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TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held on Wednesday, December 14th, 1932, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. A. HENDERSON.


The President made the following statement:

As the Minutes of the Bureau and the principal documents of the Committees set up by it have been circulated to all the delegations, it would seem superfluous to take the Commission's time by detailed statements on the question already known to you. I will therefore content myself with a brief summary of the situation as regards action taken.

On behalf of the Bureau, I have to inform the General Commission that, on the questions referred to it by the resolution of July 23rd, the Bureau is in a position to report progress, especially as regards the questions of supervision and chemical and bacterial warfare. On the question of the armaments truce, the desire of the Conference has been entirely fulfilled and the truce in armaments is now in operation. As regards some other questions—for example, effectives, the manufacture of and trade in arms, national defence expenditure,—the action of the Bureau is not terminated, as the Committees dealing with these questions have not yet reported to it.

I might be allowed to add in connection with the Committee on the Manufacture of, and Trade in, Arms, and that on National Defence Expenditure, that their work would be greatly facilitated if a decision could be secured on the questions of publicity and of the qualitative and quantitative limitation of war material.

In some other instances, like air forces, naval armaments, heavy artillery and tanks, no detailed solutions have so far been secured, partly because such solutions were dependent upon the previous settlement of other difficulties.

I may add that the agreement signed by the five Powers on December 11th is likely to facilitate the solution of some of the difficulties so far encountered, and that the General Commission will, I hope, join with me in urging the various Committees to do their utmost to expedite the work entrusted to them. I feel, nevertheless, that some previous arrangements, by means of consultations or any other appropriate method, between the parties most interested, would seem likely to promote progress in the several Committees.

The members of the General Commission have already received the Minutes of the meeting of November 4th, when M. Paul-Boncour, in the name of the French Government, made an explanatory statement to the Bureau. That Government deposited with the Conference a few days later the text of its plan, which has also been distributed. The Commission has also received a statement, made on November 17th by Sir John Simon, setting forth the United Kingdom proposals.

Proposals concerning the reduction and limitation of naval armaments were made by the Japanese Government, and these have just been distributed to you.

The Conference now possesses a considerable amount of material, and the General Commission, on the resumption of its work, will have to make every effort to assemble in the articles of the Convention all the pool of ideas which have been accumulating since February 2nd.

Indeed, we have now before us definite schemes, definite programmes, which cover every aspect of the problem which international war and national armaments present; and on some of the most urgent and most difficult parts of this problem we have now an agreement, by

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some members of the Conference, upon the most important political principles which should guide us.

Our treatment of some items which have long been on our agenda must be made easier than it could otherwise have been by the agreement reached by the five Powers.

In fact, we have before us a great mass of material of every kind—reports, plans, proposals, principles, general discussions, technical debates. On nearly every point, there has been prolonged consideration by the responsible agents of the Governments here assembled. Surely, then, we must recognise that the time has now come when we should use this material to start constructing the Convention we have to make.

I am hopeful that, when we reassemble, the period of waiting will be over and the period of definite decisions will begin. I am hopeful that, without delay, we can start upon the task of building up the structure which we want to see. Chapter by chapter, we must deal with the difficulties which must be faced.

No proposal by any Government must be disregarded, no aspect of the problem must be left aside. From the material at our disposal, we must fashion the structure which we have to build; row by row, we must set stone upon stone; and if we labour on with the spirit of determination to succeed, I believe we shall be able to construct a Convention which will be an important contribution to the peace-keeping machinery of the world.

At yesterday's meeting of the Bureau, I communicated the text of the agreement arrived at by the representatives of the Governments of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and the United States of America, as a result of the conversations held under the presidency of Mr. Macdonald. That agreement reads as follows:

"1. The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Italy, have declared that one of the principles that should guide the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments should be the grant to Germany, and to the other Powers disarmed by Treaty, of equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations, and that this principle should find itself embodied in the Convention containing the conclusions of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments.

"This declaration implies that the respective limitations of the armaments of all States should be included in the proposed Disarmament Convention. It is clearly understood that the methods of application of such equality of rights will be discussed by the Conference.

"2. On the basis of this declaration, Germany has signified its willingness to resume its place at the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments.

"3. The Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy are ready to join in a solemn reaffirmation to be made by all European States that they will not in any circumstances attempt to resolve any present or future differences between the signatories by resort to force. This shall be done without prejudice to fuller discussions on the question of security.

"4. The five Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy declare that they are resolved to co-operate in the Conference with the other States there represented in seeking without delay to work out a Convention which shall effect a substantial reduction and a limitation of armaments, with provision for future revision with a view to further reduction."

As I stated to the Bureau yesterday, on Sunday last, at noon, I was invited to meet those who have been taking part in the conversations. The British Prime Minister, as Chairman of the conversations, then handed to me the original English text of the agreement which I have just read. This text, which bears the signatures of the representatives of the five countries, is officially before the Conference, and the original English copy of it is deposited with the Registry of the League of Nations.

I further informed the Bureau that, in handing this document to me, Mr. Macdonald said that he and the representatives of the Powers participating in the conversations had unanimously decided that it would be useful for the President of the Conference to be associated in any further conversations. I replied that, subject to the approval of the Bureau, I was prepared to accept the invitation.

I have pleasure in informing the General Commission that the Bureau unanimously authorised me to take part in any fresh conversations.

Count Raczyński (Poland), in noting the important communication in which the President had informed the General Commission of the results of negotiations which had taken place at Geneva between the representatives of the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and the United States of America, stated that his Government reserved the
right to make clear its point of view on the principles expressed in this communication when the competent organs of the Conference came to examine it in the course of the usual procedure.

It was only by following this procedure that permanent solutions could be found which would take into account the legitimate interests of all Powers.

The Polish Government had no objection to conversations held between certain States outside the actual Conference. Indeed, such conversations had already taken place at various stages of the discussions. But he thought it right to express the desire that these conversations should not become a permanent institution, the result of which would be to deprive the Conference of its most important powers.

The Polish delegation was glad to see that the President had been invited to take part, in his personal capacity, in any further conversations between the five States. The delegation thought it would be equally useful for him to participate in any other conversations which might take place between countries represented at the Disarmament Conference.

M. Fotitch (Yugoslavia), after the important statement just made by the President, wished to submit some remarks on behalf of the Yugoslav delegation regarding the future work of the Conference, with a view to creating conditions likely to lead to its success.

Now that the efforts of the five Powers had enabled the obstacle encountered by the Conference to be overcome, he considered it indispensable that the entire discussion of every aspect of the important problems which now arose should be reserved for the organs of the Conference at which all the States were represented—in particular, the General Commission. Naturally, this would not prevent the discussion of purely technical questions by special Committees under instructions from the General Commission, but solely from their technical aspect.

The Yugoslav delegation was of opinion that the success of the Conference could only be ensured by the participation and co-operation of all the States, especially those whose active participation was necessary for the future work of the Conference. It wished to have an opportunity of participating in the discussion of all questions as a whole, and not merely to confine itself to recording decisions already taken by smaller organs of the Conference. The Yugoslav delegation wished to co-operate loyally and unreservedly in the work of the Conference in order to ensure its success, and to be in a position under all circumstances to offer its contribution, however small it might be, in order that the special interests of Yugoslavia might be brought into line with the interests of all. To discuss weighty problems, sometimes affecting the most legitimate national interests, in restricted organs of the Conference, or even outside the Conference, was not merely an injustice towards the States which had not the honour of being represented at those discussions, but—and this was the profound conviction of the Yugoslav delegation—would be contrary to the aims of the Conference.

He was convinced that these views would be shared by a great number of his colleagues, and that, by following the procedure which he proposed, the delegations would go far to promote the success of the Conference.

Cemal Hüsne Bey (Turkey) said the Turkish delegation had been glad to note the agreement reached by the five Powers. But the satisfaction which it felt in no way affected the view which it had not failed to express whenever occasion had arisen—that questions concerning the nations as a whole should be treated, not by a restricted body, but with the participation of all the States concerned. Turkey was also glad to see the German delegation resume its place in the Commission and bring its valuable co-operation thereto, and the Turkish delegation wished to pay a tribute to the efforts made to achieve this happy result.

The Turkish Government welcomed, in particular, paragraph 3 of the declaration made by the five Powers to the effect that the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy were ready to join in a solemn reaffirmation to be made by all European States that they would not in any circumstances attempt to resolve any present or future differences by resort to force. This was the very principle on which the policy of Turkey was based; the distinguished President of the Turkish Republic, in opening the ordinary session of the Great National Assembly this year, had said:

"The first and most important condition for the development of international political security is, in our opinion, the sincere communion of the peoples in the idea of peace."

The Turkish Government, which in this respect was inspired by the directions of its eminent head, was glad to have this opportunity of stating that it was prepared to adhere immediately to this reaffirmation.

General Tanczos (Hungary) said his delegation had noted with great satisfaction the combined efforts of the five great Powers to secure the resumption of the normal work of the Disarmament Conference, efforts which had just been crowned with success.

It was particularly glad to learn that Germany was resuming her place at the Conference.
M. ANTONIADE (Roumania), in noting the important statement which had just been communicated to the Commission, expressed the satisfaction of his delegation at the results obtained by the five Powers. One of the most difficult problems which had impeded the progress of the Conference had now been settled in such a way as to permit the resumption of intensive work. But, at the same time, and in the interests of the success of the work, he wished to support the remarks of the Polish and Yugoslav delegates. The Commission, like the general Conference, had to solve questions affecting the vital interests of all delegations. He agreed with his colleagues that these questions should be discussed and settled with the agreement of all the parties concerned. It was only in this way that the Roumanian delegation thought the work could be carried on and meet with complete success.

M. BUERO (Uruguay) associated himself with the tributes paid by certain delegations to the five great Powers whose negotiations had led to valuable results for the progress of the work of the Conference.

He had personally taken part in negotiations on certain aspects of this work and had been able to appreciate the difficulties in the way of further progress. He was sure that the prospects for the next stage of the work were now much brighter than hitherto.

With regard, however, to the reservations made—in particular, by the Polish, Yugoslav and Roumanian delegations—as regards procedure, he had himself been somewhat struck by the possible consequences for the Conference if the procedure in question were to be continued. A document recording the agreement reached by the five great Powers and signed by the negotiators had been placed on the table. It might, it seemed, be concluded that the agreement contained in this document was adopted and that its conclusions were binding on all. M. Buero knew that this was not at all the intention of the authors of that agreement; but there was one point which it was advisable to make clear—namely, that the agreement should be reached within the Conference itself. It was, of course, true that the attitude of the delegates of the great Powers was already known; but he wished to point out that, in his opinion, any subsequent negotiations between the delegations should take place within the framework of the Conference itself. All countries—and, in particular, the small Powers—were making heavy sacrifices in order to send representatives to the Conference; if the essential problems were to be studied, negotiated and settled outside the Conference, a somewhat difficult situation would arise, and the co-operation of the small States would not be very effective.

The warning just given by some delegations was useful, as there was a danger that this tendency might be accentuated in future. It might happen, for instance, that, on a future occasion, the delegates of these five Powers, together with the President, might meet outside Geneva and the Conference might in that case learn the result of these negotiations only by correspondence or by the newspapers.

He wished merely to make a reservation at the moment and to express the hope that in future, as in the past, all States would be directly concerned with the progress of the work.

In conclusion, he heartily congratulated the five Powers on the agreement, which enabled Germany to resume her seat in the Conference, where her co-operation would have valuable and fruitful results.

M. RAPHAEL (Greece) expressed the satisfaction of his delegation at the results obtained by the private conversations which had taken place between the five great Powers. On behalf of his Government, however, he felt bound to associate himself with the reservations and remarks made by certain delegates.

At the same time, he supported the Turkish delegate's declaration and his adherence to paragraph 3 of the communication of the five great Powers, which was in entire accord with the profound conviction of the Hellenic Government.

M. LITVINOFF (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) welcomed the return of the representative of the German Government to the Conference. He need not dwell upon the principles embodied in the communication from the five Powers: equality of rights, the renunciation of force as a means of settling disputes, and security. The Soviet Government's attitude towards these principles was well known, not only from its declarations, but also from its general policy and practice. He did not know whether the President's communication meant that there had been a settlement, or an approach to a settlement, of the fundamental questions that had arisen during the Conference's work. It was gratifying, however, that the Conference had once again its original composition. It was to be hoped that the next ten months would bring no further losses requiring similar efforts.

M. Litvinoff was a little perturbed at the President's suggestion that further conversations between the five Powers, in which he himself had been invited to take part, might be anticipated. Experience had shown that such conversations excluded meetings of the Conference or the General Commission. It would therefore be expedient, before fixing the date of the next
meeting of the General Commission, to ascertain whether the five Powers intended to hold any further meetings at Geneva. If so, the General Commission should be postponed until they had settled their differences. By that time the Governments might be able to come to Geneva simply to sign a Convention already drawn up.

Count CARTON DE WIART (Belgium) drew special attention to the very judicious observations of the Uruguayan delegate. He, also, considered that the agreement between the five Powers did not constitute an official act of the Disarmament Conference.

This information, which, for his part, he considered very fortunate from the point of view of future discussions, derived its importance from the fact that it had been notified to the Bureau. But it must be understood—and he desired here specially to emphasise M. Buero's observations—that the method employed so successfully did not in any way modify the powers and duties of the Conference, and particularly of the General Commission.

M. DE MADARIAGA (Spain) associated himself with the General Commission's congratulations to the Powers whose agreement had made possible what everyone desired—the return of Germany to the Conference.

