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 VIII

MINUTES

of the

SIXTH SESSION (FIRST PART) OF THE

PREPARATORY COMMISSION FOR THE

DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF MEMBERS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIRST MEETING, April 15th, 1929, at 11 a.m.**

1. Opening of the Session. Election of a Vice-President ................................ 7
2. Discussion of the Agenda .................................................................................. 8
3. Communication by the President of a Letter from the President of the International League of Aviators ................................................................. 10

**SECOND MEETING, April 16th, 1929, at 10 a.m.**

4. Discussion and Adoption of the Agenda ......................................................... 11

**THIRD MEETING, April 17th, 1929, at 10 a.m.**

5. Statement by the Turkish Delegate regarding the Turkish Proposal on Disarmament ................................................................. 18
6. Statement by the Persian Delegate concerning the Special Situation of his Country regarding the Disarmament Question ..................................................... 19
7. Discussion on the Draft Convention submitted by the Soviet Delegation ........ 19

**FOURTH MEETING, April 17th, 1929, at 4.30 p.m.**

8. Discussion on the Draft Convention submitted by the Soviet Delegation (continuation) ................................................................. 27

**FIFTH MEETING, April 18th, 1929, at 3.30 p.m.**

9. Discussion of the Draft Resolution submitted by the Soviet Delegation ............ 32

**SIXTH MEETING, April 19th, 1929, at 10 a.m.**

10. Discussion of the Draft Resolution submitted by the Soviet Delegation (continuation) ................................................................. 37
11. Statement by the Swedish Delegate concerning the Preparation of a Report by the Commission ................................................................. 41
12. General Statement by the Delegate of the British Empire ................................ 42
13. Discussion of the German Proposal concerning the Last Paragraph of Article 8 of the Covenant ................................................................. 43

**SEVENTH MEETING, April 20th, 1929, at 10 a.m.**

14. Discussion of the German Proposal concerning the Last Paragraph of Article 8 of the Covenant (continuation) ................................................................. 47
15. Discussion of Chapter IV — Chemical Warfare ................................................ 49

**EIGHTH MEETING, April 22nd, 1929, at 10 a.m.**

16. Declaration by the Delegate of the United States of America on the General Policy of his Government with regard to Disarmament ................................................................. 56
17. Discussion of Chapter IV — Chemical Warfare (continuation) ........................ 62

**NINTH MEETING, April 22nd, 1929, at 5 p.m.**

18. Discussion of Chapter IV — Chemical Warfare, Paragraphs 1 and 2 ............... 66
19. Discussion of Chapter IV — Chemical Warfare, Paragraphs 3 and 4 ............... 66
21. Discussion of the Proposal of the Soviet Delegation regarding the Prohibition of the Preparation of Chemical Warfare ................................................................. 71
22. Discussion of Chapter IV — Chemical Warfare, Paragraphs 1 and 2, and the Proposal of the Belgian Delegation relating thereto ................................................................. 72
TENTH MEETING, April 23rd, 1929, at 10 a.m.

24. Discussion of the Polish Proposal regarding the Possibility of supplementing the 1925 Protocol.

ELEVENTH MEETING, April 24th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

26. Statement by the President on the Results achieved in Committee on the Subject of Chemical Warfare.
27. Declaration by the Turkish Delegation concerning the Problem of Disarmament.
29. Declaration by the Persian Delegation concerning the Problem of Disarmament.

TWELFTH MEETING, April 25th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

31. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments: Proposal by the German Delegation.
32. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments: Soviet and French Proposals concerning the Distinction between Home and Overseas Armaments.
33. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments: Soviet Amendment to Article AA.
34. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments: Roumanian Delegation's Reservation regarding Article AA.

THIRTEENTH MEETING, April 26th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

35. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments: Declaration by the Italian Delegation with regard to the Distinction between Home and Overseas Armaments: Adoption of the French Delegation's Amendment to Article AA.
36. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments, Article AC.
37. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments, Article AD.
38. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments, Article AE: Soviet Delegation's Amendment.
39. Declaration by the Spanish Delegation with reference to the Letter from Mr. Clifford B. Harmon, President of the International League of Aviators.
40. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives.

FOURTEENTH MEETING, April 27th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

41. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives (continuation).
42. Discussion on the Chinese Delegation's Proposal (Annex 3).

FIFTEENTH MEETING, April 29th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

44. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article A: Amendment submitted by the Soviet Delegation.
45. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article A: Amendment submitted by the German Delegation and Proposal by the Czechoslovak Delegation concerning the United States National Guard.
46. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article A: Amendment by the British Delegation.
SIXTEENTH MEETING, April 30th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

47. Communication by the Vice-President ........................................... 134
48. Communications by the British and Canadian Delegations concerning Ratification of the Protocol in regard to Chemical Warfare ..................... 134
49. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article A (continuation) ........ 135
50. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article H ........................... 139

SEVENTEENTH MEETING, May 1st, 1929, at 10 a.m.

51. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article H (continuation) .......... 145
52. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article C ............................ 152
53. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article D ............................ 153
54. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article F ............................ 153
55. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article E ............................ 154
56. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article I ............................ 155
57. Discussion on the Future Work of the Commission ............................ 157

EIGHTEENTH MEETING, May 2nd, 1929, at 10 a.m.

58. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives, Article H (continuation) .......... 158
59. Discussion on Chapter II, Section I — Material of Land Armaments .... 160

NINTEENTH MEETING, May 3rd, 1929, at 10 a.m.

60. Discussion on Chapter II, Section I — Material of Land Armaments (continuation) ................................................................. 168

TWENTIETH MEETING, May 4th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

61. Discussion on Chapter II, Section I — Material of Land Armaments: Draft Resolution submitted by the Delegations of the United States of America and France ..................................................... 179
62. Declaration by the German Delegate with regard to the Work of the Commission ................................................................. 181
63. Discussion on Chapter II, Section I — Material of Land Armaments: Proposal by the Soviet Delegation .............................................. 182
64. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives: Amendment by the French Delegation to Article H ......................................................... 183
65. Discussion on Chapter I — Effectives: Amendment by the French Delegation to Third Paragraph of Article H ................................. 184
66. Discussion on Chapter II, Section III — Material of Air Armaments, Article AE ................................................................. 184

TWENTY-FIRST MEETING, May 6th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

67. Adjournment of the Discussion on Chapter II, Section II — Material of Naval Armaments ............................................................. 187
68. Adjournment of the Discussion on Chapter III — Budgetary Expenditure, and Chapter V — Miscellaneous Provisions .............................. 190
69. Declaration by the French Delegation in regard to Control .................... 190
70. Declaration by the Soviet Delegation in regard to the Work of the Commission ................................................................. 191
71. Report of the Commission and Summoning of Next Meeting ................. 193
72. Progress of the Work of the Committee on Arbitration and Security ......... 194
73. Closure of the First Part of the Sixth Session .................................. 196

ANNEXES ...................................................................................... 199
LIST OF MEMBERS.

President: His Excellency Jonkheer J. Loudon (Netherlands).

Argentina
Belgium
British Empire
Belgium
His Excellency Baron L. Moncheur.
Belgium
His Excellency Baron Rolin-Jaequemyns.
Belgium
The Right Honourable Lord Cushendun.
Belgium

Canada
Chile
China
Colombia
Cuba
His Excellency Dr. A. J. Restrepo.
His Excellency M. G. de Blanck.
Czechoslovakia
His Excellency M. Z. Fierlinger.
Finland
France
His Excellency M. Rene Massigli.
Germany
His Excellency Count Bernstorff.
Greece
His Excellency M. N. Politis.
Italy
His Excellency General A. de Marinis Stendardo di Ricigliano.
Japan
His Excellency M. N. Sato.
Netherlands
Persia
His Excellency Hussein Khan Ala.
Poland
His Excellency M. F. Sokal.
Poland
Roumania
His Excellency M. C. Antoniade.
Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes
His Excellency M. L. Markovitch.
Spain
His Excellency M. Eduardo Cobian.
Sweden
His Excellency M. K. I. Westman.
Turkey
His Excellency Dr. Tevfik Rouchdy Bey
His Excellency Mehmed Munir Bey.
Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
M. Maxime Litvinoff.
United States of America
The Honourable Hugh Gibson.
The Honourable Hugh R. Wilson.
Uruguay
His Excellency M. C. Zumeta.
Venezuela
FIRST MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held at Geneva on Monday, April 15th, 1929, at 11 a.m.

President: M. Louden (Netherlands).

1. Opening of the Session: Election of a Vice-President.

The President. — Gentlemen, the Preparatory Commission, which has been enlarged as a result of special invitations addressed to certain Governments and of changes in the composition of the Council, is now composed of the representatives of the Governments of twenty-eight countries.

The Council resolution inviting Members retiring from the Council to be good enough to co-operate in our work gave us great satisfaction. We are also very pleased to welcome among us the representatives of the new Members of the Council — Persia, Spain and Venezuela.

The Commission has in the past had the benefit of the services of two Vice-Presidents; at our last session these were M. Veverka, the representative of Czechoslovakia, and M. Politis, the representative of Greece. I greatly regret to state that M. Politis is too unwell to be with us at present. He has been indisposed for some days, but hopes to be able to join us later. I know that the Commission will regret as much as I do the resignation of M. Veverka, who has been appointed by his Government to another post and thus obliged to leave the Czechoslovak delegation. The Commission will therefore be called upon to appoint a new Vice-President. In this connection, I would remind you that M. Cobian, the representative of Spain, who formerly acted as one of the Vice-Presidents until he was obliged to resign from the Commission for a time, has now rejoined us. I feel sure you will all support my proposal that we should request M. Cobian to be good enough to resume his former office of Vice-President.

(General assent.)

M. Cobian took his seat as Vice-President.

The President. — Gentlemen, in opening the sixth session of our Commission, I should like to state frankly that I did not convene the meeting for this date, because I considered that the time had now come to take a second reading of the whole of the draft Convention drawn up at the first reading and to frame a final text marking the completion of our preparatory work: that is impracticable at the moment. I say this without any circumlocution, because I do not wish public opinion to have any illusions on the matter. As regards the negotiations between the Governments concerned — with which, in accordance with the resolution of the Ninth Assembly, I have kept in touch — agreed solutions which would enable us at this juncture to foresee the final success of our Commission's work have not yet been reached. As I have said many times, and now repeat, it will not be possible for the Commission to agree upon a preliminary draft Convention as a whole, laying down the principles of the limitation and reduction of armaments, until the Powers concerned have reached an understanding on certain points of capital importance regarding which they have hitherto been divided. Perhaps we may find the means of hastening the solution of these problems which is so urgently required. For myself, I have certainly not lost hope of doing so.

I convened the present meeting, in the first place, because I had received categorical instructions from the ninth Assembly to convene the Commission in any case at the beginning of this year, and, secondly, because I am convinced that it would be a good thing for us to reconsider various questions, outstanding at the time of the first reading, which need to be settled before the second reading. I contemplate a further session of our Commission as soon as the negotiations which I mentioned just now have been completed. Let us hope that this will be before long. Public opinion is growing impatient, and rightly so. I have had a striking proof of this in the very large number of letters which, as President of this Commission, I have received during the last few weeks. These letters come mainly from Labour organisations in different countries, some of them representing not thousands but millions of persons. These letters have been classified and are on view. They express the opinion that the Preparatory Commission should complete its work as soon as possible, in order that a General Convention may be concluded, thus fulfilling the solemn promises of disarmament made to all the nations of the world. A certain number of letters urge that the General Disarmament Conference should be convened for the year 1929. I have asked the Secretariat to prepare a document giving fuller particulars regarding the number and source of these communications, which in my opinion show to what an extent the general public — and more particularly labour circles in the various countries — are emphasising the importance of bringing the Preparatory Commission's work to a successful conclusion without undue delay (Annex 10). We are glad to see public interest expressed in this way, and I venture to hope that, if it is supported and directed in all civilised countries by a Press conscious of its real responsibility in the matter, it will bring increasing pressure to bear upon Governments, whose action in this field more than in any other depends on the will of the people.
The task undertaken at our first session, in 1926, is one that will take a considerable time to complete. We can only advance step by step and our final success will depend on the extent to which we are supported by the feeling of security developed among the peoples, and more particularly in the younger generation, by increasing faith in the pacific settlement of international disputes by conciliation and arbitration. I venture to state, however, that at each of our sessions, even at the last one, which in the eyes of the public appeared to produce little result, some progress was made. There was a great deal to do in the way of clearing the ground, and in this connection our Sub-Committees have performed most useful work, of which the public, I venture to think, is very little aware. It was not until our third session held in March-April 1927 that we were in a position to draw up a certain number of provisional texts.

We next set up the Committee on Arbitration and Security, whose work was deservedly praised at the last Assembly and has already begun to bear fruit, as shown by the proposals for accession to a General Act which have been submitted to different Parliaments. Finally, in regard to a considerable number of articles, these texts represent unanimous opinions; in the case of others, there is a single text, accompanied by explicit reservations by one or several delegations. In regard to the first point, it may be useful to point out that the Commission was unable at its third session to establish a single text of a draft Convention. The texts appended to the report of April 26th, 1927, represent the results achieved by the Commission up to the time when its work was suspended by the closing of the session. In regard to a considerable number of articles, these texts represent unanimous opinions; in the case of others, there is a single text, accompanied by explicit reservations by one or several delegations. In regard to other points, again, it was not possible to agree upon a single text, and the Draft merely offers the text or texts proposed by different delegations. In addition, there are some points which were not examined at all or were merely touched upon, fuller discussion being deferred to a later stage. Lastly, the report says:

"It is understood that each delegation retains full freedom to reconsider its suggestions or proposals and to put forward fresh ones."
There are thus wide differences between the stages attained in the discussion of the various points covered by the 1927 texts. This material has since been enlarged by the addition of the German and Soviet proposals mentioned above, which, under the Commission’s resolution of March 24th, 1928, were reserved for later consideration and were commended to the attention of the Governments.

The Commission might, I think, begin by examining the questions which have hitherto been reserved (including the new proposals to which I have just referred), or in regard to which discussion was suspended after a first exchange of views. It might then proceed to examine the texts noted in the 1927 Draft as adopted at first reading, with or without reservations, arranging them in such a way as to make it as easy as possible for the Commission to continue in due course the discussion of those questions on which the views of the delegations were widely different in 1927, in spite of the protracted efforts made at the time.

If it were decided to proceed on these lines, the following list might be drawn up:


I would remind the Commission that, in its resolution of March 24th, 1928, it took note of this Draft, and, while reserving consideration thereof until the next session, it commended the Draft to the attention of the Governments. I think, therefore, that the Commission should take cognisance of any observations which delegations may desire to submit with reference to this Draft. I would also point out that in the same resolution the Commission stated that its work must be pursued along the lines already mapped out. Consequently, the first question is to determine whether the Draft of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics comes within the framework of our Draft of 1927 or not.

