LEAGUE OF NATIONS

DOCUMENTS

OF THE

Preparatory Commission

for the Disarmament Conference

ENTRUSTED WITH THE

PREPARATION FOR THE CONFERENCE

FOR THE REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

SERIES II

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The questions relating to the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference on which the Council is called upon to take a decision may be classified under different headings, with which I will deal one after the other.

1. Composition of the Joint Commission.

The memorandum by the Secretary-General informs us that all the authorities invited, in accordance with the report approved by the Council, to submit proposals on the composition of the Commission have already done so. I will ask you to approve these proposals as they stand and to authorise the President of the Council to appoint the member of the Financial Committee to replace M. Wallenberg, who was appointed by the Chairman of that Committee, but who, according to information received by the Secretariat, is unable to accept nomination.

The Secretary-General's memorandum is accompanied by a letter from the Chairman of the Transit Committee informing us of the different technical qualifications of the members of that organisation. This letter seems to indicate the expediency of enlarging the representation of that body. There is no doubt that the opinions expressed by the Chairman of the Transit Committee are dictated by considerations of which the Council is bound to take account. Moreover, it would seem to be to the advantage of the Joint Commission itself to include members familiar with these various technical questions, not in theory only but also in the practical forms in which they arise in the large industrial States. I would propose to you accordingly that the President of the Council should be authorised to add to the Joint Commission four members specially competent to deal with questions connected with industry and transport, and to include a national of each of the following States: Germany, the United States of America, Japan and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

2. Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions.

The Members of the Council have taken note of the memorandum submitted by our British colleague to the effect that "all questions on which it may be useful for the Preparatory Commission to have the advice of military, naval or air experts shall be referred to the special technical committee composed of the military, naval and air advisers of all the States represented on the Commission". The Council will certainly concur in the reasons given in the memorandum in support of the British proposal. Put shortly, the suggestion is that all the military experts who take part in the work of the Preparatory Commission — whether or not they are members of the Permanent Advisory Commission proper — should sit on a footing of absolute equality. On the other hand, it is exceedingly desirable that this result should be obtained with the least possible change in the organisations of the League of Nations. The report adopted by the Council on December 12th, 1925, laid down that "the Joint Commission and the Permanent Advisory Commission should each be further entitled, as a body, to call in the assistance of such experts as either of these Commissions may consider desirable, and that any one of its members should be entitled to propose the exercise of this right in any individual case".

It would seem that the purpose of the British memorandum could be attained if its text were supplemented by the following resolution:

"The Council invites the States represented on the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference to appoint military, naval and air experts who would sit on the Permanent Advisory Commission on a footing of equality with members of that Commission whenever it was convened to assist the work of the Preparatory Commission in accordance with the report approved by the Council on December 12th, 1925."

3. Date of Meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference.

The Council is aware that, for the reasons explained in the memorandum by the Secretary-General (C.58 and C.58a), the meeting of the Commission had to be adjourned. It would seem desirable that the Council should pronounce during the present session on the date when the Preparatory Commission should meet. I propose as a date May 18th, 1926.

As regards the meeting of the two technical commissions the Permanent Advisory Commission might meet on May 19th, but I would suggest to the Council that it would be better not to convene the Joint Commission until the Preparatory Commission is able to fix an exact agenda for its work. The discussions by the Preparatory Commission would extend over a certain time, which is at the moment difficult to fix. It does not seem possible to pronounce upon this question so long in advance, and the Council might perhaps leave the Preparatory
Commission free to fix the date of the Joint Commission's meeting itself. Moreover, the Preparatory Commission could convene the Joint Commission by telegram.

Meanwhile, the Secretariat would be requested to notify the members of the Joint Commission of the date on which the Preparatory Commission would meet, informing them at the same time that in all probability the Joint Commission would meet a few days later.


I wish in the last place to record that, as the result of a fresh study of the composition of the Preparatory Commission, the Council has decided that the Argentine Republic and Chile should be invited to send representatives to the Commission, and has asked the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to this effect.
A. MINUTES OF THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION FOR THE DISARMAMENT
CONFERENCE

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MINUTES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION

Held at Geneva from May 18th to 26th, 1926.

FIRST MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held on Tuesday, May 18th, 1926, at 11 a.m.

1. Opening of the Session.

The Secretary-General (Sir Eric Drummond): I presume the Commission will have no objection to the public being admitted immediately at the beginning of this session. That is the ordinary procedure, and, if you have no objection, the Press will take their seats in the hall. I presume that will be agreed to. (Agreed.)

On December 12th the Council of the League of Nations decided to set up a Commission entitled “Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, being a Commission to prepare for a Conference on the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments”, which would be composed of: (a) representatives of States Members of the Council; (b) representatives of countries chosen amongst those which, by reason of their geographical situation, occupy a special position as regards the problem of disarmament and which are not otherwise represented on the Commission.

The Council also took the following decision:

Any State not represented on the Commission shall be entitled: (a) to submit memoranda on matters in which it is specially interested; (b) to be heard in support of these memoranda. Moreover, the Commission will always have the right, in the case of special questions, to call in the assistance of any State which, in the opinion of the Commission, may be particularly interested in these questions.

The Council decided in addition:

To request the President to invite the Governments of the States named below to appoint representatives to the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference:

Bulgaria, Finland, Netherlands, Poland, Roumania, Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

To request the President to invite the Governments of Germany, the United States of America, and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics to appoint representatives to the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference;

To request the Secretary-General to communicate the present report to all the States not represented on the Commission, and to draw their attention to the facilities provided for in the scheme for the organisation of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, which enable States not represented on the Commission to state their points of view, and to forward to them the list of questions to be submitted to the Commission, together with the report attached thereto.

On the same date the Council decided to adopt the list of questions prepared by the Committee of the Council in an amended form, and to refer this programme, together with the Minutes of the session of the Committee of the Council relating to the problem of disarmament, to the Preparatory Commission.

You are already in possession of the list of the above-mentioned questions and of certain additional resolutions and explanations by the Council, so that it hardly seems necessary for me to refer to these in detail.

The Council decided at its session in March that the Governments of the Argentine and Chile should be invited to sit on the Commission, and that the Commission should be convened on May 18th. It is in virtue of this decision that this Commission meets here-to-day. I need hardly say that as regards the Secretariat we are entirely at your disposal to do everything we can to facilitate the task of the Commission.

2. Election of President and Vice-Presidents.

The Secretary-General: I presume the first action the Commission will wish to take is to elect its President. If any delegate has any proposal to make on that subject, I shall be very glad to receive it.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): Gentlemen, the question that we now have to consider is who is to be our President. In the Committee of the Council which drew up the scheme for this Commission which was afterwards adopted we had the great good fortune to be presided
over by M. Paul-Boncour, the delegate of France. I am quite confident that all who sat under his chairmanship will agree with me that we could not possibly have had a better President or one who discharges his duties with greater efficiency and impartiality. I therefore venture to hope that M. Paul-Boncour will be able to complete his work by presiding over this Commission. I do not know if he can accept, but, if he is willing, I am quite sure we could not have a better President than M. Paul-Boncour. I therefore beg to propose that M. Paul-Boncour be our President.

(This proposal was seconded by the representatives of the delegations of Roumania, Uruguay, Italy and the Netherlands. The Secretary-General noted that all the other delegations also supported it.)

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: I am deeply and sincerely touched by Viscount Cecil's proposal, which has, moreover, been warmly supported by a large number of delegates and welcomed by all.

I will not affect to be surprised at this proposal, not because I consider I have any special claim to be President but because some of the delegates had already informed me of their intention. It is, in fact, because they told me of the proposal, and because I have had time to reflect upon it, that I am now able to say I cannot accept it. I naturally appreciate the offer, but there are sound reasons, which I will now explain, for my declining it.

I confess that I am proud indeed, not only, or even primarily, for my own sake but for the sake of the country I represent, that you wished to appoint her delegate to preside over a meeting the importance and aims of which are awakening throughout the world hopes that we must do our utmost to justify.

Despite this refusal, I am happy to acknowledge on behalf of my country the honour you desired to do her in choosing her delegate to preside over your labours in the field of disarmament. But in duty both to my country and to the League, I feel doubly bound not to accept the proposal, for the very reason that my country's vital interests are engaged in this question, and also because I have come here to plead in all sincerity a case which I have had time personally helped to construct; and though it is my earnest hope that the force of my own convictions will equally convince my colleagues of the soundness of my proposals, not only in regard to national interests but also in regard to the international task to which we are setting our hands, yet I think that, precisely because I have those convictions, it is not my proper place to preside over your work.

I realise, of course — and I thank them for it — that my colleagues would not for a moment question my impartiality if I had accepted this position. I am indebted to Viscount Cecil for reminding us that by a fortunate chance I was Chairman of the Committee of the Council which drafted the programme of the present Commission, and you will have seen from the fruits of its work that it is possible to combine sincere — nay, passionate — conviction with the strict impartiality which should characterise the Chairman of a Commission.

I regard the matter, however, not from the point of view of impartiality but from that of the work I have to accomplish here. As President, my position and my general attitude would have to be different from that of an ordinary member of the Commission taking part in the discussions.

I do not wish to use similes drawn from the battlefield, because there will be no battles here; there will simply be courteous, open and cordial exchanges of views. You all realise that the work before us will be of an exceedingly delicate nature, raising, as it does, problems which are vital to the countries represented here. Accordingly it is my sincere belief — and I assure you I am not stooping to simulate diffidence merely in order to be asked again; my refusal is final — that the presidential chair should be occupied by the representative of a country which is not so definitely or deeply interested in the problem before us.

I am certain that if the President is to be perfectly frank and sincere he must — to employ a term often used here — be neutral. I confess I hesitate to be more explicit, but as we are here to make proposals and a very flattering proposal has been made in regard to myself, I venture to offer one in my turn. For several years now we have had among us the representative of a great country, famed in history, which has been a centre of art and has frequently offered a home to intellectual freedom, but which, through the events of its history, happens to lie outside the field of the problems before us — I refer to our colleague, M. Loudon, delegate for the Netherlands. The appointment of M. Loudon as our President would, I sincerely believe, ensure not greater impartiality — I should myself have made every effort to be impartial — but a greater certainty of success, and this, I submit, ought to be our main consideration. (Applause.)

M. DE MARINIS (Italy) [Translation]: After the noble words that M. Paul-Boncour has uttered, I do not think we can press him further to accept the Presidency.

I fully agree with his suggestion that M. Loudon, representative of the Netherlands, should be appointed President. I also venture to propose as Vice-President M. Cobian, delegate of Spain.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): In view of the observations of M. Paul-Boncour, with the very greatest regret I have to withdraw my proposition that M. Paul-Boncour should be our President. I can assure him that it is a matter of the deepest regret to me that we shall not have his Presidency, and I do not know how we could have sustained that disappointment except for the proposal that M. Loudon should take his place.
M. MATSUDA (Japan) [Translation]: I am very sorry that M. Paul-Boncour has not accepted the office of President. In view, however, of the reasons he has given for his refusal, we cannot press him further. I fully associate myself with his proposal to appoint as President M. Loudon, who is in every way qualified to direct the difficult work of our Commission. We all have full confidence in him, and he will, I know, interpret the wishes of the Commission with complete success. I only hope that he will not follow M. Paul-Boncour's example. I also give my full support to the proposal to appoint M. Cobian, delegate of Spain, as Vice-President.

Mr. GIBSON (United States of America): I should like to say on behalf of the American delegation that we deeply regret the decision of M. Paul-Boncour, but at the same time we recognise the obviously sincere and high-minded motive which impelled him to take that decision. There could be no other more happy solution, however, than the choice of M. Loudon, whom we all know, and who is particularly well known and liked and esteemed in America: I am sure it will afford a peculiar satisfaction to the American delegation. I should also like to give my support to the nomination of M. Cobian, with whom we have all worked before, and whose high qualities we have had an ample opportunity to appreciate. In this connection, however, I venture to raise the question as to whether we could not profitably have two Vice-Presidents, as it may very likely prove necessary from time to time in view of the stress of work in Committees. It is important that we should have someone who is qualified from the technical point of view as a presiding officer, but it is more important to have someone who enjoys the confidence of his colleagues, and we are particularly fortunate in having among us a colleague who not only possesses the qualifications which make him an excellent presiding officer but also possesses our full confidence and esteem. I should like to nominate our friend and colleague the honourable delegate for Uruguay — M. Buero — as Vice-President of the Conference.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Gentlemen, the proposals which are before the Commission are that M. Loudon, the first delegate of the Netherlands, should be appointed President, and that there should be two Vice-Presidents: M. Cobian, the first delegate of Spain, and M. Buero, delegate of Uruguay. There are no other proposals before the Commission, and I think I should be fulfilling the wishes of the Commission if I declare those proposals adopted by acclamation.

(M. Loudon took the presidential chair.)

M. LOUDON (Netherlands) [Translation]: I desire to thank you sincerely for the great honour you have done both to myself and to my country. I think it has rarely happened that a Chairman elected by a meeting of this kind could say with greater sincerity that he was entirely taken by surprise. The fact has one advantage, however, since it will spare you a long speech. I can only say what I sincerely feel — that I thank you for the honour you have done me. I would also add that, with a meeting of this kind, which comprises men of such varied gifts and expert knowledge, I am certain that if we can in our work combine these gifts and this knowledge with sound judgment, and if we do not attempt to make fine speeches but speak simply and briefly, the Commission will assuredly attain success. I say "commission" — and I desire this to be clear at the outset — because this is not a conference, and we must speak as a commission and as if there were neither Press nor public present. Above all, we must be clear and concise. I for my part promise to do my best to achieve this end, and I ask you to accord me your help.

In conclusion, I desire to thank M. Paul-Boncour for his very kind words with reference to my country and myself; and with regard to what Viscount Cecil said, I feel that the Commission is receiving very small compensation in accepting M. Paul-Boncour's proposal and choosing myself. You all realise that M. Paul-Boncour was the man best qualified to preside over this meeting, and I more than any other regret his refusal. I should be very grateful if he would help me to attain our end by according me his counsel and advice.

M. BUERO (Uruguay) [Translation]: I should like to thank all the delegates for the honour they have just done my country in appointing its delegate as Vice-President of the Commission. I can assure you that if chance should lead me to preside over this meeting, I more than any other regret his refusal. I should be very grateful if he would help me to attain our end by according me his counsel and advice.

M. COBIAN (Spain) [Translation]: I am deeply touched by the very friendly and undeserved honour which has been conferred upon me by the distinguished delegate of Italy, supported by the honourable representatives of Japan and the United States and by all the other delegations as well. I also congratulate our President on the honour he has received, and I am sure he will conduct our proceedings with the utmost impartiality. Nevertheless, the great abilities of M. Paul-Boncour will always be at our service, and I must tell him that I am not convinced by his arguments.

(The public meeting was adjourned at noon and was immediately followed by a private meeting.)
SECOND MEETING (PRIVATE)

Held on Tuesday, May 18th, 1926, at 12 noon.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).


The President [Translation]: Does any member desire to raise any question of procedure?

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): There is a question of procedure which I should like to lay before the Commission but which I hope will not detain it for any length of time. Under the scheme by which we were constituted, it is suggested that, in addition to any other assistance we may require, we can have the assistance of the permanent organisations of the League — the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions and a new Joint Commission which was to be constituted from a variety of other bodies connected with the League.

I have been thinking this over for some time. It is, indeed, a matter which for very many months past has occupied the attention of the British delegation, because they feel there is a certain delicacy involved in diluting, as it were, the actual permanent organisations of the League. We have felt, more particularly with regard to the Permanent Advisory Commission, that it would be better if that Commission were left untouched, without any alteration in its constitution, for the advice of the Council, if the Council desires its advice.

On the other hand, the British delegation feel very strongly that the gentlemen who compose that Commission are precisely those whose assistance we desire to have on military, naval and air questions. The question is how to combine those two difficulties.

For this and other reasons (which I need not go into) I have a proposal to submit to you: that we should now constitute — as, of course, we are entitled to do under the authority by which we were created — two sub-committees. The sub-committees would be as follows. The first sub-committee would consist of representatives of the States which now make up the Permanent Advisory Commission, and to that would be added representatives of the other States not on the Permanent Advisory Commission which were to be added under the resolution of the Council of March 18th, 1926. That would constitute one sub-committee for military and naval affairs.

Similarly, the other body, which is to advise us on economic, political and social questions, would be constituted in precisely the same way that it was proposed to be constituted, i.e., it would consist of precisely the same persons, but it would be constituted as a definite sub-committee of this body.

On the whole, I think that would be more fitting and more in consonance with the dignity and position of the various technical organisations which make it up.

