Distributed to the Council, the Members of the League and the Delegates at the Assembly.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

GENEVA,
September 27th, 1923.

REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS

REPORT OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE TO THE FOURTH ASSEMBLY.
(Rapporteur: M. Benes.)

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I. LIMITATION OF NATIONAL EXPENDITURE ON ARMAMENTS.

The Assembly has on several occasions advocated the limitation of armaments, pending the possibility of their reduction as a result of the preparatory work now in progress. With this end in view various recommendations have been voted by successive Assemblies. The last of these recommendations which the Temporary Mixed Commission has examined was made by the Third Assembly, and is worded as follows:

"That the European States existing before the war of 1914 under their present description, whose juridical status has not been altered by the war, and which are not, at the moment, engaged in military operations which justify their armaments, be invited to reduce the total of their military, naval, and air expenditure to the figures for 1913."

The enquiries of the Temporary Mixed Commission have shown the difficulties of carrying out this recommendation.

The Third Committee has, however, endeavoured to work on the lines laid down for it by the preceding Assembly, the more so as the statistical work of the Secretariat has shown a decrease in army expenditure in the case of most States. It therefore proposes to the present Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

"The Assembly:

"Notes with great satisfaction that in the course of the last three years the States Members of the League have, with very few exceptions, been able to reduce their expenditure on armaments:

"Desires that this fortunate development should become more marked and more general;

"Recalls the resolutions of the preceding Assemblies concerning the limitation of expenditure on armaments;

"And requests the Council to recommend to the Members of the League not to exceed, during the period necessary for the elaboration and the adoption of the general scheme for the reduction of armaments, the total expenditure on military, naval and air armaments provided for in the budget of the present fiscal year;

"Subject to the reservation, however, that allowance shall be made:

"(a) for all contributions of effectives, material, or money recommended by the Council for the execution of the obligations provided for in Article 16 of the Covenant;
"(b) for all exceptional situations brought to the notice of the Council and recognised by it as such."

II. STATISTICAL ENQUIRY AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION.

From the very beginning, the Temporary Mixed Commission emphasised the importance of statistics in the matter of the reduction of armaments.

In its report to the Second Assembly, the Committee stated that the statistical data to be collected regarding armaments in different countries logically constituted "the only sound basis on which a criterion for dealing practically with the problem of disarmament can rest."

This work has always been considered by the Temporary Mixed Commission as an essential part of the series of preliminary enquiries undertaken with a view to the reduction of armaments. While the study of the Treaty of Guarantee may be considered as an investigation into the method to be adopted, the statistical enquiry would correspond to the investigation of the matter which should form the object of the desired reduction.

The Third Assembly recognised that the object of the statistical enquiry should be "the full military strength of the States", including:

(1) The actual military strength which is expressed in peace-time armaments and the expenditure on national defence;
(2) The potential military strength, in which the important element is the industrial and economic power of each State, the military importance of which was proved by the last war.

Having made this declaration, the Assembly nevertheless considered it desirable on grounds of expediency to restrict the scope of the statistical enquiry for the current year to the two following questions:

(1) Peace-time armaments.
(2) Expenditure on armaments.

The two volumes on the statistical enquiry submitted to the Assembly by the Temporary Mixed Commission deal with these two subjects respectively.

It should, however, be noted that the first of these volumes has been prepared on the basis of the tables submitted by the Permanent Advisory Commission and adopted by the Temporary Mixed Commission, which, with the Council's approval, were forwarded to the Governments of all the States Members of the League on March 1st, 1923. These tables give statistical data concerning peace-time armaments, as shown in the replies from the following Governments:

- Albania
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- China
- Czechoslovakia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- France
- Great Britain
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy (excluding aviation)
- Japan
- Latvia
- Luxemburg
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Poland (excluding land forces)
- Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes
- South Africa
- Sweden
- Switzerland

The data have been collected from Volume I of the Statistical Enquiry.

This collection comprises, in addition, a short exposé of the systems of recruitment existing in each country. This latter has been drawn up by the Secretariat from official and public documents according to the Commission's instructions.

Volume II. has been prepared by the statistical specialists at the Secretariat from data obtained from official sources, such as budgets and other official and public documents received from the various countries. The Secretariat has been authorised by the Temporary Mixed Commission to submit this publication to the Assembly. It consists of a series of separate and independent monographs, which show as clearly as it has been possible to do so the expenditure on armaments of each of the countries under consideration and the fluctuations of this expenditure in the years 1921-1923.

Two conclusions may be drawn from a study of this publication.

The first, already pointed out by the authors, is that it is impossible to draw comparisons between the expenditure of the various countries without first undertaking a very minute analysis of the profound differences in the methods of administration and systems of public book-keeping adopted by the various States, and in other circumstances which influence the matter.