2. Proposal by the German Delegation concerning the last Paragraph of Article 8 of the Covenant.

Although this proposal only relates to the Armaments Year-Book, it actually involves an amendment to the clauses of Chapter V, Section II, of the 1927 texts (Exchange of Information). The Commission will probably think it desirable, when examining this proposal, to proceed at once to discuss the several articles of that section one by one.

It should be observed that the German proposal provides, inter alia, for publicity in regard to the manufacture of arms — a question which is under consideration by the Special Commission appointed by the Council for that purpose. Attention has been drawn on more than one occasion, most recently by a resolution of the 1928 Assembly, to the close relationship between the work of the two Commissions.


Immediately after the discussion of this problem, the question of air material, which has an obvious connection with it, might fittingly be examined. Therefore:

4. Chapter II. Section III. Air Armaments (Material).

These articles have not yet been discussed so far as they concern naval and air effectives. It would scarcely be possible to discuss their application to these effectives without opening a debate on the full text of these articles and of the reservations to Articles H and I submitted by some of the delegations. On purely practical grounds, it might be best to proceed at the same time to the examination of Articles C, D and F, reserving only Article A of the first chapter.

6. Chapter V. Section III. Derogations.
7. Chapter V. Section IV. Procedure with regard to Complaints and Revision.
8. Chapter V. Section I. Organisation.

At this stage, the other Articles of Chapter I not examined under No. 5 above might be discussed.

10. Chapter II, Section I. Land Armaments (Material).
11. Chapter II, Section II. Naval Armaments (Material).

I have placed this question towards the end of the list, although it might perhaps be advisable to discuss it at an earlier stage.

The question of the publication of budgetary expenditure is dealt with in Articles DA*, and DB*, and will have been examined in No. 2 above, in connection with the discussion of Section II of Chapter V.


As to the progress of the work of the Committee on Arbitration and Security, this item should be dealt with before we separate. The Preparatory Commission will certainly desire to take note of the work done by this Committee since our last session and the resolutions adopted by the Ninth Assembly, and to express the hope that the Committee’s work may achieve the best possible practical results.
Count Bernstorff (Germany). — I should like to know, Mr. President, when you intend to open the discussion on the agenda you have indicated in your speech.

The President. — I propose that the discussion on the agenda should not be begun until to-morrow.

Count Bernstorff (Germany). — I shall then have an opportunity of making reservations.

The President. — I ought to say that I have received and circulated to all the members of the Commission a note from the German delegate (Annex 2) dated April 8th, 1929, and a note from the Chinese delegate, dated April 13th, 1929 (Annex 3). The questions dealt with in these two notes might very well be discussed at the same time as certain parts of the draft Convention drawn up at first reading by the Commission in 1927. Should other delegates desire to submit proposals, these will, of course, be circulated with as little delay as possible.

3. Communication by the President of a Letter from the President of the International League of Aviators.

The President. — I desire to communicate to you a highly interesting letter referring to the part which international aviation might play in preventing conflicts. It was addressed to me by Mr. Clifford B. Harmon, President of the International League of Aviators.

Paris, April 12th, 1929.

"The writer of this letter, an aviator and aeronaut and American citizen, President of the International League of Aviators, which includes thirty-two sections either formed or in process of formation in the Old and New Worlds, feels it his duty to address the following remarks and suggestions to you.

"Of all the horrors which might be produced in a future war, there is none comparable to those of aerial warfare. At the present moment, and a few years hence if the progress of aerial navigation continues at the same rapid rate as progress in the invention of asphyxiating gases, the horrors of warfare carried on by aeroplane and by gas will surpass anything which can be imagined. Aeroplanes of small dimensions but of immense speed, and giant aeroplanes flying at such altitudes that anti-aircraft batteries cannot reach them and aircraft protection against them will be very difficult, will be able to drop bombs filled with poisonous gases on densely inhabited centres. A single one of these bombs, according to the most recent tests, would be capable of annihilating the whole population of a very wide zone.

"The inhabitants of towns, fortresses and of ports would be the hopeless victims of such warfare.

"The chief characteristic of this form of warfare is that no defence is possible against it. Of the number of machines attacking a single town, it would be impossible to prevent more than a very small percentage attaining their objective and returning to their bases. Moreover, it is clear that these methods of warfare are as futile as they are revolting, because it is never by attacks of this sort against non-combatants that decisive victory is finally attained. Some statesmen have even gone so far as to demand the abolition of military aviation, but that is all the more impossible because of the ease with which commercial machines can be transformed into bombing machines.

"It is vain to imagine that it is possible to restrict, by international legislation, the development of a marvellous industry, the uses of which in peace-time may become more and more numerous. Is there, then, no remedy at all? After full consultation with aviation circles and with prominent persons in different countries, I have come to the conclusion that only by the formation of an International Air Force is it possible to provide guarantees sufficient to enable civilised countries to renounce, by means of a solemn Air Agreement, the use of these barbarous methods.

"It is true that engagements concluded under the auspices of the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact (which makes war more difficult) give mankind a certain safeguard against air warfare, but this moral safeguard is not sufficient.

"I know that the majority of airmen would be glad to assist in any enterprise which has for its object the making of them into guardians of the peace, or the air police of the world, instead of transforming them into executioners in time of war.

"I am aware of all the difficulties of such an enterprise. They are the same as were encountered in 1919, when plans for an International Army were discussed, and which were met with later when attempts were made to organise the effort which each country would have to make in regard to sanctions against a possible aggressor.

"Therefore, Mr. President, I do not go so far as to ask you to submit to the Preparatory Commission at this moment any practical proposals. I ask that the Commission will study the more precise suggestions which I am prepared to furnish to any experts the Commission may designate.

"I also ask that the Commission will give the valuable encouragement of its high authority to the propaganda which I have determined to resume with all my energy, not only in Europe but in Asia and the New World, and particularly in my own country, where I have received great support.

"Asking you to communicate this letter to the delegates assembled at Geneva, and repeating that I am entirely at your disposal, I have the honour to be, etc.,

(Signed) Clifford B. Harmon."
Lord CUSHENDUN (British Empire). — I should like to ask what our rules are in regard to the reading of documents such as that just read. I am bound to say it strikes me as open to grave objections that communications from private individuals should be solemnly read out here. I know nothing whatever about the gentleman who has written this letter. Everybody knows that there are organisations with high-sounding titles which possibly consist of an office on the fifth floor, stamped note-paper and one clerk. I know nothing about this International League of Aviators, but reading out such letters as this is obviously open to objection. My point is that, by doing so, we are inviting people who have a hunger for publicity to write letters to the League of Nations or to some of its organs in the expectation that a certain amount of notice may be taken of them in the Press. I think this letter, so far as I can judge, is of no value whatever. Even if it were a very valuable one (which I do not think), I consider it very improper that an outside individual, probably having no authority whatever, should attempt to influence the opinion of this Commission. I do not know what our rules are, but at an appropriate time I should like in some way to move, as a point of procedure, that on no occasion should we give publicity, by reading them here, to unsolicited letters received from external sources the value of which nobody knows.

The PRESIDENT. — In reply to Lord Cushendun's question, I will say that I ventured to read the letter referred to as I regarded it as being of great interest. As President, I saw no objection to communicating it, even though I did so in a somewhat formal manner. If the Commission desires to adopt a ruling, as suggested by the honourable delegate for the British Empire, I should be perfectly ready to conform to it.

I imagine that the members of the Commission would like to consider the observations which I ventured to put before them. I therefore propose that we should not meet this afternoon and that we should begin the discussion on the agenda to-morrow. I would also ask my colleagues to be good enough to limit their speeches on this question as far as possible.

Count BERNSTORFF (Germany). — I would request the President to be good enough to communicate to us as soon as possible the speech he made at the opening of this meeting; I, for my part, shall have to make reservations on certain points and I should be very glad if I could examine the text.

The PRESIDENT. — Count Bernstorff will have the text of the opening speech early this afternoon.

(Second meeting (public)

Held at Geneva on Tuesday, April 16th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

President: M. LOUDON (Netherlands).

4. Discussion and Adoption of the Agenda.

The President. — I received a telegram from M. Politis, our Vice-President, to whom I replied yesterday expressing our regrets that he was not with us and also our wishes for his speedy recovery. M. Politis has replied thanking the Commission and states that he hopes to be able to leave next Sunday to join us. He goes on to say:

"Would you be kind enough to express my deep regret to the Commission and my sincere hopes for the success of its work?"

Count BERNSTORFF (Germany). — I shall comply with the recommendations made by our President yesterday and be very brief.

I regret that I must here express an opinion absolutely at variance with that of our President. He told us yesterday that he had no desire to forestall the Commission's decision, but he has already mapped out a programme which runs counter to the last decision taken by this Commission.

Allow me to remind you of the Commission's decision at its last meeting:

"The Commission decides to leave its President free to fix, according to circumstances, the date at which it would be practically useful to convene a new session in order to proceed to the second reading of the draft Convention on the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments. The Commission expresses the hope...", etc.

We were accordingly to proceed with the second reading of the draft Convention. Further, in the speech with which the President closed the last session, he said:

"I may also recall that we have taken a firm decision, marked by the manner in which the Commission received Count Bernstorff's proposal. We have decided not to
abandon the method of work hitherto adopted, but to follow along the lines that we have already mapped out. We shall therefore take a second reading of our draft Convention."

Our Commission, therefore, had taken a firm decision to proceed with the second reading of our Draft. I must accordingly protest against the proposal made yesterday. I understand very well that negotiations are going on between Governments on disputed questions and I make no objection to this. I must, however, repeat what I said in the Assembly last year on behalf of my Government: in our opinion, this Commission was created to find a solution of the disarmament problem. It must not, and cannot, abdicate these functions to allow diplomatic negotiations to be carried on between Governments. It has been convened to create a system of arrangements to be approved later by Governments.

For these various reasons, I consider that our Commission should continue its work in the order which it decided to adopt at its last session. It is obviously free to decide otherwise. But my reason for rising now is that I wish to ask you, sir, to give us a categorical reply to the question: Does this Commission intend completely to reverse the decision which it took last session?

If the Commission reverses its decision, I am convinced that its prestige will suffer. If, however, you wish to do so, I would ask you to say so clearly, and to state frankly that you do not desire to proceed now with the second reading.

I am, moreover, perfectly ready to agree to the suggestion that we should discuss the Soviet proposal before going on to the second reading. I see no objection to this. But what I am particularly anxious to know is whether the Commission intends to uphold its former decision or to reverse it completely.

The President. — Count Bernstorff wishes for a categorical reply to the question he has just asked. I am quite ready to reply immediately.

There has certainly been a misunderstanding. In convening the Commission, I never had any idea of resuming the first reading, for the simple reason that we finished that reading at our last session. Obviously, we are now beginning the second reading. The proposal I submitted yesterday only concerns the order in which the various points of our draft Convention shall be discussed.

We realised that several points in our Convention had not been discussed at all, or had only been inadequately discussed. The first thing to do, therefore, at the second reading, is to elaborate and deal more fully with these various points.

That is all that I can say in reply to Count Bernstorff, and I think that this is the categorical reply which he desires.

The Hon. Hugh Gibson (United States of America). — After the very clear and precise statement made by our President, it may be superfluous for me to say anything on this subject but there are one or two points which he has not touched on, and I venture, therefore, to take up the time of the Commission for a very brief statement. I am confident that all the members of the Commission share Count Bernstorff's anxiety to get on with the second reading as soon as this can be done effectively. The American delegation is most desirous of advancing our work as rapidly as possible. Before the explanation of our President — in fact, on reading yesterday the agenda laid before us — it seemed obvious that, for all practical purposes, he had proposed an immediate second reading, and that he had done this in the most scientific manner possible — that is to say, he had singled out the very problems upon which disagreement still exists and had proposed that we should immediately tackle these problems and dispose of them one by one. Once we have disposed of these problems which have been enumerated in our agenda, the second reading will be reduced to a mere problem of drafting. An ordinary second reading will involve going over a great deal of material where substantial agreement already exists, and we will furthermore be confronted by the very problems which have been suggested in the agenda. It seems to me that, if we look at the matter in this light, our President has given the fullest satisfaction to Count Bernstorff's desire for a second reading, and that the difference between the two proposals is one purely of form and not of substance. The American delegation therefore hopes that the Commission will adhere to the proposals of our President.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — Much as I should like to be able to comply with the desire expressed by yourself yesterday as to the utmost brevity of speeches on the agenda, I find myself obliged to crave your tolerance beforehand if I should fail quite to fulfil your desire. The question we have to consider here is not simply an agenda — it is no matter of technicalities, nor merely the convenience of placing one point on the agenda before or after another — it is a matter in which the profoundest principles are involved. By its treatment of this question, the Commission will show whether it is ready to proceed at this, its sixth session, to the effective solution of the problem of disarmament; whether this session is to be a step forward or to remain as fruitless as the others have been — to consist, like them, in the mere marking of time.

These remarks of mine would be superfluous if I were convinced that, in inviting us to place first on the agenda the consideration of the Soviet draft Convention for the Reduction of Armaments, our President really intended the Commission to base all its further work on disarmament upon this Draft. I imagine I should scarcely be doing him justice were I to attribute to him intentions which he would doubtless consider quite heretical. Indeed, such an assumption is contradicted by the numerous statements of the President, both in his
speeches here in the Commission and in his written reply to me dated December 29th last (Annex 1), as to the necessity for the continuation of the work of the Commission “along the path already mapped out by it”. In the accepted terminology of the Commission, the meaning of which is now thoroughly understood by all, this signifies the practical exclusion of any new draft Conventions, including that presented by the Soviet delegation, in favour of the Draft initiated by the Commission and already through its first or, to be precise, the first half of its first reading. It is therefore no wonder that, in his speech of yesterday, the President proposed first of all the consideration of the question as to whether the Soviet draft Convention comes within the framework of the 1927 draft Convention. Pursuing this line of thought, it is obvious that, should this question be answered in the negative, the President considers it inevitable that the Soviet draft Convention be rejected in toto, without consideration of its contents. I therefore, consider myself entitled to presume that the aim of the proposed agenda is, not the consideration of the Soviet draft Convention in itself, but the purely formal consideration of the question as to whether the Commission should occupy itself with this Draft at all, or whether it should brush it aside, in order to turn to the discussion of the less important points of the 1927 Draft, the second reading of which, as the President stated yesterday, is still an impossibility. I should be only too glad if members of the Commission prove me to have been a false prophet by refuting my inferences. If, however, these have been erroneous, our President would not have included certain other points in the agenda — and that quite definitely and in no tentative fashion — which are also to be found in their entirety in the Soviet draft Convention. I venture, by the way, to mention that almost all of the questions in Count Bernstorff’s memorandum of April 8th (Annex 2) could also be solved by the Soviet draft Convention, and, moreover, in the spirit of that memorandum. Any other proposals by delegates, previously made or about to be made, could equally be placed within the framework of the Soviet Draft and be considered simultaneously with it, for the Soviet draft Convention is sufficiently comprehensive about disarmament, and in any case has a greater scope than that of 1927.