There are other reasons, which will no doubt occur to those who hear me, why the arrangement I am suggesting will probably be more convenient and more acceptable to some of our number. I need not go into those more delicate matters, but after considering this matter with the greatest attention of which the British delegation is capable, we have arrived at the conclusion that this solution would probably be the best and will greatly facilitate the smooth working of all those who are connected with this Commission. I venture, therefore, to make that proposition and trust it may prove to be acceptable to the Commission.

M. Paul-Boncour (France) [Translation]: I entirely agree with Viscount Cecil’s proposal, and I should like to make a supplementary proposal. Would it not be desirable, in order to ensure closer relations between the Commission as a whole and its Sub-Commissions, that each Sub-Commission should be presided over by a Vice-President of the Commission?

The President [Translation]: I think no one will raise any objection to M. Paul-Boncour’s suggestion.

M. de Marinis (Italy) [Translation]: I am prepared to accept Viscount Cecil’s proposal, but I think we should be quite clear as to the status of the members who will sit on these two Sub-Commissions. It must be clearly understood that on these Sub-Commissions members will represent their Governments and will not speak in their personal capacity; they will voice the opinions of their Governments, as has always been the rule in the Permanent Advisory Commission. The results of our work here are to be submitted for acceptance by the Governments, and the Governments will not always be disposed to ratify proposals made by commissions on which they are not represented.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): The point raised by M. de Marinis is certainly an important one, and, so far as the members of the new Military Sub-Committee are concerned, those who represent their Governments at the present moment will continue so to do; that is well understood. On the other hand, I understand that some of the proposed additional members of the Military Commission would not have represented their Governments, and in that case, of course, they will not represent them in the new Sub-Committee. The status will be exactly the same as the status contemplated in the original
scheme. As for the Joint Commission, none of the members represented their Governments; they were chosen from the Economic, Financial and Transit Organisations (two from each), and none of those organisations represented their Governments. The members were all experts. Other members were chosen (two from each) from the Employers’ Group and from the Workers’ Group of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and did not represent their Governments. They were experts also. Therefore, in the Joint Commission no one would represent his Government. I venture to assure M. de Marinis that the members of the two Sub-Committees that I have proposed would be in exactly the same relation to their Governments as they would have been under the original scheme — neither more nor less. I do not propose any change in that respect.

M. DE MARINIS (Italy) [Translation]: Viscount Cecil has drawn my attention to certain decisions of the Council; but some of these decisions, such as that relating to the convening of the Permanent Advisory Commission, have been modified. Would it not be desirable to propose to the Council that members of the Joint Committee should sit as representatives of their Governments? We have already had experience in this matter. There was another Committee whose members sat as private individuals, and Viscount Cecil well knows what was the result of its work. I also had the honour of being a member. We did our best. I am not in any way disparaging that Committee; it did much good work. But I think we should have done much better if the members had been representatives of their Governments.

I fully realise how difficult it would be to propose to the Council that the members of the Joint Committee should represent their Governments. Nevertheless, I think it would be highly desirable.

The President [Translation]: Before asking Viscount Cecil to speak, I should like to point out to M. de Marinis that we who are members of this Commission represent our Governments, so that the question whether the members of the Sub-Commission represent their Governments appears to be of little importance.

Viscount Cecil: M. de Marinis has made some observations with which I am afraid I shall not be entirely in accord, but I do not want to enter into that controversy unnecessarily. I am one of those who think that nothing would have been done if the Temporary Mixed Commission had consisted of members representing their Governments; but that is a matter of opinion. I venture to suggest that perhaps the best way out of the difficulty would be that we should agree to my proposition as far as the Military Sub-Commission is concerned immediately, because that Sub-Commission is ready to meet and we may desire its advice at any moment. With regard to the Joint Commission, I understand it has not yet been summoned, and it is not therefore so urgent to arrive at a conclusion with regard to it. I think that the Chairman’s observation is right and that it does not really matter whether the Sub-Commissions represent their Governments or not. They are there to advise us. The most important thing — the really important thing — is that this full Commission shall retain full control absolutely and at every stage of the deliberations of this body, and that we should never hand over any part of them for decision to either of the Sub-Commissions or to any other body. I am sure that is essential to the good working of the whole scheme, and that is why I am very anxious, though I should be very glad to meet M. de Marinis in any way about the composition of the Joint Committee if, after consultation, it proved possible to repudiate from the outset any suggestion that, whether they represent their Government or whether they represent their individual opinions, these Sub-Commissions will have any responsibility except that of advising this Commission. My view is that we shall either accept or reject their advice, as we shall think fit.

M. DE MARINIS (Italy) [Translation]: I agree with Viscount Cecil’s proposal that for the moment we should confine our attention to the Military Commission. I thank the President for his explanation, but as the real question at issue is the work which these two Sub-Committees will have to carry out, and even admitting that we ourselves must bear the ultimate responsibility, I venture to point out that if the members of one Sub-Commission represent their Governments, while those of the other merely speak in their personal capacity, our position towards the respective Sub-Commissions will be quite different. One will be giving official opinions, because its members are Government representatives, while the other will give entirely personal opinions. We shall therefore have to attach different values to their respective conclusions; and I submit that when we come to decide on the composition of the Economic Sub-Commission we ought, while respecting the Council’s decisions, to take due account of this position.

M. DE BROUCKÈRE (Belgium) [Translation]: I am quite prepared to agree to Viscount Cecil’s proposal, which M. de Marinis also has just accepted. Nevertheless, I venture to urge that we ought to come to a decision as soon as possible. We cannot advance much further in our work without referring economic or financial questions to technical experts, and we should be in a rather embarrassing position if there were no experts to whom we could apply. Whatever our views in regard to the principle underlying M. de Marinis’s arguments, we must all realise, I think, that we cannot possibly rely upon our own judgment in such cases. We must — at any rate at first — call in those upon whom most of us have ordinarily relied for advice; we can of course consult others too if a certain number of the Powers represented here so desire. If we find that this body of experts is not sufficient and that it would be desirable to have some other organisation representing the Governments, there will still be time to take a decision on that point later.
In appointing military and civil experts, we shall, of course, not be allowing them any kind of monopoly, nor shall we undertake to go to them alone for advice. Since it is we who bear the ultimate responsibility, we shall be entitled in our discussions to apply to whomsoever we choose. I think, however, that we should do well to appoint now a body of military experts to advise us for the time being and appoint at the earliest possible moment — at the next meeting if that is feasible — the body of civil experts who will temporarily help us in the same manner.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: I fully concur with M. de Marinis' objections, but I cannot see how we shall counter them by simply adopting forthwith M. de Brouckère's proposal that the necessary technical organs should be constituted.

M. de Marinis feels that our decisions cannot be effective unless they are the decisions of Government representatives. He is quite right, and the composition of our Commission itself, as well as the work which preceded its constitution, clearly testify to the force of this objection.

I would remind M. de Marinis that in the Assembly of 1924, when we created the Co-ordination Commission, we were preoccupied by the same idea. Experience taught us the difference between the two elements in the Co-ordination Commission; some members represented their Governments, while others spoke either as private individuals or on behalf of technical organisations. We found that we had to abolish — or rather to shelve — the Co-ordination Commission and create the present Commission, which consists solely of Government representatives.

When, however, we apply to experts as such, this consideration does not arise. The expert bases his statements on technical considerations — a military expert on military considerations and an economist on economic ones. The final decision rests with us alone, as representatives of our Governments. It is true that one of the two technical organisations which the Council has placed at our disposal is composed of military, naval and air officers who are, of course, Government representatives, and that the other consists of representatives of the technical organisations of the League. That does not greatly concern us, however, for we only consult either of them in their capacity as experts, and the decision to be taken rests with us alone. Thus, although I entirely agree with M. de Marinis and share his anxiety, I cannot say that I find this point of view inconsistent with the proposal made by Viscount Cecil and seconded by M. de Brouckère, which, moreover, has the advantage of placing at our immediate disposal an organisation whose services we shall soon require.

The PRESIDENT [Translation]: I understand that M. de Marinis wishes to withdraw his proposal.

M. DE MARINIS (Italy) [Translation]: As I have already stated, I accept Viscount Cecil's proposal adopting the constitution of the Military Sub-Commission as I proposed and adjourning all decision regarding the constitution of the other Sub-Commission.

Viscount Cecil's proposal was adopted.

(The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.)

THIRD MEETING (PUBLIC)

 Held on Tuesday, May 18th, 1926, at 4 p.m.

President: M. LOUDON (Netherlands).

4. Procedure: Constitution of Sub-Commission A.

The PRESIDENT [Translation]: You have before you the text of the decision reached by the Commission this morning:

"The Commission decides to appoint a Military, Naval and Air Sub-Commission, to be composed of one military, one naval and one air expert for each of the countries represented on the Preparatory Commission. "This Sub-Commission will have as President one of the Vice-Presidents of the Preparatory Commission."

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: What decision was reached regarding the second Sub-Commission?

The PRESIDENT [Translation]: No final decision has been reached. I therefore propose that the discussion on the second Sub-Commission be adjourned until to-morrow.

In the meantime, I suggest that we begin the general discussion.

Before opening the discussion, I think I must repeat the brief observation I made this morning. I should like it to be clearly understood — and I address myself more particularly to the public and the Press — that this is not a conference convened by the League of Nations.
We are a Commission convened by the Council of the League, a Commission on which representatives of States who are not Members of the League have been invited to sit, and our sole task is to prepare a programme for the Disarmament Conference which will meet later. Our task is to endeavour to draw up a programme which will be clear, precise, succinct, and, above all, simple, so that the public may be able to understand it.

This observation is addressed not to the Commission — for we ourselves are aware of the facts — but to the public, in order that nobody may be misled into supposing that we shall produce a set of rules which will lead to the immediate reduction of armaments.

5. General Discussion.

The President [Translation]: I now propose to open the general discussion on the questions submitted to us. I think it would be better to avoid a lengthy general discussion and proceed as soon as possible to consider the actual questions one by one.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I do not think I have any right to detain the Commission for more than a very few moments, and it may well be that it would be better to proceed at once to the questions with which we have to deal. I would like, however, to outline in a few words the position which, broadly speaking, my country occupies in regard to this matter, and I would like to explain the nature of the consideration which must influence us so far as the work of this Commission is concerned.

I do not propose to enlarge on the advantages of disarmament; that is not a matter with regard to which I could usefully detain the Commission. I will only point out that the question has really two quite separate aspects: the aspect of economy and the aspect of national security.

So far as economy is concerned, the attitude of the British Government is obvious. I suppose it is the same as the attitude of every other Government. The British Government is most anxious to reduce its expenditure in every possible way, and it is no less anxious to reduce its military, naval and air expenditure than its other commitments. We are suffering from taxation of the very heaviest kind in my country, and I know that several other countries are in the same position. This produces — or at any rate is one of the chief causes of — the evil of unemployment, which is so serious and so difficult a problem for us in Great Britain. I need say no more, therefore, on that aspect of the question.

With regard to the question of security, that is quite simple. The cause of armament is undoubtedly in many cases (though not in all) a fear of danger to the national security. That involves country A keeping up armaments because it fears attack from country B. The fact that country A maintains its armaments causes an increase in the armaments of country B, and possibly in other neighbours of country A, and they in turn increase their armaments, and so the process goes on. From that point of view there is no doubt that no remedy can be found except by some general scheme of disarmament such as we are now trying to elaborate.

I should like now to explain briefly one or two aspects of the question as it affects my own country. The British Army does not depend in any respect on the strength of foreign armies. It makes no difference to the size of the British Army (and it never has made any difference for many years past) whether its neighbours maintain large or small armies. The army, so far as it keeps at home, no doubt discharges certain functions. It discharges the function of invasion of our shores, though such invasion has long been looked upon as an almost incredible hypothesis.

The size of the army, however, does not depend on either of those functions; its size entirely depends on the necessity for discharging our overseas commitments. We have possessions in various parts of the globe, of which the great Dominion of India is the chief, though there are many others. For those we have to maintain certain forces. For those we have to maintain certain forces. We have to do the same in respect of certain commitments in countries which do not in any way belong to the British Empire, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia and Palestine, where we have certain definite engagements. The British Army really exists in order to supply the needs of those overseas commitments, and its size is really determined (so I am informed and believe) entirely by those overseas commitments. That places it in a rather special position, since its size does not depend on the size of other armies. If it were possible to reduce it, no one would be better pleased than the British Government, although I do not know that a general scheme of disarmament is likely to be of great assistance in that respect.

With regard to the navy, the position is different. In the case of the navy there is no doubt a certain element of — I will not call it competition, but dependence on the size of other navies. That was very carefully considered from the point of view of certain kinds of ships at the Washington Conference, which ended in an agreement which was very warmly welcomed in my country. The Washington Conference, however, only dealt with certain kinds of ships. It is possible that further agreements may be made in respect of submarines and cruisers, but I ought to point out that the number of cruisers in the British Navy is also largely a question of overseas commitments and not of the size of foreign navies, or only very slightly a question of their size. While the number of cruisers may therefore not come within the scope of the question, their size undoubtedly does, and there is no reason why by general agreement the size of the cruisers should not be diminished.
Air armaments are perhaps in a different position from both the army and navy, in that the function of the air service is primarily that of attack rather than of defence, and therefore undoubtedly the size of the air armaments maintained by my country is dependent very largely on the size of those maintained by other countries. There again we should welcome any agreement which would enable us to reduce those armaments.

These really are the few broad general observations I desire to make so that the position of my country may be understood. We are most anxious to co-operate in every way we can in furthering disarmament. There is no end which is more desired by the people of my country. They are passionately anxious to have disarmament brought about, because they regard disarmament as one of the great conditions of peace.

It is said, and said with great truth, that disarmament can only be obtained as a result of security. I should admit that you have to get a condition of security in order to produce disarmament. On the other hand, it is equally true that disarmament is the greatest guarantee of security, and if you can once get the process started by which you can get disarmament in exchange for security, then we believe that you would get security not only for disarmament but you could proceed with increasing rapidity to the reduction of armaments as the processes continued. We are therefore passionately anxious for disarmament as a condition of security, and indeed, as we think, the most essential condition of security. I can only say that my countrymen are looking with the greatest anxiety and interest to the work of this Commission. They are passionately anxious for disarmament, but there are not wanting those who say that disarmament, however desirable, is impracticable. It is for this Commission to show that it is not impracticable. I am quite certain that that can be done. Disarmament is not in itself impracticable. Perhaps it is not in itself, as a mere abstract proposition, a very difficult thing; it all depends on the extent of the will for disarmament. If all the countries of the world, or even all the countries of Europe, are really anxious — as we believe they are — for disarmament, then it is only necessary to find the actual method and plan by which disarmament can be carried out. We believe that is a difficult function, one which will take time, which must not be hurried, which, if it is to be successful, must proceed with caution and circumspection; but we believe that unquestionably it can be accomplished, and we look with great confidence and with great hope to the work of this Commission.

Count Bernstorff (Germany) [Translation]: The Government of the Reich and the German public have followed with great interest and sympathy all the efforts which the League of Nations has made to obtain some reduction and limitation of armaments. Although up to the present these efforts have not succeeded, we hope that this Conference will mark the beginning of a new epoch in which there will be no more competition in armaments but only peaceful emulation between nations in their progress towards a higher civilisation.

Germany as a whole is interested in the question of disarmament from a political, military and economic point of view. I have already said that, from a moral point of view, we must all hope and pray that the future holds no war in store for us. But, even as a matter of policy, disarmament is necessary, because history itself proves that excessive armaments have invariably led to war. Viewing the situation from an economic standpoint, no one can deny that the world, impoverished as it is by the late war, cannot continue indefinitely to support the burden of such heavy armaments. But though general considerations alone afford us sufficient reason to hope that this conference will result in the reduction and limitation of armaments, the problem is of peculiar and special interest for Germany.

In the Preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, the chapter concerning our disarmament is preceded by a declaration to the effect that the object of Germany’s disarmament is to render general disarmament possible. It will be remembered, too, that on June 16th, 1919, representatives of Germany and the Allied Powers exchanged certain correspondence which proved incontestably that the disarmament of Germany was to be the prelude of a general plan of disarmament to be undertaken by the League of Nations. That, indeed, is formally laid down in the Protocol to the Locarno Agreements.