The second is that, in the majority of cases, when the fluctuation in currency values and in wholesale prices has been taken into account, military expenditure shows a clear tendency to decrease.

Work in connection with the statistical enquiry will this year be undertaken on different lines, and will be more uniform and uninterrupted, as a result of the investigations carried
out by the Temporary Mixed Commission in respect of the application of the last para-
graph of Article 8 of the Covenant concerning the exchange of information.

In the light of the recommendations of the Temporary Mixed Commission with regard
to this matter, the Council adopted the following resolution:

"The Council, in view of the decision of the Temporary Mixed Commission
with regard to the publication of a year-book which would allow the carrying-out
as from the present time of the intentions of the last paragraph of Article 8 of the
Covenant, decides to authorise the Secretariat to publish this year-book, beginning
with an experimental volume dealing with the figures for 1923 and developing
this publication by degrees according to the experience acquired, it being clearly
understood that the information would be drawn solely from official and public
documents, and that the programme of the year-book would exactly correspond
to the terms of the last paragraph of Article 8 of the Covenant."

These two questions have thus been brought into relation with each other by the Coun-
cil's decision quoted above.

Henceforward, the statistical enquiry will cover the greatest possible number of countries
and will be defined and limited by the programme for the exchange of information resulting
from the last paragraph of Article 8 of the Covenant. It is understood that this enquiry
must include the potential military power of States and therefore their wealth in raw mate-
rials and their industrial power. The Secretariat, under the direction of the Temporary
Mixed Commission, will collect the information necessary for the publication of the statisti-
cal year-book in official and public documents.

Guided by the Council's decision, and with a view to the continuation of the work of
statistical enquiry with which the Temporary Mixed Commission has been occupied since
the time of its appointment, the Third Committee has adopted the following resolution:

"The Assembly expresses the approval of the decisions which the Council
has taken in connection with the publication of a Year-Book of Statistical
Information concerning National Armaments, and recommends that in preparing
this volume the Secretariat should take into account the recommendations put
forward in the Report of the Temporary Mixed Commission."

III. PRIVATE MANUFACTURE OF ARMS AND CONTROL OF THE TRAFFIC IN ARMS.

These two questions, which, as the Third Assembly recognised, are closely inter-related,
call more and more urgently for international solution. It has been recognised on all sides
that a solution is only possible as a result of co-operation on the part of the great producing
countries.

The first attempt at solution — the St. Germain Convention — failed, principally
because the United States Government found itself unable to ratify the Convention.

At the request of the Third Assembly, the Council again addressed to the United States
Government an enquiry as to the conditions upon which it might be disposed to co-operate
with the other States with a view to the solution of this serious problem.

It was while the deliberations of the Committee were in progress that the reply from the
United States Government was received by the Council and submitted by the latter to the
Assembly. This reply reiterates the objections of the United States Government to the St.
Germain Convention, but apparently proposes no method and makes no sugges tion
likely to permit of an international solution of the problem in co-operation with the United
States.

The Committee nevertheless considered that the League of Nations should persevere
in its efforts in a matter of such infini e importance to the cause of international peace.

Taking into account the preliminary work already carried out by the Temporary Mixed
Commission and by the Secretariat in this matter, it adopted the two following resolutions,
in the hope that they would make it possible to arrive at a solution of the question at an
early date:

(a) Traffic in Arms.

"The Assembly recommends that the Temporary Mixed Commission should
be invited to prepare a new Convention or Conventions to replace that of St. Ger-
main for the control of the traffic in arms.

"The Temporary Mixed Commission should be requested to draw up the
draft Convention or Conventions in such a form that they might be accepted by
the Governments of all countries which produce arms or munitions of war.

"The Temporary Mixed Commission should, however, also make alternative
proposals for a Convention or Conventions which might be adopted by some of the
producing Powers even if others refused their co-operation.

"The Assembly recommends that the Council should invite the United States
Government to appoint representatives to co-operate with the Temporary Mixed
Commission in preparing the draft Convention or Conventions."

IV. CHEMICAL WARFARE.

The Temporary Mixed Commission has, for the last year, had before it a resolution of the Third Assembly on this subject, the text of which is as follows:

(a) The Assembly, having considered the report of the Temporary Mixed Commission on the subject of the development of chemical warfare, approves its action in establishing a special Sub-Committee to report on the probable effects of chemical discoveries in future wars, and requests the Council and the Temporary Mixed Commission to take every possible measure to secure the fullest publicity for the report of this Sub-Committee.

(b) The Assembly requests the Council to recommend the Members of the League and other nations to adhere to the Treaty of Washington (February 6th, 1922) concerning the use of asphyxiating gas and submarines in war, and other similar matters.

As regards the second part of this resolution, the Council decided to put the adhesion to the Washington Convention concerning the use of poisonous gas and submarines in war on the agenda of the International Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armaments proposed by the Assembly.