I feel sure that it is quite clear to all delegates that the draft Convention of 1927 and that of the Soviet delegation are mutually exclusive and cannot be discussed simultaneously. It should, moreover, be added that, while the Soviet Draft is based upon perfectly definite principles which would make it possible to solve the question and the degree of disarmament even now, the other Draft only affords an opportunity for discussion on technical questions, and, should it even be finally accepted, opens no prospects for the solution of the fundamental question of disarmaments, and its degree. Most important of all, however, is the elimination by the Soviet draft Convention of those obstacles which, two years ago, proved a stumbling-block to the 1927 Draft, and which it has hitherto been impossible to overcome.

Permit me to remind you, gentlemen, that the 1927 draft Convention has remained in an embryo state over several sessions. At the third session, the completion of its first reading was postponed owing to the differences of opinion it aroused. At the fourth session, it was found impossible to continue work on it on account of the persistence of these differences. At the fifth session, the delegate for France, corroborated by the delegate of Great Britain, stated that there was a possibility of arriving at an agreement with regard to these differences outside the sphere of the Commission, and the Commission decided once more to postpone its work on the Draft until this desirable consummation should have taken place. Over a year has elapsed since then, but the President has not yet been able to tell us anything at all consoling as to the present state of the controversies evoked by this draft Convention. So far as we are permitted to know, not only have these differences not been softened, but they have actually become still more acute and rendered still more complicated by new questions. While France and Great Britain may have arrived, through negotiation, at a solution satisfactory to their respective interests, new differences have arisen to take the place of those settled — this time between the Anglo-French compromise and the points of view of the United States and Italy. As far as we can tell, negotiations for the settlement of these differences have not yet even begun.

I have referred to the above facts in my letters to the President of the Preparatory Commission of August 20th and December 6th last (Annex 1). I was not a little surprised to see from his reply that, in his opinion, the Commission could succeed in its work only along the lines already mapped out. I cannot but envy the optimism of the President if he can consider the work so far achieved by the Commission as successful, for it seems to me that even the most confirmed optimist will cease to look to the League of Nations for disarmament if its Preparatory Commission carries on in the future with the “success” that has so far marked its efforts.

But, even if we are to believe that the next few months will produce “such fortunate circumstances as might enable Great Britain and France” to enter into negotiations with the United States, and sooner or later bring them to a favourable conclusion, what guarantee have we that an agreement thus arrived at will prove acceptable to other States not participating in these negotiations? I recollect that the honourable representative of Italy declared at the last session, in connection with the communication regarding the negotiations then beginning between Great Britain and France, that his Government would by no means consider itself bound by an agreement arrived at without its participation, and other States represented in the Commission are also entitled to express their opinion on this agreement.

Moreover, differences have so far been discussed with regard to only one point in the draft Convention (true a most important one), and there are many differences of opinion (with
to the requirements of national safety were extremely instructive on this point, almost every instead of establishing a coefficient for the reduction of armaments, which would be equitable and obligatory for all countries, it provides for the individual fixation of armaments to be applied to each individual country, with all its specific political, geographic, strategic, economic and other features, despite the obvious necessity for general international recognition of individual estimates of the requirements of each State.

The results of the questionnaire circulated by the League of Nations in 1921-22 with regard to the requirements of national safety were extremely instructive on this point, almost every State asseverating that its national requirements prevented reduction of its armed forces. All countries were found to be in a special position, and there were some which actually claimed the existence of special obligations, frequently self-imposed. In a state of affairs when all countries are found to be in one way or another in a special position, owing to individual causes, the need for seeking some criterion which should be independent of subjective factors, causes no detriment to any State and by which no attempt in made to solve the insoluble problem of arriving at a general agreement for the alteration of existing relative forces becomes obvious. It is only the Soviet draft Convention, with its proposal for the proportional reduction of all armed forces, and deviations in favour of the smaller States only, that furnishes such a criterion.

The acceptance of the Soviet proposal for the proportional reduction of all armed forces and categories of armaments would, as already mentioned by me previously, have removed those differences between sea Powers which are at present blocking the work of the Preparatory Commission, and would obviate similar, if not still more acute, differences otherwise sure to arise in connection with the problems of land and air forces also.

To turn to another point, the work of the Commission along the lines which we are invited to pursue in the future does not convince the Soviet delegation that it is necessarily aimed at any reduction whatsoever of existing armaments. The Soviet delegation would consider, therefore, the introduction of clarity as to the general aims of the Preparatory Commission with regard to disarmament extremely apposite. Doubts on this point have been suggested both by the recent declarations of prominent statesmen and by the persistent use in the Preparatory Commission of the dual and equivocal phrase "limitation and reduction of armaments", and the proposed postponement of fixing disarmament figures until the Disarmament Conference itself. The term "limitation of armaments" does not signify the compulsory establishment of such limits as shall be lower than existing armaments, but admits of such limits as would not differ from those of now existing armaments, or even, by exceeding them, would leave room for the increase of armies, navies and war budgets. Such limitation would mean, not the diminution of armaments, but their preservation or even increase, and would in no way differ from attempted agreements made before the war, such as the one-time proposal for the establishment of a naval holiday between Great Britain and Germany and similar efforts. Such agreements have, of course, nothing in common with the task which the Soviet delegation would like to see the Preparatory Commission set itself, and would in no wise answer to the aspirations of the peoples of all countries towards the restoration, or at least the diminution, of the threats of war. If the authors and advocates of the Commission's draft Convention limit their task to agreements of this sort, it is easy to understand the opposition with which the Soviet draft Convention has met, differing as this Convention does from that of the Commission first and foremost in its provision for the immediate consideration of a coefficient for the reduction of armaments — in other words, for effective preparation for considerable disarmament in the very near future.

Such are the principal considerations which move the Soviet delegation to appeal once more to the Commission to revise the methods of its work, the defects of which must be obvious to all, and to enter the path recommended by the Soviet delegation. So far, the only objection to this path made in the Commission has been that it is new. The Soviet delegation does not, however, expect to meet here in the Commission a conservatism of thought which condemns everything new as unworthy of attention. I foresee here a formal reference from someone to the sacramental phrase, contained in the resolution passed at the fifth session, as to the necessity for going on in the path already mapped out. But I think, gentlemen, you will not deny the right of any delegation to raise the question of the revision of decisions formerly passed by the Commission, especially when this is done after the lapse of a year and in the light of new facts and circumstances. Even at the fourth session, eighteen months ago, we characterised the "path mapped out" by the Commission as a blind alley. Nothing has happened between the fourth and fifth sessions to cause us to qualify this opinion. At the fifth session, however, certain delegates fancied that they saw a light and the Commission decided that there might be a way out of the blind alley. The ensuing year has proved this light to have been a mere will-of-the-wisp and the blind alley has become narrower than ever. It is therefore permissible to enquire whether it is worth while to persist further in the same direction, to go on wasting time and labour in trying to dig a way out of the blind alley, and whether it would not be at once more reasonable and economical to attempt to study the new path suggested by us, which is at least free from those obstacles which have encumbered the work of the Commission for two years. You are entitled to say that the Soviet delegation is also unable to guarantee an
unimpeded move along the path it suggests. In reply to this, I would say that the only
obstacle, in this regard, can be reluctance on the part of other Governments to carry out
disarmament and that, if such reluctance exists, any work of the Commission must be a foredoomed
failure. The Soviet draft Convention, however, possesses the advantage that, by proposing
the same degree of disarmament to almost all States, it makes it difficult — nay, impossible —
for any Government to refuse to disarm on the plea of detriment caused by disarmament to
the specific interests of its country. The President, in stating yesterday the necessity for
accelerating the work of the Commission, referred to the increasing impatience of workers'
organisations demanding the speedy realisation of disarmament. If the President considered
this movement a powerful factor in the matter of disarmament, the Soviet delegation would
be the first to agree with him. This movement will, however, admittedly gain in strength
if the Commission employs such methods as will help to expose the hypocrisy and baselessness
of the references of any Government to pretended national interests said to prevent its country
from disarming in the same measure as agreed upon by other States.

Finally, the demand of the Soviet delegation for the revision of the methods of the
Commission, and for consideration of actual questions of disarmament, finds an added and
fresh justification in those events which have taken place during the last twelve months, that
is, in the interval of time which has elapsed since the fifth session. I am thinking of the increased
threats of war, for one thing. We referred to this as long ago as the fourth session of the
Commission, but these threats were not perhaps then so pronounced and so apparent to all as
they are now. They are by no means the invention of the Soviet delegation. I do not want
to lengthen my speech and tax your attention, but I could, if desired, quote any number of
recent pronouncements by responsible statesmen, outside the Soviet Union, by Members of
Parliament and Senators, and give numerous extracts from the Press testifying to the growth
of alarm during the last twelve months. This fact alone should suffice to stimulate our efforts
for thespeediest possible realisation of disarmament.

On the other hand, a new and favourable situation for disarmament has been created during
this year by the increase of that security to which the League of Nations and the Preparatory
Commission has always attributed such great importance. The Kellogg Pact for the renunciation
of war as an instrument of national policy has become a fact. Owing to the initiative and
special efforts of the Soviet Government, this Pact has already come into force in the relations
between eight States, and precisely in that part of Europe which was considered to be under
the greatest menace of war. The Kellogg Pact, it is true, has not yet become compulsory
between all its participants, on account of its non-ratification by one State, but this obstacle
is certain to be removed or overcome somehow or other in the near future. I am by no means
inclined to over-estimate the value, as guarantees of peace, of international agreements in
general or the Kellogg Pact in particular. I cannot ignore the numerous infringements of
international agreements during the past, but am nevertheless unable to approve of the repeated
tries of certain statesmen to minimise the importance of the Kellogg Pact as compared with
similar international agreements the more that such attempts are inspired by aims which
have nothing in common with the preservation of peace. Indeed, it is to be feared that these attempts are made with a view to creating extenuating circumstances for possible infringement of the Pact for the outlawry of war, or to weaken its
importance as a starting-point in the demand for disarmament. I fail to see why the Kellogg
Pact for the outlawry of war should be less binding for all its participants and present less
guarantee of security than, for instance, the Locarno Agreements, the so-called guarantee
treaties, recommended by the League of Nations, or any other international agreements. The
Preparatory Disarmament Commission, considering, as it does, safety guarantees as essential
for the realisation of disarmament, should draw the proper conclusion from this. As for the
Soviet delegation, it has already considered, and still considers, general and complete
disarmament to be the most effective guarantee of peace in the present conditions. The draft
Convention for such complete disarmament was unfortunately rejected by the Preparatory
Commission, and the Soviet delegation can only advance it again at the International Disarmament
Conference, if ever convoked. At the same time, the Soviet delegation advances a draft
Convention for proportional and progressive reduction of all armaments, which would immediately
diminish the menace of war to a considerable extent and might become a stage for further
disarmament. It is this draft Convention that I recommend to the attention of the sixth
session of the Preparatory Commission, supporting the proposal for its being placed first on
the agenda, but not merely for its rejection on formal grounds, out of fear of its novelty and
devotion to the old paths, even when these are erroneous, but for its detailed study and the
consideration of its contents. I am profoundly convinced that nothing but the acceptance of
such a proposal can lead the Commission out of its difficulties, recompense it for time and work
spent in vain and bring about a recognition that the Preparatory Commission has at last really
taken up the question of disarmament.

The President. — I merely wish to say a word in reply to M. Litvinoff. As President
of the Commission, I was and am compelled to act in conformity with the decisions adopted
by the Commission. I had therefore, obviously, to say that we would continue our work
on the lines already mapped out. There is no doubt that the Commission is entirely free to
alter its method of work; in spite of M. Litvinoff's observations, it is free to decide that
his proposals are not in conformity with our Draft; it is also free to take the Soviet proposals as
a basis for its work. But it was my duty to remind the Commission of the decisions which it

[Image 0x0 to 472x837]
previously adopted, and the suggestions which I ventured to make yesterday were based entirely on these decisions.

Count Bernstorff (Germany). — If I have misunderstood you, sir, I beg to apologise. The reason is that I must have misinterpreted a sentence in your speech. You stated: “I did not convene the meeting for this date because I considered that the time had now come to take a second reading of the whole of the draft Convention drawn up at the first reading.” I now understand that we shall immediately begin a second reading of this Draft, after the Soviet proposals are discussed, provided, that is, that these are not accepted. We shall pass to this second reading with the idea that we are here to prepare for the Disarmament Conference and to map out a programme for the Conference. I accordingly do not see why the agenda did not simply say: “Consideration of the Proposal of the Soviet Delegation and Second Reading of the Draft Convention.”

I am well aware that we cannot compel Governments to do what they are unwilling to do. Such, of course, is not my intention, but, whenever during this second reading we reach one of these points on which Governments say it is impossible for them to take a decision for some reason or other, it will be our duty to try to find a way to help Governments to settle problems which at present appear to them insoluble.

If I have now understood you aright, sir, I think that we are in complete agreement—that is, we shall proceed, if the Soviet proposals are not accepted, to the second reading of the draft Convention.

The President. — I think we are now agreed. Obviously, we shall undertake the second reading in accordance with the suggestion which I made yesterday.

Tevfik Rougby Bey (Turkey). — Mr. President, — We must, of course, proceed to the second reading during the present session of the Commission. If, however, we are not to be confronted with inevitable difficulties due to a divergence of views, I think it would be desirable during the second reading to proceed in turn to a general examination of the Drafts submitted, more particularly those by the Soviet, Chinese and Turkish delegations. It would then be desirable to discuss the points which were held over at the first reading.

In this way we think it would be possible to expedite the work of the Commission and to obtain those tangible results which are rightly being looked for by public opinion throughout the world.

General Tsiang Tsoping (China). — This meeting of the Disarmament Commission is based on the hopes and real wishes not only of the Governments but of the peoples of the world. It is therefore very important that the work we have in hand should lead to far-reaching results. Our object is to achieve real disarmament, for in no other way can permanent peace be obtained. For this reason, the Chinese delegation, on behalf of the Chinese National Government, has submitted a draft amendment proposing the abolition of the system of universal compulsory military service, which the Chinese delegation holds is of fundamental importance in the question of disarmament and is the key to the whole problem. Disarmament means not only the limitation or reduction of armaments; its ultimate aim is the disarmament of the hearts of the people; it means the discarding of everything which may be conducive to the spirit of war.