In accordance with these stipulations the German nation is now entirely disarmed, and its forces are no longer sufficient to guarantee the national security referred to in Article 8 of the Covenant — which Article, moreover, requires all Members of the League to disarm. Our object may be attained if all Governments display equal good-will in the search for those formulas which will finally enable us to reduce and limit armaments. Consequently we feel that we shall more easily attain our goal if we endeavour to limit, as far as possible, the number of questions to be considered. In the Questionnaire submitted to us, reference is made to a large number of very important problems; but they are not all absolutely essential to the solution of the major problem. In all the League’s discussions, the problems of security, arbitration and disarmament have been intertwined, and now that the principles of security and arbitration have been so greatly strengthened under the Treaty of Locarno, the time for general disarmament would seem to have arrived. Since it was the policy inaugurated by the German Government which led up to the Locarno Agreement, I can safely say that our foreign policy is entirely dominated by that Treaty and its spirit. It is in the spirit of Locarno that we should seek to solve the disarmament problem — by far the most important problem which the League of Nations has to solve. Without disarmament, the League can never successfully fulfill its many important missions. So long as the armaments of certain countries are excessive,
while the armaments of other countries are not even sufficient to guarantee their security, the application of the Covenant is bound to be attended by great difficulties.

Germany, who has so fully complied with her obligation to disarm, has a right to expect that other nations will follow in her footsteps in order that permanent peace and mutual confidence will finally be established not only in Europe but in the whole world.

Mr. Gibson (United States): The Government of the United States has gladly accepted the invitation to be represented on the Preparatory Commission. The reasons for this acceptance were stated by the President in his message to Congress on January 4th in the following terms:

"The general policy of this Government in favour of disarmament and limitation of armaments cannot be emphasised too frequently or too strongly. In accordance with that policy, any measure having a reasonable tendency to bring about these results should receive our sympathy and support. The conviction that competitive armaments constitute a powerful factor in the promotion of war is more widely and justifiably held than ever before, and the necessity for lifting the burden of taxation from the peoples of the world by limiting armaments is becoming daily more imperative."

It was this conviction which led to the calling of the Washington Conference in 1921 and which prompts the American Government to give its cordial support to any efforts which may lead to further limitation of armaments, wherever and whenever it is felt that the circumstances are such as to hold out a reasonable prospect of success.

In the hope that the American Government may contribute to finding a solution for the problems of the reduction and limitation of armaments, the President has sent a full representation with instructions to join in the work of the Preparatory Commission. He has impressed upon his representatives his deep interest in any sincere effort to deal with the problems of armaments and his confident belief that with mutual good-will substantial progress can be made. It will be a matter of gratification to him if the American representation can in some measure contribute to this progress.

The questions which will come before the Preparatory Commission require patient study in order to establish the principles which offer the most effective method of approach to the reduction and limitation of armaments. It is hoped, therefore, that there may be a general disposition to devote to the problems before us the earnest and continuous attention of the Preparatory Commission and its Committees constituted for the study of special subjects.

This is not the time to indicate in detail the views of the American Government on the specific questions which may come before the Preparatory Commission. It may, however, be of interest to state in a general way the attitude of the American Government on certain outstanding questions.

The conditions prevailing in different regions of the world are so varied, and so many divergent factors are involved that constructive achievement in the matter of the limitation of land armament appears to lie in the conclusion of regional agreements rather than in an effort to work out a general plan for limitation applicable to the whole world.

As regards land armament, the United States occupies a fortunate situation. We have since 1918 been able to reduce our land forces from more than four million men under arms at the end of the World War to a present actual strength of 118,000 — or one soldier per thousand inhabitants. It will thus be seen that so far as land armament is concerned, we have voluntarily reduced it to a minimum. It is fortunate that our situation has permitted this reduction, but we are not disposed to overlook the fact that other countries are differently placed and that their problems are not susceptible of such simple solution.

With respect to naval armament it may be noted that, while a substantial part of the progress presented to the Washington Conference by the American Government was realised, no agreement was reached as to the limitation of competitive building of naval craft other than capital ships and aircraft-carriers. The American Government would welcome any steps which might tend to the further limitation of competitive naval construction.

The scope of the work of the Preparatory Commission includes a consideration of all types of armament and of many related problems. For the ultimate success of our efforts toward the limitation of armaments, it seems important not only to consider general abstract principles but also to endeavour so far as possible to isolate from the general problem as many concrete questions as possible and then deal with these definite questions in a direct and practical way.

One of the most practical approaches to the subject lies in an effort to put an end to international competition in armaments. Agreements of this character should constitute helpful guarantees of that national security which has been so much in the past and in spite of intelligence and industry and good-will the end sought has not yet been attained. It is imperative that the world - particularly the peace-loving nations - should be provided with means of ensuring the security of the peoples, and thus lay a foundation for lasting peace. No one of us can accomplish this alone, but together we can go far along the road if we approach our task with a single purpose — with a readiness to understand each other's problems and patience to seek solutions.

We have no right to disappoint our peoples. They have suffered too much and their lives are clouded with fear of future wars. If we refuse to be turned aside from our purpose, we can surely do something to relieve their anxieties. There could be no greater incentive for us to meet in a spirit that is worthy of our task.
6. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission: Question I.

What is to be understood by the expression "armaments"?

(a) Definition of the various factors—military, economic, geographical, etc.—upon which the power of a country in time of war depends.

(b) Definition and special characteristics of the various factors which constitute the armaments of a country in time of peace; the different categories of armaments—military, naval and air—the methods of recruiting, training, organisations capable of immediate military employment, etc.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): This question seems to me to require to be read in connection with the first part, at any rate, of Question II. I think this is a matter which the Commission should deliberate on very carefully. As the question is drafted, it proposes that we should agree upon a very elaborate examination of all the various factors of military strength both in time of war and in time of peace. I do not feel quite sure that that is going to be a very useful form of enquiry.

I do not know how far it is going to extend. Are we really going, either by ourselves or with the assistance of experts, to draw up a complete catalogue of every possible source of strength of every country, or are we merely going to write down on a piece of paper everything that may constitute the elements of strength of a country when it goes to war? If the former is contemplated, I venture to think that that is an enquiry which has practically no limits, and I do not really think any body of men could possibly arrive at a useful conclusion with regard to it. It would mean an examination of the details of the resources of every country, for you cannot say that any part of the strength of a country may not ultimately be of value in time of war. Its mineral and agricultural resources, its credit, its pecuniary advantages, its position—everything may help to make up its strength in time of war. If you are going to try to make an examination of all those things as applied to all countries, you would embark on a very lengthy and indeed an almost insoluble problem, and I do not know that you would have made the least advance towards disarmament when you had obtained the answer.

If, on the other hand, it is merely contemplated that you should write down first all the things which may contribute to the strength of any country in time of war, I think you would have to write down quite generally all its resources in men and material. Those are the ultimate sources of strength in time of war. I do not know if you have made much progress towards disarmament when you have written that down. On the other hand, if you confine it to armaments as the term is popularly understood, I think you would have to say that armaments are the forces immediately available at the outbreak of war and the material maintained for their use. That seems to me to be the only answer you could give to this question which would be of any value.

I do not conceal from myself that this question opens up one of the biggest of the preliminary questions which we have to settle. It is the question put in so many words in Question II (a), which says: "Is it practicable to limit the ultimate war strength of a country, or must any measures of disarmament be confined to the peace strength?" If you decide that it is not practicable to limit the ultimate war strength of a country, then it does not seem to me to be of any particular value to institute an elaborate enquiry into what that ultimate war strength may be. It seems to me, therefore, that is the first question to be decided before you can embark on the enquiries indicated in Question I.

With regard to that question, I confess my own very decided opinion is that it is quite impossible to limit the ultimate war strength of a country—i.e., to limit its whole resources in men and materials. That cannot be done. You cannot limit nature; therefore you cannot limit the ultimate war strength of a country in that sense. Nor do I think that is a helpful step to be considered, at any rate in the stage of disarmament we have before us now.

The main object which we should have, it seems to me, is to get the nations to agree upon such a measure of disarmament as will materially increase the security of the peoples, and for that purpose, what you really want to do is to consider and limit if you can, and to the extent that you can, the actual striking force, so to speak, that each country has. That would be a question as to which technical advice would be necessary. I do not necessarily mean only those troops which are actually with the colours but also those that can be made available in a very short time—which are under your hand, though not actually with the colours.

That seems to me to be a thing you really can limit, and which it is useful to limit if you are going to increase the security of a country. If you can do that, then at any rate there will be no danger of that lightning, overpowering blow which is what most countries arm themselves to avoid. They do not arm themselves against what will happen in the third, fourth, fifth, or sixth month of the war; they arm themselves for what will happen immediately on the outbreak of war. That is the problem they have to meet. The question they have to answer is: "What is the force that can be brought against us? What is the immediate
danger to our country?" It is on the strength of that force that the experts advise their Governments as to the necessary forces which must be kept up in their own country.

It seems to me, therefore, that the first step, and the most important step, is to limit the mobilisable strength of the armaments of a country. I do not think we can go further than that. I should very much like to know, therefore, what other members of the Commission think should be the extent and nature of the enquiries to be made under Question I. How far are we really going into this question of the complete strength of countries? Ought we not rather to limit the enquiry to the peace strength of countries, and even in that respect are we to make so elaborate an examination of everything that is required (I am inclined to doubt whether that will be useful), or should we not rather obtain some general idea of what is the nature of the armaments we think this Commission can be most usefully employed in limiting and reducing?

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: I should have been glad, I admit, to have had the opinion of some of my colleagues on this extremely important point, for each of us has come here not merely to present our views but to see what practical conclusions may be evolved from them. But since no one has asked to speak, I feel that it is absolutely necessary for me to say where I agree and where I disagree with the views just stated by my right honourable colleague Viscount Cecil.

He has quite logically coupled together Questions I and II, because, as he says, he cannot imagine how they could be considered separately. Yet it seems to me that, in point of fact, Questions I and II at once raise both a problem of procedure and a problem of principle. The problem of procedure is this: What are to be the relations between the technical organs and the Commission, and by what procedure are they to be governed?

Indeed, whatever the importance of Question I—I will presently explain my own views on the subject and how in this respect I differ slightly from Viscount Cecil—whatever, I say, may be the importance given to Question I, it is absolutely certain that we ourselves, unaided and as we sit around this table, cannot supply the answer. Question I is, in fact, the very prototype of the questions which ought to be referred to the technical, military and economic organs.

In what manner should this be done? What procedure are we to adopt to ensure that these organs shall function with such speed that the work which we are to accomplish shall suffer no delay? You see how closely this problem is bound up with Questions I and II. I do not suggest any solution. I merely raise the point because it seems to me we shall have to discuss it. That is why I said this morning that we ought to have at our immediate disposal certain technical organisations which can meet our requirements and which we can consult—not, of course, thereby abdicating our right to take decisions but in order that we may be able, if we so desire, to base our decisions on the results of technical enquiries which we cannot undertake ourselves.

Hence there arise both a problem of method and a problem of procedure in connection with our relations with the technical organs.

There is also a problem of principle. On this point I am—inevitably, I am afraid—obliged to revive some of the controversies in which I was engaged with my honourable colleague and friend Viscount Cecil at the time when we were preparing the Questionnaire. Why did the Committee of the Council, and subsequently the Council itself, decide to place this question at the beginning? Its only importance lies in its relationship to Question II, and it might just as well have been placed after that question. The two questions are intimately connected and might have been arranged in inverse order. But Question II is placed where it is because it raises the serious problem which will dominate the whole of our discussion and which Viscount Cecil has defined as follows:

"By the limitation and reduction of armaments, are we to understand merely the limitation of peace-time armaments or must we take into consideration forces of every kind which an enemy country might employ in time of war?"

I have come here to express the very definite views held by the country I represent—views which are shared, I think, by a number of other countries represented here. I will state this opinion as precisely as possible. In my belief, the problem of the positive limitation or reduction of armaments should be confined to peace-time armaments, because they are the only armaments which can be counted or estimated and, consequently, reduced and limited. But I would add, and with equal emphasis, that countries can only agree to these peace-time limitations and reductions if they feel that, when the total forces which their adversary can bring against them in time of war are being reckoned, account is also taken, in the limitation imposed upon them, of the risks they will have to incur if ever they are attacked.

The whole problem raised in Question I—which must, it seems to me, be defined by our technical organisations—cannot be considered with reference to an impracticable limitation. You cannot limit the coal or iron-mines of a country. You cannot change frontiers or coastlines, nor would any country allow its general geographical or economic characteristics to be changed. When, however, we have completed our task and say to each country: "What do you offer in the way of a reduction of armaments?", when we come to consider whether each country is offering enough or too little, and to estimate the effort each is making to obtain the general reduction which we must at all costs secure, we shall have to take into account precisely those national factors which each country may, on historical or geographical grounds, regard as likely, at some time or other, to lead to conflict. What in our discussions we have
called — and the term is now becoming almost an accepted one — the war potential cannot, I maintain, be considered in the light of its possible limitation: it should be considered in the light of the measures of security which can be afforded to the State concerned. If I limit your armaments, I also diminish the force which, at the beginning of a war, you can oppose to mine.

I agree with Viscount Cecil that the beginning of a war is the only moment we ought to consider; the total resources which could be employed after several months are, for us, imponderable. Nevertheless they exist. When I say they are imponderable, I mean they cannot be gauged by any standards or methods which we can devise. Nevertheless they exist in the tragic reality of war. The forces which a country can employ in the first days of mobilisation will be measured in proportion to the resources, including the economic resources — or rather, including primarily the economic resources — which it possesses, and those which the adversary can bring into play against it. Suppose I have before me a nation which, in view of its resources, its railways, its economic machinery, can with extreme rapidity transform its peace industries into war industries, I could not limit these industrial resources; I could not begin to think of doing so. Yet I am bound to put forward this consideration and say to the organ which is proposing the reduction: "What can you do to help me when I am attacked?"

Thus, every path we follow leads us back to the fundamental argument advanced by my own and other countries, namely, that the limitation and the reduction of armaments are indissolubly bound up with the organisation of economic and military assistance in time of war.

This problem, which is stated with great precision in Question V, paragraph (a) and paragraph (b), might, of course, be solved if our technical organisations were able — I will not say to carry out an enquiry into the geographical and economic factors which constitute the power of the various countries, but to define with the greatest possible accuracy what really are the factors composing the war potential — that is to say, the factors with which a country has to reckon when it is attacked, and for which it has to be prepared.

These are the general considerations I wish to submit in order to show where I agree with Lord Cecil and where I differ from him and thereby to enable us to see what we must do to attain some positive result.

If I might venture to offer a suggestion, I think that we should refer Question I to our technical organs and discuss Question II ourselves in an endeavour to settle the question of principle which, as Lord Cecil himself has pointed out, dominates the whole discussion. Of course I would much rather, before offering this suggestion, have heard other proposals, and so ascertained the opinions of my colleagues, for resolutions should be the outcome of a consensus of opinion and not the proposition of one individual. I hope you will understand, therefore, that I submit my suggestion subject to any others that may be made.

M. DE MARINIS (Italy) [Translation]: The Government which I have the honour to represent will follow the work of our Commission with the keenest interest.

Personally, though fully aware that the problem may be solved in many different ways, I beg to say that I shall, with the deepest respect for the opinions of others, have to defend certain general principles which my country cannot abandon. I would add, however, that I come armed with no ready-made formula, and I hold that all the conclusions we reach should be the result of an honest and careful study of the problems before us. The problems we have to consider are, as you are well aware, not merely matters of international concern; they include certain factors which affect various countries individually and which those countries cannot afford to neglect. For us, the difficulty will be to adjust the legitimate needs and requirements of our individual countries to the general interests of the community of nations, since the military situation in each State is dependent on, and bound up with, the situation in other States.

As regards the question of war potential, I had the honour at the meeting of the Committee of the Council to refer to the importance which my country attaches to gauging all the resources which a State may have at its command to provide itself, at short notice, with all its requirements for war. In this connection I think I may say that the most competent authorities in all countries who have studied the problem of disarmament are agreed on one point, namely, that the war potential is of enormous value to countries which possess it as opposed to countries which do not.

In many respects it may be said that a country's preparedness for war is, in the main, directly proportionate to that country's ability to produce implements of war — that is to say, its possession of the raw materials of which such implements are composed, the factories in which they are made and the laboratories which can produce, experiment with and perfect them. Guns and rifles are not the only implements required in war; there are countless varieties of equipment which, from the rear, keep up and increase the strength of the armies. An army which only possessed its arms would be powerless if it did not also possess rapid and plentiful means of transport, safe means of concentration, perfected means of production — if, in short, it did not possess a great deal of equipment which war consumes and which must be replaced.