The Spanish delegate explained that, in his view, the agreement should be interpreted to mean that equality must be brought about by reducing the armaments of the more heavily armed Powers and not by increasing the armaments of the less heavily armed Powers, for it would be paradoxical if a disarmament conference resulted in re-armament.

Nor did M. de Madariaga desire, in view of the general bearing of the observations made in the General Commission, that there should be any misapprehension as to the Bureau's attitude in adopting the proposals just submitted by the President. Its attitude was very clear, and might be summed up in the sense of the Uruguayan delegate's observations: it was for the whole Conference—that was to say, all the States without exception—to lay down the general principles according to which the Convention should be drawn up, and to fix the actual details of its application, which, directly or indirectly, affected all countries.

The experience of almost a year, however, must suffice to show that there were a number of problems in regard to which not a step forward could be taken apart from an understanding between the great Powers.

In other words, it must be admitted that disarmament meant chiefly the disarmament of the great Powers. The difference in any sphere of armaments—land, naval or air—between the average level of a great Power and that of any other Power, however heavily armed, was so great that actual disarmament was mainly the affair of the great Powers. M. de Madariaga did not mean by this that the other Powers must attempt nothing. Far from it. But it was obvious that, if the great Powers did not reach agreement, there would be no Disarmament Convention.

As, therefore, there were a certain number of problems in which a year's experience had proved that not a single step could be made unless the great Powers were in agreement, would it not be better, instead of reaching agreement in a more or less chaotic fashion by chance meetings in hotels, to act rather more systematically and to give the great Powers the impression that the other States were awaiting their agreement? That was the meaning which should be attached to the resolution.

A certain number of considerations had been put forward which seemed to express doubt, reservations and even fear that the question was being taken away from the Conference. That could not be so, and there was more than one proof of it. In the first place, there was the experience and political wisdom of the great Powers themselves, which were very well aware that this was a world Conference, apart from which they could not achieve their aim. Secondly, there was the objective problem: for the consequences of agreements between the great Powers with regard to the disarmament of other Powers must be noted by the Conference. Further, it was always to be feared that the difficulties certain States might raise with regard to certain decisions would be, if not a danger, at least a hindrance and a source of disputes which might destroy the value of the agreements of the great Powers. In the third place, the great Powers, who were well aware of the need for constant liaison, had asked the President to follow their conversations. Mr. Henderson had shown such authority, interest, enthusiasm and devotion in his desire that the Conference should pursue and achieve its aim, that it was certain that the day disarmament would be a reality—on a somewhat modest scale no doubt, but a beginning at any rate—and sooner, M. de Madariaga hoped, than M. Litvinoff anticipated.

Dr. YEN (China) associated himself with the previous speakers in extending a very cordial welcome to the German delegation on its return to the Conference. Everyone realised, he thought, that the Conference could not achieve success without the help of the German delegation.

A number of speakers had taken exception to the procedure adopted, and perhaps they were right; but Dr. Yen believed there was a saying in European languages to the effect that the end very often justified the means. Perhaps the very important end accomplished on this occasion might justify the means employed. In any case, however, he also hoped that this procedure would not become an established practice.
But that was not the point he desired to emphasise. The communication from the five Powers contained the words: ‘a solemn reaffirmation to be made by all European States’. That seemed rather unfortunate; many of the delegations belonged to non-European States, and the implication would be that those States were not prepared to make the reaffirmation. That might be so; but as far as China was concerned, Dr. Yen desired to associate himself with the Turkish delegate in saying that the Chinese Government was also prepared to make it.

M. Massigli (France) thought it was correct to say that the statements made by several delegations were not inspired by the text of the document which the President had read. The emotion which had found its echo in the Commission was due, he thought, rather to information which had been somewhat hastily published without being checked, or even to interviews which he, for his part, did not regard as authentic. This information explained and even almost justified the emotion.

He was therefore glad to take this opportunity of making perfectly clear the attitude which the French delegation had always adopted. The French Government did not for a moment admit that there could be any question of going over the head of the Conference, or to present it with a fait accompli in questions which concerned the Powers as a whole and were of special interest to a large number of Powers in particular. The French Government would never accept a system which, even if it did not tend to bring about this result, would expose the Conference to the risk of such an eventuality. The attitude which France had maintained throughout the diplomatic negotiations since the end of August made it unnecessary to stress this point.

On the other hand, it was true and had been proved by experience that it might be advisable to hold conversations on some particular question between certain groups of Powers, within the framework of the Conference, in order to overcome some obstacle. This method was necessary; it had proved so in the past and would prove so again. It was justified by the results attained. Was it not this very method which had led to the resolution of July 23rd? Had there not been negotiations in and between various groups of Powers at which the General Rapporteur and the President of the Conference had taken part? The question as to when such a procedure should be adopted depended on circumstances and no rules could be laid down.

What was clear was that this method was and must remain exceptional and could, under no circumstances, be substituted for the regular machinery of the Conference. Moreover, it must never be allowed to delay or hamper the working of that machinery.

He hardly needed to add that, if this had not been the case and if definite assurances had not been obtained on that point, the French delegation, for its part, would never have been willing to contemplate the possibility, even as an exception, of conversations of that kind.

Sir John Simon (United Kingdom) observed that he was the only survivor at Geneva of the signatories to the communication from the five Powers, the other principals in the conversations having been compelled to return to the study of urgent public questions in their own countries. Before following their example, he desired to make one or two brief observations on the true relation between informal conversations, such as those just concluded, and the work of the Conference.

He associated himself entirely with M. Massigli’s observation that recourse to such methods should be exceptional. But everything depended on the circumstances. Moreover, all who thought it well to take part in such private and informal conversations must always do so for the purpose of promoting the work of the Conference itself.

Sir John Simon would ask his colleagues to consider the circumstances. He fully appreciated the preoccupations and reserves just expressed, and shared the views on which they were founded—that was to say, no one wished any action to be undertaken, formally or informally, that could either detract from the authority or diminish the usefulness of the Conference. But he counted himself a practical man, who, when faced with a practical problem, tried to discover some practical method for dealing with it.

What was the situation? The situation was that on July 23rd last, nearly five months previously, Germany had withdrawn from the work of the Conference at Geneva. No useful purpose would have been served, therefore, by conducting conversations, whether in public or in private, in the absence of Germany.

The United Kingdom Government therefore took upon itself the responsibility of announcing publicly that it would be willing to arrange for conversations of a purely informal and private character, in which it hoped Germany, France, Italy and the United States of America would take part. He did not remember that anybody had raised objections, although many critics said the idea was hopeless and would produce no results whatever.

His country entered into communication with the countries he had named, whom it was willing to meet anywhere and at any time if it could restore the unity and complete the membership of the Conference, and he desired to express satisfaction at the invaluable assistance they had given throughout.

The difficulty was that Germany was not represented at Geneva, and that objections were raised from one quarter or another to meeting elsewhere. Advantage was taken, however,
of the presence at Geneva of Baron von Neurath for another purpose, and it was thus possible to hold the informal conversations there.

As a practical man, Sir John Simon pointed out that, while other methods might well be worth considering in the future, this method had at any rate succeeded. He wondered whether the process of general public debate in full assembly would have brought back the distinguished friend he was so glad to welcome that day.

The strongest proof of the fixed intention of the five Powers that their action was in no sense a substitute for or rival to the Conference’s work was their announcement, after reaching agreement, that, should circumstances seem to suggest the advantage of similar private conversations, they would be very glad if Mr. Henderson, in his capacity as President of the Conference, would be good enough to give them the benefit of his assistance.

Sir John Simon urged the Commission to realise that the method adopted had seemed appropriate in the very difficult circumstances, and was designed to assist the Conference. He sincerely trusted its work would be resumed in complete unison.

Dr. Yen might be right in attributing to Europe the proverb he had quoted. If so, it was one of the signs of Europe’s decadence; and Sir John Simon certainly did not subscribe to the abstract proposition that the end justified the means. There was another English proverb, however, that illustrated what he was trying to say: “Do not look a gift horse in the mouth.”

In conclusion, Sir John Simon expressed great satisfaction that the Commission had with it once again its comrade and colleague, the representative of Germany.

M. Mikoff (Bulgaria) recalled that just before the resolution of July 23rd had been voted, his delegation had expressed the hope that questions relating to equality of rights and security, with which the Commission had not dealt during the first phase of its work, might be considered and equitably settled during the second phase.

He was glad to see that the agreement of the five Powers had converted this hope into a reality, and that, as a result of this agreement, Germany was resuming her seat in the Commission. This would enable the Conference to continue effectively its joint efforts towards the achievement of the task which had been entrusted to it.

M. Guinazu (Argentina) said his delegation was happy to associate itself with the statements regarding the agreement concluded between the great Powers which, while stimulating disarmament, was consolidating the organisation of world peace. The Argentine Government was earnestly pursuing this object by means of a permanent system of conciliation.

His Government, therefore, was glad to support any efforts towards peace, on which the work of the Disarmament Conference had, from the outset, been based.

Mr. Lester (Irish Free State), on behalf of the Irish delegation, welcomed the return of the German representatives to the Conference. Their presence was not only essential, but was welcome to all.

With regard to the procedure used in securing that result, Mr. Lester agreed with Sir John Simon that the morality of the proverb quoted by Dr. Yen was somewhat doubtful in a general way. In this particular case, however, he thought that all the members of the Commission felt that the end did justify the means. Some doubts had been expressed by various delegations as to the application of the same procedure in the future. It had always seemed to Mr. Lester that the progress of the Conference would depend, to an overwhelming extent, upon agreement between the heavily armed Powers. The main preoccupation of his delegation had been that that agreement should represent the very greatest possible degree of disarmament. His delegation, however, welcomed the declaration of the British and French delegates that such a procedure would only be applied in rare cases, and presumably always with the consent of the Conference. It was possible also that when the great Powers came back to the Conference with their measure of agreement, the Conference might be able to induce them to go a little further.

Mr. Lester added that he fully shared the reservations so clearly expressed by M. de Madariaga.

The President associated himself very fully with the satisfaction expressed at the return of the German delegation, whom he welcomed cordially.

Baron von Weizsäcker (Germany) thanked the President for the words spoken by him in informing the Commission of the agreement reached on Sunday last. He also thanked the President and the other speakers for their warm welcome on the occasion of Germany’s return to the Conference. The German delegation would resume its collaboration after Christmas, when the Conference and its various organs continued their work.
As far as the application of the agreement of the five Powers was concerned, he felt sure no unexpected difficulties or hindrances would arise, no new situation would be created, and therefore no new decisions would be required. Agreement had been reached in a spirit of goodwill and confidence, and, in that same spirit, the Conference would resume its task and bring it to a speedy and effective end, in the common interest and in the interests of peace.

The President said he fully agreed with the observations of M. Massigli and Sir John Simon. The discussion reflected, in some measure, the feelings that had undoubtedly arisen owing to the very long delay, since July 23rd, in calling together the General Commission. The resolution of July 23rd laid down a time-limit of four months for the convening of the Commission, however, and the President had therefore called it together in order to place it in possession of all the information available as to the exact state of affairs.

In the early stages of the discussion, there had, he thought, been a feeling of uneasiness that everyone was not participating in the work of the Conference. All that had been done since July 23rd, however, was to give effect to the General Commission's resolution which said:

"The Conference requests the Bureau to continue its work during the period of adjournment of the General Commission, with a view to framing, with the collaboration (if necessary) of a Drafting Committee, draft texts concerning the questions on which agreement has already been reached. Such texts will be communicated to all delegations as soon as they are drafted, and will then be submitted to the Commission."

"The questions which will form the subject of such examination are the following: Effectives; Limitation of National Defence Expenditure; Trade in and Manufacture of Arms; Naval Armaments; Violations."

Those were the questions with which the respective Committees had been endeavouring to deal. If all the delegations had not had the privilege of participating in the work, that was because the instructions of the Commission had been kept to strictly.

Some concern might be felt at the way affairs were progressing in the Committees, but all the Committees were obliged to report to the Bureau, and their work must eventually come before the Commission for full consideration, acceptance or rejection. There could be little complaint against the Bureau for carrying out the work entrusted to it, as far as lay in its power in the time as its disposal.

The Polish delegate had said that the President had been invited to attend any further conversations of the five Powers in his personal capacity. That was not so. Sir John Simon had put the position clearly: he was invited as President of the Conference and could only attend in that capacity in order to be the better able to report either to the officers of the Conference, the Bureau, or the General Commission, on what might take place. The President hoped, therefore, that the Polish delegate would be able to withdraw his observation, in order to make it perfectly plain that he was invited as the President and representative of the Commission.

Count Raczyński (Poland) did not think it necessary to retract his statement; it would perhaps be enough if he explained what he had had in mind. Other delegations would undoubtedly share his views.

No organ of the Conference was composed of the representatives of certain Powers, plus the President of the Conference, and Count Raczyński desired to point out that the President's participation in such deliberations would be of a private character, to emphasise that the conversations themselves were private and not a regular institution of the Conference, and that the participation of the President would not give them an official character. He had never thought that, in taking part in those deliberations, the President would lose his capacity as President. That, he trusted, explained what he had in mind.

The President thanked the Polish delegate for his explanation, which was satisfactory. He assured the Commission that he would do everything he could to keep all business as open to the Conference as possible, in order to ensure success.