The system of universal compulsory military service, which engenders in the mind of the people a warlike spirit, and the system of militaristic nationalism are contrary to the spirit of the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament and unless this question is dealt with and a solution found, I dare say there will never be any results from the labour of this Commission.

This question has already been brought before the Commission, and I understand that many difficulties have arisen, and opposition has come from many sides. But these are things of the past. I am convinced that, this time, the proposal of the Chinese delegation will be accepted by the Commission, because, since the conclusion of the multilateral Pact for the outlawry of war, the international situation has changed considerably, or is changing. In this Pact, the nations of the world, through their Governments speaking in the names of their peoples, solemnly condemn war as the enemy of civilisation and of mankind, and have solemnly undertaken not to use war for the settlement of international conflicts, or as an instrument of national policy in their mutual relations.

The Chinese proposal, which is fundamental to the question of disarmament, is therefore a subject which we cannot discuss without having an opportunity of bringing up the whole problem. I understand, from the remarks of the President and of various delegations, that it is not likely that any second reading of the draft Convention will take place at this session. If there is not going to be any second reading, then I wish that the Chinese proposal may be brought forward first for discussion, as an item which has not been decided upon in the first reading. I do not believe that the Commission can afford to disregard this question as, by doing so, it would disappoint the wishes of the peoples of many lands, and the members of the Commission would be held responsible for this disappointment.

The President. — We have three proposals on which to decide—the Soviet proposal, the Chinese proposal and the Turkish proposal, which will be communicated to you this afternoon.

As regards the Chinese proposal, you will no doubt agree with me in thinking that it might be discussed in connection with the effective of land forces. As regards the Soviet proposal, M. Litvinoff has proposed that the Commission should examine it independently of the question whether it is or is not in conformity with the 1927 Draft. I would therefore ask the Commission
to decide whether it wishes to examine the Soviet delegation’s Draft, in order to see whether it could form a suitable basis for our work in place of the 1927 Draft.

Personally, I see no objection to the consideration of the Soviet Draft, but it is for the Commission to decide. I should be very glad to hear the Commission’s views.

Count Bernstorff (Germany).—As I have already said, I quite agree that we should begin by examining the Soviet proposal, that we should then proceed with the Turkish proposal, and should finally discuss the Chinese proposal, as you state, in conjunction with the question of land forces.

I may add that we agree that the observations which I had the honour to lay before the Commission recently should also be discussed with the question of land forces.

I should like, however, to say quite definitely that, in our opinion, it is absolutely necessary to begin with a study of the effectives, and then to proceed to that of material. We think these questions the most important.

I must therefore ask the President whether he proposes to keep us at Geneva until we have exhaustively discussed the whole programme that he has laid before us. I myself do not think that we can leave Geneva before we have found a solution for these two questions of effectives and material. I therefore make a definite proposal that we should begin by studying both points, since the others should be easily solved if we have reached an agreement on these two.

Lord Cushendun (British Empire).—Mr. President, all I want to say on this point is this: I entirely agree with the agenda as proposed by you. I agree with Mr. Gibson that it is a very scientific arrangement and, I think, will prove wholly satisfactory, but I would like to make sure that it is not to be too rigid. By that I mean that, as we proceed with our discussion, it might prove convenient to postpone or to alter the order of some of the items, and, while accepting the agenda as a whole, I would like to reserve the right to suggest the postponement of some particular item or a rearrangement of the order.

The President.—I quite agree with Lord Cushendun. My intention was that the Commission should reserve a certain degree of freedom and should not adopt a procedure as rigid as that referred to. In particular, we agree that it may adopt an order different from that which I indicated.

M. Massigli (France).—Having considered all the difficulties, the President has proposed an agenda which should lead us gradually from the less difficult to the more difficult points. This seems to me a very wise course and, like Lord Cushendun, I wholly agree to it. It is understood that we are free at any time to change the order that has been fixed and, if it seems desirable, to study one point before another.

The President.—In order to settle this question, I propose that we take an immediate decision upon the point.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics).—I want it to be made clear what is meant by this agenda. If we suppose that the Soviet draft Convention is accepted, of course it is quite superfluous to go on with the second reading of the Commission’s draft Convention; it is therefore illogical to put into an agenda items dealing with the same matter, which exclude each other.

Count Bernstorff (Germany).—I think the majority of the members of the Commission will accept the President’s suggestion, on the understanding that, as Lord Cushendun has just said, the programme may be changed in the course of discussion. That is practically what I myself ask. What we want to ensure is that the essential questions are thoroughly investigated. If that is done, we are satisfied.

The President.—I may tell Count Bernstorff that we are in agreement, and we have now only to take a decision on M. Litvinoff’s proposal. Is it the Commission’s desire to examine the Soviet Draft, to see whether it can form a useful basis for our work instead of the Draft of 1927? I propose that the Commission should give its decision by the method of rising or remaining seated.

Lord Cushendun (British Empire).—I would like to say that I do not think it is quite clear to the Commission what you are asking us to vote on, and that there is a good deal of doubt as to what is indicated by voting for or against.

Count Bernstorff (Germany).—Will there be a discussion on the Soviet proposal.

The President.—What I am asking is that a vote should be taken on the question whether the Soviet Draft is to be examined to see if it can be used as a basis for discussion.

M. Markovitch (Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes).—I do not quite understand on what we are to vote. If we accept the agenda proposed by the President, it is implicitly understood that we have to discuss the Soviet proposal, which forms the first item of that agenda. I therefore do not see the use of voting on the particular point whether the Soviet delegation’sDraft is to be examined or not, and, above all, I cannot see what the consequences of a positive or negative vote will be. Does a positive vote in favour of as complete an examination as possible mean that the 1927 Draft is to be abandoned? My proposal is that we should not vote at all, but should simply adopt the agenda proposed by the President,
which begins with an examination of the Soviet proposals. Each delegate is free to consider the Soviet Draft in his own way, and to give his opinion on it.

The final vote would not be taken until after the discussion, and would decide whether the Commission considers that the Soviet proposals are to be rejected outright, whether they are to be taken as a basis of discussion in place of the 1927 Draft, or whether we should reach a compromise by taking a few useful points from the Soviet proposals and introducing them in the 1927 Draft.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — I would ask the honourable delegate who has just spoken to consider the difficulties of the Soviet delegation. If, as he proposed, we vote on the agenda as a whole, including the Soviet proposals and the second reading of the Commission's Draft, I myself will not know whether to stand up or remain seated; since there is no middle position known! If I stand up, I shall be voting for the second reading of the draft Convention which presupposes the rejection of my own proposals; if I remain seated, I vote for the rejection of my own proposals, which form the first item of the proposed agenda. I therefore suggest the agenda be put to the vote not as a whole, but point by point. The first thing to decide is whether we are going to proceed to the consideration of the Soviet Draft. We can limit ourselves to-day to this vote. If the Soviet proposal is rejected, we can then decide what other points should be placed on the agenda.

Dr. Riddell (Canada). — I move that we adhere to the President's original proposal, which includes the whole agenda and gives equal attention to all the subjects on it. I think we may assume that we shall deal justly with all the proposals that come before us if we adhere to the President's original proposal.

M. Zumeta (Venezuela). — I second that proposal.

The President. — I therefore propose that we should take a decision on the whole of the agenda, as I had already ventured to suggest. In this way you will, of course, be deciding primarily whether the Soviet Draft is to be discussed or not. Obviously, too, if this Draft is discussed and adopted, there will be no need to proceed with the subsequent points of the agenda.

The Hon. Hugh Gibson (United States of America). — When the proposed agenda was laid before us, it seemed to me very simple and clear. I confess it is only since it has been so elaborately explained that I have become completely confused. I assume we are asked to vote on whether the agenda proposed by the President is accepted or rejected as a whole. Obviously, if it is adopted as a whole, the Soviet proposals will come up for consideration. Am I correct in that?

The President. — Yes, that is how the question stands. After all the observations that have been made, I think there is no need for a formal vote and that it is agreed to accept the agenda which I proposed yesterday.

The draft agenda submitted by the President was adopted.

(The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.)

THIRD MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held at Geneva on Wednesday, April 17th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).

5. Statement by the Turkish Delegate regarding the Turkish Proposal on Disarmament.

The President. — Gentlemen, we will now deal with the first item on our agenda, but, before doing so, I will call upon Rouchdy Bey to make a statement on behalf of the Turkish Government.

Tevfik Rouchdy Bey (Turkey). — Gentlemen, I do not know if you have already had an opportunity of perusing the observations which I had the honour to communicate to the Commission. In any case, I do not intend to go into details at the moment or to enlarge upon the proposals. I will reserve this until it comes up for discussion.

There is one essential point, however, to which I desire to draw the Commission's special attention. In regard to the limitation and reduction of armaments, the principle underlying the Turkish proposal is altogether different from that of the systems based on proportional reduction; consequently, the acceptance of a system providing for a proportional reduction of armaments,
however gradual, and even if this system takes into account to the very least extent the necessity of the legitimate defence of States, would amount to an automatic rejection of the Turkish proposal without previous examination.

Such a result would mean that this proposal was denied fair treatment, to which all proposals concerning the problem of disarmament submitted to the Commission are entitled. The adoption of such a procedure is certainly not be recommended in view of the importance of the work upon which we are engaged.

I therefore request the Commission to be good enough to insert the examination of the Turkish proposal in its agenda and thus ensure its examination and discussion in due course.

The President. — The Commission will, I am sure, agree to the discussion of the Turkish proposal in due course, and when the time comes all the points coming within the competence of the Preparatory Commission will receive due consideration.

6. Statement by the Persian Delegate concerning the Special Situation of his Country regarding the Disarmament Question.

Hussein Khan Ala (Persia). — Mr. President, allow me, in the first place, to thank you for the kind words regarding my country spoken two days ago.

Persia, which is participating for the first time in the important work of this Commission, will co-operate wholeheartedly in this work.

I therefore think it advisable to explain at once, and as briefly as possible, the position of my country and the views of my Government with regard to the reduction and limitation of armaments.

It is recognised in Article 8 of the Covenant that each country, because of its geographical situation alone, has its special problems, which must be taken into account.

Persia has particular grounds for invoking the provisions of this article, for it has at all times been the meeting-place of Eastern and Western nations. Its territory, which has frequently been threatened and invaded from the east and west, was not spared during the great war. The belligerents fought on its soil notwithstanding its declaration of neutrality, and several of its most fertile provinces were completely devastated. The only reply of the combatants to Persia's emphatic protests was an official statement that, as the Persian national army was too small, it was impossible for them to evacuate Persian territory.

These deplorable circumstances induced us after the war, and as a result of the downfall of the oppressive regimes of our neighbours, to stabilise our political and financial situation. To-day we only ask for peace to enable us to proceed with our economic development and to carry out social reforms without danger.

With this object in view, we have signed regional pacts of neutrality and security with certain of our neighbours; we at once adhered to the Briand-Kellogg Pact, and have just signed the Litvinoff Protocol.

In carrying out its eminently pacific programme, Persia needs, in the first place, to maintain order and tranquillity within a vast country which does not yet enjoy rapid means of communication and whose area exceeds 1,600,000 square kilometers. It must also guarantee respect for its frontiers and extensive coast-line.

As already explained by our first delegate to the plenary meeting of the League Assembly on September 26th, 1927, the existing forces at our disposal are still far below the lowest number compatible with national security and the execution of our international obligations, more especially as the cavalry contingents, hitherto furnished by our tribes for the purpose of guarding our frontiers, are gradually being reduced as they are disarmed. This cavalry of the military frontiers, the number of which is considerable, was unable, owing to lack of modern weapons, to be of any real assistance in maintaining our neutrality during the world war. Accordingly, my Government has proceeded to organise, during the last few years, at the cost of heavy financial sacrifices, a modern and well-trained army to take the place of these heterogeneous forces, for the sole purpose of defence.

In view, therefore, of Persia's peculiar situation, and bearing in mind that the provisions of Article 16 of the League Covenant, concerning mutual assistance to countries victims of aggression, have not yet been put into application, it seems to me only right that the military forces of countries with small effectives and a low war potential should correspond to their requirements for defence and security.

The President. — The Commission will take note of the very interesting communication of the honourable delegate of Persia.


M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — I would ask the President to allow my colleague, M. Langovoy, to submit comments on the Soviet delegation's draft Convention.

The President. — I authorise M. Langovoy to address the meeting.

M. Langovoy (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — Mr. President, in his speech yesterday, the Chairman of the Soviet delegation had an opportunity of explaining the general features of the Soviet delegation's draft for the reduction of armaments. This will enable me to shorten my introductory observations to a certain extent. I need only recall briefly
the indisputable advantage offered by the Soviet delegation's draft as compared with the 1927 Draft. This advantage consists in the fact it is a concrete proposal and that, instead of giving a mechanical enumeration of the subjects with which the Disarmament Conference ought to deal, it makes perfectly clear proposals both as regards the methods to be followed and the numerical coefficients for the reduction of armaments.

It thus gives flesh and blood to what was only a skeleton outline in the 1927 Draft. The Soviet delegation fully realises that the concrete figures indicated will be disputed in the course of the discussion and that proposals will be made to substitute other figures for them. I think it particularly necessary to emphasise the fact that the figures given in the draft have no absolute value and that they merely represent the Soviet delegation's desire that the reduction of armaments may bring about a substantial change in the present situation — that is to say, that the burden of militarism and the dangers of war will be appreciably lessened.

The draft is based upon the following principles:

In submitting its draft for the reduction of armaments after its proposal for the complete abolition of armaments had been rejected, the Soviet delegation sees no reason to discuss the limitation of armaments, since the impossibility or the insuperable technical difficulties of reduction have never been proved. For these reasons, the Soviet Draft is permeated throughout by the governing idea of reducing armaments and not legalising them by limitation, all the more so because we observe the tendency on the part of certain Powers to provide for an increase in their own armaments by fixing the limit at a very high level. To reduce, therefore, and not to limit, is the first and basic principle of the Soviet delegation's draft.

This reduction is effected in the Soviet draft by means of a proportional diminution in all the categories of the armed forces of the individual States. We admit the possibility of a relatively smaller reduction in the armaments of the lesser countries, seeing that such armaments have no aggressive character and do not constitute any serious menace to the cause of peace. Accordingly, the reduction contemplated in the Soviet draft affects the armaments capable of rapid increase of large countries, those which are most deeply imbued with militarist ideas.