But if — though the hypothesis is an absurd one — we decided not to consider the whole of the equipment necessary for warfare but merely arms, the problem would still be the same. The relative positions of two countries which, on the outbreak of war, possessed the same number of guns, rifles and howitzers would rapidly change as one country, better equipped and possessing more raw materials, multiplied its armaments, while the other could not even replace the losses it suffered during the first days of the war. For, when all is said and done,
what are arms, implements and apparatus of war? They are iron, steel, coal, petrol and other materials. When a country can rely on obtaining these resources in its own territory without being dependent upon foreign countries, we may say that it possesses the fundamental elements of defence on which all sense of security depends.

But, again, the ultimate war strength is not merely a question of the arms and apparatus required for war. It covers the whole economic life of the country. We must include in it the national resources in the matter of food supplies, or the possibility of obtaining these at home or abroad; and it also includes the agricultural wealth of a country and its geographical situation with regard to the main routes of supplies. I think that the natural economic situation, thus defined—that is to say, taken in its broadest sense—should be the basis of every estimate of peace-time armaments.

I may be told that the state the problem in these terms is tantamount to avowing that it is insoluble. To that, however, I reply that it is, in point of fact, the duty of the military and economic experts to study this question most carefully and show us exactly how it stands. I say it would not be right to omit all consideration of this aspect of the question. To do so would be to weaken the weak and strengthen the strong; it would be to propose arbitrary solutions which no country could adopt, whether the victims of our injustice or those who would benefit thereby; for the spirit of international solidarity and justice which animates the more powerful States would never allow them to accept a privileged position, much less to create such a position for themselves.

M. Paul-Boncour and Viscount Cecil were fully agreed that any attempt to limit this maximum armaments; what is meant is the maximum military effort of which a given country could be converted into a formidable instrument of war in a period varying according to circumstances from 40 days to 40 hours.

But, again, the ultimate war strength is not merely a question of the arms and apparatus which might be brought into action by one of the parties some time—a week, a fortnight, two months—after the outbreak of hostilities. Armaments, so defined, comprise two elements: peace armaments in the ordinary sense—that is to say, peace armaments actually available in peace time—and armaments which could be brought into action during mobilisation. I venture to point out to Viscount Cecil the enormous difference there would be between increasing a country's effective strength in two months, and increasing its strength in two days. Therefore, to obtain a really accurate conception, ought we not to substitute for the expression "peace armaments" two distinct ideas: peace-time armaments in the strict sense—i.e., those which are maintained in commission in peace time—and strength on mobilisation, the amount and duration of which must also be considered?

When we come, therefore, to our practical conclusions, when the time arrives for us to see how we can solve the question of armaments, we shall have to discuss separately the question of the reduction of armaments in their strict sense and the question of facilities for mobilisation.

The latter question is perhaps more important than the former, and I could quote many instances in recent history in which a victorious general, endeavouring to render his adversary powerless, was apparently at greater pains to deprive him of his locomotives than of his guns. But, if we are to examine the question of mobilisation at all, we must examine it in all its aspects. The question is not merely one of mobilising men—there is also the mobilisation of material and everything which can be used in warfare. We should consider not only things which are "armaments" today but things which may become "armaments" in the period referred to by Viscount Cecil. It is obvious that we should be wasting our time if we endeavoured to limit the number of guns, regardless of the fact that there is an ever-increasing tendency in modern warfare to carry out bombardments by aircraft. Then again, we should most certainly be wasting our time were we to attempt to discuss the number of rifles without taking steps to prevent chemical warfare, warfare conducted with gases, and if we shut our eyes to the fact that an aeroplane which is not in itself an implement of war could become so in a few days or hours, or if we failed to recognise that a dye-works can be converted into a formidable instrument of war in a period varying according to circumstances from 40 days to 40 hours.

That is why, in our conception of mobilisation, we ought to include the idea of industrial mobilisation.

If we thus break up the idea referred to in Question II into its elements, we find that it really contains three distinct ideas:

The idea of peace armaments;
The idea of mobilisation, taken in its ordinary military sense;
The idea of industrial mobilisation.

Unless we take these three ideas into account, I fear that we shall accomplish nothing.

First, as regards mobilisation in the ordinary sense of the term, this is a self-evident and well-recognised fact; and were we not to take industrial mobilisation into account, we should
be simply ignoring the modern forms of warfare, ignoring air warfare and chemical warfare.

My own impression is that we should thereby be creating a danger. We should be
making the same mistake as a commission on disarmament meeting in the sixteenth century,
if it arranged to limit the quantity of armour without taking into account culverins and arque-
buses, which were then beginning to exert a preponderating influence. If we ignore industrial
mobilisation, our disarmament will simply be "historical", "antiquarian" disarmament.
We can only bring about real disarmament if we take into account the three ideas to which I
have referred.

There is just one more point I should like to mention in defence of those who support
this argument. They are often criticised for causing the Commission to engage in such long-
drawn-out and difficult investigatory work that it will never find a practical solution. I do
not agree. On the contrary, I think we should be able to discover definite formulas by
establishing principles which can subsequently be applied without delay.

In my opinion the great mistake frequently made is to misapply mathematical processes
to these problems. We are sometimes asked, for example, "What coefficient are you going
to apply to such and such armaments? How many chemical factories are to be taken as
the equivalent of three regiments of infantry?" If we work on these lines, we shall certainly
fail. We must realise that we are dealing with imponderable quantities. Mathematics,
I may say — since I have passed a large part of my life in studying them — form an admira-
ble field for mental gymnastics and have a definite application within limited bounds.
But if we attempt to apply mathematics to sociology or disarmament, we shall certainly be
disappointed at the results.

We must not measure: we must estimate. The question "How many infantry regiments
equal one artillery regiment?" is senseless. But if we say that the absence of artillery
decreases the fighting value of infantry, we make a definite statement, with consequences
which it is possible to determine.

I do ask me how many regiments of artillery equal a thousand kilometers of railway,
I cannot tell you; but if you ask me whether the railway system and industries of a country
should be taken into account, you raise a definite problem which, after a certain amount of
calculation and, possibly, some negotiation, can quite well be solved.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I have listened with great attention, to the three very
interesting speeches which have been made and I am bound to say I am a good deal encouraged
by them, because I think that though there may be an apparent difference of opinion
between what I said and what was said by the three following speakers, that difference is
mainly a matter of a misunderstanding of words and not a fundamental difference of principle.
That, if I may say so with great respect to M. de Brouckère and M. de Marinis, came
out most clearly in M. Paul-Boncour's speech. His thesis was this: "I quite admit", he said,
"that there is a kind of armament which is limitable and a kind of armament which is not
limitable." So far he expressed complete agreement with what I have ventured to say,
namely, that we must bear in mind that we are here to limit armaments, and when we talk of
"armaments", it is convenient, as a matter of nomenclature, to mean primarily those arma-
ments which we can limit.

How we should put them is quite a different matter. What standard we should apply
to them is entirely a different matter. The first thing is to settle what are the kinds of arma-
ments which can be limited. I understood M. Paul-Boncour to say he entirely agreed with
me (on broad lines, and without going into details) that there was a distinction between those
two conceptions.

Let me try to explain what I conceive to be limitable armaments. I am not going to
escape from the other considerations which were put before me: I am coming to them later.
What are limitable armaments? I entirely agree, of course, with my friend, M. de Brouckère,
that you cannot confine it to rifles or cannon or even to the number of men available. There
is a great number of things in modern warfare beyond those which are let off on the field of
battle; I quite admit that. What I mean, however, is this. I put aside for the moment the
question of aerial and chemical warfare which I quite admit presents a problem of the greatest
possibility difficult. What I mean by the expression "limitable armaments" (i.e. armaments
which limitation can apply) is this kind of thing: You can say you can limit the number of
trained effectives. That does not mean you limit the total number that can ultimately be
put into the field, because evidently you can train men after war has been declared; but I
believe I am saying what every soldier would admit when I say it takes a certain time to train
men. You cannot train them in a week or a month. I do not know the exact time, but let
us say it takes three or four months.

If, therefore, you can limit the number of trained men, you have in that particular limited
the force that can be put into the field until the untrained men who have been trained since
the declaration of war are sufficiently trained. Similarly, it takes a certain time to manufac-
ture a rifle, a longer time to manufacture a cannon, and a considerable time to manufacture
a tank, and so on. If you can limit the amount of those things actually existing at the time of
the outbreak of war, you give yourself, as it were, a pause. They cannot be manufactured
in a moment, and the number, therefore, cannot be increased until the expiration of three
or four months — exactly how long is a question for experts.

I quite admit that an immense difficulty is caused by aeroplanes, because of the possi-
bility of converting civil into military aeroplanes and thus obtaining a large air force — much
larger than appears in any return of military aeroplanes. That is a very great difficulty, and
we have got to deal with it. It is not a question which really touches the general conception
of the limitation of armaments, because it has to be dealt with as a special subject which we have to deal with, and it is raised in a subsequent question which we have to consider.

With regard to chemical warfare, thought it is quite true you can prepare gas with great rapidity, you cannot use your gas unless you have some means of employing it either on the ground or from the air. That again is a question for technical advice, but I think you would find the amount of gas you could use would depend on the instruments you could manufacture or bring into the field to enable you to use it. If you can limit the instruments which make the gas available, you do in fact limit the amount of gas; though you may not be able to limit the amount of gas produced, you do limit its utilisability — to use a horrible word.

At any rate, that is the thesis I put forward. I am not a soldier or an expert; I am merely putting forward a thesis as to limitable armaments. If it be conceded (and, unless it is, we are really in the position that we cannot do anything) that there is a class of armaments which is limitable, and that those are the ones which we have to deal with, that is the main proposition I want to put forward. I may have been unduly nervous, but I was anxious that we should not start on the theory that it was possible to limit the total ultimate strength of a country. That is evidently impossible.

What evidently preoccupied the three speakers who followed me was this: they said that there was a great difference in the resources of different countries. It may be a question of railways; it may be a question of mineral resources; it may be a question of a number of other things. Obviously it is partly a question of men. Actually the number of men available is one of the greatest differences between different countries, and probably the most important of all. Evidently, all these things will have to be considered — at least, I think so — in estimating what is the proper force which ought reasonably to be allowed to the different countries. I confess I was a little terrified by the extent to which my friend M. de Marinis wants to go. I think that an enquiry so detailed and so elaborate as he contemplates would be almost an impracticable thing, when he says — which is no doubt quite true formally and scientifically — that every conceivable source of riches in a country means part of its war strength in the ultimate last consideration. That is absolutely true and it is quite evident that an attempt to measure the complete and potential riches of each country with accuracy and then to make that the basis of the armaments you allowed would be, I think, an altogether impracticable thing. I do not understand M. de Brouckère or M. Paul-Boncour to go nearly as far as that. What they say is that you must have regard to the broad considerations — that is to say, you must recognise that a purely agricultural country is in a different position from a country with large mineral resources — and that a country with a large railway system is in a different position from a country where railways are less developed. All those considerations would certainly have to be borne in mind in estimating the forces that are to be allowed.

I do not dispute that, but I would add this: something of course will depend upon the value that you attach to things. Article 16 of the Covenant and the assistance which other countries may be able to bring to that country that is attacked, so equalising those ultimate resources which otherwise would no doubt have to be considered in saying what was a reasonable amount to allow as the limitable armaments of each country.

I want very much to impress upon my colleagues this consideration. Although it is perfectly right to say that you cannot really estimate the ultimate strength, when we come to the questions which we shall have to consider under Question V, I am not going to say, at any rate at this stage, that there is any one of the considerations set out in that long list which is not germane to the ultimate question of what is to be the ratio of armaments between the different countries. I admit that. Yet I do beg and pray you to consider the most practical side of the question as the most important. It is perfectly true that the ultimate strength of the countries is that which will always preoccupy their inhabitants, because they are arguing on the basis, which has hitherto been true, that a war, once it is begun, goes on to its bitter end, and therefore the strongest country will win — that is to say, the one that is less strong is entitled to make larger preparations in order that it may if possible obtain safety before the ultimate event takes place. Yet all those considerations may really, I venture to think, be easily exaggerated. That is the only point of difference that seems to me to remain between myself and the three preceding speakers. Though I do not say it is irrelevant, I do not want the Committee to concentrate their attention, and I do not think they would be wise in concentrating their attention too much on the ultimate potential strength of different countries. The thing that really determines the armaments of the different countries is the limitable armament of their neighbours. That is the real thing. When a Government goes to the parliament of its country, or whatever the constitution is, with its plan for the armament of the country, what it says in effect is — though it may not say so in so many words — “these are the armaments which we have to meet.” When it says that, it means not the armaments that may ultimately be brought into the field but those armaments which it knows can be brought against it within the first few weeks, or even the first few days it may be, of a war, and which it has to meet by preparing armaments in order to make larger preparations against such an attack. It is not considering the potential strength of the ultimate strength of the country which is going to attack. That is a thing almost impossible to prepare against, because one cannot increase one’s ultimate strength any more than one can diminish it. What it has to consider is what is necessary for it to save the country — what is necessary to protect it from invasion. That is the problem which every Government has to consider, and in considering that it does not consider what can be done in six or four months’ time but what can be done in the first week or fortnight or three weeks of a war, and it prepares its armaments accordingly. Therefore, when you come to limit armaments, though I am far from saying that all the considerations that have been put before
us are irrelevant and not to be considered, the main thing to be considered is the limitable armaments of the different countries, and, unless we arrive at an agreement as to that, I think our progress will be very difficult — that is to say, that the main thing to be considered is the armaments which can be made effective for an immediate invasion by their neighbours and, consequently, have to be dealt with by a preparation of similar military and naval armaments to resist the attack. If my friends and colleagues will just consider what is, after all, the psychological question, and for this purpose the most important question, will they not agree with me that, if you could really obtain an important reduction of the limitable armaments of the various countries, you would have obtained a measure of security of the greatest possible value, which would really lead straight forward to further limitations in the future and the completion of the work of peace in which we are engaged? The only difference, as far as I can see, if there is a difference between us, is that I wish to concentrate the attention of the Commission more on the limitable armaments, while my friends are perhaps more inclined to concentrate attention on, or at any rate to put forward the importance of, the ultimate strength as one of the elements which you would have to consider in settling the limitable strength. In my view the limitable strength will mainly depend upon the limitable strength of the forces that may be brought against you. May I just add that I personally see no objection to sending Question I (a) and (b) to be examined by our military experts, though to what extent their replies will be valuable, we shall only know when we get them.

M. de Brouckère (Belgium) [Translation]: I think a slight misunderstanding has arisen. I entirely agree with Viscount Cecil that we should only consider such armaments as can positively be reduced. I sincerely believe, however, that we can take action in regard to three factors, all equally subject to control by us: (1) peace effectives in the strict sense; (2) mobilisation facilities in the strict sense; (3) facilities for industrial mobilisation.

In so far as we succeed in reducing facilities for industrial mobilisation — facilities for transforming peace industries into war industries, facilities which are dependent on circumstances within our control — we shall have simplified the solution of all the other questions. We can only deal with this factor effectively if we follow the lines indicated in connection with the problem raised in Annex II which follows the questionnaire — the problem of control.

The President [Translation]: Before we rise, I propose that the Commission should take a decision on M. Paul-Boncour's suggestion that we should refer Question I to the Sub-Commission and should consider Question II in plenary session.

M. Paul-Boncour's proposal was adopted.

(The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.)

FOURTH MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held on Wednesday, May 19th, 1926, at 10.30 a.m.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).

7. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission: Question II.

(a) Is it practicable to limit the ultimate war strength of a country, or must any measures of disarmament be confined to the peace strength?

(b) What is to be understood by the expression "reduction and limitation of armaments"?

The various forms which reduction or limitation may take in the case of land, sea and air forces; the relative advantages or disadvantages of each of the different forms or methods — for example, the diminution of the larger peace-time units and of the forces composing them and their equipment, or of any immediately mobilisable forces; the diminution of the length of active service; the diminution of the quantity of military equipment; the diminution of the expenditure on national defence, etc.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I am very sorry continually to be addressing the Commission, and I did wait a considerable time to see whether anyone else desired to do so. I have really nothing more to say about the principle of Question II than was said in the course of the discussion yesterday, but I shall be very glad to know whether there is anyone who disagrees with the proposition that it is impossible to limit the ultimate war strength, and who
disagrees with the statement that limitation must be confined to what is here described as the peace strength but is perhaps better described as the mobilisable strength of a country.