As regards the first paragraph, the Temporary Mixed Commission had appointed, from among its members, a Committee consisting of Lord Robert Cecil, Admiral Seagrave, General de Marinis and Colonel Requin, which, in consultation with eminent bacteriologists and chemists, has been engaged in drawing up the report suggested by the Assembly.

The Third Committee’s discussions have again emphasised the importance of this question.

The necessarily inhuman nature of war is intensified by modern discoveries in the domains of chemistry and bacteriology. War being in itself a relentless struggle for life, chemical and bacteriological weapons emphasise the inhuman quality of this struggle and heighten the dangers of war to such an extent as to threaten the very existence of mankind and civilisation.

It is, however, possible to turn this terrible danger to account by bringing it home to public imagination in order to make the outbreak of future wars even less likely.

The Committee has also discussed a proposal aiming at an extension of the work of the Special Committee to include the study and publication of the means of defence against chemical and bacteriological weapons. The Committee did not feel itself to be in a position so to widen the mandate of the Special Committee, and therefore rejected the proposal.

In conclusion, the Third Committee proposed that the Assembly should adopt the following resolution:

“The Assembly awaits with interest the report of the Special Committee on the probable effects of chemical discoveries in future wars and it again requests the Council and the Temporary Mixed Commission to ensure by all possible means the fullest publicity to the report of the Committee.”

V. THE EXTENSION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE NAVAL TREATY OF WASHINGTON TO NON-SIGNATORY STATES.

In the course of its discussions, the Third Committee considered M. Salandra’s report to the Council relative to the extension of the principles of the Naval Treaty of Washington to non-signatory States. This report had been approved by the Council at its meeting of September 20th, 1923.

In accordance with the terms of this report, the Council requested the Permanent Advisory Commission to enquire into the extension of its technical scheme relating to the application of the principles of the Treaty of Washington to States which had not signed that Treaty and were not Members of the League. The Third Committee did not pass a specific resolution on this subject, but in its report it places on record the keen interest it takes in this question and expresses the hope that the International Conference summoned to consider the extension of the principles of the Washington Treaty to non-signatory countries, will meet at as early a date as possible and with successful results.
VI. **Draft Regional Agreements for the Reduction of Armaments.**

The Committee has taken note of the chapter in the Temporary Mixed Commission's report relating to the Conference of Santiago and Moscow, to the Convention concluded between five Central American Republics on the limitation of armaments, as well as to the Continental Treaty for the Prevention of Disputes between the American States. The Committee, in its report, thought it advisable to call the Assembly's attention to the good example set by the States of America which have succeeded in giving effect to an agreement for the limitation of their armaments. This convention belongs to the type of partial agreements which the Third Assembly had already considered and has recommended to the attention of the Council and the Temporary Mixed Commission.

The Third Committee desired to reiterate its confidence in this type of treaty for the purpose of solving the problem of the reduction of armaments in certain special cases and for certain regions of the world, and passed the following resolution:

"The Assembly,

"In view of Resolution XV of the Third Assembly concerning the problem of the reduction of armaments,

"Asks the Council to request the Temporary Mixed Commission to consider the possibility of recommending concurrently with the general scheme for the reduction of armaments, the negotiation of draft partial agreements for the same purpose, to be submitted for examination and decision to the Governments of the States Members of the League which are in a special geographical position, and brought to the notice of States not members of the League.

"These draft agreements might, should opportunity arise, provide for reductions of armaments still greater than those provided for by the general scheme."

VII. **Renewal of the Mandate of the Temporary Mixed Commission.**

The Third Committee was called upon to consider the organisation of the work of the League of Nations in connection with the reduction of armaments, and more especially the question of the renewal of the mandate of the Temporary Mixed Commission.

After having discussed the matter, the Committee decided to recommend to the Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

"The Temporary Mixed Commission shall be invited to continue for a further period of one year the work which it has undertaken and to submit its report as early as possible before the meeting of the next Assembly.

"The Assembly is of opinion that it is henceforth the duty of the Council to establish direct co-operation with the Governments with a view to formulating the general plan for the reduction or limitation of armaments which, under Article 8 of the Covenant, must be submitted for the consideration and decision of the several Governments.

"The Assembly requests the Council to regulate and co-ordinate the work of the Temporary Mixed Commission and of the Permanent Advisory Commission, in anticipation of the possible expiration of the Temporary Mixed Commission's mandate at the next Assembly.

"The Assembly, having considered the resolution noted by the Second Assembly in regard to the Disarmament Section of the Secretariat, and taking into account the importance of this organisation, is of the opinion that the Secretariat should be requested to re-establish, when circumstances permit, the special directorship of this Section which the Second Assembly recognised as necessary."