A great many military specialists assembled here will probably agree with us in thinking that all the constituent elements of armaments, within the territory of a given country, are purely defensive if these armaments are absolutely without power of mobility or can only be rendered mobile after a considerable lapse of time, and that various types of armaments — for example, warships with a limited radius of action — are essentially defensive in character. On the other hand, there is no doubt that certain categories of armaments, such as long-range artillery and aircraft, which are intended specially for use against objectives in enemy territory, are essentially aggressive in character. While recognising that no clear delimitation between defensive and offensive armaments can logically be established in the terminology of armaments, I must say, in the first place, that devices for defence against chemical warfare, or means of individual defence against such warfare, may be regarded as coming under defensive armaments, and, that in the present stage of development, we must regard as aggressive armaments the various technical appliances which are not at the disposal of non-industrial countries which have not reached a high level of production, and which, accordingly, are only available for the armies of the imperialist Powers. The desire above all to abolish offensive armaments, while leaving essentially defensive armaments in existence as a matter of necessity — that is the third principle in the Soviet draft.

We have more than once heard it said in this place that some particular measure for the reduction of armaments would make it difficult to wage war, thus making any such measure inadmissible. I must state in the most categorical fashion that any measure which would relax, even to the slightest extent, the increasing tension of the post-war atmosphere and retard, however little, the renewal of further hideous slaughter would be regarded by us as an immense success, as a real victory for the public opinion of the masses. We must accordingly, from the outset, ignore the reproaches directed against us for not taking into account the necessities of war. The Soviet delegation desires further to take advantage of this opportunity to declare that it is in favour of the organisation of peace, but that it is opposed to any means whatever of facilitating war.

Allow me now to pass to the consideration and explanation of the Soviet draft, article by article.

The basic ideas of the first part of Chapter I of the Soviet draft consists, in the first place, of the system of progressive and proportional reduction of armaments, all States being divided for the purpose into three groups (Articles 1 and 2), and, secondly, the proposal for the reduction of the trained reserves.

We attach very great importance to the proposal contained in the Soviet draft for the reduction of the trained reserves both by means of the diminution in each year-class of the total number of men who have received military training and of officers who have been given military preparation with or outside the army (by a reduction in the number of registered reservists and of reserve officers, and by a suitable diminution in the war material required to equip these reserves), and also by abolishing the public formations organised on a military basis, the object of which is to give the population military training.

Where supplementary measures of mobilisation are required to place these organisations on a war footing, the Soviet draft does not regard them as armed forces in active military service, but it nevertheless proposes that they should be disbanded in so far as they are a
means — a supplementary though very substantial means — of supplying those enormous reserves of men which are indispensable for the formidable armies maintained during war.

Articles 3 and 4 of the Soviet draft enumerate the elements which must be reduced in accordance with the coefficients given in Article 2. I must point out here that the Soviet Draft, in its desire to obtain the maximum useful effect for the cause of peace by means of this Convention, considers it necessary to bring under the Convention all the essential elements in existing armaments by reducing both the total number of the armed land forces and their various categories (regular troops, militia, organised reserves, etc.), troops in the home country and the colonies, the number of units, the number of officers, non-commissioned officers and other ranks, etc.

I now pass to the question of war material. The essential point of this question is naturally the proposal contained in the Soviet draft to retain as part of armaments the patterns of war material shown in the existing schedules (Article 6). By doing so, we put an end to the fever of modernising armaments which is observable at present and to the race to develop new military inventions which are dishonouring to mankind and the whole practical purpose of which is to break the latest record in the production of corpses.

Article 6 also proposes to abolish completely tanks and heavy artillery with a very long range, as such implements of warfare are essentially designed for aggression. We consider it necessary that this proposal should apply to long-range heavy artillery with a calibre of 204 millimetres and below.

The Soviet proposal for a direct reduction (direct, and not by a limitation of the corresponding expenditure) of war material, whether such material is in service in the units or in store or, in general, within the territory of a given country, supplies a concrete method which will enable us to determine the extreme limit which may be attained in war material, a point which is not found in any other plan for the reduction of armaments.

Allow me now to pass to Chapter II of the Soviet draft, which deals with the reduction of naval armaments.

We consider that our draft, in its naval section, attacks much more energetically and directly the reduction of armaments than the other proposals of this kind which have hitherto been put forward.

We propose to abolish the whole of the most aggressive class, that is to say, aircraft carriers; we only tolerate for a certain period the huge capital ships and we propose to replace them gradually by vessels of 10,000 tons. We have chosen this particular tonnage as a limit for the vessels of the future, because this figure was laid down in the Treaty of Versailles in the case of Germany, and was no doubt recognised by the victorious Powers as a figure which, while leaving countries the possibility of providing adequate means of defence for their coasts, nevertheless imposes a certain restriction on the powers of aggression afforded by the means of naval warfare. This limit of tonnage, combined with the further limits which we propose for other elements, allows of a certain flexibility which would enable Powers to choose some particular type of vessel according to their requirements. Indeed, the purely maritime Powers have found it possible to introduce into tonnage not far removed from this figure units such as ocean-going cruisers. States which are more particularly concerned in the protection of their own coasts can, while limiting the radius of action and the speed of these vessels, increase their means of defence and their artillery.

The method which we propose for the limiting of the tonnage of individual vessels (note to Article 16) definitely puts an end to any possibility of underhand evasion of the 10,000-ton limit, which is possible under the method for calculating the standard displacement laid down in the Treaty of Washington, by which cruisers with this standard displacement of 10,000 tons are, in reality, when fully loaded and equipped, of 14,000 tons and over.

Our method of calculation definitely puts an end to the possibility of creating a vessel of 10,000 tons which will be an offensive unit.

In many of our proposals for the limitation of the naval units of the future, we go further than the drafts which have hitherto been framed by other Powers. By limiting the calibre of the artillery, by abolishing aircraft carried on warships and by increasing the age-limit of vessels, we are aiming at weakening the destructive power of the means of naval warfare and at diminishing naval expenditure.

In proposing the immediate destruction of aircraft-carriers and the gradual replacement of the existing large, capital vessels by vessels of 10,000 tons, we intend to fix the time-limit within which the replacement should be made for the year 1942, a date laid down for certain Powers in the Washington replacement tables.

We do not think it possible to suggest that submarines should be abolished until the complete and general disarmament of all navies, because we recognise that this class of vessel is the weapon of the least powerful navies, with the reserve that restrictions are applied which would give this arm more of a defensive than an offensive character.

The recent proposal in the Anglo-French compromise is entirely in favour of a limitation of the tonnage of submarines to 600 tons, a figure which these two naval Powers regard as acceptable. Nevertheless, that compromise did not limit the number of such submarines, whereas we propose, not only to limit the tonnage of the individual submarines, but also to effect a notable reduction in the total strength.

We do not propose to limit the calibre of torpedoes on the above grounds, but we would not raise any objection if other Powers should ask that this should be done.

We have not spoken of a reduction in the personnel of the navies, because we consider that such a reduction is intimately connected with that of the vessels and that, consequently, a reduction of personnel is implied in our draft.
In Article 12, we propose a reduction in navies by taking as a point of departure the existing tonnage. As regards the relation between the size of the fleet and the strategical, geographical and other conditions of a given country, we must say that, in view of our experience of the futile attempts made by the Powers to agree on a universally acceptable interpretation of these conditions, we do not propose to base our plan on any figures of the nature of "prestige figures", "naval laws", "programmes of naval construction", etc.

Having regard to the possibility of doubt as to the meaning of Article 16 of our draft, we make the following addition:

"States which reduce their fleet according to the figures of global tonnage shall be entitled to replace their vessels by new vessels, without taking account of classes and categories, but without increasing the limits of tonnage allowed to the State in question."

When vessels are replaced on the expiration of their period of service, our Article 16 would require the application of the following methods.

States which reduce their navy by categories are entitled to construct, in the place of the large unit which is being discarded, several small vessels the dimensions of which do not exceed the limit of tonnage allowed for vessels of the given category. States which reduce their fleet by the global method will make the substitution by means of any vessel whatever within the limit of the units mentioned in Article 16, at a ton-for-ton rate.

In applying the two methods of reduction (by category and by the global method), we are proceeding logically. The application of "categories" to small navies is in fact impracticable, and certainly affects their interests too seriously. On the other hand, "categories" are convenient and natural in the case of large and regularly composed fleets, and do not prejudice their interests. The few insignificant advantages which this method would confer on the weaker navies, as compared with those given to navies carrying out their reduction by categories, will lead, with each replacement of old vessels by new vessels, to a constantly increasing diminution of the existing inequality.

Our plan does not indicate what sort of tons and what method (Washington "standard displacement" or our method of calculating displacement) should be used in computing the tonnage of the vessels mentioned in Article 12. We consider it is possible to calculate the tonnage of the existing vessels mentioned in that article according to the Washington "standard displacement", without, however, requiring that there should be applied to that article the note appended to our Article 16. This note deals with vessels which may be constructed in the future.

I will now pass to the chapter in the Soviet draft dealing with the reduction of air forces.

The general and extraordinarily rapid development of air armaments, the strengthening of the fighting power of the different kinds of aircraft, and their constantly increasing radius of action clearly prove how dangerous and destructive this form of armament is in the case of war, and how it is constantly extending the theatre of military operations, threatening with destruction not only objectives of purely military value, but also the centres of the economic and intellectual life of the belligerent countries.

The Soviet draft, in its endeavour to prevent these destructive activities and to lessen as far as it can the danger threatened to the pacific populations, bases its proposals for the reduction of air armaments on the renunciation of air forces which are essentially of an offensive character, and it regards as such, in the first place, bombing aeroplanes and dirigible airships.

In conformity with what has already been said, we propose to disarm all lighter-than-air military aircraft, and to limit the engine power of aeroplanes in such a way that this limitation may be a real obstacle to the development of aggressive air armaments.

It is for this reason that we are submitting a proposal to destroy air bombs and other means of destruction intended to be dropped from vessels of the air fleet, and that we are prohibiting their manufacture in the future or their retention in the military stores of the air forces.

The Soviet Draft also proposes to limit the reserves of aeroplanes and aeroplane engines, to such an extent that these reserves will only suffice to meet the requirements of the air forces in time of peace, and cannot be used as a means of illegally increasing the strength of the air forces. In connection with the reduction of the number of aeroplanes in service, we are providing for a reduction of aviation effectives, the number of which, with their subdivisions into main categories (pilots, specialists, etc.), would have to be laid down in a special convention, together with the division of all the air forces in accordance with their territorial distribution (home country, oversea territories). Having regard to the importance of the organised aviation industry as a fundamental basis for the development of military air forces, we propose to limit the manufacture of and the trade in military aeroplanes. This will be an effective guarantee for preserving the limits of armament laid down in the Convention.

Lastly, our proposals contemplate restrictions on the civil air fleet, in the sense that the design and equipment of civil aircraft must only be such as to meet the requirements of their pacific use.

These measures, taken as a whole, will greatly reduce the constantly increasing burden of expenditure for the maintenance and the development of air armaments, and will be a great step forward towards creating conditions which will guarantee the pacific co-existence of the peoples.

Chapter IV of the Soviet draft contains a proposal for the adaptation of industrial undertakings engaged in the manufacture of appliances or substances specially intended for
chemical and bacteriological warfare. The Soviet delegation naturally takes into account the possibility of civil chemical industries being rapidly transformed into war industries. But it considers that the destruction of the military chemical industry, combined with an undertaking accepted by all States not to have recourse in time of war to the chemical and bacteriological weapon, will constitute an indisputable and substantial advance on the present position. Article 44 of the Soviet draft, which proposes to establish control in undertakings engaged in the various branches of the chemical industry (in virtue of a decision of the Permanent International Commission of Control), gives the necessary guarantees for preventing the clandestine manufacture of chemical war material.

Chapter V of our draft, which deals with the reduction of military budgets, does not, in my opinion, call for any special explanation. The fundamental idea is to offer a supplementary guarantee for the reduction of armaments by a reduction of military budgets, which will certainly be an additional stimulus to apply the Convention and will also be a real expression of the progress which the Convention has brought about in alleviating the burden of taxation.

Gentlemen, I fully recognise that the short explanations which I have just given in regard to the Soviet draft Convention cannot possibly cover all the questions which may arise when you come to examine it.

I thought it desirable to abridge these explanations in my opening speech and I shall be only too happy to reply to any questions which you may care to put to me on the subject.

The President. — I have authorised M. Langovoy to make his statement at the request of M. Litvinoff, but it should be clearly understood that this cannot create a precedent. It has always been a custom in this Commission for the first delegate to speak on behalf of a delegation, or, in his absence, for his deputy to do so.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — The draft Convention which you are now considering has been before the delegates and their Governments for over a year, and no doubt the delegates have been instructed by their Governments with regard to this draft. However, it seems to me that the moment has not yet come for a detailed discussion of all the clauses of this draft Convention, seeing that the principal points have not yet been discussed. These points, if you will allow me to recapitulate, are:

1. The reduction — I should say the substantial reduction — of existing armaments.

2. The carrying out of reduction on proportional principles, with certain deviations in favour of less-protected and smaller countries.

3. The establishment at once of a coefficient for proportional reduction.

I should like to suggest, therefore, that the Commission should now concentrate on an exchange of views on these three cardinal points, by which, obviously, the draft Convention stands or falls.

M. Sato (Japan). — I should say first of all that, as representative of the Japanese Government, I realise my responsibility in discussing a disarmament scheme so important as that submitted by the Soviet delegation. It is my feeling of responsibility which prompts me to reply to the request made by my Soviet colleague that we should discuss this scheme immediately, and without going into details. To do otherwise would be to show a lack of courtesy towards a foreign Government with whom Japan entertains quite friendly relations. I therefore feel it my duty to submit to you the following observations:

We have before us a new scheme by the Soviet delegation, and I am obliged to say, after careful examination of the same, that there is still a considerable difference between his standpoint and mine.

Already at the fifth session of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference I had occasion to state my delegation's views, and to-day I venture to remind you of my attitude, based on Article 8 of the Covenant of the League, which constitutes the foundation of all our discussions. Paragraph 1 of Article 8 stipulates that "Members of the League recognise that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety ". This article most formally states that there exists a close connection between the question of the reduction of armaments and the existence of a certain degree of security. Consequently, all armaments necessary for the security of a State Member of the League are legitimate.

In estimating this security, we must necessarily take into account the political and geographical situation of each State. Paragraph 2 of Article 8 of the Covenant indicates this in terms which preclude all doubt. It says, indeed, that plans for such reduction shall be formulated "taking account of the geographical situation and circumstances of each State ". Moreover, in my opinion, the very notion of security is proper to each State. In a given set of circumstances or faced by a given political situation, each country will estimate in its own way the existing degree of security. When faced by one and the same event, each nation will react in a different manner according to its own political sensitiveness. Some countries will experience no feeling of insecurity, while others will hold that they are not in a state of security. These differences of opinion are due to the fact that the very notion of security is, by the nature of things, a personal notion proper to each country.