The Bureau had unanimously authorised him to submit the following resolution for the General Commission's consideration:

"The General Commission of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, taking note of the conclusions reached in the conversations of the five Powers as stated in the document handed by the British Prime Minister to the President of the Conference and reported to this Commission to-day:

"(1) Expresses its thanks to the British Prime Minister and his co-signatories for the success of their efforts, which have resulted in a notable contribution to the work of the Conference;"
¨(2) Welcomes the declaration that the five Powers are resolved to co-operate in the Conference with the other States represented in seeking without delay to work out a Convention which shall effect a substantial reduction and a limitation of armaments with provision for future revision with a view to further reduction.¨

M. Fotitch (Yugoslavia) asked whether the text of draft resolutions which the Commission was asked to adopt could not be distributed some time before the discussion, in order that the delegates might be familiar with the position. While he fully approved the present resolution, he asked that in future such proposals be submitted to the delegations in plenty of time.

The President agreed with the Yugoslav delegate, pointing out that owing to a slight misunderstanding the resolution had not been circulated earlier. If there were no other observations, he would take it that the resolution was approved. The draft resolution was adopted.


The President suggested, on behalf of the Bureau, that the General Commission should hold its next meeting on January 31st, 1933. The Bureau would meet on January 23rd to prepare the agenda. In preparing the agenda, the Bureau would take into account the desire of the French delegation that the French plan should be discussed at an early date. This time-table did not apply to the other Committees of the Conference, the dates of adjournment and resumption of work of which would be fixed by their Chairmen after the usual consultations with their officers. In other words, those Committees were free to adjourn at a later date and to resume work at an earlier date than the Bureau and the General Commission.

The proposals of the Bureau were adopted.

TWENTY-NINTH MEETING.

Held on Thursday, February 2nd, 1933, at 3.30 p.m.

President : The Right Honourable A. Henderson.


The President was sure that it was not necessary for him to remind the General Commission that this day was the anniversary of the opening of the Conference. He did not propose to follow the English custom of wishing the members “Many happy returns of the day”. He would content himself by saying that the past year had been in some respects eventful, but, so far as real disarmament was concerned, it had been profoundly disappointing. The mere fact of remembering that a year had gone since the Conference entered upon its task ought at any rate to stimulate all members to a determination that 1933 must eclipse 1932, and he thought there would be a general desire on the part of all that important decisions should be taken, and taken speedily. He hoped that they could be taken within the next couple of months, and that the Drafting Committee might get to work, in order to present a complete Convention as early as possible.

The President then reminded the Commission that, on November 4th last, M. Paul-Boncour had made a statement before the Bureau, submitting to the Conference the French plan. That plan had been subsequently circulated to members on November 14th, and he would, therefore, open the discussion on the French plan.

1 See Minutes of the twentieth meeting of the Bureau.
2 Document Conf.D.146.
M. MASSIGLI (France). — My first words must be to express to you the regrets of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is detained by important duties in Paris, although he earnestly desired to be present here now that the General Commission is entering, at the wish of the French delegation, upon the discussion of the plan for general disarmament and for the organisation of peace which my Government has laid before the Conference.

The general principles on which the plan is based were outlined by M. Paul-Boncour to our Bureau on November 4th last; the full text of his remarks has been communicated to you. The draft was further explained in the memorandum of November 14th, which has also been laid before you.

In the last two months the Governments represented here have had time to study the French proposals. From the debate which is now beginning, we expect more than vague encouragements, general observations or polite reservations; we hope and request reasoned approval or definite criticism, the frank expression of which will enable the Head of the French delegation—who, I can assure you, will very soon be with you—to give you any explanations which may be asked for, to dispel uncertainties, to remedy any deficiencies which the debate may bring out and, at the end of this general discussion, to see where we stand.

We hope for a thorough discussion, because this is, in our opinion, essential if the details are to be discussed later, and according to the method which you are free to decide upon, with the best chances of speedy success. I say speedy success, because the French delegation considers—like you, Mr. President, and, I am sure, all our other colleagues—that, after the whole year which has to-day elapsed, it is time to conclude—and the plan which it submits to you aims at a conclusion.

M. Paul-Boncour has already said before the Bureau that the French delegation's plan constitutes an endeavour to synthetise the main principles which have emerged from your previous debates. Allow me to recall them.

First of all, the essential principle that, between disarmament and the development of security through the organisation of peace, there is an indissoluble link.

The principle that the reduction of armaments must be adapted to the special conditions of each State, according to the terms of Article 8 of the Covenant.

The principle of qualitative disarmament to strengthen the means of defence by reducing the forces of aggression, and this, not only in the sphere of material, but in that of effectives also.

The principle of the reduction of armaments by stages, each of these stages—according to the terms employed by Sir John Simon in the House of Commons and repeated in the French memorandum—being justified and resulting naturally from the experience acquired in the previous stages; in this way, the factor of confidence, which has as much importance in the political as in the economic sphere, is brought in, due account being taken of existing realities.

The principle that the progressive reduction of armaments is incompatible with re-armament.

Lastly, the French plan is attuned to the principle, which has been proposed to you, of equality of status in a regime ensuring security to all States.

The plan which the French delegation has submitted to you has been worked out on the bases which I have just defined; its different parts form an organic whole. I do not intend to describe again its main outlines, for which I would refer you to the statement which, as I recalled above, M. Paul-Boncour has already made before our Bureau.

I will only summarise a few points.

The guiding, the new idea, it seems to us, can be summarised as follows: experience, our experience, has shown that it is still impossible to combine, on a universal basis, both the political conditions and the technical conditions—the latter varying with the geographical position—which appear necessary for a coherent and effective application of the principles I have just recalled. The French Government therefore considered it preferable to conceive of their full application only within a limited geographical framework.

At the end of over ten years' work, all the elements of a collective organisation such as that which we propose are now on a working basis. To succeed where there has hitherto been failure, it is sufficient to take regional conditions into account. It is on a European basis that the French delegation invites you to make a great effort.

In this way, by graduating obligations according to their geographical scope, and by combining political and technical factors at every stage, it seems to us possible to solve the problem, and I am thinking in the first place of the difficulties which the Conference has been encountering during the past year—for example, as regards qualitative disarmament—in the different branches of armaments.

The debates to which this formidable question of qualitative disarmament has given rise are fresh in your memories. You know what difficulties we encounter when we attempt to distinguish between aggressive material and defensive material, including material which may be necessary for counter-attacks—a formidable difficulty for which we have not found any solution in the national sphere.

If, on the contrary, we seek a solution on the international plane, if, with all the essential guarantees and precautions, we reserve for the League of Nations contingents with very limited effectives ready for immediate intervention, powerful stocks of material and an
international and effective reduction of armaments. I think it my duty to express very clearly a single specific datum that would allow us to anticipate an immediate and effective reduction of armaments. We are happy to say that we have not found in the French plan a single feature that prevents us from thinking that the mass of effectives and war material, of whatever nature or kind, embraced by the plan, can be less than that which is fixed views and unvarying instructions of the Head of the Italian Government, the immutable mission of its efforts, the essential mission which has been entrusted to it, which is expressed in a single perfectly clear formula and takes all the plans that have tended to depart from the essential ideas of the League have not refused to co-operate in methods different from its own. It has never refused to do so, although—I am bound to admit—it has been forced to realise that hitherto all the attempts have been made to work by the Preparatory Commission, by its Committee on Security, and by the Conference itself. It is within these limits that we wish to achieve speedy results, by at last putting into operation all the abundant material which has been accumulated at the cost of so much effort.

Baron Aloisi (Italy). — When the Italian delegation to this Disarmament Conference considers the work of its predecessors or that of the Italian representatives in the Preparatory Commission, it feels a legitimate satisfaction in observing that, in accordance with the fixed views and unvarying instructions of the Head of the Italian Government, the immutable basis of Italian policy has been, and still is, the practical application of the principle laid down in Article 8 of the Covenant.

In the wide variety of principles and ideas that meet at Geneva, we look upon it as a particular ground for pride that the formula "disarmament and security" which we have chosen, and to which we adhere, as the basis of our policy, is in keeping with the dictates of the great charter of the League.

At the same time, while observing this fundamental principle, the Italian delegation has never refused to co-operate in methods different from its own. It has never refused to do so, although—I am bound to admit—it has been forced to realise that hitherto all the attempts have tended to depart from the essential ideas of the League have not brought us to our goal, or even anywhere near it.

Thus, confronted by so important, complicated, and well-intentioned an experiment as the French scheme before us, the Italian delegation is far from entrancing itself, in a purely idealistic spirit, on the firm positions the nature and limits of which were determined by M. Grandi's speeches in this Conference. On the contrary, it is prepared to co-operate sincerely in the study of the French plan, even if that plan chooses other routes than ours by which to reach its goal. For that reason, I wish to assure the Commission and our French friends that we have approached it in a spirit of friendly sympathy and confidence. We feel that, when we have before us a general prospectus, such as is given by the French plan, which is not limited to a chilly consideration of present political possibilities, but launches out into a far wider field and perhaps anticipates the future, it is our duty to enter upon the study of it in a confident and optimistic frame of mind.

At the same time, while expressing the Italian delegation's genuine desire to co-operate, I am bound to say that it cannot lose sight of the true object of its efforts, the essential mission that has been entrusted to it, which is expressed in a single perfectly clear formula and takes the concrete shape in a single perfectly tangible objective—the reduction of armaments.

It is quite natural, therefore, that, apart from any other concrete and valuable element in the French plan, the Italian delegation should have considered, first of all, whether that plan, as a whole or in detail, answers completely or partly to our fundamental and legitimate expectation—the reduction of armaments. We are happy to say that we have not found in the plan a single feature that prevents us from thinking that the mass of effectives and war material, of whatever nature or kind, embraced by the plan, can be less than that which is now crushing the economic life of the world.

But, while I make this observation with satisfaction, I am bound to add that we have not been able to find in the plan a single specific datum that would allow us to anticipate an immediate and effective reduction of armaments. I think it my duty to express very clearly
the Italian delegation’s opinion on this point. In our view, to change the label of certain armed forces or of their material, to change the authority that controls them or the purpose for which they are to be used, and to alter their duties by making them the safeguard of some international balance of power instead of that of the integrity of nations, would in no way discharge the duty for which we have been sent here—the reduction of armaments, national or international, and of the burden they involve. That is not all. The French plan also proposes far-reaching measures in the way of the unification of war material and the creation of professional armies by certain States, such as Italy, which at present draw their forces purely from national recruiting, untouched by any idea of professional career or gain. This gives us reason to fear that these changes may lead for many years to an increase rather than a reduction in budget expenditure.

I need scarcely say that, on making this observation at the outset, we have been rendered less confident than we should have liked to be of our ability to overcome the technical objections and doubts raised by the more strictly military aspects of the French plan. I do not propose to dwell upon this point, or to go into the arguments of the specialists who, basing their view on the employment and efficiency of military units, doubt whether they could be maintained on the general lines of the French plan.

The formation of international military or air units, the unification of commands, the practical co-operation of units of different origin and nationality, and, above all, the creation of a new mentality which should be military but at the same time anti-war-minded and international, if only to avoid the very definite danger of these highly-specialised professional armies becoming a threat to peace instead of its safeguard—all these are problems that give rise to many doubts and perplexities, because they are incompatible with principles which do not represent a peculiarly Italian line of thought, but belong to military science as taught in every country in the world, and to a very important branch of the psychology of communities.

I shall not dwell, then, on these particular problems; but I should be concealing our point of view from you if I did not confess here and now that the idea of so many far-reaching and detailed military measures coinciding with the opening of a new era of international co-operation and union such as we hope to bring about through disarmament and the abolition of war, leaves us with a feeling of discomfort and anxiety.

For, gentlemen, we have before our eyes a great lesson taught by the history of the formation of social communities—namely, that from the remotest prehistoric times down to our own days, tribes or cities, provinces or cantons, have united or confederated against external enemies with one single idea—to join forces in order to secure their predominance over the extraneous element. Their fear was not that one or another of them might be too heavily armed, but that it might be insufficiently armed.

On the other hand, in a plan such as that with which we are concerned, we find confederates devoting themselves primarily to the study of military measures which would secure them against mutual bad faith—which seems to be assumed a priori. Almost completely absorbed as they are in this fear, it seems as if they have no more room to consider the problem which, after all, brought them together, and on account of which they were to form their confederation—that of all constituting a single army animated by the same spirit and marching together against the common enemy—that is to say, the burden of crushing military expenditure, the economic crisis, overproduction, tariff barriers, and economic particularism. In this war the first weapon to be forged, the first tactical manœuvre to be executed, is precisely disarmament.

I think that the root cause of the disquietude which we sometimes feel, and which is experienced by world public opinion when it turns its attention to this Conference, is this dramatic reversal of historical experience—that the predominance, one might say, the almost exclusive documentary consecration of mutual suspicion, is put before us as the charter of future co-operation.

It is obvious that this original flaw, this contradiction, will be more marked in proportion to the rigidly centralised character of such a scheme. Since this defensive organisation of some against others which is proposed in the French scheme is the most extensive and concrete that could be imagined, the weight of the duties of the signatories of the Convention to the central power—namely, the Council of the League—becomes greater. The more completely States have to sacrifice their freedom of decision, the greater will be their mutual suspicion. The distance that separates us from free and spontaneous co-operation founded on justice, frankness, and self-determination, and therefore on mutual confidence—in short, from the fundamental spirit of the Covenant—will become even greater in an atmosphere of suspicion.