M. DE BROUCKÈRE (Belgium) [Translation]: I am prepared to accept the formula proposed by Viscount Cecil subject to two conditions: (1) that the "mobilisable forces of a country" shall be taken to mean peace-time effectives — forces provided by ordinary mobilisation, and forces provided by industrial mobilisation — and (2) that when we say we cannot limit war effectives, it is clearly understood that, though we may not be able to limit them, we can certainly discuss them. We are bound to stress that peace-time effectives not only with a view to reducing them but also in order to estimate the effectives which it would be legitimate for others to maintain, because the possible war-time effectives of other States constitute a part of the danger of war against which each State may have to protect itself.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I do not think I disagree at all with what M. de Brouckère has said, but I want to make the position clear. We are not dealing here at all with the amount of the forces that are to be allowed to this or that country. That is not the question. The question is: What are the forces that we can seek to limit? That is the only question. Therefore, though I do not want to enter into a controversy with M. de Brouckère about the latter part of his observations, he will forgive me if I say I do not think it bears on this particular question, which concerns really the subject of the operations to be undertaken — i.e. the forces to be limited.

With regard to his observations about industrial mobilisation, my conception of the matter is this. I think that what you can limit is the force that a country can put into the field within a predetermined period of the outbreak of war. Whether that is done by industrial mobilisation (which, of course, would have to be taken into consideration) or by ordinary mobilisation, that is what I mean by the peace strength — or, to use what I think is a better phrase, the mobilisable strength — of a country. I mean the strength which can be immediately mobilised within a predetermined period of the outbreak of war. I say a week, but I do not tie myself to the exact period, because that is a matter of technical information, but within a very short period of the outbreak of war — that is what I mean. When you come to consider it, I am sure it must be plain that there must be a division. There will be the forces which can be put into the field immediately, and then there must be an interval before the forces which a country begins to create on the outbreak of war can be put into the field. It is the forces which can be put into the field immediately which seem to me to be the only ones you can possibly limit by agreement between nations.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: In view of the exceptional gravity of the questions we are called upon to solve, I think that if the Commission, in replying to the questionnaire does nothing more than exchange views, we shall only arrive at vague interpretations, which may give rise to misunderstandings and may in the future produce extremely undesirable results. I am inclined to suggest, therefore, that we should try to agree upon certain formulas. Take Question II: "Is it practicable to limit the ultimate war strength of a country or must any measures of disarmament be confined to the peace strength?" If we simply reply in the affirmative or the negative, then, in view of the reservation made by M. de Brouckère, M. de Marinis and myself, I think that later on, when it comes to convening the Conference and after all we are here simply and solely to prepare for such a Conference — nobody will be able to gather exactly what the Commission had in mind. I therefore feel that we should do our utmost to arrive at a formula. Naturally, it will be difficult to do so, because we shall have to embody in one text all the theories which have been advanced. It will be difficult but that consideration should not, I think, deter us.

Personally, if I had to explain as clearly as possible my own opinion on the subject, I should be inclined to make a statement on these lines (of course, you quite understand that I am not proposing a formula; I am merely stating my own views). I should say: "In view of the present impossibility — I say "present impossibility" because we do not wish to close the door to future action — of limiting the ultimate war strength of a country, the Preparatory Commission is of opinion that any partial limitation or reduction, account should be taken of: (1) of the facilities which the various factors enumerated in Question I afford for increasing armaments in war time, and (2) of the extent and rapidity of the assistance which could be given in case of attack." I am not proposing this as a definite formula; I am simply expressing my opinion. But I think that when we have agreed on some such formula, we shall really have accomplished something definite.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I am very much obliged to my friend, M. Paul-Boncour. I think the first part of his statement is quite admirable. I find myself, however, in a very strange position; I find myself desiring to be more logical than the French. I do not want to quarrel with the proviso that he makes, but I think it does not come into question. This question: What can you limit? It does not deal with the question of to what extent it is to be limited. What can you limit? — What is the subject matter on which you can operate?

The question of how far you should limit it is dealt with in Question V and subsequent questions and is indeed an important and vital question, and I am quite sure that there is no desire whatever to shirk that or to try to obscure it by anything we are doing now; but I am convinced that for the logical and practical conduct of our discussions we must keep each question separate, and the first question to be settled is: What can you limit?
What is the subject of limitation of armaments? As to that I do not at all disagree with the proposed formula, as far as I am able to appreciate it at the first hearing, proposed by M. Paul-Boncour.

May I make a suggestion which I hope he and the rest of the Commission will consider? Would it not be desirable that we should appoint a small drafting committee to draw up a formula on this point, and probably on other points, as we proceed? I venture to think that it is very difficult in a commission of this size to attempt drafting, whereas if we had some such drafting committee as I have mentioned (which, of course, to be very carefully constituted), I believe we might get on rather more quickly and effectively. I venture, therefore, to make that suggestion and would be very glad to hear the views of my colleagues regarding it.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: The proposal which Viscount Cecil has made for a drafting sub-committee entirely corresponds to the views which I myself hold. I had suggested a formula, and emphasised the need for one, not as a proposal to the Conference but to indicate the necessity of expressing our views in some definite form. We have to seek a formula to which we can all subscribe, and for that we need a committee. I think, however, that the drafting committee can only succeed if we ourselves indicate the general lines of the text. It is only on the basis of our expressed opinion that the committee will be able to establish a formula.

As regards the second point on which we have differed somewhat, I think Viscount Cecil is quite right. The questions to which I refer come under other headings in the Questionnaire. But in fairness I think we must avoid deciding upon anything in reply to the first question, which might modify our attitude towards subsequent questions. I hope I make my meaning clear. If we say "Yes, at present" - I lay special stress on the words "at present" - "it is possible to limit only peace-time armaments", it should be understood that we are reserving the right to state, when replying to other questions, to what extent we may consider peace-time armaments. That is simply a question of fairness to the Commission itself.

The President [Translation]: If everyone is in agreement with the proposal made by Viscount Cecil, and seconded by M. Paul-Boncour, to appoint a drafting committee, I will offer certain suggestions regarding the composition of that committee before the meeting adjourns. I now propose to pass to Question II (b).

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: Before passing to Question II (b), we must define exactly what we mean by peace-time armaments. The duty of finding this definition devolves, I think, upon the technical organisations.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I am quite sure it will be necessary. This Question II (b) is really another way of putting Question III, which is really the same proposal — namely: How are you going to measure peace-time armaments and what are they to consist of? What they are to consist of is already dealt with in Question I (b), but how you are to estimate them is a very difficult question, and it is evident that it must vary very much according to the different arms that you are dealing with. There will be the three arms which really present quite different considerations. Naval force is a comparatively simple matter to estimate; you have the classes of ships and the guns which they carry. If you limit the ships and the guns, you really limit the strength of a navy completely. That is what was done at Washington, and no doubt that principle is perfectly sound in theory and works extremely well.

When you come to limit an army, you are in a much more difficult position, because evidently you have to limit in some way or another both the actual number of men and the weapons they use — the equipment. You have also, of course, the question of mobilisation, and other questions of that sort, regarding which I think it is essential that we should have technical military advice. I do not pretend to know how you are going to limit that beyond saying that my own feeling is that you will have to rely mainly on the limitation of the number of men coupled with some kind of limitation of the expenditure on those men or on the armaments and equipment of the men. But that again is a matter, I admit, which is a very technical one and on which we must have technical advice.

With regard to the limitation of air armaments, you are in a still greater difficulty, because of the fact put by M. de Brouckère (which is one of the points which meets you in all these discussions), the unfortunate fact that purely civil or commercial aeroplanes can be changed in a night into military aeroplanes, at any rate, of some value. It may be that, as invention progresses, that will become less of a difficulty. I rather incline to think it will, and the type of fighting aeroplane and military aeroplane will differ more and more from the type of commercial aeroplane. You will get more and more aeroplanes which will be practically useless for fighting purposes, and then the difficulty will be over; but at the moment there is no doubt you have a very grave difficulty about it, and personally I believe it can only be partly solved at this moment, as to how you are to estimate the air force of a country. But I quite agree that it is absurd for me to discuss these matters without hearing what our military advisers have to say. It is essentially a technical military matter of the gravest and most difficult description, without a solution of which we certainly cannot make any definite advance toward disarmament. One of the most important things we have to get is the advice of our Military Sub-Commission as to how or by what standard it is possible to measure the armaments of one country against the armaments of another. I think that is practically the same as II (b).
though I think II (b) puts it rather more at length and rather more elaborately. At any rate that seems to me to be the great question raised by these questions, and I do not think that this Committee will throw any great amount of useful light upon it.


M. Pérez (Argentina) [Translation]: I have noticed that only two members of the Committee have spoken since the beginning of this debate, and it is clear that no one is willing to address the Commission on this subject. What does this reticence mean? It surely means that the programme submitted to us is not clear, and that, with the organisation available, it is difficult to give the discussion a definite orientation. I think we must appoint a sub-committee, not only to draft the formulas which are eventually to be submitted to us but also to change the order of the items in our programme. We must detach the technical elements from the political elements.

What has happened so far? We began the discussion of Question I and were then told that it must be referred to a technical committee. We are now attacking Question II (a) and are once more told that we must refer it to a technical committee or a sub-committee.

Then again we are told that Question II (b) depends upon Question III. I think if we continue in this way we shall never accomplish anything. I therefore propose that we appoint a committee to prepare a new text which will enable the discussion to be conducted on definite lines — questions which should be referred direct to a technical commission, being clearly distinguished from those which we can discuss, without further delay, in this Commission.

M. Paul-Boncour (France) [Translation]: I am sorry to have to speak once more, because I am confirming the very true observation made by the Argentine delegate, namely, that the discussion has become a mere duologue, which I myself find extremely interesting, but which does not correspond to the wishes either of Viscount Cecil or myself. Nevertheless, I feel bound to make a reply, and indeed I am to a certain extent entitled to do so, since I was one of the authors of the Questionnaire which is now being subjected to criticism. Some of this criticism is sound, but not all. M. Pérez thinks that the Questionnaire is obscure, but that may be due to the fact that we have, from the very outset, been forced by circumstances to discuss questions which should, in point of fact, have rightly been discussed under other headings. Each question in the Questionnaire, however — and we drew them up last December with great care — has some special significance in itself. Our colleague of the Argentine Republic would like us to begin by separating all questions which should be dealt with by the technical organisation from those which the Commission itself can consider. That is not possible, however, because the Commission, when it has found a formula to express its wishes, will also find that each single question contains technical points that must first be solved by one of the technical organisations. We have, I think, unanimously agreed to work through a drafting committee, but, if that committee were asked to draw the proposed distinction, it could not do so. We must do this ourselves as we examine the questions, and must ourselves refer certain points to the technical organisations. What have we done up to the present? As regards Question I we decided that we could not deal with it until the technical organisations had supplied us with fairly precise definitions of the terms involved. Suppose for a moment that this sub-committee has completed its work; you will then at once perceive that the points in Question II which were holding us up are to be automatically solved. If the technical committee had completed its work, one of our principal difficulties — the exact meaning of the term "peace-time armaments" — would have automatically disappeared. We are in a difficult position, because we have questions to solve which cannot be solved until the technical organisations have elucidated them. We cannot, however, adopt the simplest method of handing over all these questions to the technical organisations, because the organisations in question can only act upon our instructions.

I think, therefore, that we should continue to follow the present method — that is to say, consider what is to be our reply to each individual question and lay down the main lines on which the technical organisations are to work.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I only wish to speak if none of my colleagues desires to do so. I am not at all surprised at the criticism which has been made by the Argentine delegate with regard to these questions. The truth is that, if you are going to approach the problem of disarmament practically and seriously, you will find a number of very difficult and complicated technical questions in your path, and you cannot ignore them if you are going to do your work practically. There is an impression abroad in some quarters that all that is necessary to secure disarmament is for a number of representatives of the different countries to meet and say they will disarm, and that each of them will cut down their forces, and so on. That cannot be done; disarmament is much too complicated and elaborate a matter for that.

I do not dispute at all that these questions are rather difficult and elaborate. They were formed partly, as M. Paul-Boncour said, as an amalgam of two different sets of suggestions, one brought forward by the French delegate and one by the British. The Committee of the Council very prudently thought it would be a mistake to exclude the discussion of either of the propositions, and therefore an attempt was made to amalgamate the two. Very likely the attempt has not been successful in all respects, but I do not think it is seriously amiss.

I said that Questions II (b) and III had to be considered together, and I think that, if M. Pérez would be good enough to read them with care, he will agree with me. Let us look at
Upon which we are to take decisions wherever possible. When we came to the first programme to solve a problem which is both extremely important and extremely serious. That is the meaning of Question III, and it seems to me fairly clearly expressed; at any rate, I should be very glad to have suggestions as to how to express it more clearly.

Then let us take Question II (b), which I think was mainly drafted by the French delegation. It is put in a different form, but I think it is really only an elaboration of what is said in Question III. It says "What is to be understood by the expression 'reduction and limitation of armaments'?" It goes on to say the kind of elements you will have to consider.

The various forms which reduction or limitation may take in the case of land, sea and air forces; the relative advantages or disadvantages of each of the different forms or methods..., and then it illustrates what is meant by that by saying, in effect: "Are you, for instance, to reduce the larger peace-time limits or their establishment or equipment, or are you rather to deal with questions like the length of active service, and so on?"

Those are merely indications of the kind of questions which those who are going to set up this standard will have to consider before they can set it up. I do not think there is any great difficulty in understanding Questions II (b) and III if you take them together and see what is in the minds of those who drafted them.

If I may say so, with the greatest respect for my colleagues, it is precisely in order that they should state the difficulties which they feel about the questions, and ask what was meant by them and criticise them, and suggest any others, that we are here to-day. As far as M. Paul-Boncour and myself are concerned, we heartily desire the assistance of all our colleagues in this very difficult matter.

The President [Translation]: I understand that M. Perez does not wish to press his proposal.

M. Perez (Argentina) [Translation]: Yes, that is so; I will wait and see how the discussion turns.

M. Comnine (Roumania) [Translation]: Mr. President, it is perhaps somewhat bold of me to speak, but I feel that we ought to break this silence, as otherwise it might be misinterpreted by public opinion. We must—or, at any rate, I feel I must—explain the policy we have followed hitherto.

I have not yet taken part in the discussion because I took no part in the work of the Council. Obviously those who only know the problem through the documentary information supplied to them must observe some reticence, at any rate until they can—I will not say form an opinion, because I presume that we had more or less definite ideas on the subject before coming here—but at any rate until we have modified or confirmed our opinions.

That is why I have hitherto said nothing. I should like, however, to say something in defence of the Council. I was not, if I may say so, on the stage during the Council's proceedings, but I was often in the stalls, and I realised the difficulties, — sometimes insurmountable— which were encountered both by the Council and by the Commission which prepared the work submitted to the Council.

No one, I think, claims that the work we have before us is perfect; as you know, nothing is absolutely perfect in this world. Nevertheless, I submit that we must all bear a share of responsibility for this imperfection.

In the Minutes of the Committee of the Council of the meeting held on December 4th, 1925, I read the following words uttered by Viscount Cecil: "In recommending an increase in the number of members of the Preparatory Commission, it should be stated that all Members of the League would have a right of access to the Commission in order to explain any views that might have been submitted in writing, or to develop them orally. It would be obligatory upon the Preparatory Commission to admit such Members."

Consequently, we have for three months had the right to make suggestions and contribute our share towards this work, and we still have that right. Some of us do not belong to the Commission; we do not officially form part of it, but we are present at its discussions. Nevertheless, we may at any juncture submit observations and speak in defence of them; so that as I, like the rest, have hitherto failed to contribute my share, it would be unfair of me to blame the authors of this work for its imperfections.

I have ventured, therefore, to make these few observations for the purpose of breaking the ice and with a desire to reach as soon as possible some satisfactory formula which will serve as a basis for discussion without further delay.

M. Cobian (Spain), Vice-President [Translation]: We have no programme before us, and indeed it is right that we should have none. We have simply the materials for a programme to solve a problem which is both extremely important and extremely serious.

Accordingly, a large number of questions have been set before us which we are to consider and upon which we are to take decisions wherever possible. When we came to the first
question, we found ourselves obliged to refer it to a technical committee for an opinion, and we took a decision to that effect.

Then we appointed a Drafting Committee to propose a formula for Question II (a). It seems to me that this Committee will have to act as rapporteur for all the Commission's work and submit to us definite proposals on which to give our opinion.

As regards Question II (b), I find that it contains two points. The first is: What is meant by the term "reduction or limitation of armaments"? I think the Preparatory Commission will have to find a reply to the first question, and the Drafting Committee will have to propose a formula in which to express that reply. The question of the various forms which reduction and limitation may take is a highly technical one, and we must refer it to our technical organ.

I propose, therefore, that the Drafting Committee should draw up a formula for the first question in paragraph (b), and that we should refer the rest of that paragraph to our Technical Sub-Committee.