It therefore follows that a State cannot refuse another State the right to hold a different idea from its own as to the degree of security which affects it.
If this is a true picture of the situation, it seems to me hardly right to say that the already existing security enjoyed by all is sufficient to bring about a reduction of armaments by the application of an equal and specified proportion, of an impersonal mathematical coefficient.

If we now compare the present draft of the Soviet delegation for the reduction of armaments with the principles of the Covenant to which I have referred, we cannot help seeing that there are considerable differences between the two points of view. The Soviet plan starts from a mathematical and impersonal basis and operates with extreme rigidity; but for that very reason it does not take sufficiently into consideration — and this is very necessary — the element represented by the security of each country, an element which varies according to the geographical situation and special circumstances of each country. Moreover, this mathematical way of approaching the problem is no novelty to the League of Nations.

As far back as 1922, Lord Esher, one of the British delegates, laid before the Temporary Mixed Commission a plan which, as regards the particular point of a mathematical coefficient, has more than one point of resemblance to the present draft of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It is true that the British delegate’s plan only related to land forces and therefore fell far short of the draft now before us. Nevertheless, certain principles coming within the field common to both drafts are very similar. Both schemes start from the idea that the reduction of the armies existing in time of peace should be based on the number of effectives.

For this purpose, Lord Esher adopted as his unit a figure of 30,000 men, and proposed to classify the States in different categories and to allot to each a certain number of these units.

The plan was referred for examination to a special committee, and was rejected by that body, which held that any mathematical formula for the reduction of armaments would be useless because it would ignore the political factor, that is to say, the risks which every country would incur on account of its geographical situation and its special circumstances.

For that reason, among others, Lord Esher’s plan was not accepted either by the Permanent Advisory Commission or by the Temporary Mixed Commission. These reasons, however, which led to the rejection of the British delegate’s plan in 1922, appear to me equally applicable to the plan for the reduction of armaments put forward by the Soviet delegation. In my view, the question has already been fully considered by the League of Nations, and I think it would be very difficult to go back and revive all the discussions which have already taken place in regard to a plan which is based on the same fundamental principles as that of Lord Esher.

Moreover, this is not the only difficulty which makes it hard for us to accept the Soviet delegation’s scheme. The adoption of the Soviet plan necessarily involves the exact fixing of the forces which each of the high contracting parties is to be allowed to retain. This determination in precise figures, however, appears to me to go beyond the powers of our Commission, whose instructions are simply to prepare the technical structure of the future Convention for the Reduction of Armaments, leaving it to the Conference itself to fill in the exact figures in the columns which we shall have drawn up.

Moreover, the report of the Preparatory Commission to the Council on the work of its first session indicates that it is at the Conference itself that each Government will propose precise and quantitative figures, accompanied by justificatory arguments based on the security existing at the time when the Conference is called.

It is true that M. Litvinoff, in his speech yesterday, touched on this point and rejected the decision of the Preparatory Commission to which I have referred, as he regarded it as obsolete. In this connection, he claims for his delegation the right to raise the question of revising that decision. As far as I myself am concerned, I feel that, since that decision exists and so long as it is not amended, I am bound to conform to it, and as members of the Preparatory Commission we cannot depart from our instructions which have been laid down after careful examination.

To embark on the course proposed by the Soviet delegation would, in my opinion, be to trespass on the path of the future Disarmament Conference; and for my delegation that constitutes a difficulty which for the present it regards as insuperable.

In these circumstances, I venture to ask my honourable colleague, M. Litvinoff, if he could not see his way to take a further step to meet us. It would be sufficient for that purpose if the Soviet delegation would be good enough not to press at the present moment for the fixing of a precise figure for the effective and material of war, but to conform to the resolution which I have just mentioned, reserving this question for the future Disarmament Conference.

I trust that our colleague, M. Litvinoff, will see his way to give favourable consideration to this suggestion and so to facilitate an agreement which would mark an important stage on the road towards the reduction of armaments.

Count Bernstorff (Germany). — Mr. President, I am very much impressed by what was said just now by the honourable representative of Japan, and by the fact that he reminded us that the object of our present work is to prepare for the Conference on Disarmament, and that the great difficulties presented by the figures will not be solved by us but by the Conference.

I think if we had always kept that fact in mind, we should have considerably accelerated our work, because there are a great number of questions which will occupy much time, but which will be dealt with more rapidly if we remember that they are to be settled, not by us, but by the Conference; and we desire the Conference to be held as soon as possible.

I have some more brief observations to make on the Soviet delegation’s proposal.
I consider it an advantage, in view of the small success obtained at our previous proceedings, that we have had submitted to us proposals containing fresh ideas which we have not yet had an opportunity of studying. I hope these proposals will both stimulate and advance the work of the Commission.

In the course of its numerous sessions, our Commission has always been in danger of losing sight, after a time, of the object it had in view and of wandering away from that object. In place of the original idea, which was to bring about a big reduction in the heavy burden of general armaments, we are finding that other aims, much more modest — indeed, far too modest — are creeping in.

It must be admitted that since disarmament has been discussed armaments have often actually increased, and that the opportunity which was originally favourable for the establishment of a Convention on General Disarmament is in danger of being lost.

The Chancellor of the Reich indicated six months ago at Geneva the factors which, in Germany’s opinion, were essential for the first stage towards disarmament. I have already quoted these words, but I venture to remind you of them once more. The Chancellor spoke as follows:

“The first stage can and must involve an appreciable reduction of the present state of armaments — a reduction which must include all the elements of military, naval and air armaments, and a guarantee of full and entire publicity in respect of all classes of armaments.”

If I compare these basic conditions for the first stage of disarmament with the present proposals of the Soviet delegation, I notice the following: the Soviet proposals doubtless involve an appreciable reduction of the present state of armaments. They are also in conformity with the principle of military, naval and air disarmament, both from the point of view of the «Personnel» and of the «Materiel»; and, further, they guarantee us full and entire publicity in respect of all categories of armaments.

They tend to reduce the divergences which at present exist between armaments and to bring the States nearer to the levelling of armaments to which I have referred.

The Soviet proposals also take into account the protection of the civil population. I should like in particular to emphasise the prohibition of bombing from the air. That is an idea which I ventured to submit to the Commission in my recent observations (Annex 2).

The Soviet proposals more especially provide for the reduction or abolition of a number of important material elements of armaments which would seem capable of facilitating or favouring aggression.

I cannot, therefore, but feel that the aim to which the Soviet proposals are directed is identical with that which the Commission ought to hold up as its own aim.

As regards the method suggested in the Soviet proposals, it contains one idea which is particularly novel. The draft Convention drawn up by our Commission provides, as you know, that a general Conference on Disarmament should establish figures both for personnel and for war material. We all know that the negotiations which would be necessary in that case would encounter considerable difficulties. We should have to expect very complicated bargaining in regard to figures with a view to obtaining a Convention on Disarmament which would be acceptable to all.

As a means of avoiding these difficulties, the Soviet proposal involves, if I am interpreting it rightly, a new system and, in some respects, a mechanical system. It is to be hoped that such a system, after careful examination of the proposals in the Soviet draft, will meet with the approval of our Commission. This revision should also tend to give greater flexibility to, and to perfect, the system laid down in the Soviet proposal, which is perhaps somewhat too rigid, so that we should provide greater elasticity and thus make it possible to obtain a better equilibrium between armaments.

By proceeding in this way, we should be affording valuable assistance in preparing for the Disarmament Conference. I think, therefore, that we ought, in the first place, to direct our attention to this basic principle of the Soviet proposals.

As the Commission is aware, my co-operation in the discussions at Geneva has always been based on the methods of work which the Commission has hitherto adopted.

The observations I have laid before you in the last few days are also based on these methods. Nevertheless, if I consider it desirable to make a careful examination of the Soviet proposals, it is because I think we ought to take into account any useful suggestions which may be offered to us, and because, in my opinion, it is not so much the method which is of importance as the aim to be attained, that is to say, an appreciable reduction of armaments.

M. VALDÉS-MENDEVILLE (Chile). — My sole desire is in all impartiality to afford my small assistance in throwing light upon and helping the progress of the discussion and the examination of the draft. We have, I think, to take into account considerations of three kinds, relating to procedure, the practical organisation of work and the main question itself.

As regards procedure, I cannot forget that yesterday we adopted the agenda proposed by the President, subject only to a reservation in regard to a possible change in the order of the questions. After reminding you that in its resolution the Commission said that the work should be carried on along the lines already laid down, the President added that we should have to determine in the first place whether the Soviet draft was or was not in accordance with our draft of 1927.

It was said yesterday that, since the matter before us related to a resolution of the Commission, the Commission could itself change it. So far, however, it has not been done so. Indeed,
I question whether it has the right to do so in view of the resolution of the Assembly and of the Council empowering us to continue on the course already begun.

I admit that this resolution should be modified, and this brings me to the matter of practical considerations. The very important draft which we are studying involves a solution which might be described as of a "surgical" character. In view of the complex nature of the malady, I think it would be only logical to call the doctors to a consultation on a large scale. In other words, we should have to have the draft studied, since the author wishes it to be carefully examined by a technical organ which would be of the type of our Sub-Commission A. That would amount to retracing our steps in order to enter upon a new road. The technical work involved might prove lengthy and, if a result were long in forthcoming, we should certainly be bitterly blamed for having departed from the known course and for having steered our vessel into an uncharted sea. Moreover, in the meantime, other proposals might arise which might lead us to abandon this second course and enter upon a third. Such frequent changes would certainly not be conducive to attaining the object we have in view.

As regards the fundamental considerations, I quite agree with what M. Sato has said. I, too, think that the system in the Soviet draft conflicts with Article 8, paragraph 2, of the Covenant, since it divides the countries into groups according to the forces which they maintain, irrespective of the geographical situation and special circumstances of each, as is laid down in Article 8, paragraph 2, of the Covenant.

In conclusion, I will merely say that it has always been in virtue of that article that our delegation, which is entitled to regard it as fundamental, has reminded the Commission more than once of the situation of a new country like Chile, in view of her geographical position in the South American continent and also of her rapid and evergrowing economic development.

M. Massigli (France). — Mr. President, you yourself and other speakers have referred to the resolution adopted by the Commission last year when it laid down the principle that it should continue to follow the course upon which it had already embarked.

M. Sato has also explained very lucidly the legal situation in which we stand, and has shown that our terms of reference do not permit us to examine the substance of the Soviet delegation's proposal.

I am sure, however, that, desirous as we all are to expedite our work as far as possible, we should not hesitate, and we should not hesitate now, to recommend the Council, from whom we hold our powers, to sanction a change of method if, having studied this Soviet Draft as we have done for a year past, we have become convinced that it offered a practical basis for a solution of the problem. It is, at any rate, in that spirit that the French delegation has examined the Soviet delegation's draft and that I venture to put before you the conclusions it has reached.

We were told yesterday that the Soviet draft would enable us to gain time; it was represented to us as a kind of magic formula that would dispel the obstacles which confronted us and would enable us to advance rapidly along the path mapped out.

But I am not at all convinced by this argument. No doubt the Soviet draft lays down a very simple principle: armaments are to be reduced by a mathematically determined proportion. But how, then, are they to be limited? For that, no solution at all is proposed. We are referred to special conventions. How are the effective to be limited? Article 4 says that a special convention is to be concluded. How is material to be limited? According to Article 10, there is to be a special convention once more. How is tonnage to be limited? According to Article 13, a special convention again. How are the air forces to be limited? According to Article 29, there is again to be a special convention.

Then, again, is the reduction of effective to be actually realised? In this connection I am uneasy on account of an observation which I see at the end of Article 1. Here, again, we are told there is to be a special convention for the purpose of determining:

"The numbers of the police forces organised on a military basis, gendarmerie, Customs corps, train corps, forest corps and other armed corps organised for the needs of the Customs preventive service, for the maintenance of order within the country and for the protection of Government and public property."

That is a very wide programme, and in countries where all property is State property it might have very far-reaching effects.

I quite understand that, as is stated at the end of the draft, these special conventions must be concluded within three months after the coming into force of the main Convention; but can we believe that any Government would sign and implement the main Convention without knowing what commitments it would have to undertake under the special conventions?

What is really proposed is a change of method. What we wanted was to establish a scheme and fill in the figures afterwards, but it is now proposed that we should fix the figures and then establish the scheme. It may be a rapid method, but surely it is putting the cart before the horse, and, if that is so, I am not at all sure that the draft offered to us will be a means of gaining time. Moreover, is it possible to go rapidly in view of the difficulties of the problem? Is it those which we must examine. Let us see, then, the practical conclusions of the system proposed to us.

This system — it is a simple one — consists in dividing the countries into a certain number of classes and allotting to each a mathematical coefficient of reduction. I will endeavour to show you the actual results which will follow from the adoption of this method.

In the first place, the military forces of a State will be fixed without regard to its neighbours. In this way, two States at opposite ends of Europe will be placed in the same category, while, on the other hand, two neighbouring States may be placed in different categories. But there
is another and more important point. We are told that tie percentages are only given as a matter of indication and that they may be revised or modified. Nevertheless, any mathematical method presupposes a mathematical starting-point, and, since categories are established, a classification based upon figures.

Let us take two hypothetical States. The first has an armed force of 210,000 men; the second has 180,000. The first, coming under the first category, finds its army reduced to half, i.e., it keeps 105,000 men. The other State, which belongs to the second category, has its army reduced by one-third only. It will thus have 120,000 men. A result such as this, whereby the stronger becomes the weaker, may be just, but not on mathematical grounds.

And now let us take two States belonging to the same category. One of these has perhaps already made a great effort to reduce its armaments and has perhaps reached its minimum. The other has made no such effort, yet, all the same, it is automatically reduced in the same proportion. Is that just?

Let us take another example. There are three categories of armaments for each State. It may quite possibly happen that for financial reasons, or on account of its geographical situation, a State may concentrate upon one form of armament and neglect the others. It may, for example, have reached the indispensable minimum as regards its navy, but have developed its land armaments to an extent which would allow of reduction. Yet, according to the system proposed to us, it will have to reduce the three categories.

In truth, I find it hard to believe that a system of this kind can offer any serious practical possibilities. I find it hard to believe that we can ignore the fact that a State's armaments taken together constitute a single whole. We ourselves have not ignored it, and so we decided from the outset of the Preparatory Commission's work that the countries would bring to the Disarmament Conference proposals with definite figures which they would have to justify, in view of their requirements and of their situation.

