intentions, should
be allowed, so long as general and complete disarmament is regarded as impracticable, to possess
a fleet more powerful than the strongest of the fleets of her neighbours in the Balkans and the
Egean Sea, and a fleet adequate to protect her vital interests.

In order, however, to bear witness to the purely defensive aims of its naval policy, the Greek
Government would be willing to consider reducing the number of its capital ships provided that
similar measures were taken by all the neighbouring countries, including those which are not
Members of the League of Nations, and that certain conditions, which it will specify at the
proper time, were fulfilled.

C. Any estimate of the actual value of peace-time armaments in time of war can be of no
appreciable interest except as regards countries which have war industries and are rich in raw
materials. All military men have experience of the enormous deterioration and damage suffered by arms and material in general, and of the immense consumption of munitions during a war, and they know how important it is that there should be an adequate supply of munitions. It is also well known that, whatever quantity may be available at the beginning of a war and whatever saving may be made, the stocks of material and munitions in hand can never suffice in themselves, but that renewals must keep pace with consumption and deterioration. Consequently, there can be no question of peace-time armaments being of any great value to a country which cannot effect renewals out of its own resources, having regard to the possibility that for one reason or another it might find itself unable to import.

The conversion of peace-time armaments into war-time armaments is also dependent upon the industrial arrangements available. More especially, in connection with the distinction between civil and military aircraft, we do not think that the difference is great enough to justify the assertion that civil aircraft would be useless for war purposes. On the contrary, we are of opinion that heavy transport aircraft used for conveying passengers and mails could easily be converted into bombing machines, while light aircraft could be converted into scouts and fighting machines. Consequently, the whole of the aircraft of a country should be regarded as a military force, and evaluated at the actual number and power of the machines in use.

QUESTION VII.

Admitting that disarmament depends on security—as, indeed, we believe, and have frequently maintained—it is obvious that any reduction which is to have useful results must affect the armaments of all countries without exception, and not those of certain limited regions. It is impossible to be certain what country might conceivably in the future attack another country, and to include those two countries in disarmed regions. If, for example, a measure of regional disarmament were carried out including a country X, and if in the future another country W not included in this regional disarmament should in any way appear likely to attack the first country, what would be the position of the disarmed X, threatened by the fully armed W? Moreover, if in this regional disarmament we followed the principle of including groups of contiguous countries, we should then find ourselves faced with the problem of the neighbours of the contiguous countries, and so on ad infinitum.

Since, therefore, regional disarmament seems to be so ineffectual, and general disarmament so difficult, we are of opinion that, in order to achieve the latter and more desirable end, something like the following process might take place:

(1) Groups should be formed of countries linked by special treaties of security and mutual assistance, under the auspices and under the immediate supervision of the League of Nations, as complementary to the Covenant, and

(2) A gradual, fair, and properly proportioned reduction of armaments should be carried out.

This line of action, we think, might lead to general disarmament, which is essential for the tranquillity and peace of the world.

We feel bound to emphasise the word “general”, because there are some countries which are not members of the League of Nations and which might conceivably not feel bound to submit to any decisions which the League might take, and in view of the position, in that event, of the countries bordering upon them, which might be disarming at the very moment when their neighbours were doing the reverse.

As regards the economic and military assistance (Question V, (b)) contemplated in Article 16 of the Covenant, we regard this as being one of the most important points, and one of the most effective means of securing a considerable, and approximately general, reduction of armaments. In our opinion, it is the only way to inspire that confidence and sense of security upon which disarmament entirely depends.

If, however, that confidence and sense of security are to be stable and absolute, we think that a complete scheme of action and financial and economic assistance for an attacked country should be drawn up in advance, on the following lines:

(r) Determine the armed forces to be sent to the aid of the country attacked;

(2) Determine the financial and economic assistance to be given;

(3) Determine the exact measure in which each State should contribute either armed forces or material and funds for this assistance;

(4) Determine the time-limit within which the armed forces sent to assist should arrive in the field, in order to prevent the risk of a serious attack, and to spare the attacked country such general or local catastrophes as might result from such an attack;

(5) Draw up a full and clear scheme of operations, having regard to the special circumstances of each country and the possibilities of attack;

(6) Contemplate the eventuality of a State which was expected to contribute assistance failing for any reason to fulfil its obligations in time, or to fail to assist at all, and decide upon the immediate measures to be taken to make good the loss due to such defection or impotence;

(7) Regard as null and void all treaties of alliance or special conventions existing with the attacking country;
(8) Assuming that the attack was premeditated and came as a surprise, the attacker having collected the forces needed for an invasion, it would be doubtful whether the assistance arranged for could be brought into operation in time to prevent such invasion. In this eventuality (a highly probable one):

(a) The country attacked should be assisted as speedily as possible, and all the measures contemplated in Article 16 of the Covenant should be carried out without delay;
(b) An ultimatum should be sent through the League of Nations to the attacking country, calling upon it to withdraw its troops at once and unconditionally, and to indemnify the attacked country to an amount to be determined on an estimate of the damage done;
(c) Hostilities should not cease, nor pressure upon the attacker be withdrawn, until he has acted as required by the ultimatum and has indemnified the country attacked; and
(d) If the armed forces sent for this purpose prove to be insufficient, they should be reinforced without delay, so as to compel the attacking country to accept the League's conditions.

If these conditions could be so realised as to inspire a sense of security and absolute confidence, there could, we feel, be no justification for any State refusing under such circumstances to reduce its armaments to a minimum.

Notwithstanding her precarious geographical situation, the immense length of her frontiers, the almost total destruction of her armaments during the recent wars, Greece would be most happy to find herself free to employ all her revenue in peace works and for peace purposes, for the comfortable settlement of her refugees, and for her internal development. She would naturally, therefore, reduce all her armaments to a minimum without delay, and without reservation; but before doing so she must have that sense of security, she must believe, she must have absolute confidence, in those to whom she would entrust her independence, the integrity of her territory, and her future existence.

Under those conditions she would immediately reduce all her armaments with a genuine and profound sense of relief.