LEAGUE OF NATIONS

CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

Proposals of the Polish Delegation with regard to the Gradual Attainment of Moral Disarmament

Referring to its memorandum of September 17th, 1931 (document Conf. D. 16), the Polish Government, being convinced of the absolute necessity of achieving moral disarmament in every field of public life controlled by the organs of government, and anxious to facilitate the work of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments by creating an atmosphere of mutual confidence, has the honour to suggest to the Conference that the following proposals be forthwith brought under consideration:

I. REFORMS TO BE INTRODUCED IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION.

Inasmuch as the laws in force in the various countries do not take into account the new necessities arising out of the development of international relations, but confine themselves to protecting purely national interests, the Polish Government proposes that consideration be given to the possibility of adjusting national laws to the present stage of development of international life. The object of such consideration would be to define a class of actions incompatible with satisfactory international relations and dangerous to the peace of the world, such as the inciting of public opinion to warlike sentiments, propaganda aimed at inducing the State to violate international law, and the deliberate spreading of false or distorted reports or forged documents likely to embitter the relations between States.

On the basis of the results of this consideration, it would be possible to conclude a first international convention whereby Governments would agree to make the actions so specified punishable offences under their laws.

This first step might be followed by others as international ties were drawn closer.

II. PRESS.

Inasmuch as newspapers and periodicals determine the main currents of public opinion, and thereby exercise a considerable influence on international life, the Polish Government proposes that a conference be held, as soon as possible, of qualified representatives of journalists’ and publishers’ professional associations, to consider what steps could be taken to put the idea of moral disarmament into effect so far as the Press is concerned. This conference might further discuss the specific proposals formulated in the Polish memorandum of September 17th, 1931.

The results of the proceedings of this conference might afford a basis for concerted action, both by Governments and by professional Press associations.

III. EDUCATION.

Inasmuch as the future peace of the world depends upon the spirit in which the young are brought up, and the whole effort to organise an international community would be in vain if the young were not taught to look towards peace as the supreme good, the Polish Government proposes that the recommendations and suggestions already adopted should be progressively put into
effect by international undertakings. In this connection, attention should be drawn to the desirability of a general revision of school text-books, to the introduction, in educational institutions of every grade, of instruction concerning the League, international co-operation and the life of other peoples, and to the importance of Government encouragement for closer relations between students and teachers in different countries.

IV. Broadcasting, the Cinematograph and the Stage.

Inasmuch as international opinion is influenced by every kind of public manifestation of thought, such as broadcasting, the cinema and the stage, the Polish Government proposes that steps be taken to prevent, in these directions, abuses which would be dangerous to a good international understanding.

As regards broadcasting, the Polish Government is of opinion that considerable progress would be made if a general convention could be concluded on the subject. It should be observed that that part of the broadcasting programmes which deals with international relations is generally reserved for Governments and official news agencies. If Governments would undertake to adhere to the principles of moral disarmament in their exercise of this privilege, they would contribute greatly to the achievement of moral disarmament in this field.

Films and plays are generally subject to Government censorship, and the Polish Government therefore proposes that the Governments should undertake to prohibit the exhibition of films and the performance of plays which might embitter international relations, and, on the other hand, to encourage—e.g., by exemption from tax—films and plays conveying propaganda in favour of peace.

V.

Needless to say, the realisation of all these ideas in regard to the attitude of Governments to private activities would be entirely valueless if the Governments did not adhere to the fundamental ideas of moral disarmament in their mutual relations. The achievement here contemplated will not be complete unless the international policy of Governments is in harmony with their efforts in the direction of moral disarmament.

Procedure.

The Polish Government proposes that the question of moral disarmament be referred to the General Commission, which will doubtless appoint a sub-committee to draft the necessary convention or conventions.