Yet at the same time, while the autonomy of States is being subjected to restrictions that may jeopardise the very principles of their Constitution, we are bound to ask ourselves whether certain other aspects of the internecine struggle between men or nations have not been overlooked. As the Head of the Italian Government once said, struggles involving bloodshed are not the only ones that can be described as war; tariff barriers, preferential systems, quotas, immigration restrictions, monopolies of raw materials, are all war. Let the community of States legislate, by all means; but let it not legislate merely to create powerful professional armies. Let its legislation secure to its members, not merely the right not to be slain by soldiers, but also the right not to be suffocated by trusts and Customs officers. If we consider the doubts raised by the definition of the aggressor, as may be seen from an examination of the League’s records since its inception, we cannot return to this subject without feeling the gravest apprehension. Yet that effort would at least seem more logical and of more value if this future
central power were expected to determine and punish also the aggressor in an economic war, a tariff war, or a financial war.

It is by no means my desire to extend unduly the scope of our task, especially since we are already being accused of inability to solve our problems in a more limited field. But when we pass beyond the boundaries of pure measures of disarmament, clear and effective, that might be established on the principle of the general interest or on international guarantees, when we enter the sphere of a veritable "organisation of peace" controlled by a central power, we, I think, entitled to ask that that organisation should not confine its operations to the establishment of international military security; for in that case one limb of the organism would be hypertrophied in its isolated strength, while the other limbs, though equally important, would be paralysed.

When I say this, I am not denying that we have felt a deep admiration in considering the French scheme. What we particularly admire in it is its ordered arrangement, its clarity of detail, and the mutual harmony of its parts. I say "clarity of detail", because even certain features that may seem ambiguous, certain obscurities that may be noted here and there, are, rightly regarded, no more than the revelation of difficulties and reticences which, after all, the plan had to take into account. I have also referred to the harmony among its parts, because I feel that its authors are fully justified in stating as a conclusion that all the parts of the plan are indissolubly linked together.

This plan, starting with an outer circle in which rights and duties are regarded, as one might say, with a liberal and indulgent eye, gradually narrows down to an inner circle in which they grow in proportion to the needs and the potential contribution of each party. The whole is so harmoniously linked together that the inner circle could not even come to life at all if the outer circle did not live first, and if the two circles were not securely joined by a great maritime Power which, through its geographical position and its peculiarly worldwide interests, belongs both to Europe and to the extra-European world. That means that this scheme, and any rational structure, can only be usefully studied if we proceed with continuity from the general to the particular. If we do not first come to an understanding on this more general problem, it will perhaps be useless to discuss the other aspects which depend entirely upon it.

Or, to put it more clearly, there is only one logical and advantageous method of examining the French scheme—namely, to proceed chapter by chapter, from the first chapter to the last, considering in the first place the more extensive obligations, and then passing to the narrower ones, and descending from the examination of the preliminary political problem to that of the central problems.

Moreover, I am afraid that, if we proceeded in any other way, we should be obliged to admit that the solution of the problem dealt with in the first two chapters of the plan present insuperable difficulties—which would imply a lack of confidence in a system the authors of which assert that it can only hold if it is accepted as a whole.

I should not venture to make these remarks, or even to think them, if I were not justified by the experience of the earlier stages of this Conference.

I hasten, however, to add that, so far as method is concerned, we yield to no one in our spirit of conciliation, as our attitude throughout has shown. But I confess that we do not enjoy the constant exercise of our patience on highly difficult matters, when we know at the same time that the series of factors by which the very existence of the question under discussion is conditioned have not even been touched. This tends to encourage what I may call mental laziness—only too well justified, alas!—which in this way can always contrive to find expression and to safeguard itself by means of repeated "general reservations". Public opinion, rightly or wrongly, has by now passed judgment on this method: its judgment may err on the side of too much severity, but it is not unfounded in fact.

We have sounded our praises of the "ordered arrangement" of the French plan; but our sincerity forces us to draw attention to a defect in it. Any sanction taken against a country which has violated the Convention would have to proceed from two different centres—namely, from the Council of the League in the case of States Members of the League, and from the whole body of nations which have acceded to the Pact of Paris in the case of those which do not belong to the League. The fact that there may be two places of enquiry, two places for passing sentence, and two places for judicial proceedings, calls for our serious attention, because the standpoints of these two communities, or of the more powerful elements in them, may not be identical, and that may prevent any effective action being taken. I should also say at once that the French plan may weaken one of the principles which are at the basis of the Covenant, by putting an end to the equality of rights, duties and burdens of the several Members of the League. It is sufficient to reflect on the difference between the tasks and obligations which it is sought to impose on the Continental Powers of Europe, on the one hand, and those which Chapter II imposes on the other Members of the League, owing to the fact that, though many of these countries are indeed situated at a great distance from Europe, others are situated in European waters only a few miles distant from the Continent, in order to arrive at the conclusion that the harmonious equality which is at the root of the Covenant is seriously threatened.

I should also like openly to express my opinion as to the scope and significance of the adjective "continental", which is almost always coupled with the word "Europe" in the text of the French plan. It seems to me that the political, economic, cultural and military situation of Europe as we have known it, in the past and in our own time, should put us on our guard against the conception of a United Kingdom holding aloof from the European system proposed by the French plan.
It must be said at once that it would be very difficult for a Power like Italy, situated in
the Mediterranean and alive to all that happens in those waters, to conceive of the United
Kingdom as a purely oceanic Power and to convince herself that the latter country is not closely
involved in problems in which Italy is concerned, the more so as in Italy we have all been
brought up in the belief that England is part of the European family and that the European
spirit is just as much English as it is German, or French or Italian, or Spanish or Polish.
It is therefore difficult for us to concede that, in this question of security, such complicated
obligations can be satisfactory for us, if they do not also apply to this constant friend of our
country.

I cannot close my statement without expressing a hope that the existing differences
between certain tendencies will in the end be merged in a single carefully drawn resolution,
and that what we all desire will be attained—namely, a peaceful future and an alleviation of
the material and moral burden now crushing the world. I trust also that the hopes and
expectations and the confidence which humanity reposes in our work will not once again be
disappointed.

It seems to me that what the voice of the peoples rising amid the difficulties of the hour
is urging us to do is not to provide them with new complicated organisations, international
or supernational, the practical possibilities of which, both as regards their constitution and
operation, appear (to say the least) remote. Skilful distillations of phrases and subtle alchemy
of formula, compromises between opposing theses, will not count so much in the eyes of the
peoples as a single word—but not an illusory word—a limited—but not a deceptive—ideal,
a conclusion which admits of immediate consummation. What do I mean? I mean the
reduction of armaments.

M. NADOLNY (Germany).—The German delegation desires to express its satisfaction
that the discussion of the French plan has now been begun; for, on the one hand, this plan has
naturally aroused the greatest interest in Germany, and the Conference will no doubt wish
to know the German point of view in this connection; and, on the other hand, it is evident
that, in order to clear the way for progress in the work of the Conference, which is so keenly
desired, a discussion of the substance of the French plan is essential.

In this connection, I note with satisfaction that the German Government has formally
declared in the foreword to its plan that it does not claim to set the Conference upon an entirely
new path, but that its proposals are aimed at enabling the Conference to bring its task speedily
to a successful conclusion, taking into account the decisions taken and the proposals made
up to the present.

The general situation of the world imperatively demands that the Conference in this
second phase should promptly arrive at genuine and practical results. In any case, the German
Government desires that disarmament should be carried out as quickly as possible. Now as
previously, my Government is of opinion that it is entitled, under existing treaties, to demand
general disarmament, and that the realisation of this right, which it has been awaiting for over
ten years, should not be any longer deferred. It is also of opinion, now as previously, that there
can be no question of any disarmament convention which does not take into account the
stipulations of Article 8 of the Covenant for all the States Members of the Conference and
consequently for Germany also.

Such is the German point of view, which has not changed since the beginning of the
Conference, and which yesterday evening was again confirmed by the Chancellor of the Reich.
Its right to participate in the work and results of the Conference on an equal footing having
been established, the German Government is quite ready, on the above-mentioned basis,
to enter upon a discussion of any proposal likely to contribute to the success of the Conference,
and hence upon the discussion of the French plan which is submitted to us.

After this general observation I pass on to the contents of the French plan. I do not wish
to lose myself in details or repeat what has already been said. I only wish to submit some
considerations of principle. From these considerations it will be seen that the German
dlegation intends to do justice to the French wish to see the Conference speedily brought
to a successful conclusion. If I must to some extent criticise the proposal, I should nevertheless
like to emphasise my desire to take up a positive attitude with regard to certain important
elements in the French plan.

For the sake of clearness I shall deal with the two principal parts of the French plan in
the following order:

(1) Military and technical part;
(2) Legal and political part.

In dealing with the military and technical part, I note, first of all, that the French plan
considers that the method which answers best to the idea of disarmament, and especially to the
conditions of the European continent, is that armies should be composed both of long-
service and short-service soldiers. The plan thus lays down, as regards military status, a general
principle which would, of course, be applicable to each State and could be adjusted to the
requirements of every country and to its economic and social conditions. The said principle
should also be extended to the oversea forces.

I regret, however, that the French plan contains no concrete proposal for bringing about
a real and decisive disarmament in the qualitative sphere or for effectively limiting material.
Such measures are indispensable if the principle formulated in the Hoover plan, which has
already been approved by the Conference, is to be put into practice—namely, the principle
of decreasing the power of attack and increasing the power of defence. I do not, however, anticipate any result from the continuation of the fruitless debates of the special Committees which have been dragging on for many months. In my opinion, one of the Conference’s most essential and urgent tasks is to decide how far it wishes to go in the reduction of specifically offensive weapons. Without going once more into technical considerations, we shall have to begin by putting to the vote the proposals in regard to qualitative disarmament which have been laid before us or which may yet be laid before us.

According to the French plan, however, aggressive material would not be really abolished but would be retained. It would be assigned to the national contingents forming the forces of the League of Nations, or would be kept at the latter’s disposal in the territory of the former owner.

The German delegation considers that this procedure would render qualitative disarmament illusory. It holds that all material which is to be disallowed in future should be destroyed within a given time-limit, and that its manufacture should be entirely prohibited. This is the only means which will permit of the speedy attainment of genuine disarmament such as the whole world is impatiently awaiting and such as would be likely to produce the economic and political effects which it is desired to attain though general disarmament.

Apart from the proposals regarding reductions in naval armaments, we find that the French plan also contains no concrete proposals for quantitative disarmament. It is true that in its first paragraph it puts forward the idea of combining its own proposals with those of the Hoover plan. I conclude from this that France, too, desires a quantitative disarmament on the basis of this plan, which has already been adopted by the Conference as a guiding principle. It is therefore necessary to proceed without delay to the execution of the Hoover plan. As regards the degree of disarmament, it will have to correspond to the rules of Article 8 of the Covenant, as the General Commission has recognised. According to those rules the future state of armaments must be fixed for each country—and consequently for Germany also—in conformity with the requirements of its national security—a security which is, moreover, chiefly determined by the state of the armaments of the other countries.

Such are the observations which I have to submit on the military part of the French plan. I shall have occasion, however, to revert later to the proposal concerning the military forces of the League of Nations.

I now go on to the legal and political part. The French delegation, reverting to ideas with which we are already familiar, expresses the opinion that progress in regard to disarmament and progress in regard to security must go hand in hand.

With this object and on the basis of previous proposals, it has laid down a system of rules the adherence to which is to be extended, not only to the States of Europe as a whole, or to the European continent, or to the Members of the League, or, lastly, to all States Members of the Conference. The scope of these proposals is very wide, and they should undoubtedly be studied with the greatest care.

Before going any further, I should, however, like to make the following observation: the theory that the measures of disarmament expected of our Conference would only be possible hand in hand with a development of the organisation of peace is not in accordance with the principles on which our work is based. It is obvious that, under the Covenant, disarmament was to be immediately effected on the basis of the guarantees created by the Covenant itself and was not to be conditional upon the creation of further guarantees of security of a legal and political nature. This was the position thirteen years ago when there was only the Covenant. Since then there have been added to it, in the sphere of contractual guarantees, the Pact of Paris; the Locarno Agreement; the Permanent Court of International Justice and the Optional Clause, which has been accepted by thirty-four States, whereby the jurisdiction of that Court is recognised for all disputes of a juridical nature; many pacts of arbitration and conciliation; and the General Convention of 1930 concerning financial assistance, and that of 1932 relating to the means of preventing war. It is true that these latter Conventions have not yet come into force, but there is no doubt that, if the result of our work is satisfactory, they will be brought into operation.

In the meantime, the Assembly decided, in 1926, to convene without delay a conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments, in accordance with the conditions of regional and general security obtaining at that time. Two years later, in its resolution of September 25th, 1928, the Assembly again stated that the conditions of security were such as to permit of the immediate conclusion of the first disarmament convention, that is to say, the convention on which we are now working. That was all prior to the Pact of Paris and the Conventions relating to financial assistance and the prevention of war. We consider, therefore, that the accomplishment of the task before the present Conference—which, as has been recognised by the General Commission, should constitute the decisive stage on the road to disarmament—should not be dependent on further guarantees of security of a legal and political nature, especially as, in Article 8 of the Covenant, disarmament is recognised as the best means of maintaining peace. In other words, the reduction and limitation of armaments are considered to be the most effective means of guaranteeing the security of all States.

Nevertheless, and although disarmament cannot be made conditional upon further guarantees of security, the German Government has always expressed its readiness to examine proposals with a view to the establishment of further guarantees, and, eventually, to participate in the relevant conventions. We accordingly stated in the Agreement of December 11th, 1932, that we were prepared to undertake, in conjunction with all European States,

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1 See Minutes of the twenty-eighth meeting of the General Commission.
in no circumstances to have resort to force for the settlement of a present or future dispute. I should like to repeat this declaration by my Government within the framework of this important discussion.