M. Matsuda (Japan) [Translation]: Public opinion is somewhat uneasy regarding the silence of some of our colleagues. I think, however, that silence is very often a good sign, and I only hope that the opinions expressed here will not too frequently differ.

We must now exactly where we stand. We are discussing a questionnaire; we are considering how to frame certain questions in order to prepare the way for disarmament. Our sole aim is to find out the best way to frame these questions, and I think, therefore, that we can allay the misgivings of our colleague, M. Perez.

It is also necessary that we should know the events which led us to the questionnaire and the seven questions which it contains. This we can learn from the document distributed by the Secretariat. There was the draft submitted by M. Paul-Boncour, that submitted by Viscount Cecil and the proposal submitted by M. Cobian. The questionnaire before us is the product of the discussions of the Council Committee. The documents we have seen (C.P.D.1) give an account of the difficulties of the two that were experienced. Finally, the text of the Questionnaire itself was adopted by the Council. I can quite realise that some of our colleagues feel some uncertainty with regard to this list of questions; nevertheless, we can submit our observations on each point as it is discussed.

I take it that certain questions may be treated by the Military Sub-Commission, while other commissions may be appointed later.

We must not forget that all these questions are interdependent. When one question is clearly defined, it throws a great deal of light on others; that is clear from the questions themselves.

I think that the silence of my colleagues cannot be misinterpreted by public opinion.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I have been thinking very carefully over the suggestions of our Argentine colleague, and I am rather disposed on further consideration to agree with him. I think there is a great deal to be said for defining very carefully the questions which we are going to ask of our military and technical advisers. I remember in previous discussions of these armament questions sometimes being met by a reply from our military advisers that "this is a question which is largely political, and therefore the military advisers must decline to give any opinion on it"; and quite rightly. Therefore we must be very careful, when we send them questions, to be quite sure that we are only asking them technical military questions. It is quite true that you cannot separate the final answer you are going to give into political and military aspects; that will be no doubt a combination of the two. But the questions which we ask of our military advisers must be purely military, and I think it is practical well be true — I have been looking carefully at these questions — that parts of these questions are political as well as military. For instance, one of the suggestions is that a method for the reduction of armament would be by a limitation of expenditure. Well, that is to some extent a purely technical and military question — that is to say, whether the limitation of expenditure, supposing it can be effectively established, will in fact produce a limitation of armaments, and, if so, to what extent it will do so. That is obviously a technical question, but it is also true to say that very grave political questions are involved in it, one of them being, as anyone knows who has looked into it, that at present the method of establishing the budgets of the different countries are so different that it is difficult to institute a comparison of expenditure between them, and it may well be a question whether we should not seek to find some method by which the countries would agree to make returns for the purposes of disarmament; which would be comparable one with another. That is evidently a political question of considerable difficulty which it would be absurd to refer to our military advisers. Or take the question of compulsory service. I am not expressing any opinion upon whether that has a bearing on our questions or not, or, rather, whether that has a practical bearing on the question of disarmament; but it is quite evident that there are some people who hold that, if you could secure the abolition of compulsory service all over the world, that would in itself operate so effectively as a measure of disarmament that you need not do anything else. I am not expressing any opinion as to whether that view is right or wrong. What effect it would have technically is clearly defined, it throws a great deal of light on others; that is clear from the questions themselves.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I have been looking carefully at these questions — that parts of these questions are political as well as military. For instance, one of the suggestions is that a method for the reduction of armaments would be by a limitation of expenditure. Well, that is to some extent a purely technical and military question — that is to say, whether the limitation of expenditure, supposing it can be effectively established, will in fact produce a limitation of armaments, and, if so, to what extent it will do so. That is obviously a technical question, but it is also true to say that very grave political questions are involved in it, one of them being, as anyone knows who has looked into it, that at present the method of establishing the budgets of the different countries are so different that it is difficult to institute a comparison of expenditure between them, and it may well be a question whether we should not seek to find some method by which the countries would agree to make returns for the purposes of disarmament; which would be comparable one with another. That is evidently a political question of considerable difficulty which it would be absurd to refer to our military advisers. Or take the question of compulsory service. I am not expressing any opinion upon whether that has a bearing on our questions or not, or, rather, whether that has a practical bearing on the question of disarmament; but it is quite evident that there are some people who hold that, if you could secure the abolition of compulsory service all over the world, that would in itself operate so effectively as a measure of disarmament that you need not do anything else. I am not expressing any opinion as to whether that view is right or wrong. What effect it would have technically is clearly defined, it throws a great deal of light on others; that is clear from the questions themselves.
to ask our military advisers, so as to be quite certain that we are only asking them military and technical questions which they are capable of answering, and not adding to the difficulties of their task by mixing up political and military questions in the same question. Therefore, I have to express my acknowledgments and apologies to my Argentine colleague and to say that I think in substance his suggestion is a very valuable one, and that it is important that we should have, as far as we can, a very careful isolation of the military questions from the political questions in order to consult effectively our military advisers.

Mr. Gibson (United States of America): I have listened with great interest to the profitable discussion of the problem which is before us. Although it has taken a good deal of time, I feel it has been very well spent, as it has given us a much clearer idea of the problem and the methods best calculated to lead to a solution. Moreover, the discussion has brought out several very valuable and sound suggestions as to how we can deal with it. The suggestions of our Argentine and Spanish colleagues seem to show us the way, and the adoption of some such scheme for referring questions to a committee for clearer definition and for the separation of the technical and political phases of those questions seems to be an obviously sound method of procedure. I should like, however, to make one further suggestion, and that is that, in separating the technical phases of these questions and giving such indications as seem to be called for, the Committee should be asked at the same time to perform a similar task in regard to the political phases of the questions, and that at that end, when the questions are referred to the Committee, it should be placed in possession of the fullest possible understanding of the views of the different delegations on the political questions, either through a general discussion in the plenary Commission or through the circularising of their views in writing or in any other form which may prove to be practicable.

I should like to support the suggestion to refer these questions to a Committee in the manner suggested.

M. Matsuda (Japan) [Translation]: I quite realise the value of the proposal which has been made, but I think it is often difficult to draw a sharp distinction between political and military questions. We find, when we examine political questions, that they contain many factors of a military character, and vice versa. It would be well, therefore, if we allowed ourselves a certain latitude with regard to the categories in question.

M. Paul-Boncour (France) [Translation]: I am prepared in my desire to obtain definite results to give a trial to any procedure you may advocate. Nevertheless, I feel bound to point out to my colleagues the drawbacks of their proposal. It seems to me that we should merely be shelving a difficulty which, as the responsible representatives of our Governments, it is our duty to solve. The fact is that every point in the Questionnaire, without exception, has a technical as well as a political aspect. It is, I submit, essential that technical questions should be solved by the technical organisation; upon that we are all agreed, but in my opinion the Commission, and the Commission alone, has authority to tell the technical organisation: "This is what you have to solve". The Commission must not merely refer questions to the technical organisation: it must also lay down the general lines on which that organisation must proceed. If we refer questions to it, without further indications, we shall merely be putting off the hour when we shall have to discuss these matters ourselves. I repeat that I quite agree that the final work should be done by the Drafting Committee, but I do not see how the Drafting Committee can undertake the preliminary work in place of the Commission itself. I am quite prepared to give the suggestion a trial, but I am afraid it will not succeed. What is the purpose of the Committee which we contemplate appointing? Obviously it should reflect 'the views of the present Commission and should endeavour to define, in precise terms, the general decisions we ourselves take. If this Committee meets without receiving instructions from the Commission as a whole, each member of the Committee will merely act as the representative of his own country, and from that country's standpoint. What we require is a drafting committee to conciliate, co-ordinate and express the views which have been roughly outlined by the Preparatory Commission itself.

I repeat that I am ready to try this method, but I warn you that you may be disappointed in it. It seems to me that the Commission must first review the various questions, however cursorily, in order that it may indicate to the Drafting Committee the lines on which the latter is to work. If I may be quite frank, without, of course, venturing to criticise any individual member, I would add that one of the difficulties we are experiencing is due, I think, to the spirit — entirely laudable in itself — in which we have entered upon this discussion. We have tried, as our President has very rightly asked us to do, to avoid long speeches. I think perhaps the cause of our difficulty is that the general discussion has not been ample enough, and countries which did not express their views during the preliminary stages of our work have not expressed them now. I am certain that if all the different points of view had been expressed and compared, we might have drawn useful suggestions from them. I am afraid that by simply referring the questions to the Committee without having first given them general consideration we should be intensifying the effects of this omission.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I entirely agree with what M. Paul-Boncour has said. Certainly I never contemplated that we should immediately send the whole of this Questionnaire to the Drafting Committee to be redrafted. That was not my idea at all, and I do not think that would be a good plan. All I meant was that after discussion of each of the articles we should not only ask the Drafting Committee to draw up the conclusion at which this Commission had arrived with regard to the substance of the question, but that when it
was decided to refer them, either in part or altogether, to the Military Sub-Commission, the Drafting Committee should draw up the exact question which, after discussion in the Commission, it was decided should be sent to the Military Sub-Commission.

Let me explain exactly what I mean by that. Question II says: "What is to be understood by the expression 'reduction and limitation of armaments'?" I doubt very much whether that question as it stands is one on which, as M. Cobian has said, the Military Sub-Commission can help us very much. As it stands actually it is a question of grammar, and I do not know whether it makes very much difference. When you come to the rest of the question — the second paragraph — you find some points on which the Military Sub-Commission can help us and some on which they cannot. For instance, they can help us as to the various forms which the limitation of armaments can take. That is a purely military question.

When you ask them about the relative advantages or disadvantages of the different forms or methods, I think you will have to be more precise, because there are evidently advantages of a purely political character as well as advantages of a military character. They cannot help us as to the advantages of a political character but they can help us as to those of a military character.

In the same way, Question III says: "By what standards is it possible to measure the armaments of one country against the armaments of another?" Numbers, I agree, are a military question. Period of service must be defined more precisely, and it should be explained what is wanted there is not to know whether it is a desirable thing to deal with the period of service but rather what military effect a reduction or alteration of the period of service has on the military strength of a country. That is a purely military question.

In that way you will be able to make more precise the questions you wish to send to the Military Sub-Commission, which seems to me advantageous both from the point of view of the Military Sub-Commission and of ourselves.

What I wish to propose to the Commission, therefore, is this. If they think they cannot usefully discuss further Questions II (b) and III, after the exchange of views which has taken place, the Drafting Committee should be asked to state precisely upon what points in those Questions the Commission desires the assistance of the Military Sub-Commission and then that precise statement will come back to the Commission, and the Commission will be able to see whether those are really the questions they wish to ask their military advisers. They ought, at the same time, to state precisely (so far as it is possible to do so at the moment) what will be the political questions which will arise to be considered after we have got our military information. That also will be a matter for the plenary Commission to consider.

In the meantime I hope we shall go on with the rest of the Questionnaire and deal with the other questions in the same way. That was, at any rate, the suggestion I meant to make. If the Commission considers, for example, that we have considered Questions II (b) and III sufficiently, we might go on to Question IV. Evidently some aspects of the questions are military and some political, and, if we can indicate them, we can ask the Drafting Committee to say precisely what are the questions we wish to present to our military advisers and what are the political questions which must be reserved ultimately for our own decision.

Mr. Gibson (United States of America): My recent remarks gave rise to this misunderstanding, and I am afraid I must have expressed myself badly. I thank Viscount Cecil for having put my views into happier language, and I quite agree with the interpretation he has given of the task which it would be my desire to allot to the Drafting Committee.

M. Paul-Boncour (France) [Translation]: We are now completely agreed, for I also accept these suggestions on the understanding that the Committee will not set to work until we have stated our views and until the delegates, as representatives of their sovereign Governments, have been asked to give their views on the questions referred to the Committee. I was only afraid that the Committee, meeting without definite terms of reference or instructions, might have virtually superseded the Commission as a whole.

The President [Translation]: We will now continue our first reading of the Questionnaire. The ensuing discussion will indicate to the Drafting Committee the lines on which it is to proceed. It will then submit its report, which we will discuss and refer to the sub-committees.

I propose that the members of the Drafting Committee should be the following: M. Paul-Boncour (France), Viscount Cecil (British Empire), M. de Marinis (Italy), M. Matsuda (Japan), Mr. Gibson (United States), Count Bernstorff (Germany), M. de Brouckère (Belgium), M. Perez (Argentina) and M. Sokal (Poland).

This proposal was adopted.

9. Procedure : Constitution of Sub-Commission B.

The President [Translation]: I propose the following draft resolution regarding the constitution of a sub-committee for non-military questions. We might call the first sub-committee, which deals with military questions, Sub-Committee A, and the one which deals with non-military questions, Sub-Committee B.

"There shall be constituted a second sub-committee of the Preparatory Commission to be composed of a representative of each delegation to deal with non-military questions which may be referred to it by the Preparatory Commission. This sub-
commission is authorised to refer any such question to any organisations or individuals it may see fit to consult, including, in particular, the Joint Commission approved by the Council resolution.

"One of the Vice-Presidents of the Preparatory Commission shall preside over the proceedings of this sub-committee."

M. DE MARINIS (Italy) [Translation]: I am particularly glad to accede to this proposal, as in my opinion it coincides with the suggestions which I had the honour to submit to you. The resolution was adopted.

(The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.)

FIFTH MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held on Wednesday, May 19th, 1926, at 3.30 p.m.

President: M. LOUDON (Netherlands).

10. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission: Question II (continuation).

M. VEVERKA (Czechoslovakia) [Translation]: I have been following the discussions of this Commission with the closest attention and I have tried to discover amid the complex observations which have been exchanged here, and possibly also the lack of observations, the reasons for a certain reluctance on the part of several delegations to state their views on the questions so far discussed.

I have come to the conclusion that, in the absence of a general debate which would have enabled each delegation to state its views on the whole problem and indicate what it considered to be the essential point and what it regards as subordinate to that point — in the absence, I say, of such a debate, each delegation has been compelled to wait until the discussion reached the question which it held to be the main one to which it would subordinate all questions merely concerned with the application of limitation.

I think that that must be the reason for the hesitation shown by delegations, and that no doubt is felt as to the technical possibility of limiting armaments. The important point is to elucidate the essential condition of this limitation: security.

The discussion of security, however, is reserved for Question V.

With your permission I will explain what I mean. I think we are agreed that most of the delegations are considering the problem of armaments in the fairly wide sense which has been described by the term "war potential". This potential strength, however, consists of three factors: (1) constant factors, namely: geographical and economic conditions; (2) varying factors which, as M. de Brouckère said, can be estimated; for example, this question of security; (3) varying factors which are capable of being technically limited; for example, armaments properly so called, and the organisation of forces.

The important point for each country is not only its own potential strength but still more the potential strength of its neighbours.

The previous discussions, I think, have clearly shown that limitation must be confined to forces which can be limited from a technical point of view. I admit that that is an interlocutory question, but only technically, and for that reason we have rightly referred it to our technical colleagues. The interlocutory question, from the political point of view, however, — the question as to how far limitation can actually be effected — depends entirely upon considerations arising out of the discussion of security.

I think, therefore, that the discussion of Question V will determine the final drafting of the previous questions, and this perhaps is the main reason why several delegations have so far displayed a certain reluctance to make known their views.

The President [Translation]: I think I am right in saying that the discussion of Question II is concluded, and it is agreed that we refer it to the Drafting Committee.

11. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission: Question III.

By what standards is it possible to measure the armaments of one country against the armaments of another — e.g. numbers, period of service, equipment, expenditure, etc.?

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): The only thing is: did not we really discuss Question III, as far as it could be discussed at this stage, during the debate on Question II?

The President [Translation]: Quite so, and I was just about to propose that we should refer it to the Drafting Committee.

This suggestion was adopted.
12. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission: Question IV.

Can there be said to be "offensive" and "defensive" armaments? Is there any method of ascertaining whether a certain force is organised for purely defensive purposes (no matter what use may be made of it in time of war), or whether, on the contrary, it is constituted in a spirit of aggression?

M. DE BROUCKÈRE (Belgium) [Translation]: I think everyone will agree that this is essentially a military question and should be referred to the experts.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: I agree with M. de Brouckère, but it seems to me to be one of those questions which, although within the exclusive competence of the Sub-Commission A, ought not to be referred to it without some guidance from us. It is certainly for the Sub-Commission to determine which armaments are offensive and which defensive, but whether the question should be discussed at all is, I think, a point of principle upon which the Commission should pronounce. It is a general question, and I think that if we refer it purely and simply to Sub-Commission A without any guidance, that Commission will be unable to carry out the practical work which we shall need for reference at a later session.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I should have been very glad if M. Paul-Boncour had added to our obligations to him by suggesting an answer to the question. I myself think that from a point of view of disarmament it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish between offensive and defensive armaments, because, apart from actual fixed defensives (fortifications and things of that kind), any armaments, however defensively established, may be used for offensive purposes. I should have thought that, subject to any advice we might receive from Sub-Commission A, the answer was quite plain — that there was, from the point of view of disarmament, no distinction between offensive and defensive armaments apart from fixed defensives.