I say "situation", because geography is a reality. We do not live above the earth, and we must take the situation of countries into account. Let us suppose you have two countries with identical forces. One has extensive and open frontiers: its vital centres, its industries, are all situated near the frontier. Another has strong natural defences, and its vital centres and industries are far from the frontier. It has time, and consequently space, in its favour. In fixing the armaments of these two States, ought we not to take these different situations into account? Have we any right to apply mathematics and mathematics alone? I cannot think so, and I venture to say that the Commission has not thought so either.

I have every respect for the work of experts. Sometimes, it is true, they do not reach any practical result; but at other times they are unanimous. We had a Commission of experts — Sub-Commission A. It submitted to us an important report, the conclusions of which, I must add, were not unanimous — far from it, unfortunately. Nevertheless, there were some points on which the experts were unanimous — at any rate, there was one to which I call your attention. It is true that the Soviet delegation was not represented. The point in question is this very matter of mathematical comparisons. Our experts are unanimous in telling us — you will find it on pages 37-38 of their report — that mathematical comparisons are impossible. I confess that I cannot find in the Soviet proposal any adequate reasons for departing from that conclusion. I will retain it, therefore, and I prefer for the moment — in order to proceed with greater speed — to abide by the bases of our own draft.

As regards the question raised by our colleague of Chile, namely, whether we ought to decide forthwith to accept or reject the Soviet draft or to submit it to a technical investigation, I prefer to reserve my judgment on that point until I have heard the views of other delegates.

(The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.)

FOURTH MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held at Geneva on Wednesday, April 17th, 1929, at 4.30 p.m.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).


M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — This morning's exchange of views, in which unfortunately a very small number of delegates took part, did not, in my opinion, yield any arguments whatsoever giving grounds for the rejection of our draft Convention or for the discontinuation of the discussion of it. General statements as to the advantage of moving along well-beaten tracks rather than seeking out new ways and routes can scarcely be admitted as serious arguments. Such considerations may be raised in any society or
political organisation when discussing any question or any new proposal. Of course, investigation through well-tried channels may guarantee comparative tranquillity for the work of the Preparatory Commission, but, as the President told us in his opening statement, the sensation of tranquillity and ease is by no means shared by the peoples in all countries, feeling the keenest interest in disarmament. I do not know how tranquil are the people of Chile, a country which is geographically far from us, whose representative to-day spoke against our draft Convention, but I can assure him that the peoples of Europe and other continents are far from basking in a sense of tranquillity.

It would not have been difficult to foresee the remarks we have heard to-day. Indeed, I anticipated them in the statement I made yesterday. The same remarks had been expressed at the fourth and fifth sessions of the Commission in connection with our draft Convention for complete disarmament. I trust the authors of these remarks will pardon me if I say that to-day they sounded even less convincing than a year ago. Then there was still some hope of finding a way out of the situation created in the Commission, some hope that the path mapped out would lead the Commission somewhere, hope nourished by suggestions that the obstacles in that path might soon be removed. Then we were invited to make one more effort, to which the Commission willingly agreed, this effort consisting in patient inactivity. But who would now venture thus to bid us hope? Who will assure us that there are real grounds to expect the disappearance of these obstacles, or mention even an approximate term, or name the means by which our Commission could help to bring about this desirable consummation? And yet, as I have repeatedly pointed out, no one can erase from my mind the profound conviction that the greatest obstacles in the path mapped out are still a long way ahead and that, if the Commission will not find the courage to approach them, the Disarmament Conference will be unable to avoid them.

The gist of the remarks made by the honourable representatives both for Japan and France and also, probably, shared by other opponents of our draft Convention, who may or may not express their opinions, consists in the fact that, in disarming, we must be ruled by the specific means for security of each State individually. This idea in a more consistent and vivid form has been expressed here in the Commission by M. Sato, who declared that each State should decide for itself the question of the conditions of its security, and consequently, the rates of disarmament corresponding to these conditions. But this is exactly the state of affairs which at present exists. Surely no one suspects any State of maintaining and financing greater military, naval and other forces than it considers to be necessary for its security! It would seem to follow, then, from M. Sato's words, that nothing is required except to perpetuate the status quo. Logically speaking, the exponent of such ideas ought to object even to the limitation of armaments, since if any State, owing to changing circumstances, decides that the defence of its security demands an increase of its armaments, it cannot admit, being itself the best judge of this, interference in its decision from other States or from international organs. By following up this train of ideas, the Commission must inevitably end in giving up the thought of disarmament and even of the limitation of arms.

I do not mean that I think M. Sato is wrong. Taking into consideration the present international position — this period through which we are living of imperialistic capitalism — and the political and economic antagonisms existing between States, the division of these States into various groupings, coalitions and alliances, one would need to be a confirmed optimist, nay, a Utopian dreamer, to admit that any State would allow other States, or even any international organisation, to estimate the degree of its security and the scope of the means required for its defence.

Taking my standpoint, however, from the perfectly correct ideas of M. Sato, I arrive at a different conclusion as to the impossibility of solving the problem of disarmament by subjective methods or criteria. M. Sato is infallibly led to the conclusion of the impossibility of disarmament on an international scale, but I draw the conclusion hence of the necessity of finding such a common criterion as will not infringe the security of any State. Such a criterion can only be furnished by an impartial mathematical criterion and the principle of proportionality.

Indeed, when our draft Convention for complete disarmament was being discussed, I said a man felt safer among unarmed men than surrounded by armed neighbours. This is true of States as well, and that is why I believe the utmost security is that offered by complete disarmament. Admitting, however, for a time, the preservation of armaments, a State cannot but reckon what the degree of its neighbours' armaments are in estimating its own security. It increases its own armed forces according to the increase of its neighbours' armed forces, and hence it can and must diminish them according to the reduction of armaments in surrounding States. A general reduction of armaments on the same principle and proportion would seem to me in no wise to infringe the security of any State. Such a principle can only be furnished by an impartial mathematical criterion and the principle of proportionality.

The representative of France endeavoured to criticise separate and less essential clauses of our draft Convention. I am well aware of the fact that our draft Convention is imperfect and capable of improvement, and I therefore welcome any remarks or proposals. If France considers a Disarmament Convention cannot be signed until a Convention for police, Customs, forest and other guards has been concluded, I agree willingly to the formation of a special committee for the study of this question and the working out of a supplementary Convention to be signed together with the other. M. Massigli also expressed the fear that the various coefficients proposed by us might alter the relation of the forces between individual States,
while the numerical strength of the armed forces in one State might exceed that in another, which had formerly been stronger as regards armed forces. This is theoretically of course, quite possible, but if M. Massigli takes the trouble to compare the assumed results of the reductions proposed by us in relation to all existing countries he will see the baselessness of his fears. He will also see that the figures of 200,000 and 40,000 have not been taken by us at random but have been selected precisely because they involve no alteration of the relation of forces such as he fears.

I think I have exhausted all the objections expressed by delegates to-day. It may be picturesque to describe our proposals as an attempt to put the cart before the horse, but it disproves nothing. What we really suggest is to unharvest horses which are too weak and feeble to drag the cart of our Commission. This cart has got stuck in one place, and we propose bringing fresh horses to get it out of the rut and set it going at last along the road to disarmament. Some speakers tried to alarm us by suggesting the possibility of new proposals, and seemed to be aghast at the idea of having to study these and work them out. Personally, I should welcome any new proposal which pointed the way to the aim we have set ourselves. But why engage in metaphysics? Actually there is only one proposal, the Soviet draft Convention. Rejecting it you will be practically going nowhere, for you will be at a standstill, remaining just where the old path led you two years ago. The question before the Commission is, ought it to prepare for a Disarmament Conference or ought it to go on doing nothing? Some delegates have produced as an _ultima ratio_ arguments founded upon references to mandates, prohibitions, etc. Without wishing to enter into a controversy with them on this ground, I would limit my remarks to the baselessness of these references. I would myself refer to the United States delegate who stated at the first session of the Commission that the Commission itself could propose figures for disarmament to the Governments.

A proposal was made here to-day to transfer the question to a Commission of Experts. This proposal would be comprehensible if our draft Convention was introduced here for the first time, but as a matter of fact it was put before the Commission thirteen months ago and recommended at the fifth session to all Governments for study; and must have been mastered by all delegations and their military experts, so it seems to us a proposal for transfer to a Commission is superfluous and out of date. It can only be of use to set up a Sub-Commission for the settlement of differences which might arise with regard to details, after the discussion of the principal articles of the Convention and their acceptance in principle. As I remarked this morning, the Commission ought first of all to express its opinion on the basic principles of our proposal: Does it desire to recognise the necessity of reducing armaments and to base such reduction on the proportional principle, establishing now numerical coefficients for the reduction of armaments? These are questions of a political and not a military character. And if the Commission really desires to make a step forward, it ought not to hesitate to give a clear and unequivocal reply to them.

M. Sato (Japan). — Sir, I desire to add a few words to my observations of this morning.

In the first place, I am most grateful to the Soviet delegate for the consideration he has been good enough to give my observations and for attributing so much importance to them. It is indeed only by making criticisms that one can advance the discussion of any question, and for that reason we may congratulate ourselves on the speech which M. Litvinoff has just delivered.

I must now say a few words about the question of security, so as to dispel a misunderstanding which might arise in consequence of M. Litvinoff's reply.

M. Litvinoff said quite correctly that security exists at the present moment and that it does enable us to proceed with disarmament up to a certain point. I quite agree; I never sought to deny that security does exist at the present moment. After the war, owing to the efforts made by many countries and owing, above all, to the action of the League of Nations, an atmosphere was created which was particularly favourable to international security. If that security did not exist, we should not have been able to assemble here and hold tranquil discussions on a question so vital as disarmament. This security may serve as a stepping-stone to disarmament and enable it ultimately to be attained.

When I said this morning that security was an individual and subjective idea, I wished to convey that it was an idea which varied in different countries, thus making it impossible to accept a measure of disarmament uniformly applicable to every country.

Thus my Government has never objected to taking part in the Disarmament Conference on the ground of the present state of security. Nevertheless, we cannot accept the idea of adopting a given coefficient which would apply equally to everybody. As I have already said, every country has its own subjective conception of security, and therefore the coefficient must vary according to the circumstances and the peculiar situation of the different countries.

That is what I wished to convey in my remarks this morning and I hope that any misunderstanding has now been removed. I would repeat that my own country has never refused, and never will refuse, to do its part in bringing about a substantial measure of disarmament as early as possible. But it is quite possible that some country which at the present moment could only agree to disarm to a modest extent, because it does not feel that its security is quite adequate, may later on — say in two years' time — when it feels more secure, announce that it is prepared for a much larger measure of disarmament.

In short, what we are aiming at is progressive disarmament. We all wish the Disarmament Conference to meet at an early date; but we also consider that this Disarmament Conference,
though it will be the first, cannot be the last, because the countries will not all be prepared to disarm on a very extensive scale at the first Conference. Later on, perhaps in five or six years, they will have a clearer view of the new situation thus created, and, as security will have increased, they will be able to go further in the direction of disarmament.

As I have the opportunity of addressing you, I wish to add a few words on the question of the second reading, a term to which Count Bernstorff seems to attach great importance.

To be frank, I do not attach the same importance as the delegate of Germany to the words "first reading" or "second reading". It is quite open for us to say—and I think the President took that view—that it is a continuation of the first reading. These are technical terms drawn from parliamentary practice. I must ask your indulgence in discussing them, as I have never been a Member of Parliament, and am therefore imperfectly qualified to discuss technical points of parliamentary usage; what I mean is that these expressions—"first reading", "second reading", "third reading"—form part of parliamentary terminology and are very possibly not used in the same sense in every Parliament. In this Commission, we have never tried to define them; we have never laid down that in the first reading we would proceed up to a certain stage and no further, and that then we should take the second reading, in which we should be able to take such-and-such action but no more, etc. Therefore, in the present stage of our work, it is equally correct to describe our discussions as the continuation of the first reading, or, as Count Bernstorff desires, as the "second reading".

The important point in reality is that we are going to embark on a second discussion of all questions which were left in suspense—call it a "second reading" if you wish; I have no objection. But we must not cherish any illusion that this second reading will suffice to clear up all the questions which we have not yet settled. There will perhaps be a third reading of the questions which are most difficult of solution; I should not be surprised if there were even a fourth reading.

The aim to which the Preparatory Commission should concentrate all its efforts is to reach an agreed text which we can then submit to the Disarmament Conference. When that is done, our task in the Conference itself will be greatly facilitated. I sincerely hope that this moment will not long be delayed, because—as the President told us yesterday—public opinion will not allow us to postpone much longer a solution of the disarmament problem. We shall therefore go to the plenary Conference and bring with us an agreed text; we shall submit figures supported by all the necessary evidence, and, with those figures before us, we shall endeavour to come to an agreement, being duly regardful of the requirements of the several countries.

The President. — After listening to the speeches which have been made, and although several delegates have not spoken, I have a very clear impression—and I am convinced that M. Litvinoff himself shares it—that the immense majority of our Commission is not prepared to discard its former method of work and to accept the Soviet scheme en bloc for its discussions. It is manifest—and I trust that the Soviet delegation recognises that it is so—that, if we resume our work on the lines already mapped out, the Soviet delegation will always be free to propose amendments and to re-submit a large part of the ideas embodied in its draft. In these circumstances, I consider—and I hope that once more M. Litvinoff agrees—that it would be useless and unnecessary for the Commission to vote.

I merely propose to note what I have just said, and to proceed with our agenda.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — I have no doubt our President has means of knowing the opinions and desires of the various delegations. I myself do not know what the various delegations think about our proposals, with the exception of those whose representatives spoke to-day in the Commission. I know that the representatives of Japan, of Chile and of France have expressed themselves as against our proposals. On the other hand, the representative of Germany has spoken very eloquently in favour of our proposals. What the other delegations think of our proposals I do not know, but it is, of course, of some interest, not only to myself, but to the rest of the world. I think generally we should do a great service to the cause of disarmament and the cause of peace if we accepted as a rule that all the Governments represented in the Commission should take responsibility individually for each decision arrived at here, and should be deprived of the possibility of sheltering themselves behind the anonymity of the Commission. I think it is important for the President to afford an opportunity for every delegation to express itself in one way or another on the points raised by the Soviet delegation.

On one point I agree with the President: I shall not insist that this vote be taken to-day. I have no objection to postponing it until the meeting to-morrow, but I should like to have some definite decision of the Commission itself based upon the expressed opinions of the various delegations here present.

The President. — If I rightly understand, M. Litvinoff desires a vote to be taken. I had hoped to avoid the necessity.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — It need not necessarily be a vote by saying yes or no; I would prefer that my colleagues should state their views.