In the same spirit we are willing to participate in the examination of the French proposals. When doing so, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that the provisions contemplated for the Powers as a whole represented at the Conference, those applicable to the Members of the League, and, lastly, those dealing with European organisation, are interdependent. Moreover, the French memorandum states that these three systems which it proposes for the organisation of peace form an indivisible whole. It would be out of place in this general discussion for me to go into details. This will be done at subsequent discussions. At that time it will be necessary conscientiously to consider the question whether an organisation such as that contemplated in the French plan is practicable within the limited framework of Europe, and, still more, of continental Europe, and whether, in the present situation of Europe and the world as a whole, the different political conditions necessary for the working of such a complete and strict system as this exist side by side. Other very delicate problems are raised by the proposal to depart from the principle of unanimity in the League Council and by the suggestions relating to general arbitration.

It only remains for me briefly to express my views on the French proposal for an international executive, that is to say, the creation of an armed force in the service of the League, and on the proposals concerning air navigation. I do not dispute the possibility that the future development of international collaboration may make it possible to create, as the keystone of the organisation of peace, an international army, provided that this is technically feasible. Another condition resulting from the nature of things would be the guarantee that this common force could be employed with the same certainty of success against each Member of the League. It will therefore be necessary to examine the question whether this guarantee can exist before complete equality of armaments has been realised.

I consider that this also applies to the proposal to create a League air fleet. As regards the proposal relating to civil aviation, I should merely like to point out that the healthy and normal development of civil aviation can only be ensured by the free play of competition. The best solution of the problem of air navigation—as the German delegation has constantly repeated during previous discussions—would be, I think, the complete abolition of military aircraft and the absolute prohibition of bombing from the air, this prohibition being supported by effective guarantees. Only in this way can an assurance be given to the world that this weapon, the most formidable of all, will not be employed in future.

In conclusion, I should like to summarise the general attitude of the German delegation to the French proposals as follows: We note with satisfaction the French Government's desire to expedite the work of our Conference and not to depart from the principles already adopted by it, and we are prepared to examine the various French suggestions. In so doing, the German delegation will be guided by the fundamental principle that the future Convention should constitute the first decisive stage towards the reduction of the armaments of the powerfully armed States. The German representatives will not fail to study the French proposals with the greatest care and to give their wholehearted support to all the suggestions made therein which are likely to promote the aim of the Conference, since the sole object of our work is to achieve effective disarmament and the same security for all.

The continuation of the discussion was adjourned to the next meeting.

THIRTIETH MEETING.

Held on Friday, February 3rd, 1933, at 3 p.m.

President: The Right Honourable A. HENDERSON.


Mr. EDEN (United Kingdom).—Before beginning the few remarks which I am going to make, I would like to express on behalf of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom, Sir John Simon, his deep regret at being unable to be present on this occasion. Unhappily, however, he is retained by immediate and pressing work in London.

The delegate of France was kind enough at the opening of our discussion yesterday to give us a further statement upon the French plan and to invite us to comment and criticism.

1 Document Conf.D.146.
At the outset, I should like to pay my tribute to the sincerity and earnestness of the efforts which have gone to the creation of this plan. We all of us, I think, appreciate the spirit in which the French Government has sought to make its contribution so that this Conference may achieve its goal. The French plan is, in part at least, concerned with a problem which has figured in European history and more particularly in post-war history—that of security. It is a problem which we are all of us, whatever our nationality, bound gravely to consider to-day, but, in our search for new safeguards and new formulae to give security, there is one consideration which is ever present to my mind and to which I must first refer. Is there not perhaps a real danger that in our search for new security we may overlook the very full significance of those guarantees that already exist? In pursuit of the new, let us not forget the old—the latter are real and substantial and, in the eyes and judgment of my country-men at least, they loom large.

There is first, of course, for those of us who are Members of the League of Nations, its Covenant, expressly binding upon us all. There is next the Pact of Paris, to which every, or almost every, Government in the world has subscribed. There is finally for certain countries of Western Europe the Treaty of Locarno. The importance of the guarantees given by that Treaty may seem by comparison slight in some countries; it does not seem so in mine. Locarno, we have always held in the United Kingdom and still hold, marked the close of the immediately postwar era in Europe. It opened a new chapter which still remains unwritten. The security that Locarno gives within a certain area is real, and the United Kingdom Government believes that, by its signature of that treaty, it contributed generously to the security of Western Europe. We should, I believe, make a grave mistake were we to underrate the significance of the Locarno Treaty. But Locarno was meant to be something more: it was meant to be the first of a series of similar agreements. His Majesty's Government, in what we held to be a spirit of realism, abandoned the more ambitious ideal of a universal pact of mutual assistance, and sought rather to encourage the natural growth of a system of security in accordance with local and immediate needs. In signing the Locarno Treaty, the United Kingdom Government sought to set an example which it hoped might be followed. This example has been followed, as it is to be hoped that it will be followed, and is, I believe, a real beginning of a new era of European security.

It has not yet been realised. But if groups of nations, wherever they may be, can devise similar means for meeting those regional perils which immediately beset them, these might in themselves—in our judgment, would in themselves—prove to be a valuable contribution to the general sense of international confidence and goodwill.

In the course of his speech to the General Commission yesterday, the Italian delegate paid my country a compliment, which I much appreciate—the compliment of an invitation. He said—I hope I paraphrase him correctly—that it was difficult for Italy to conceive of the United Kingdom as a purely oceanic Power, and also that it was difficult to admit that, in a ship of the League of Nations and its signature of the Locarno Treaties it has gone as far as it could and should in assuming definite commitments in Europe. I can give no hint of encouragement therefore that it will be possible for us to modify this attitude or to undertake new obligations and new commitments to which, as I believe, the public opinion of my country is unalterably opposed. It is the very fact that to us the obligations which we have undertaken matter so much—those for which we have assumed so great a seriousness that limits their extension. We feel that we have contributed what we can by guarantee to achieve security and we do not feel that by such methods we can contribute more. I hasten therefore to acknowledge the delicacy of the French Government in taking into account, as it has done in its plan, this attitude of which indeed successive British Governments have made no secret.

But there is another aspect of the work of this Conference with which also the French plan deals, and with which it is imperative that we should concern ourselves at once—reduction in armaments. What we now wish for the Conference in its second year, and what above all I believe the public opinion of the world wishes, is to see achieved very soon a real reduction in the armaments of the world, which reduction in itself may serve to pave the way for still further reductions hereafter. The burden of taxation for many of our countries makes such reduction imperative. I would add that the need for security makes it not one whit less important. I would put this question in all seriousness to my colleagues: is it not possible that the present measure of security which existing commitments guarantee is in itself sufficient for a real measure of disarmament, and is it not true that disarmament by Europe is an effective guarantee of peace in Europe? That, at least, is an experiment which I believe that world opinion would wish us to make and that economic forces will in any event soon compel us to undertake.

It is of course true that, in certain respects, the past year’s discussions have not been sterile; but is there not now almost a danger that this Conference may be compelled to pass from the consideration of a limitation of armaments to the consideration of a limitation of plans for disarmament? If we are to achieve those practical measures of disarmament upon which, as I believe, we should now concentrate to the exclusion of all else, we shall of course need the ideas, suggestions and practical proposals contained in all the plans that have been placed before us—those of President Hoover, of the Italian Government, of my own Government and, last but not least, those in the most important plan which we are now discussing.
The co-ordination of these various plans for the achievement of practical results should surely be the Conference’s next task and in that, as I believe, we cannot engage too soon. It is for that reason that my Government has thought fit, in all humility, to submit at this stage certain of its ideas of a practical method 1 by which the Conference may, once take in hand the work of piecing together all the material—and there is now an abundant supply—at its disposal, and my Government hopes that it may thus have contributed to facilitating and hastening the successful achievement of the task for which the world has waited so long.

Can we not then soon give speeches a rest and recall with Shakespeare that “Joy’s soul lies in the doing”.

M. Beneš (Czechoslovakia). — In taking part in the discussion on the French plan of disarmament and security, I do not wish to speak as the Rapporteur of the General Commission, but quite freely on behalf of the Czechoslovak Government and as its delegate to this Conference.

Ever since the beginning of the Disarmament Conference, the Czechoslovak Government has been perseveringly and consistently pursuing an unvarying policy of good faith and frankness. It realises the primal necessity, for all the countries of the world, to reach an agreement to reduce armaments, diminish the military expenditure of every country and create a state of at least relative political tranquillity and calm, particularly in Europe, this being an essential condition for bringing the world out of the economic and financial crisis. It realises that failure might lead to mishaps and disasters. But it also realises the extraordinary difficulties which our work must encounter on its path, and the impossibility of lightly settling these grave questions, which sometimes affect the very existence of many countries, and of settling them in too simplified or superficial, or in too selfish, a manner in favour of one or other side, as in politics the opposing parties often shortsightedly endeavour to do.

Lastly, my Government has always been convinced that our work cannot succeed without a certain degree of mutual confidence and without a policy which, particularly in the grave problems which occupy us, is free from any kind of hidden designs aiming at a future political disequilibrium as a consequence of the present Conference and redounding to the unilateral profit of one country or another.

If such an atmosphere of confidence and loyalty did not prevail among us, we could not hope to succeed. If it does not yet exist, it is time to create it. It is true that we are in the final phase of the Conference; but we can always find the opportunity and the time to apply ourselves to bringing this about. If I am taking part in the discussion on the French plan, it is because I am convinced that the plan itself has the great merit of being able to contribute largely to creating this essential atmosphere in our Conference.

The Czechoslovak Government pronounces in favour of the French plan, but is at the same time ready to examine any amendments the Conference may wish to introduce, and to consider how it can be combined with the Hoover plan or with the proposals on qualitative disarmament submitted by the Italian and United Kingdom Governments, and especially by what stages its essential principles can be realised.

The acceptance of the plan by the Czechoslovak Government is due to several reasons:

(1) In the first place, the plan presents a complete system expressing, on the one hand, a definite political doctrine, the essential elements of which have always been upheld by the Czechoslovak Government and, on the other hand, concrete views on certain technical military questions which the Czechoslovak Government would be ready to accept if certain conditions were realised, as indeed the plan stipulates and demands.

(2) While setting out from the principle that disarmament can only be general, the plan is based on the experience of the past and does not lay down any universal, rigid solutions for everyone. On the contrary, on the basis of Article 8 of the Covenant, it differentiates measures according as it relates to the special circumstances of certain countries or continents, or to the whole world.

(3) It strikes a balance between the essential factors of the problem with which we are dealing, for it creates a well-balanced parallelism between the three principles which are fundamental for all our present work: security, equality of rights and the degree of disarmament. In this connection, it is usefully completed by the decision of the five Powers, dated December 11th, 1932, concerning the same problem.

(4) It very clearly brings out the special conditions of Europe and shows in relatively detailed fashion what must be the characteristic features of the special solutions for Europe alone, whether as regards the problem of the treaty of mutual assistance, the problem of supervision, the adoption of a generally applicable type of armies, or, lastly, the question of aviation.

In its general structure, it embraces all the points which the Disarmament Conference has already recorded as definitely settled, thus indicating the path which we must now continue to follow.

I will take point by point these special reasons and explain them:

(1) The opinions I have read or heard concerning this plan are all favourable as regards its logical structure, its systematic construction and its general conception. I am well aware, that in politics, this is not always considered as an advantage, and that often it is preferred to have concrete proposals which are elastic, applicable immediately—even if drawn up only on the spur of the moment—and modifiable according to circumstances. Stability, consistency in politics and faith in immutable principles are, unfortunately, not in fashion in the post-war world. Indeed, in my opinion, this is the reason why it is in so deplorable a state. I am too much of a realist not to be aware of these political and moral realities.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that here in the League of Nations we are all governed by the Covenant, which is our fundamental law, or else have been convened to put into application the principles of Article 8 of the Covenant. This Covenant is the expression of a political philosophy, of a doctrine which is at once logical, systematic and consequent, representing a general conception, an ordered structure of the new political world and an organic embodiment of political practice as a whole, to which the major part of the world has pledged itself.

What seems to me to be certain—and here I venture to disagree with certain passages in the speech of Baron Aloisi—is that the plan we are discussing is entirely imbued with the spirit of the Covenant, that the political doctrine which inspires it is that of the Covenant, that the political practice which it wishes to generalise consists in our subordinating ourselves, in our future political action, to the fundamental principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Pact of Paris, the General Act of Arbitration, the Locarno Treaties, and other diplomatic acts of this kind.

I know that it may be objected that, while the proposals contained in the plan may not be contrary to the Covenant, they go beyond it. It is in this, I think, that its merit lies; for I consider that we should have the courage to say frankly that the fourteen years of international politics which have elapsed since the war have seen the world advance from several points of view, even leaving the Covenant a little behind. Does not the Pact of Paris go further than the Covenant of the League of Nations in explicitly forbidding war and obliging us all to settle our disputes by peaceful means? Does not this pledge no longer to resort to force to settle our political conflicts, of which M. Nadolny was speaking yesterday, go further than the obligations imposed by the Covenant and fill to advantage the gaps in it, which we are beginning to feel to-day as we do its defects?