This was not a question which, I think, formed part of the British proposal for the Questionnaire. I do not quite know what was in the mind of the draughtsmen of the question, as to the importance they thought it had from the point of view of disarmament.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France) [Translation]: I will supply Lord Cecil with the answer he desires. I think a distinction can be drawn between defensive and offensive armaments. I think, too, that it is most important to do so, in order to help on the final work and the preparation of the programme we are to submit to the Conference. Moreover, I consider that, just as it will be necessary — with the consent of the various States, of course — to limit armaments which may be of an offensive character — that is to say, may by their nature convey a threat of aggression — so also will it be necessary to leave States entirely free to ensure, by suitable measures which we should consider strictly defensive, a measure of security it would be impossible to guarantee by other means.

Lord Cecil himself recognised the value of my distinction when he said "apart from fortifications". That, as he acknowledged, is an exceedingly important element in the distinction which we are seeking to establish in accordance with the opinion of Sub-Commission A. As common sense would suggest, fortifications by definition and by nature are clearly intended for defence and are not of an offensive character. Material already exists which will give us a useful basis for discussion. It is for the technical organisations to enter into the details, but it is for us, speaking on behalf of our countries, to declare that it is in conformity with their respective interests that they should be free to undertake defensive works which, since they are no threat to peace and are only intended to ensure security, cannot be subject to limitation.

I select this example because it is the one quoted by Lord Cecil, but there are others. In naval matters, for example, it is clear that ships of war may vary widely in character, according to their nature and their radius of action, and may be of importance from either an offensive or defensive point of view.

Let us take another point and consider the military and naval system of any country. It is obvious that military and naval characteristics vary enormously according to national requirements, and also, if it may be said, according to national temperament. One country, by tradition, by temperament, or of necessity, favours a regular army; another country favours conscription. These are different forms which they decide upon in virtue of their absolute sovereignty. But if we take any system and find that within that system there is a diminution of strength from year to year, or between one period and another, whether the diminution is one of effectives in the case of a professional army or, in the case of a conscript army, a steady reduction in the period of service, we may then conclude from this diminution is one of effectives in the case of a professional army or, in the case of a conscript army, a steady reduction in the period of service, we may then conclude from this diminution of forces effected by a country within the limits of its sovereignty, that these measures are defensive in character.

A third point is that, in order to follow the evolution of military systems in different countries, control must be effective (it would not interfere with the sovereignty of a State, because it could be exercised from outside simply by examination of that State’s laws). These are all matters in regard to which our technical organisations can only work on a programme which we have fixed for them, and therefore I think we cannot answer this question, merely by “yes” or “no”; we must submit a formula, to be established by the Drafting Committee,
as a guide for the technical organisations. I am afraid that, if we merely refer the question to them, they, with their limited powers and their respect for the rights of the Commission, will not furnish us with the detailed work we need for our final decisions.

M. Cobian (Spain) Vice-President [Translation]: I wish to reply to Lord Cecil. It was in fact at my request that the question of defensive or of offensive armaments was raised. You will find in Document C.P.D.1, that I had the honour to submit the following question to the Council:

"Is there a method by which it is possible to ascertain that a given force is organised in a purely defensive spirit or, alternatively, in a spirit of aggression?"

You will also find an explanation of this problem in the memorandum itself under the headings "A war of aggression" and "an offensive war".

To me it is evident that exclusively defensive armaments do exist. Naval mines, for instance, and certain submarines which are not supported by cruisers and whose field of action is limited, may be regarded as exclusively defensive armaments. I will even add that there are whole armies which, by their composition and organisation, and the special geographical conditions of the countries to which they belong, are absolutely and exclusively defensive.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): It is evident that there is a much more important difference of opinion than I imagined. I cannot help feeling that from the point of view of disarmament the test must always be what armaments can be put into the field immediately on the declaration of war. It seems to me that, taking M. Paul-Boncour's suggestions, this is the position. I will take the two suggestions of his that I have in my mind. He suggests that there are certain kinds of ships of war which can be regarded as purely defensive. It is very difficult, of course, to say that there cannot be such ships. All I can say is that I have never heard of one. All the ships of war that I have ever heard of certainly can be used for offensive purposes. Take the instance given by M. Cobian of submarines with a very small radius of action. It is, of course, conceivable that if you put such a submarine into the polar ocean, or something of that kind, it would be of no offensive value. But, taking an ordinary country with an ordinary seaboard it would be impossible to say that a submarine, even with a very small radius of action, a submarine as small as anything that is in fact built, could not be and might not be of great offensive value if it were used, as submarines were in the late war, for the purpose of commerce-destroying or other similar purpose. I certainly would be very reluctant to say that any submarine could be classed purely defensive.

Let us now take the other and much larger question: that of an armament which M. Cobian thinks—and apparently M. Cobian shares this view—might be regarded as purely defensive. I can conceive of no such army. It is quite true that an army may be organised primarily for defensive purposes, but is anyone going to say there is any army which can be organised effectively for defensive purposes which cannot be used also for offensive purposes?

If you are going to consider the reduction of armaments, surely you must consider all armaments which could be used for offensive purposes. If not, you will be launched into an enquiry into the psychology of the Governments, which would produce no certain results.

I agree with M. Paul-Boncour fully that this is a matter for which the Drafting Committee should certainly be asked to draft a formula very carefully before it goes to the Sub-Commission A, but I ask him to consider very carefully how utterly destructive of any scheme of disarmament it would be if you were to allow it as a possibility that an armament which could be used for defensive purposes might be treated as a defensive armament and therefore as not coming at all into the estimate of armaments to be permitted.

I do not quite follow his last suggestion, which was that the question of control had a bearing on this question. I should not have thought it had. I will take one of the most extreme cases of a defensive armament. It happens in my country and in others that troops are raised on the terms and conditions that they shall not be utilised outside the limits of the country to which they belong. There are many cases of such purely defensive militia, but everyone knows that, in the late war, troops which were raised purely for defensive purposes were in fact put into the front line of battle and used for offensive purposes on the same terms as the ordinary army. No doubt they had to receive additional training, and the question of whether they were mobilisable armaments would have to be considered, but if properly trained, it does not matter if they are to be used primarily for defensive purposes provided they could be used for offensive purposes.

If we once suggest that it should be left in effect to each country to consider whether the armaments it is maintaining are maintained for defensive purposes, and that it does not matter, so long as they make provision in their laws, that they are to be used for defensive purposes, I feel very clearly indeed that we shall really accomplish nothing by any scheme of disarmament we may contemplate. I am entirely of the opinion that this should go to the Drafting Committee, but I hope the Drafting Committee will consider the point of view I have tried to express when they are drafting their formula.

Mr. Gibson (United States of America): I must ask your indulgence for speaking again, but it may be advantageous for us to have as many points of view as possible considered, in order to ventilate this question thoroughly before it is dealt with by the Sub-Commission.

In the view of the American delegation, it is very difficult, if not practically impossible, to say whether a given armament is per se offensive or defensive. From a technical point of view, the terms offensive and defensive are employed as applying to the use or disposition of armaments rather than to the armaments themselves. It is generally accepted that a vigorous offensive is often the best defence. An inferior force may be used offensively and thereby...
obtain additional advantage with a view to accomplishing a more efficient defence. It is quite conceivable that a nation which considers her rights or honour violated, although her armament may be no greater than would generally be considered necessary for the defence of her territory, would launch an offensive which would in reality be entirely in defence of her national rights.

Defensive peace armaments in the non-technical sense may be considered as those which are created and maintained solely for the internal and external security of the homeland and oulying possessions or dominions and for the protection of national rights throughout the world.

As for the specific types of armaments which may be considered defensive rather than offensive, we are disposed to feel that there are two sorts of fortifications which fall within that category — i.e. that partake of a defensive rather than of an offensive character. In the first place there are coastal fortifications, and, secondly, land fortifications at a reasonable distance from the frontier. It should be remembered, however, in this connection that land fortifications may be offensive or defensive, depending on their location or their probable use. Although it may be called a peace armament by the nation possessing it, an armament may partake of an aggressive character if apparently created by a State to secure or maintain political, military or economic dominance or preponderance over territory not under its sovereignty or jurisdiction, whether this be accomplished by invasion or threat of invasion.

I think that covers rather fully the American point of view as to the possibility of fixing an exact definition as to the distinction to be made between offensive and defensive armament.

M. Perez (Argentina) [Translation]: We are asked to answer a question which, to all outward appearance, is very clear cut. M. Paul-Boncour has entirely convinced me. I thought at first that the question was essentially a technical one, but after listening to him I agree that it is not.

We must take into account what I will call potential peace strength. By definition all arms are offensive. As the United States delegate very rightly said, it is man himself who makes the weapon offensive or defensive according to circumstances. I will quote an example. I read in a book by an English writer that, in proportion to its population, Switzerland was the most strongly-armed country in Europe. Granted that that is so, no one could possibly suggest that the Swiss Army is an aggressive army, although it comprises all the elements necessary for a large army. As the result of her neutrality, Switzerland possesses a large potential peace strength, and, although armed to the teeth, her army — and if she could have one, her navy — would be in no sense aggressive, and no one need ever be afraid of Switzerland on account of her potential peace strength.

Accordingly, I think that, as M. Paul-Boncour said, the question is not purely technical but has also a general aspect to which we can give a reply.

M. Hennings (Sweden) [Translation]: I will only make one brief observation. The question is being asked: "Are there defensive as well as offensive armaments?" I reply as the representative of a small country which has long pursued an absolutely peaceful policy. The answer is "Yes", if we consider the ultimate purpose of the armaments in question. There is no doubt that in most of the smaller countries — in the Scandinavian countries, for example — the object of armaments is entirely defensive. We prepare our army and our navy simply and solely for our defence, and we have no aggressive motives. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that, with a few exceptions such as fortifications, purely defensive armaments may, in case of attack, be employed as offensive armaments. I think, therefore, that, from the purely technical, purely military point of view, it is very difficult to draw a distinction between offensive and defensive armaments, whereas from the political point of view we can, if we like, draw such a distinction. It is very hard to define, but it does exist.

From a political point of view, therefore, armaments intended primarily for defence and armaments intended primarily for aggression do exist; but from a military point of view it would seem to be well-nigh impossible to draw such a distinction, even in theory.

M. De BROUCKÈRE (Belgium) [Translation]: I have closely followed these discussions, Mr. President, and I observe that every speaker without exception has come to the same conclusion, namely, that there do exist offensive or defensive armaments whatever the difference in their arguments and in the standards by which they claim to distinguish the two varieties. They all say that there exist two kinds of armaments.

I agree with the Swedish delegate that this distinction may be political. It is a very important one, and I agree with him that it is very difficult to define. If we ask the opinions of Governments, they will all say that their intentions are purely defensive.

Everyone is agreed that at least certain forms of fortifications are offensive. I say "certain forms" and not all, for obviously large fortresses on the frontier may constitute a formidable instrument of aggression and may indicate aggressive ambitions, conceived a long time in advance and as a rule seriously premeditated. But I also think that no one will call measures offensive which a State might take in order to defend its capital or its important centres against attack by air. To prevent a State from taking these measures would be an act of cynical cruelty amounting to complicity in any act of aggression.

Since we are all agreed that there is occasion to distinguish between offensive and defensive armaments, and since most of us affirm that it is technically possible in certain cases to define them, should we not refer to the military experts for a decision as to which are offensive and which defensive?
M. VEVERKA (Czechoslovakia) [Translation]: I do not claim to speak with any profound technical knowledge of this subject, but I confess that I am much impressed by M. de Brouckère’s argument. There are, however, fortifications within the country and anti-aircraft defences which should be classified as defensive armaments. We have only quoted a few of these cases; possibly a technical expert will be able to supply many others. For that reason I think it might be well to refer the question to the Sub-Commission A in its present form.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): I also think that this question must be referred to Sub-Commission A but I rather agree with M. Paul-Boncour that before it goes to Sub-Commission A, we ought to give them some indication on what we regard as the criterion between offensive and defensive armaments. Take the instance given by M. Veverka and M. de Brouckère—the anti-aircraft defences of a capital. It is perfectly true that, if they are genuinely and only sufficient for the defence of the capital, they would be defensive armaments; but if you were to say that any cannon established for the purposes of defence are to be treated as purely defensive armaments, you would make an immense hole in your disarmament system. Let us get back to the fundamental principle. We have two things to decide: first, what is the character of the armament? second, what is the amount of the armament that ought to be permitted? It is quite true that you may have almost any weapon used in a defensive way; the real test is: can they be used for offensive purposes? Then, when you come to settle the amount of armaments that ought to be allowed to a country, you must, of course, allow all that is necessary for real defensive purposes and nothing more. That will be the subject which you will have to decide, but it is one which must be decided under Question V when you come to settle the amount. We all know that the cannon in the last war were constantly taken from fortifications and used in the fore-front of the battle, and any cannon can be so used. Therefore, in my view, what we ought to say to the Sub-Commission A (something which ought to be drawn up by the Drafting Committee) is: Are there any armaments that can only be used for defensive purposes, and if so, what are they?

M. COBIAN (Spain) [Translation]: I think that we have nearly reached agreement, though there may be some misunderstanding, due perhaps to the use of an inappropriate expression. I say in advance, referring to Annex II to the Minutes of the Committee of the Council, that a distinction must be made between a force organised in a purely defensive spirit and a force organised in a spirit of aggression. Strictly speaking, the distinction should not be between offensive and defensive armaments but between defensive armaments and armaments which can be used in an aggressive spirit.

I therefore ask the Commission to distinguish between a war of aggression and a war of defence.

Just now Lord Cecil appositely quoted the example of the British Territorial Army in the last war. That example shows us a defensive army which was able to take the offensive but which could never have been used for an act of aggression.

Accordingly I think that the essential distinction we have to make is between aggression and defence and not between offensive and defensive armaments.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): Is there any force in the world organised for the purposes of aggression?

M. COBIAN (Spain) [Translation]: That is the very question we are raising.

The President [Translation]: The question is whether the Drafting Committee has sufficient guidance from our exchange of views on this question.

M. Paul-Boncour (France) [Translation]: The question can be discussed, if necessary, in the Drafting Committee, but in any case we should note that there are deep-rooted differences of opinion on the subject.

The point is, would it be better for the Drafting Committee to discuss this question in greater detail, and with fewer speakers? I am quite ready to accept that procedure, but I feel bound to say that these profound differences of opinion will re-appear in the Drafting Committee.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire): It will always be possible for the Drafting Committee, if there is really an irreconcilable difference of opinion, to present two formulas for the consideration of this Committee, or of Sub-Commission A as the case may be.

13. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission: Question V.

(a) On what principle will it be possible to draw up a scale of armaments permissible to the various countries, taking into account, for example:
Population;
Resources;
Geographical situation;
Length and nature of maritime communications;
Density and character of the railways;
Vulnerability of the frontiers and of the important vital centres near the frontiers.

The time required, varying with different States, to transform peace armaments into war armaments.

The degree of security which, in the event of aggression, a State could receive under the provisions of the Covenant or of separate engagements contracted towards that State?

(b) Can the reduction of armaments be promoted by examining possible means for ensuring that the mutual assistance, economic and military, contemplated in Article 16 of the Covenant shall be brought quickly into operation as soon as an act of aggression has been committed?

M. DE BROUCKÈRE (Belgium) [Translation]: I was much impressed by the observations made this morning by a number of my colleagues and so forcibly reaffirmed by M. Veverka.

He told us that one of the difficulties which many delegates felt was that they could not solve the earlier questions until the later questions were settled.

I am wondering whether an immediate discussion of Question V, and of that question only, would solve this difficulty. I cannot help thinking that, while all the questions raised, and the further question implied in Annex II, have a political as well as a technical bearing, there are some — those that we have so far discussed — in which the technical aspect appears more important than the political. The same is true of Question VI, whereas Questions V, VII and the further question contained in Annex II, which I may be allowed to call Question VIII, present a political rather than a technical aspect. This being so, in order that all delegates may have an opportunity of explaining their views, I suggest the general discussion of Questions V, VII and the further question contained in Annex II, after Question VI has been dealt with.

The President [Translation]: If everyone agrees, we might adopt M. de Brouckère’s proposal and proceed to consider Question VI.

This was adopted.

14. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission: Question VI.