In my opinion, none of us should have any fears in regard to the admirable audacity of the French plan, for let us not forget that the world of to-day, the world of the machine and of mechanical invention, travels very fast, and might lead us into war more rapidly than is generally supposed. It is precisely because the plan we are discussing to-day is imbued with the ideas of the Covenant and that it is founded on the only doctrine which should, in my opinion, govern all our future policies, that the Czechoslovak Government accepts it and is ready to discuss it in order that it may be progressively adopted in the form which the Conference wishes to give it.

The plan does not propose any rigid universal measures, but differentiates, according to political necessities and according to special regional or continental conditions, etc., the measures to be taken, whether in the political and legal sphere or in the military and technical sphere.

It proposes a world-wide arrangement based on the consequences to be drawn from the Pact of Paris as regards the principle of neutrality towards an aggressor.

It amounts to what might be termed the world consultative pact, the realisation of which I consider to be essential, if we are ever to achieve either a serious degree of disarmament or the true stabilisation of peace. It proposes to make a thorough study of Article 16 of the Covenant and of the details of its practical application, measures which are indispensable if the Members of the League do not wish to continue to live in a state of doubt. Otherwise, it should be frankly admitted that the League of Nations will never and can never be anything else than a moral force in international political systems. In that case, it would be necessary to draw the necessary consequences as regards the degree of genuine security which the Covenant provides for its members in moments of crisis or in abnormal periods, such as that in which we are living to-day.

The French plan proposes a complete pact of mutual assistance for the European continent. I know all the objections which are raised against such a pact. Even before the French plan was submitted, I had occasion to speak on the subject with several delegates who are present to-day, for it is the old idea of the Protocol rehandled, rendered more concrete, and adapted to the regional conditions existing on the European continent. With this more limited scope, it should be more easily practicable. I am, and I shall always be, in favour of this idea, although I realise the present difficulties and the momentary impossibility of realising it. I well understood the reasons adduced yesterday by Baron Aloisi and M. Nadolny against such a pact. I appreciate these reasons. But allow me to give you the reasons, in my opinion convincing ones, which lead me to think that Europe will be unable to overcome the difficulties which stand in the way of disarmament if she has not finally the courage to adopt, in the comparatively near future, peaceful measures of this nature and scope.
These convincing reasons are quite clear to me when I consider the example of my country and that of one of our neighbours. I apologise for speaking so frankly of my country and of our neighbours. It is in all loyalty and friendship towards them that I use this example. On November 7th, 1932, I made a speech in the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Prague Chamber of Deputies on the work of the Disarmament Conference. Speaking of the necessities of the organisation of peace, I said:

“No one, I suppose, will doubt that Czechoslovakia sincerely desires peace. But, if it is considered that three of her neighbours, disarmed by the Peace Treaties, might, in case of a possible conflict, have war equipment of all kinds many times superior to those which she has herself, that her geographical position places her in an extremely difficult situation, that the length of the frontier she would have to defend is greater than that of some of the great Powers, it must be recognised, with all impartiality, that our Government, although we have no exaggerated fear for ourselves, since we live on good terms with our neighbours, is justified in always defending the cause of security and the necessity of organising peace in Europe on a permanent basis.”

In order to show the impartial manner in which I consider this question, I will quote another passage:

“Any unbiased political man must admit that Hungary has the right to desire a feeling of security. The strength and potentialities of three of her neighbours would be much greater in the case of the execution of the clauses of the Treaty of Trianon on disarmament, and a conflict might lead to a catastrophe for that country. Every nation has the right to live in peace and security, and this right cannot be refused to Hungary either. For her, too, the terms ‘security’ and ‘organisation of peace’ are not empty words. She has to defend her vital interests, and the same might be said of Poland, Roumania or Yugoslavia.”

Yesterday you heard the German representative make similar remarks as regards his own country.

I quote these two examples, but each of you might invoke the similar example of his own country, for present conditions in Europe are interdependent, and the respective situations of each of our countries rapidly change. There will be no peace on a continent like Europe until a suitable and permanent system for the organisation of peace has been established.

If it does not prove possible now to realise a system of compulsory mutual assistance within the limits of the French plan, I am certain that recourse will be had to a system of voluntary mutual assistance conceived on the same lines and open to all the countries of Europe, according to the proposal drawn up in the Committee on Arbitration and Security, of which I was Chairman, a few years ago. The idea is now ripe, like the idea of arbitration treaties, the idea of the outlawry of war, the idea of non-recourse to force. All these ideas have ripened in the last few years and even in the last few months, and this despite the scepticism and resistance of many countries. For, I repeat, the world is travelling fast, and it is travelling either towards war or towards peace. War spells disaster, perhaps for all. Peace signifies the organisation of peace, and this will not be possible without some kind of mutual assistance.

I consider, moreover, the undertaking not to resort to force for the settlement of political conflicts as the first step towards this final aim. In this connection, the German representative rightly emphasised the advance, in relation to the Pact of Paris and the Covenant of the League, which was realised last December by the great European Powers. We may congratulate ourselves on this. I should like this undertaking not to be contracted only in the form of a collective declaration, but in the form of a solemn pact containing definite stipulations. I need hardly explain to you this necessity at length, particularly after the events of recent times.

The third reason for which I accept the French plan is that it establishes a well-balanced parallelism between the three essential principles on which our work is based: security, equality and disarmament.

I have already said in this connection that the agreement of the five great Powers of December 11th, 1932, in virtue of which one of the aims of the Conference was to be the realisation of equality of status in the system of security, supplements the suggestions of the French plan on this point. The latter admits the principle of equality; it indicates the methods by which it desires this principle to be carried into effect, and, at the same time, it emphasises another essential principle which we have all adopted in a special resolution, namely, that all disarmament, all realisation of security and of equality, can only take place by progressive stages, observing during this evolution towards the final aim a careful balance and parallelism between each of these three principles.

Nothing further need be said on this point. We have had so much talk of the interdependence of these principles, and we have of late years listened to so many debates on this subject, that we can now congratulate ourselves that the Agreement concluded on December 11th, 1932, between the Powers—if accepted by the other members of the Conference—has at last settled the dispute, putting these three principles on an equal footing of preference by making them interdependent, subordinate to one another, and by amplifying and balancing them one against the other.
This session of the General Commission is the opening of the decisive phase of the Conference, and we are entitled to ask for definite results. These results could not have been achieved, let it be frankly and boldly admitted, if there had not been prior agreement on this balance and on the conditional character of the solution. Let us make an honest attempt to apply this latter principle to our future work; for, if we have not the courage to refrain from selfishly playing off one of these principles against the other, we shall make no progress and shall fail to secure the results needed for the future Convention.

I am perfectly aware that, put quite frankly, the theoretical recognition of this balance is only the first step to success. The real difficulty will emerge when we try to translate this principle into practice; it is here that the struggle for the proportional application, at similar stages and to a similar degree, of security, equality and disarmament will be most difficult. If we are to succeed, a certain amount of mutual confidence is essential. Have we, I ask it quite frankly, are we going to have this necessary degree of mutual confidence? Are we all doing everything necessary to create this confidence? Without it, we shall not succeed in drawing up the Disarmament Convention.

Lastly, there are other reasons which lead me to favour the French plan. I am referring to some of the practical measures suggested in it.

The idea of reducing European arms to a uniform general type and of transforming professional armies into short-service armies not adapted to a sudden offensive cannot but evoke our sympathies. I should, however, add at once that this uniformity cannot be achieved if both types of army are simultaneously retained. It will be necessary here to see by what means and within what time-limit such changes can be made.

There are two special questions intimately bound up with the question of a uniform general type of army, at any rate in Europe. First, such a solution involves a final settlement of the problem of irregular military formations, and, secondly, it raises the question of applying qualitative limitation to effectives as well as to material, with which latter we have hitherto been accustomed exclusively to associate it.

Another noteworthy feature of the French plan is the idea of regular, permanent and effective supervision. This is supplemented by the ingenious system of "establishing" commissions—a system applicable within the framework of mutual assistance, but capable also of employment in the general organisation of supervision.

Lastly, I would like to mention as a specially praiseworthy feature of the French plan its provisions regarding bombardment from the air and the international regulation of civil aviation. These provisions might and should be included in the future Convention in any case, quite irrespective of the French plan. Their inclusion in the latter makes them so much the more effective, and I give them my full support. The terrible consequences of aerial warfare have nowadays become one of the facts which are in themselves an argument for the disappearance of this weapon.

To be comprehensive, I ought to mention yet other details of the French plan; but my idea is merely to stress its main features and thus to prove the real merits of this general idea of a system of disarmament and security. Much might be said of the system of armed contingents put at the disposal of the League of Nations, of the international air force, of the storing of war material, of the application of the system of collective disarmament to the various categories of powerful weapons, of the impossibility of re-armament, of naval disarmament, of the Permanent Commission, etc. These are certainly highly important details of the plan as a whole; but I wish to-day to deal, primarily, with its basic features and essential principles.

The last reason why the Czechoslovak Government supports the French plan is that it does not impair the result of the work so far accomplished and does not propose to displace other initiatives taken here. On the contrary, it comprehends, practically speaking, all the results of the work of our Conference, all the resolutions of the latter find their application therein, particularly that of July 23rd, 1932. If our Italian and German colleagues have failed to find in it the concrete proposals for qualitative disarmament, that to my mind is due also to the fact that the plan as a whole confines itself to laying down the main lines for negotiating the application of certain accepted major principles, whether in the sphere of security or of disarmament. In any case, during the practical discussions, we shall necessarily have the figures, scales and calculations before us.

Furthermore, the plan is identical in several important points with the concrete proposals made here by the United Kingdom and Italian delegations, as well as by the delegations of the United States of America and some other countries. If someone tried to draw up a table showing the common points covered by these proposals, they might perhaps be astonished at the number of important points on which views were more or less indental. Such a comparison would not be difficult: the difficulty is to bring into line the conditions which the States reciprocally require as the price of their acceptance of this or that point, the principle of which is accepted by all, in the event of its final approval by the Conference.

I now arrive at the same conclusion as preceding speakers, particularly the United Kingdom representative, Mr. Eden. As this is the last stage of the Conference, we must at the close of this general discussion see how we are going to set about the practical work of drafting in the speediest possible manner a Convention which can be accepted by all.
Here again, let me say frankly that this effort will not be successful, unless we state, clearly and sincerely, that the following two conditions are essential:

In the first place, the work must, in perfect good faith and with no political reservations, be proportioned and balanced in each of the three main directions—viz. political and juridical measures, that is to say, the organisation of peace, equality, and practical disarmament measures.

Secondly, the work must be deliberately regarded as the first part of a logical and complete whole, the first part of a system which will be worked out, with all the necessary adaptations, by the Permanent Commission until, in its final form, it represents a kind of relative norm in the sphere of general disarmament and general security. I use the term “relative” in order not to desert the province of realities and in order not to enter for the present on the sphere of the ideal aims of full disarmament and full and absolute security.

This is the definite practical effort we now have to make, and there is not much time left in which to achieve our aim. If we failed, we should each have to take steps commensurate with our rights and international obligations. For the time being, I dismiss any such idea, as I have a firm hope and conviction that this last phase of the Conference will produce real, reasonable and appreciable results, corresponding to the realities and possibilities of the present troubled situation.

The present dangers are certainly grave, from several standpoints. Each of us sees them and measures them primarily from his national standpoint, and is prepared, if need be, to adjust his attitude accordingly. The most important point is that we should see these dangers and realise our responsibilities.

But, if we see the dangers, we cannot fail also to discern the hopes of the future in the event of our effort producing a result which can be accepted by everyone sincerely, loyally and with the patience so needed everywhere to-day. Economic, financial and moral distress is spreading; but the hope of shortly seeing better times is not lost, and the belief of the greater part of world public opinion in our work has not yet been shattered. We have time to act and to accomplish a very useful task. My country is prepared to do its best in this direction.

A discussion of the French plan will certainly bring us farther in this direction and give us the necessary basis for the work we have still to do in this last phase of the Conference. I trust that this last phase will be successful, and speedily successful.

M. Bourquin (Belgium). — The initiative taken by the French delegation has been welcomed as a valuable contribution to the work we are engaged on in common. On behalf of my Government, I heartily associate myself with the tribute paid to the French plan, and I desire briefly to explain why we think it justified.

The President reminded us with humour, in which there lurked maybe a certain melancholy, that the resumption of our work coincided exactly with the anniversary of the Conference. That is a fact to which it is impossible to shut our eyes, and which undoubtedly gives rise to certain reflections. I do not think, however, it should surprise us, because, in the natural course of events, such a task as this was bound to take a long time to accomplish, and it would be quite inaccurate, it seems to me, to claim that the discussions and deliberations of the last twelve months have been a waste of time.

To the outside public, no doubt, the results are not very apparent. The texts and formulae of agreement which we are in a position to offer to the public are still so meagre that it is perhaps preferable not to say too much about them. But it is within, in our hearts, that the change has taken place. When one looks back and from this standpoint measures how far we have come, one is sometimes astonished at the rapidity of the evolution that has taken place. What we have achieved during this year is primarily a maturing of ideas. This period of psychological preparation was indispensable, but we shall all agree that it has lasted long enough.

We are living in a troubled world, as M. Beneš reminded us a moment ago, a world in which the greatest optimists are themselves compelled to admit the existence here and there of disturbing movements beneath the surface. It would be, to say the least, highly imprudent to delay any further in giving the world the pacification which it expects as the result of our work. We have hitherto been walking round the problems. It is now time to tackle them. That is why the discussion of the French plan seems to me well timed.

What the French Government offers us is an effort, made at an opportune moment, to get out of the rut. It is a loyal and sincere effort because, if opinion may differ as to the value of the formulae which it offers us, there is one point on which I think we shall all agree, namely, that these formulae are inspired by a real effort to lead us towards the goal we are seeking.

Another thing we appreciate in these proposals is their elasticity. I know that, in some respects, they constitute a coherent whole. I know that the proposals with regard to disarmament are conditional, in the mind of their authors, on the proposals for strengthening the organisation of peace, and that there is, in consequence, a certain indivisibility between the two panels of the diptych. But, subject to this natural reservation, which affects the basic factors of the problem, the French proposals have the merit of not constituting a rigid and exclusive whole. In the
terms of the memorandum itself, the French system is one which, combined with other proposals, will enable the Conference to accomplish its purpose.

Suggestions have been made from various quarters. Far from rejecting them, the French plan appeals for their incorporation. What it advocates is an attempt at synthesis, and that is undoubtedly the path we must follow if we wish to succeed.

And now, without going into details, which at the present juncture would be out of place, allow me to cast a rapid glance at the general structure of these proposals.

Security, Disarmament. That is the order in which the elements of the problem are grouped. But it is merely a way of putting things and nothing else; for there is no question of establishing an order of precedence and proclaiming that "security comes first". The old dispute about precedence is no longer under discussion. Nevertheless, as men dealing with realities, we have to admit that it is in fact impossible to arrive at satisfactory solutions in the matter of disarmament, unless a certain advance is made in connection with security: so that the two terms are connected de facto if not de jure. It is on this practical and firm ground that the French memorandum takes its stand, leaving on one side all theoretical arguments and dogmatic pretensions.

What does it propose to do to improve the organisation of peace? It is at this point that we come upon one of the ingenious ideas by which it is characterised—namely, the conception of the so-called "concentric circles". On the outside there is the universal plan, on the inside there is the European plan. The obligations become stronger and more definite in proportion as the area is narrowed. It is an ingenious idea, because it would in practice be impossible to induce all the nations of the world to accept certain obligations to which the States of Europe may, on the other hand, submit in their common interests. For our part, we give our entire approval to this method, which seems to us the only method capable of yielding positive results.

In the application of this idea, the main lines of which the French memorandum indicates, it is necessary to make distinctions. The system of undertakings of a world-wide character in practice concerns mainly Powers which are not Members of the League. It is to these that the invitation is primarily addressed, and it is with these consequently that it is necessary to consider the possibilities of agreement.

For our part, being already bound by the Covenant of the League, the obligations of which are very much greater, we shall obviously have no difficulty in accepting the French proposals on this point; and I need not say how glad we should be if these were accepted by all States.

But, whatever the importance we attach to this chapter, that which engrosses our attention above all is of course the system of organisation which it is proposed to introduce within the framework of Europe. This system, as you know, implies two kinds of obligations. There are in the first place obligations of principle. Their object is to condemn, beyond any possible misconception, recourse to armed force, whatever the object and whatever the qualifications that may be made. The prohibited act is thus defined. The other obligations relate to sanctions and mutual aid in the event of violation of the former obligations. They are grafted on to the former obligations, and constitute, if I may say so, their superstructure.

In this connection, different formulæ might be considered. The question is beyond a doubt delicate and calls for particularly thorough study. It would not be possible to indicate in a few sentences the observations to which it gives rise; but I can say that my Government is prepared to go as far as possible along this path, subject only to one condition which it regards as essential. That condition is that the system which emerges from our discussions must not be limited to a small group of States, but must be a European system in the true sense of the word.

The judicious organisation of a system of mutual aid operating for the benefit of the victim of aggression would no doubt represent a considerable step forward in the matter of security. But what security calls for more than anything else in our opinion is the clear, exact and incontestable definition of the act of aggression itself. It must be known beyond a doubt what is allowed and what is forbidden. The collaboration of statesmen and jurists has produced such a tangle that this is now no longer known.

Here is the main weakness of the pacts by which we are governed. It is here that the remedy is required. The French proposals meet this requirement, and I hope that, on this point, we shall all unanimously accede to them. My hope, moreover, is based on certain indications, I venture even to say, promises.

In a speech to the Bureau on November 17th, 1932, Sir John Simon said that all the European States should unite in a solemn declaration that under no circumstances will they attempt to resolve any difference whatever, present or future, which may arise between them by resort to force. The same formula is found word for word in the agreement of December 11th last which preceded the return of Germany to the Conference.

It would seem therefore that, in this connection, ideas are converging, and that we all accept the same fundamental principle. Attention is so often drawn to our disagreements, that I may be permitted to point out this important and salutary case of agreement.

In the case of disarmament, as in the case of security, we can at the moment only consider the more general aspects of the French plan. There are certain provisions, in appearance only of secondary importance, which may have a significance of their own in this connection: but it is impossible in this general discussion to deal with them. It is only later, when the question will be tackled at close quarters, that we shall be able to give them the attention they deserve.

Regarded as a whole, it seems to me that the project outlined in the French memorandum is primarily the application of a principle to which frequent reference has been
made in our discussions—namely, the principle of qualitative disarmament. Not that the French scheme discards the idea of quantitative reduction of armaments, which is after all an essential idea without which there can be no genuine disarmament at all. Its originality lies elsewhere, for its proposals on quantitative disarmament are merely borrowed. In the case of qualitative disarmament, on the contrary, it brings into our discussion new food for thought in the shape of novel formulæ which my delegation regards as particularly fruitful.

The principle of qualitative disarmament has already, it will be remembered, been approved by the Conference. But up to now we have limited it to war material. The characteristic feature of the French proposals is that they extend and generalise the application of this principle. It is not only the weapons to which it is to apply but the men, their recruiting, their instruction and their cadres—in short, all forms of military organisation in all their aspects. It seems to us that this extension of the principle is logical and happily fills an important gap. It remains to be seen of course whether the actual formulæ achieve the object at which they aim.

In the case of material, the Conference has already decided to accord special treatment to those arms which have been described as particularly offensive in character—namely, those the possession of which encourages sudden aggression and thereby threatens to constitute a dangerous temptation.

But the Conference has not yet pronounced on the nature of the steps to be taken in the case of these arms. Should they be destroyed? Or internationalised? Both views have been expressed, and up to now no formal resolution has been adopted to decide between them.

In a general way, the French memorandum shows a marked preference for internationalisation. Frankness compels me to say that, on this point, my own delegation takes a different view. Nevertheless, we do not wish to discard a priori all systems of internationalisation; but we think it essential, if there is to be internationalisation, to establish a system which effectively dispossesses the State of the prohibited arms, and prevents it in fact, and not only in law, from making use of them. Otherwise, the whole proceeding will be stultified and will not achieve its object.

If in this matter there is a certain difference between us, we welcome warmly on the other hand the tendency in the French plan to unify the different types of armies on the European continent and approximate them progressively to the militia form. Here, we consider, is the method and here is the formulæ which can best facilitate a real reduction of armaments and deliver Europe from the nightmare by which she is obsessed.

I said a moment ago that ideas were ripening and that, in time, the most ardent controversies would be appeased. Here we have a new proof that this is so. The echoes of the discussion of some years back on the famous question of "trained reserves" will be remembered. That was a point which seemed in practice to defy solution; and yet we find it solved. What France proposes is short-term service and limited effectives. Limitation of effectives implies limitation of trained reserves. In 1930, at the Preparatory Commission, this formulæ would no doubt have appeared subversive to many of us. To-day, embodied as it is in an organic whole, it bears unquestionably another aspect. And why not? It is sufficient to recall certain memories of the past in order to appreciate the progress achieved and the substantial significance of the proposals before us.

The above are some of the reasons for our sympathy with this vigorous attempt at definite accomplishment which the French Government puts before us. No proposal, of course, is beyond criticism. But what is wanted now is to speed up our efforts, by conciliating views and interests, in the direction of a practical solution making a real beginning with a first reduction of armaments and paving the way for future reductions.

We believe the new French proposal brings us nearer to this end, and it is for this reason that we give it our cordial welcome.

The continuation of the discussion was adjourned to the next meeting.

THIRTY-FIRST MEETING

Held on Monday, February 6th, 1933, at 3.30 p.m.

President: The Right Honourable A. HENDERSON.

M. POLITIS (Greece).—I cordially welcome the French plan in principle on behalf of the Greek Government, which accepts the plan in all its parts and is prepared to go as far as the principal Powers are prepared to go in carrying it into effect. This attitude is based on a deep-seated conviction that peace, in order to be lasting and beneficial, can only result from the organisation of the international community. The firmer the international organisation, the greater the safeguards of peace.
That has been the feeling of the Greek people for a long time past: it derives from their most ancient history, which is so rich in lessons, and has been strengthened by the spectacle of the world on the morrow of the war. Greece at that time conceived and welcomed with enthusiasm the idea of a League of Nations, and gave of her best in the making of the Covenant. She has consistently united her efforts with those of others to strengthen and improve this first attempt at international organisation, for example, in connection with the 1924 Protocol and on a number of occasions since then.

But, in the course of this already long experience, others besides ourselves have come to realise that the international organisation of which the world is so deeply in need cannot be established all at once, or at the same time and to the same extent in all parts of the world.

The Greek Government has come to the conclusion that, within the framework which the League affords for universal organisation, an effort must be made to establish this organisation and to achieve the first indispensable improvements within the geographical limits of Europe.

The Greek Government even takes the view that, in the event of no European Pact with the collaboration of all the continental States being immediately possible, a beginning should at least be made by the conclusion of a Pact between certain countries with the door left wide open for others to accede to it in the future, or even—in accordance with certain recommendations that have been already submitted to the Conference and to the Assembly of the League—with the conclusion of regional security agreements on the model of the Locarno Treaty.

The Greek Government, which has always been in favour of the ideas at the basis of the French plan, now feels that these are being thrown into special prominence at the present Conference, at which we are endeavouring to realise a far-reaching reform interfering with habits and customs dating back a thousand years, and committing to a very considerable extent the future of all countries—a reform of which it is not too much to say that it will mark a decisive turning-point in the history of mankind.

But it must not be forgotten that disarmament is not an end in itself, but a means towards the establishment of firm and lasting peace. Disarmament alone is not, I am convinced, capable of attaining this end. For its attainment, a firm foundation—moral, legal and political—is essential. That view, I know, is not shared by all delegations, and, for that very reason, I insist on the point and propose, with your permission, to attempt to prove it: for it is the duty of the delegates to the Conference to put their respective ideas to one another and so enable the public opinion of the world to pass judgment on them.

Why cannot disarmament achieve the consolidation of peace except on the basis of a strong moral, legal and political foundation? In order to answer that question, it is sufficient to recall two simple points of fact, one of which confirms and strengthens the other.

The first point was made before the Conference in admirable language by Sir John Simon on November 17th, 1932, \(^1\) when he said that the main obstacle to disarmament was fear, fear of the arbitrary recourse to force, compelling the States to remain armed as much as possible. The same idea has been put forward recently by another member of the United Kingdom Cabinet, who said that, as long as Europe continued to live in fear, it was no good reproaching it for its armaments. That is a point which no one presumably will contest.

The second point is the reverse of the first. Wherever fear has disappeared, giving way to confidence, the disarmament problem has ceased to exist. It has resolved itself more or less. Of the various examples in which history abounds, in the present and in the past, I will confine myself to citing two.

The first is the case to which the Canadian delegation has so often alluded—namely, the happy conditions existing between Canada and the great Republic of the United States of America, where over a frontier of many thousands of miles there are neither fortifications nor guns, nor protective troops. Why? Because these countries are fortunate enough to live together in perfect harmony, and because they have unlimited confidence in each other.

The second case is that of Greece and Turkey, which touches me even more closely and which I am proud to quote. It is even more striking than the former case, because there have existed between these two peoples for centuries back not merely mistrust and animosity, but actual hatred and hostilities. Each has suffered at the hands of the other. They have frequently fought one another. But, after the last experience, they were both convinced that they had nothing to gain by continuing on these lines, and that it was better to make a change of system. They accordingly resolved to treat their existing frontiers as definitive and to settle all their differences amicably. The consequence has been that they have become friends; and I appeal to my friend here, Rustu Bey, to say if to-day they are not just as firmly convinced of the permanency of this friendship as they used to be convinced of the permanency of their hostility. The result is that there is no longer mistrust between them, but only confidence.

That has been the feeling of the Greek people for a long time past: it derives from their most ancient history, which is so rich in lessons, and has been strengthened by the spectacle of the world on the morrow of the war. Greece at that time conceived and welcomed with enthusiasm the idea of a League of Nations, and gave of her best in the making of the Covenant. She has consistently united her efforts with those of others to strengthen and improve this first attempt at international organisation, for example, in connection with the 1924 Protocol and on a number of occasions since then.

The conclusion which appears to me to arise with almost mathematical exactitude is that disarmament is a function of confidence, and that the whole problem turns on how fear

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\(^1\) See Minutes of the twenty-ninth meeting of the Bureau.
can be eliminated in the relations between States and replaced by confidence. It will be
objected, no doubt, that confidence is not a thing which can be imposed by a stroke of the
pen, that it either does or does not exist. It is a fact, as fear is a fact. That is true, but it is
a human fact; and, like all human facts, it has a cause, and that cause can be combated, and
combated with success. What are the means of combating it? What are the remedies?

There is one radical—it might almost be said, heroic—remedy. That is the remedy to
which resort was had in the relations between Greece and Turkey. It consists in the extirpation
by a single stroke of all the germs of animosity, and an amicable settlement of all conflicts,
avowed or dissembled. This method, for the very reason that it is radical and presupposes a
certain measure of heroism, is not everywhere applicable; for heroism is a rare and occasional
virtue, incapable, in the case of peoples as in the case of individuals, of being elevated into a
general rule of conduct.