(a) Is there any device by which civil and military aircraft can be distinguished for purposes of disarmament? If this is not practicable, how can the value of civil aircraft be computed in estimating the air strength of any country?

(b) Is it possible or desirable to apply the conclusions arrived at in (a) above to parts of aircraft and aircraft engines?

(c) Is it possible to attach military value to commercial fleets in estimating the naval armaments of a country?

The President [Translation]: Here we are concerned with a purely technical question. I propose that this question be referred to Sub-Commission A.

This was adopted.

15. Discussion of the Questionnaire submitted to the Commission (continuation): Questions V, VII and Annex II.

Admitting that disarmament depends on security, to what extent is regional disarmament possible in return for regional security? Or is any scheme of disarmament impracticable unless it is general? If regional disarmament is practicable, would it promote or lead up to general disarmament?

Annex II.

Note on the Statements made at the Meetings of the Committee of the Council regarding the Supervision of Armaments.

It will be seen from the Minutes of the Committee of the Council that on one highly important question — that of the supervision of armaments — no conclusions were reached, although certain delegations seemed to be in agreement on the subject.
The Minutes of the Fourth Meeting (Saturday, December 5th, 10.30 a.m.) contain the following statement by Viscount Cecil:

"One question would at any rate have to be added. The Preparatory Commission would have to enquire into the nature of the international supervision to be, if possible, established in order to make sure that countries kept within the limits of the scale of armaments which had been fixed for them. It might prove impossible to establish such international supervision, and countries might have, as at present, to rely on their military attachés, but this was a matter which the Preparatory Commission should investigate."

In the same Minutes we find the following statement by M. Paul-Boncour:

"If the limitation of armaments were not to have as a counterpart a general system of control, it would be equivalent to placing a premium on bad faith. If, however, only the visible disarmament in peace time were taken into account, this control could only be exercised over the actual troops in barracks and on the material of war in the magazines. On the other hand, were account to be taken of the potential war strength, it would have to be admitted that war material would have at the same time to be controlled and that control should be particularly active and vigilant during the period when the procedure of conciliation and arbitration was being applied. This procedure had just been defined by the recent agreements, which contained valuable promises of security."

Lastly, the memorandum submitted by M. Cobban mentions the idea of an "international organisation set up to supervise the observance of limitations of armaments and "to take measures to prevent re-arming".

The President [Translation]: In accordance with M. de Brouckère's proposal, we will now proceed to consider Questions V and VII and the question contained in Annex II.

M. Markovitch (Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) [Translation]: I would like to give you my point of view with regard to Question V and at the same time to submit a few general considerations.

We have avoided a general discussion, but, in dealing with particular questions, we are every moment confronted with problems which seem to me to require previous consideration. For example, Question V enquires on what principle it will be possible to draw up a scale of armaments permissible to the various countries but we have left unsettled the fundamental question, namely, what is to be understood by "armaments". I should like to explain the attitude of the Serb-Croat-Slovene Government in this matter.

I must first remind you that my country — like all other countries for that matter — is devoting most serious attention to the question of disarmament. We left Belgrade with the intention of taking the fullest possible share in the work which lay before us, but we were neither over-optimistic nor over-pessimistic as to the results. I am not surprised to find that since yesterday the Commission has been somewhat perplexed both as to the methods to be followed and the exact results to be aimed at. I do not propose to recapitulate all the aspects of the question. My desire is to be brief, and I will first dwell on the fundamental question of the idea underlying armaments, by which I also mean what is currently referred to as potential war strength. If all States had the same geographical, economic, financial and demographic structure, we could judge in the same way not only the armaments of all countries but also their disarmament. Unfortunately, however, this is far from the case. We listened this morning to representatives of large countries, and even of industrial States, who insisted that account should be taken of certain factors included in industrial mobilisation or of certain factors contributing towards victory. In that case it is my duty to remind you of the character of certain countries which have no war industries and which are obliged to borrow money, ammunition and instruments of war for their own defence. This is the case with my own country. By this reminder I desire to emphasise the fact that in our opinion any reduction of armaments must take into account the total strength that a country could throw into the balance not only at the moment of declaring war but throughout the whole period of hostilities. I am not an expert; I am not even familiar with the art of war, but I think the last war taught us that the country which possessed the greatest resources was bound to win.

In saying this, I wish to point out that by the word "armaments" the Government of Belgrade understands all factors capable of being utilised with a view to defensive warfare. I agree with the honourable representative of Great Britain that in the matter of disarmament we must only consider the reduction or limitation of that which is capable of being limited. I think, too, that the divergence of opinion between him and the French representative...
is not so much one of substance as of wording. I therefore feel that it would be well to state, in unmistakable terms, that we cannot even endeavour to apply limitation to certain elements in the national strength of the country, because they cannot be limited. I would therefore suggest to the Drafting Committee that the proposals which it is to make to us should be so drafted as to make it quite clear that we do not propose to hinder the development of these resources. I therefore suggest to the Drafting Committee that the proposals which it is to make to us should state, in unmistakeable terms, that we cannot even endeavour to apply limitation to certain elements in the national strength of the country, because they cannot be limited. If, therefore, we desire to draw up a scheme of disarmament and call upon States to reduce their military expenditure, we can only do so if we offer them at the same time a greater measure of security. I listened very closely this morning to Lord Cecil's views on security as a consequence of disarmament. Before, however, we can realise this derived security, we must make quite sure of that initial security which is essential to any practical solution of the disarmament problem.

Before we can proceed to this disarmament we must, either through the means provided by the Covenant or by a change in the mentality of peoples or else by the sacrifice of certain national ambitions, succeed in creating a state of mind favourable to complete security. I will say no more but will conclude by declaring that Question V contains the essence of the problem, but that it cannot be settled until we are agreed upon these preliminary questions: what is to be understood by the expression "armaments", what do we wish to reduce and what do we desire to take account of for this purpose?

With regard to the question of security, I am reluctantly compelled to state — and I think my opinions are shared by all countries anxious for their independence and integrity — that neither the Covenant of the League nor the Security Pact offer us that security which would enable us to deal with the two questions separately. This point of view must not be lost sight of in speaking of disarmament, and that is why I have ventured to emphasise it. Our work will be valuable as long as we keep sight of realities and political facts, for the question of disarmament is essentially political, and, as representatives of our various countries, we are bound to take this fact into account.

Subject to the above considerations, our delegation will support every effort to achieve practical results.

The President [Translation]: Since I myself am President, I will ask General van Tuin en to speak in my place on behalf of the Netherlands.

General van Tuinen (The Netherlands) [Translation]: The Netherlands delegation has been following with the keenest attention the interesting discussion on the Questionnaire. It desires to state with regard to Question V, which should determine, as it were, the scale of armaments for each country, that the reply to this question depends primarily on factors which will be defined in the answer to Question I. I need hardly say that the Netherlands Government will warmly support any efforts and measures which may lead to an immediate limitation or reduction of armaments, provided, however, that such limitation or reduction is general and simultaneous.

In accordance with the traditional policy of our country, the armaments of the Netherlands have always been based exclusively on the principle of defence of the country against all attack. It is because of this absence of any aggressive intention that we have already begun to reduce our armaments, despite the fact that we are a Colonial Power.

Beyond all doubt the problem of the reduction of armaments is particularly influenced by geographical, strategic and economic factors, which, in the case of exposed countries, are of primary importance.

With regard to the factors in Question I, we must point out the desirability of taking into account only military and economic factors immediately mobilisable.

We should be extremely glad to reach a solution, based primarily on the determination of the time required for mobilisation — that is to say, a very limited period of time. In this way the conception of potential war strength would find a more limited application and our discussions would certainly gain in value and efficacy. Further, we should obtain a better definition of the various railway, strategic and geographical factors — in other words, the potential war strength of the first few weeks.

Finally, the Netherlands hold it as an essential principle that home armaments and colonial armaments form two separate problems, requiring each its own solution.

M. de Brouckère (Belgium) [Translation]: It is with some embarrassment that I rise once again to claim your attention. I am perhaps encouraged to do so by the fact that I represent on this Commission a small country more interested than any other in the maintenance of peace, and one which, owing to its position in Europe, can only live in a world at peace — a small country whose very size places her above all suspicion of military ambition.
and which has only one earnest wish; to cultivate her soil in peace and be mistress in her own home. It is in this pacific spirit and with a keen desire to attain rapid and practical results that I should like to examine the political aspects of Questions V and VII and also of the question implied in Annex II.

The first words of Question V are these: "On what principle would it be possible to draw up a scale of armaments permissible to the various countries, taking into account. . . ." Essentially, therefore, it is a question of fixing proportions between the armaments of the different countries. I am quite ready to admit that the search for this proportion is a matter of importance: I propose presently, in fact, to show how important it is. But I venture to doubt whether such an investigation, upon whatever factors it may be based, constitutes the real problem we have to solve.

To what shall armaments be proportionate? To the population of the different countries? I quite realise that a thickly populated country and, generally speaking, an important country, with large interests, is thereby liable to become involved in a larger number of questions affecting its security. But the ratio between population and security is not a simple ratio: indeed, there is not necessarily any ratio at all between them.

Shall armaments be proportionate to the wealth of a country? I realise that a rich country more often rouses feelings of cupidity and may be more often obliged to defend itself, but even in that case the ratio is not a simple one. Should armaments then be proportionate to the size of a country? Surely not, since there are countries whose chief means of defence is the vastness of their territory — the huge distances which have to be covered.

In order to make my meaning clearer, I will apply the three criteria mentioned in Question V to my own country.

Mine is a small country maintaining within a very limited area of 30,000 kilometers a comparatively large population of seven and a-half million inhabitants, and before the war possessing considerable wealth, which it is now endeavouring to recover. Let us suppose that, as the result of some exceptional circumstance, some crisis, its population of seven millions is reduced to five millions. We shall be told that we must diminish our army. The consequence of such a situation, however, might be that we ought, on the contrary, to take more energetic measures of defence. We should be more, rather than less, exposed to danger thorough the diminution of our population.

I will suppose — and let no one think that it is my hope — that our frontiers have been altered and that the people of Belgium have pushed back their neighbours and established strategic frontiers beyond our present territory. Because our territory has increased in size, do we need a bigger army? On the contrary, our frontiers having been made stronger, we must reduce our army.

Let us suppose that Belgium has succeeded in effecting what we so much desire; the recovery of her wealth. Will it be said that, because we are richer, we can have a larger number of soldiers? In that case the value of national security would depend upon wealth, and the independence of a poor State would not be worth defending! I quite see that "population, wealth, size, production, railways" etc., are factors which may to some extent be taken into account when determining the forces which must be left at the disposal of a country for its defence.

I do not, however, see what simple ratio can be established; but if we took one of these factors — and only one — as the basis of our calculations, we should be departing from the spirit and the letter of the Covenant, to which the Members of the League of Nations must always remain true and to which we must always return if we do not wish to go astray.

What does the Covenant say in paragraph I of Article 8?

"The Members of the League recognise that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national security and the enforcement by common action of international obligations."

This means that if a country is very thickly populated, very wealthy and very large, and if her conditions were such that, in proportion to her population, her territory and her wealth, she had too many soldiers for her defence, the maintenance of such an army would not be in accordance with the spirit of the Covenant. Her means of defence would exceed the minimum necessary to her national security. If, on the other hand, a small country with a small population and little wealth, were to be conspicuously open to attack, it would be iniquitous to prevent her from maintaining forces sufficient to ensure her national security.

Is not that the ground upon which we must, in the last resort, take our stand, if we wish to achieve anything practical?

I have just been reading an admirable book written a few weeks ago by Mr. Baker, one of the men who, by their scientific work, have contributed most towards shedding light on the problem of disarmament. Mr. Baker examines one by one all the possible methods of disarmament, all the bases that might be taken, the number of men, the length of the frontiers, etc., and he concludes that in undertaking this work, it will be necessary to draw up a scheme and submit it to the different States; the claims of these States will then have to be adjusted by negotiation. I am far from saying that all our calculations are useless, but I would urge that they should not absorb too much of our time and that we should arrive as quickly as possible at the real and concrete stage of these negotiations between the different States in order to ascertain what sacrifices they can make, and what they can, as M. Paul-Boncour so well put it, place upon the table. From that moment we shall be on solid, positive, practical ground.
What arguments will then be adduced? May I again be allowed to take my own country as an example? I will suppose that the League of Nations has prepared its schemes and says to the Belgian Government: "We consider that you can keep so many guns, so many rifles, etc." What will be the reply? I will assume that, as in all negotiations, the Government will begin by saying: "That may not be enough." What argument will then convince it that the League of Nations has calculated rightly? Will it be enough for the League to say: "That amounts to such-and-such per cent of your population, such-and-such per cent of your budget"? No. The argument which must be used is the argument of security. The Belgian Government will say, "I cannot disband any more, because I do not feel secure". It will then be necessary to show Belgium that the forces left to her will be sufficient for her defence under clearly defined conditions, the account being taken of her own forces and those of any possible enemy.

The League will say, "You are not to reckon only on your own strength; you must also count on that provided by the Covenant of the League, which links you up with 55 other States. You have the Locarno Agreements, which, when they have come into force, will create a new situation in Western Europe. Remember this additional security". In that case it will be necessary in the last resort to show that this potential help will more than outweigh the superior strength of a possible enemy.

When we have finished what I may call the theoretical, or even academic, part of our work, when we reach the desire to disarm, the principal consideration will be that of Article 8, and it will still be agreed that every country must be left the forces necessary for its defence, after taking account of the forces which may attack it and of those which can come to its assistance.

I quite realise that we must not lose sight of the importance of what Lord Cecil said this morning. He told us that disarmament was itself a cause of security. Lord Cecil is right, and that is a point to which attention must continually be redirected.

It is evident that the disarmament of neighbours enables each country to disarm to a larger extent and is itself a valuable guarantee. More than that; if not perhaps, it provides not only security but a feeling of security. How will this be taken into account when the scheme provided for in Article 8 is established? What action will be taken by those who have assumed the difficult and delicate duty of framing it? I imagine that they will have to proceed as follows.

They will have to begin by ascertaining whether there are countries with forces superior to that indispensable minimum required to guarantee their security in present circumstances, and then effect an initial reduction. When each country thus possesses the exact strength necessary and sufficient to ensure its safety due account being taken of the help it may receive from its neighbours and friends — They will have to try to estimate what further reductions can be made without again disturbing the equilibrium.

Now we come to the calculation of proportions, the importance of which I do not underestimate in what I will call this second phase of disarmament. In this case again, however, it would be futile to endeavour to make strictly proportionate reductions. If all my neighbours reduce their armaments by half, can I say that that necessarily doubles my security? It will be increased, perhaps rather more, perhaps rather less. And when it has been decided to reduce by 20 per cent all the forces reduced to the first state of equilibrium, we shall probably have produced a new disproportion which will have to be adjusted by further negotiations.

The important point, therefore, is not to draft hard and fast rules for limitation but to commence negotiations with a view to securing agreement among the parties.

I now come to considerations of another kind. If it is in the spirit that we must determine the forces to be left at the disposal of each country to ensure its national security and fulfill its international obligations, it goes without saying that we cannot consider one form of its disarmament independently of others. If you tell my country, "You will have so many infantry regiments", how can it judge whether that will be sufficient, so long as it does not also know the other armaments it may maintain?

I do not of course propose in this discussion to make any sort of suggestion with regard to naval armaments; my country is not directly interested in the question, and I shall listen to what the other members of the Commission have to say on this matter. But I do say that we must avoid dissociating the examination of land armaments from the examination of air armaments and, I will add, from the study of chemical warfare, since the preparation of chemical warfare is, officially or unofficially, becoming more and more one form of armaments.

And this leads me to a third consideration, which I think an important one.

When we consider aviation, chemical warfare and other modern forms of war, we cannot help recognising that it is becoming exceedingly difficult, sometimes, according to the experts, impossible to distinguish between armaments and industrial equipment.

In olden times, when our Flemish towns were in danger and the workpeople rushed to the ramparts, they seized their swords, clubs or slings, and then, when the enemy had been driven off, they hung their arms up on the wall again and resumed their hammers. The distinction between the hammer and the sword was clear and easy. The difficulty to-day, however, is that men actually fight with the tools they employ. The aeroplane, which facilitates the conquest of the air, is the most recent instance of this fact. The chemical industry, which contributes so much towards the increase of wealth, may become the most terrible instrument of destruction that the world has known and that in a very short space of time which, according to experts, may in some cases be as little as forty-eight hours.

Must we then go so far as to agree with certain specialists that in order to abolish air and chemical warfare, every kind of aircraft must be prohibited and the conquest of the air