Happily, there are other less drastic remedies. Where immediate agreements are not
possible, it is possible by international organisation to provide a very fair substitute for them.
What is to be understood by international organisation? I conceive it as an edifice supported
by three main pillars: the first, moral, the renunciation of all recourse to force; the second,
legal, the possibility of settling all differences by judicial means; the third, political, a system
of mutual assistance.

The first expedient, the first remedy, the first pillar is absolutely indispensable, but the
others are also necessary. All three together are the delineation of a civilised society, that
is to say, a society in which it is prohibited to carry arms.

But if these three pillars are placed in order of importance, precedence must undoubtedly
be given to the renunciation of all recourse to force. That is an undertaking of the most solemn
kind which must usher in the organisation it is desired to found. This is essential because—and
I cannot emphasise this point too strongly—the peace which we are striving to establish
consists not merely of the absence of war; it is peace in the truest sense of the term. In a
Bourgeois defined it thus: "Peace is the reign of law". That implies a condition of legality
which not merely rules out all violence, but which also goes so far as to condemn arbitrary
pressure.

It is only thus that peace, endowed with its full moral and practical force, can make possible
the surrender of individual armaments precisely because it deprives them of all practical
utility.

I believe that on this point the Conference will easily reach agreement, for this principle
has already been proclaimed by the five great Powers in their decision of December 11th, 1932,
and last week M. Nadolny brought us, on behalf of his Government, confirmation of this
principle, of a solemn undertaking to renounce the use of force in whatever shape or form.

In this connection, I should like to point out that, in the agreement of December 11th,
1932, and also in the recent British proposals regarding the method to be adopted for our future
work, this undertaking entirely to renounce force is only contemplated for the countries
of Europe. If this were really the case, we should be led to infer that the Pact of Paris, which,
in its terms, only formally prohibits war, tolerates the other forms and methods of force.
There would thus be two grades or categories in the international legal system, the first of
which would be reserved for the countries of Europe. This is highly flattering, no doubt,
for the countries of our continent; but it should be pointed out—and this is the purpose of my
remarks—that the countries of Europe could only live up to this privilege of membership
of the first category in their relations between themselves, since, in their relations with extra-
European countries, the rule of reciprocity would reduce them to the lower grade in the
international system of law.

Even if confined to the States of Europe, however, the undertaking to refrain hence-
forward from recourse to force, in whatever shape or form, would be an indubitable and
appreciable step forward, but it would not be sufficient. The leading Powers recognised
this in their report of December 11th, 1932, where they stated that such an undertaking
did not preclude a complete investigation of the problem of security. They were entirely
right, as the proposed undertaking might well in practice prove ineffective if the countries
expected to assume it had not the certitude that henceforward they would live in a society
sufficiently organised to afford them the guarantee that their rights and interests would
be safeguarded by law, together with an assurance of political protection in place of their
individual weapons of defence.

Complete renunciation of recourse to force must therefore carry with it, on the one hand,
the extension of compulsory submission to law and, on the other, a practical system of mutual
assistance. Naturally, that will mean that each State will have to make an effort, perhaps
even sacrifices; but we must never forget what is at stake in this problem. Our task is to
institute and confirm a system of order and justice, for that is what I understand by peace.
Is it to be imagined that such a treasure can be acquired without paying the price? I believe
for my own part that the greater the value of that which we desire to acquire, whether it
be in the moral or material order of things, the greater must be the price we pay, and that
which the world is at present striving to acquire is of such sovereign worth that there should
be no haggling over the price.

Such, then, should be the nature of this international organisation. These two reforms,
combined with the solemn undertaking to renounce all recourse to force, are absolutely
essential, and it is because the French plan prescribes them that it deserves the Conference's
esteem. It is all the more entitled thereto as it is not a brilliant piece of improvisation. It is the
development not merely of the different plans which have been submitted here, of the different ideas which have emerged during the first year of the Conference’s activities; it is also a rational development, in conformity with the needs of the times, of ideas which for years past have been put forward, revived and constantly scrutinised here at Geneva, whence they have circled the world and gradually made their way into the conscience of all mankind.

The French plan might even claim a still older origin, as the credit for having first conceived the exclusively defensive character of the armies of the future belongs to one of the greatest minds of the pre-war period. It is now almost a quarter of a century since Jaurès laid before the French Chamber a Bill for the organisation of the army on the basis of a national militia, and this Bill embodied ideas which its author’s shortsighted contemporaries regarded in the main as absolutely Utopian. Scarcely a quarter of a century has elapsed, and several of his ideas—the condemnation of war as an international crime, the settlement of disputes by arbitration, the determination of the aggressor by the same institution—have developed, thanks partly to their own inherent strength and partly to unceasing striving here at Geneva during the last ten years, and are now an integral part of the moral and legal heritage of mankind.

Articles 16 and 17 of Jaurès’ Bill were as follows:

"Article 16. — The sole purpose of the army is to protect the independence and soil of the country against aggression. All wars are criminal unless clearly defensive, and they cannot be clearly and indubitably defensive unless the Government of the countryproposes to the foreign Government with which it is in conflict that the dispute be settled by arbitration.

"Article 17. — Any Government entering a war without having publicly and in all good faith proposed a settlement by arbitration shall be deemed to have betrayed both France and mankind, to be the public enemy of their native land and of humanity. Any Parliament assenting to such a course shall be guilty of treason and automatically dissolved. The constitutional and national duty of citizens shall be to overthrow any such Government and to set up in its stead a Government of good faith which, while safeguarding the independence of the nation, proposes to the foreign Power that hostilities be forestalled or suspended by an arbitral award."

I consider that the time has come to make a further effort to realise more completely the ideas of Jaurès—a difficult task certainly, but not impossible, provided that our Governments can really appreciate the responsibilities they have now to shoulder. But, in any event, this task is necessary and even unusually urgent. For the world is passing through a period of transition from the international system of before the war, which has disappeared never to return, to a new system still in embryo, still ill-defined, but which will be what we choose to make it.

For four centuries, the nations have been living under the symbol of national sovereignty. This has led to the chaos in which they now find themselves involved. If the civilisation they have succeeded in creating is not to fall about them, they must without delay emerge from this chaos and allow the exclusive communities—which modern States are—to become, by the mere expansion of their influence on every side, an open community capable of gradually achieving a state of universality. The nations must realise that, in the modern world, our respective States are no longer mere units. We must finally establish—and that as soon as possible—the organic statute of this great new community by giving definite form to the concept (of which some States appear to have but a glimmering at the present time) of true international sovereignty.

I cannot hope feeling that the French plan has been laid before us at a really propitious moment. It brings to a world harassed by so many anxieties the light of a great hope. It gives the Conference, in the labyrinth of the problems before it, an Ariadne’s thread by which to make it.

The importance of the present discussion, now that the General Commission has recommenced its work, makes it incumbent on the Polish delegation to define its Government’s opinion. The great merit of the plan submitted by the French delegation is that it has helped to make clear the respective attitudes of the principal Powers concerned. This plan, forming a clear and logical system, has been conceived by its authors as an indivisible whole, the various parts of which are indissolubly linked together. Any attempt—for individual reasons—to isolate one or another of its constituent parts must be regarded in advance as an inadmissible procedure which would probably throw the entire scheme out of balance. Doubtless, the attitude adopted by the representatives of other Powers leaves little hope that the generous conceptions of the authors of this plan will reach fruition. Very few illusions still exist as to the possibility of improving the present state of international security. Certain countries, without whose effective participation a complete system of security would be impossible, have explained to us the reasons for which they are unable either to assume new obligations or to follow up all the consequences of the obligations to which they have already subscribed.
In the light of this situation, the Polish Government—though still a strong partisan of the organisation of peace, and, by this means, of a better organisation of the international community—feels that we are bound for the present to accept the logical consequences of the actual political situation in order to devote all our efforts to the establishment of a lasting fabric of peace. In spite of the slow progress achieved during the last twelve months, owing to difficulties on which I need not dwell at present, we must not give way to despair. The difficulties have arisen from two distinct sources. During the technical work of the Conference, experts very often expressed divergent and sometimes entirely opposite views. Nevertheless, after laborious and at times purely academic debates, the distance separating the various technical standpoints has constantly tended to lessen. The true causes of the difficulties which beset us do not therefore reside in technical considerations, but, above all, in the fact that political questions, far transcending this Conference’s terms of reference, show a tendency to graft themselves on the problems of security and general disarmament, with the consequent danger that our discussions may become unduly enlarged and may pass into a sphere which would be inconsistent with our aims. To avoid this danger we must, at this stage of our work, decide on some clear objective and thus achieve definite results in the shortest possible time.

Our experts will surely raise a whole host of difficulties, but it will doubtless be easier to reach agreement with our technical experts than to reconcile the political divergences which entirely transcend the problem of disarmament.

A full and frank discussion in the General Commission with the object of defining the programme of our subsequent work is the first necessity.

I do not propose to give a complete list of the questions which await solution within the framework of the Convention. Most of these questions have been examined in detail and agreement has, I think, been almost reached regarding the final formulae for their solution. I will merely indicate quite briefly those questions which, in the opinion of the Polish Government, must be dealt with in the Convention.

I think we should contemplate an agreement including the prohibition of chemical and bacterial warfare; the prohibition of aerial bombardment; the limitation and reduction of particularly powerful arms in the sphere of land, naval and air armaments; possibly a number of regional naval agreements, with international supervision; a general and effective supervision of the execution of all the provisions of the Convention; the abolition of the private manufacture of arms and ammunitions of war and a strict supervision of the trade in arms.

To sum up, I have the honour to propose that the General Commission should decide, at the end of its discussion, to draw up a programme of work consisting of these technical points, together with such further items as the observations of other delegations may show to be desirable.

In so doing, the Conference will have achieved an extremely useful result which will exercise a strong and beneficial influence on international relations as a whole and will usefully prepare the way for the ensuing stages of disarmament in the light of the experience thus gained.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).—The French delegation has appealed to us to refrain from vague general remarks, but to make clear the attitude of each delegation to the French plan. I am in complete sympathy with this appeal and consider it thoroughly apposite. We are too fond of promising to study proposals without, however, really making a practical study of them or even considering them. The Conference has received any number of proposals, and we have spent a whole year, not on their discussion, but on their postponement, pigeonholing them for some future occasion, or putting them into cold storage in technical commissions. I can assure our French colleagues that the Soviet delegation, which has always spoken frankly and sincerely on all the questions brought before us here, will not now mince its words and will give a precise definition of its attitude. The French delegation has asked us to give "considered approval" or "exact criticism" of its proposals. I shall endeavour to give both.

The Soviet delegation has studied with the deepest interest the French proposals now under discussion, and I am happy to declare that some of them can be supported by it. While far from desiring to minimise their importance, I am, nevertheless, bound to remark that we are unable to find among them any new proposals for the reduction of armaments, or, if any such are to be found therein, they are made to depend strictly on the acceptance by the Conference of the French scheme for security. We are invited first to draw up a programme of our subsequent work is the first necessity.

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M. Litvinoff (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).—The French delegation has appealed to us to refrain from vague general remarks, but to make clear the attitude of each delegation to the French plan. I am in complete sympathy with this appeal and consider it thoroughly apposite. We are too fond of promising to study proposals without, however, really making a practical study of them or even considering them. The Conference has received any number of proposals, and we have spent a whole year, not on their discussion, but on their postponement, pigeonholing them for some future occasion, or putting them into cold storage in technical commissions. I can assure our French colleagues that the Soviet delegation, which has always spoken frankly and sincerely on all the questions brought before us here, will not now mince its words and will give a precise definition of its attitude. The French delegation has asked us to give "considered approval" or "exact criticism" of its proposals. I shall endeavour to give both.

The Soviet delegation has studied with the deepest interest the French proposals now under discussion, and I am happy to declare that some of them can be supported by it. While far from desiring to minimise their importance, I am, nevertheless, bound to remark that we are unable to find among them any new proposals for the reduction of armaments, or, if any such are to be found therein, they are made to depend strictly on the acceptance by the Conference of the French scheme for security. We are invited first to draw up a programme of work consisting of these technical points, together with such further items as the observations of other delegations may show to be desirable.

A full and frank discussion in the General Commission with the object of defining the programme of our subsequent work is the first necessity.

I do not propose to give a complete list of the questions which await solution within the framework of the Convention. Most of these questions have been examined in detail and agreement has, I think, been almost reached regarding the final formulae for their solution. I will merely indicate quite briefly those questions which, in the opinion of the Polish Government, must be dealt with in the Convention.

I think we should contemplate an agreement including the prohibition of chemical and bacterial warfare; the prohibition of aerial bombardment; the limitation and reduction of particularly powerful arms in the sphere of land, naval and air armaments; possibly a number of regional naval agreements, with international supervision; a general and effective supervision of the execution of all the provisions of the Convention; the abolition of the private manufacture of arms and ammunitions of war and a strict supervision of the trade in arms.

To sum up, I have the honour to propose that the General Commission should decide, at the end of its discussion, to draw up a programme of work consisting of these technical points, together with such further items as the observations of other delegations may show to be desirable.

In so doing, the Conference will have achieved an extremely useful result which will exercise a strong and beneficial influence on international relations as a whole and will usefully prepare the way for the ensuing stages of disarmament in the light of the experience thus gained.