The President. — I venture to point out to M. Litvinoff that it is impossible for me to compel any member of this Commission to express his views otherwise than by yes or no.
The formula on which I will ask you to vote reads as follows:

"Does the Commission desire to accept the proposal of the Soviet delegation as a basis of discussion for our preparatory work in place of the Draft of 1927?"

Tevfik Rouchoy Bey (Turkey). — Sir, we have already had the honour to submit the Turkish proposals on the problem of disarmament. We believe that our plan is practical and at the same time very simple.

We are also of opinion that the Soviet draft contains very interesting and very valuable principles affecting the problem of disarmament, and that it is therefore very desirable to study it carefully before proceeding to examine the draft Convention prepared by the Commission.

You now ask us whether we desire to accept the Soviet draft as a basis for our discussion. As far as we are concerned, we consider that the three drafts should be examined in succession: the Soviet draft, the Turkish draft and the draft Convention prepared by the Commission.

The President. — Allow me to remind you that the Soviet proposals have been under consideration for a year, and that the Governments have had time to examine them thoroughly; whereas the Turkish scheme was only communicated to us yesterday. It will, of course, be studied in the same way as the others.

Tevfik Bey (Turkey). — I am only anxious to point out that the examination of the Soviet draft does not exclude that of other drafts.

The President. — I entirely agree.

Count Bernstorff (Germany). — I also consider that I could not vote yes or no, because, in my view, the Soviet scheme contains some very useful and interesting proposals.

It is not my intention, as head of the German delegation, to ask the Commission to change the method on which it has been working for some time past. Indeed, my colleague M. Sato reproached me just now for insisting too rigidly on the necessity for adhering to the course mapped out at our last session. If I declared myself in favour of a second reading, it was because the Commission had already decided on a second reading and because I felt that it ought not to alter its method.

Although, for these reasons, I do not wish to change our method of procedure, I think that we cannot reject the Soviet proposals en bloc, since they contain a number of excellent features.

The President. — The situation appears to me perfectly clear. I told M. Litvinoff just now in so many words that the Soviet draft manifestly contains many ideas which will be of great value to us, and which can be discussed in the form of amendments such as the Soviet delegation will be free to submit if it thinks fit.

I am therefore entirely in agreement with Count Bernstorff. But what I propose is to decide whether or not we are going to take the Soviet proposals as the basis of our discussion in place of the draft which we have already adopted at the first reading.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — I wish to attempt to dissipate one more misunderstanding, mostly for the benefit of the Turkish delegation. That delegation seems to be under the impression that the proposals I have made in some way compete with the proposals of the Turkish delegation or with the Commission's draft Convention of 1927. That is not so. The Turkish delegation has not introduced any draft Convention. The proposals they have made are not embodied in a definite technical form. They have only put forward certain principles which can be embodied either in the draft Convention of the Soviet delegation or in any other draft Convention accepted by the General Conference on Disarmament. Of course, when a second reading is spoken of, it is not meant to deal with figures, or with any coefficient of disarmament such as is put forward in the proposal of the Turkish delegation; the principles which have been formulated by the Turkish delegation can only be embodied in our draft Convention or in the Convention considered at the General International Conference, and not here. So it seems to me that, by rejecting the Soviet draft Convention as a basis, we shall make it impossible also to discuss or accept the proposal of the Turkish delegation, because that deals also with certain figures and with certain coefficients. That is the first thing I want to make clear.

Then, new misunderstandings may arise from the use of the words "acceptance or rejection of the Soviet draft Convention en bloc". Certainly we do not propose the acceptance en bloc of the whole Soviet draft Convention. If the Commission finds that our proposals contain good ideas, what I ask you to do is just to deal with these ideas one by one, accepting some and rejecting the others; but in order to do this we must discuss our draft Convention, and consider it article by article. But for the moment I do not even insist on that. I have singled out three definite cardinal principles on which I should like the Commission to express itself. If these three principles are rejected, the Soviet delegation will be the first to oppose any reading whatsoever of its proposals, for it would be quite useless. Therefore I venture to suggest that the principles which we have enumerated many times should be put to the vote one after another:

First, is the Commission in favour of expressing itself on the necessity for reduction of armaments, not for their limitation but for their reduction?

Secondly, does it think it necessary to base this reduction on the principle of proportion?
Thirdly, is the Commission ready now, before the Conference, to establish a certain arithmetical coefficient for that reduction?

If these principles are accepted, then the way is clear for the further study of our proposals. If these three principles are rejected, then our proposals fall.

The President. — What M. Litvinoff has just said creates a new situation, and in order to avoid all confusion or misunderstandings I think it will be better, before taking any decision, to ask M. Litvinoff, to communicate to the Bureau the exact text of the formula which he has just submitted. We can then decide to-morrow how best to deal with it.

(The meeting rose at 6 p.m.)

FIFTH MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held at Geneva on Thursday, April 18th, 1929, at 3.30 p.m.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).


The President. — M. Litvinoff has submitted to the Commission the following draft resolution:

"The Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, desirous of defining with the utmost precision the task before it, which consists in the preparation for the speediest and most efficient solution of the problem of disarmament, "Resolves:

"(1) To base the draft Convention to be proposed to the Disarmament Conference upon the principle of the appreciable reduction of existing armed forces; "(2) To embody in the draft Convention methods of reducing armaments based upon the proportional principle, or a similar impartial criterion, to be applied equally to all States, with certain deviations in favour of smaller and insufficiently protected States only; "(3) To include in the draft Convention numerical coefficients for the reduction of armaments."

Tevfik Rouchdy Bey (Turkey). — After hearing a number of speeches yesterday, we find ourselves confronted with a definite formula in regard to which the President has asked us to express our views, in order to clear the ground before the second reading of the draft Convention of 1927.

The Turkish delegation considers that, without clearly defining the fundamental differences between the Soviet draft and the 1927 Draft, a vote given by the Commission would not be clear to public opinion, which is insufficiently informed, and might thus give rise to erroneous interpretations. These substantial differences would not, of course, escape the notice of the delegates assembled here, and the Governments which we represent would certainly not fail to understand what we have done in voting for or against the Soviet draft. I consider, however, that the interest aroused throughout the world by the work of this Commission makes it incumbent on us to enlighten public opinion by a full discussion of the real object of the vote which we are called upon to register.

It is with this intention that I now venture to lay before you briefly the reasons for which the Turkish delegation, which also has a proposal to put before the Commission, could not, without contradicting its real attitude, take part in a vote on a previous question.

In point of fact, the draft which is under consideration and the Soviet draft possess many points in common, in regard to which there would be no object in the Commission deciding one way or the other now, as the points in question are generally accepted matters of principle and clauses which could perfectly well be reconciled with one another or which might serve to supplement one another in the interests of greater clearness and precision. There is, for example, the introductory part of the scheme, in which the definitions given constitute matters of scientific terminology rather than issues of principle or subtleties of conception. In regard to the whole of these clauses, it is obviously undesirable for the Commission to pronounce itself outright in favour of one text to the exclusion of the other.

As regards the substance of the matter, we consider that, as the reduction of national armaments is the starting-point indicated by the Covenant and recognised by all those who have agreed to sit on this Commission, it is essential first to distinguish between the different bases which have been discussed suggested in the course of our deliberations. A primary distinction must be made between reduction by individual measures and reduction by joint
collective measures. In the application of individual measures of reduction, there appears to be a choice between two solutions:

1. The first is to leave each State to determine the coefficient of reduction compatible with its security requirements.

2. The second is to take, in regard to each State, a collective decision fixing the coefficient of reduction to be imposed on that State, according to its security requirements as assessed and defined by this decision.

Or again, there is the possibility of a simultaneous application of both these methods. The first solution, while it may be suited to limitation, does not appear capable of leading to a reduction of armaments, because undoubtedly, if the Governments were left free to determine their own security requirements, they would not be able to effect any change in the situation, since we have evidence to show that, save in the case of imperious need, there can be no question at present of inserting in the budgets of any State the smallest expenditure for the upkeep of forces, already extremely costly, above what is judged necessary. Accordingly, the Governments, driven by the strongest possible incentive—the desire to reduce their own budgets—have already arrived at the maximum possible restriction of expenditure, and they could not go beyond those limits unless some collective system imposed this necessity upon them and at the same time afforded them an opportunity of reducing their sense of insecurity.

The second solution is hardly more feasible than the first. How, indeed, could it be left to a group of States to determine the security requirements of any one of their number, and to lay down for that State a coefficient by a decision, no matter how reasoned the decision might be? Such a procedure would, moreover, be extremely dangerous, since, owing to the complicated interplay of political combinations between States, decisions inspired simply by common aims and ambitions might produce results which would be exactly the opposite of those we have in view.

Of the two solutions, while the first might perhaps be tolerated by some, simply with the object, as it were, of setting disarmament in motion, the second could never be contemplated in any circumstances, or even discussed as a possibility.

Having thus pointed out the possible, and even probable, consequences of individual reductions, whether on the basis of unilateral assessment or of collective decision, it now remains for us to make a rapid survey of common reductions as a basis for disarmament.

In this connection, we are confronted with various proposals. The proportional system laid down in the Soviet draft is based in substance on reduction by joint decision. This, however, is not the fundamental difference between the two schemes on which the President desired the Commission to vote.

The question at issue is really whether the Commission intends to take, as a basis for the reduction of armaments, some objective criterion such as the proportional principle recommended in the Soviet draft or the system of equalisation suggested by the Turkish delegation, or, indeed, any other definite or concrete basis, or whether, on the other hand, it desires to adhere to the subjective criterion proposed in the draft now before the Commission.

It does not seem to us that world opinion in order to come to any decision as regards this distinction, is in possession of the adequate material that only an ample discussion of this question could really furnish.

If the Commission rejects the Soviet proposal—or its ideas condensed into the draft resolution submitted by M. Litvinoff—that does not mean that it would be refusing to accept the proportional system as a basis for reduction, but that it would be refusing to accept an objective criterion of any description.

It seems to us clear beyond doubt that, even if, as the President has assured us will be the case, the Commission gives us an opportunity of defending our disarmament proposals at length, our vote on the Soviet draft would nevertheless imply—and this without adequate study—the rejection of any objective criterion on which these proposals are based.

The principles of proportionalism and of equalisation necessarily come within this category, and they are not the only principles which belong to that category. Our duty is to go thoroughly into the question and then to take a decision with full knowledge of the case.

The honourable delegate of Japan reminded us yesterday that the fixing of the coefficient and of the figures was a matter for the Conference. If the application of a system of reduction which has been merely sketched out in the abstract is to be left to the Conference, why should not the same apply to the choice of the actual criterion?

For our part, we consider that the only result of such a procedure would be that, when the Disarmament Conference meets, it would have to appoint a special committee to study the questions of criteria and figures—and no resolution has ever been passed which need prevent the Preparatory Commission from setting about and completing this task itself. On the contrary, we think that such a discussion would be of the greatest utility in the Commission, because, according to whether an objective or a subjective criterion is adopted as a basis for reduction, international supervision would assume a character which, in the one case, might be useful or merely tolerable or, in the other, might be essentially injurious. During the second reading of the 1927 Draft, the clauses referring to international supervision will automatically involve the question of a criterion, so that there is every reason why this should be properly elucidated beforehand.

However, if the Commission considers it right to abstain from such a discussion and to leave the matter to the Conference, we should be prepared to agree to this procedure provided that no previous question be voted on here, and that the Turkish suggestions are examined.
and form the subject of a decision before the Disarmament Conference meets, together with the questions of a criterion and coefficients with which they are intimately bound up.

M. LITVINOFF (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — I will not take up your time, gentlemen, by new speeches, because it seems to me that the Soviet delegation has thoroughly expounded its point of view. I will therefore, in the fewest possible words, explain the aim and meaning of the resolution proposed by us.

By the first point of the resolution we should like to get the Commission to state definitely, in the hearing of all, that it is preparing a scheme for the Disarmament Conference providing, not for the further increase of armaments, but for the reduction of existing armaments. It is essential that there should be clarity introduced into this question. It is essential that public opinion as a whole should at last know what the Preparatory Commission, now holding its sixth session, is really engaged upon. The Commission ought at least to show some justification of its title in which the word “disarmament” figures. Limitation of armaments is not disarmament. A reply in the negative to the first point of our resolution should have, as its logical consequence, the alteration of the title of the Commission and the future Conference. Replies should, of course, be unequivocal, leaving no loophole for those voting against it to say that they are really for the reduction of armaments all the same. The voting should reflect the real opinion of the Governments represented on the Commission, which have had plenty of time to take a definite decision on this question.

Naturally, not every reduction of armaments would be a justification of the work of the Commission and of the Disarmament Conference and correspond to the demands of the masses of the people as a means for diminishing the menace of war and lightening the burden of militarism. The Soviet delegation, which proposed last year, and will go on proposing in the future, complete and general disarmament, can only be satisfied with a substantial reduction of armaments, which will be really tangible for the people of all countries and will relieve the tense atmosphere of the present international situation.

The second point deals with the methods of reducing armaments which the Preparatory Commission should propose to the Disarmament Conference. I can only think of the following three methods for the reduction of armaments:

First, the individual method, by which each State decides for itself whether it can disarm and to what extent. I dwelt in particular on this method in my statement yesterday, referring to the idea developed here by the representative of Japan and other delegates. This method would appear to render superfluous the convocation of any Conference whatsoever and, consequently, the work of the Preparatory Commission also, since in the last resort everything is decided by the State alone without any general international plan for the reduction of armaments. This method does not even allow for the limitation of armaments.

The next method consists in the Preparatory Commission or International Conference imposing on each State separately, either quite arbitrarily, or based upon certain considerations which must themselves be more or less arbitrary, the level of armed forces to be maintained. I doubt whether any persons — still less States — would be found to believe in the possibility of such an impartial and just international organisation, to whose judgment they could submit the care of their security. This method is, by the way, being applied in the negotiations on naval agreement between Great Britain, France and the United States, with the results which we know — and here it should be borne in mind that it is not even a question of reduction of armaments, but merely of the limitation of individual types of vessels. But what might, after all, be the dream of the leaders in negotiations between several countries is condemned to absolute failure when agreement between sixty States is necessary. This method also obviously leads to the complete bankruptcy of the problem of disarmament.

The third method is the application of a quite definite fixed-in-advance impartial general criterion, to be applied to all States, maintaining the preservation of the existing relation of forces and, consequently, offering no detriment to the interests of any country. It is this that the Soviet delegation recommends as the only practicable method and the only one capable of leading to the solution of the problem of disarmament. This method is capable of various expressions, practically speaking. The Soviet delegation selected that based upon the proportional principle. Not, however, wishing to bind the Commission by this aspect of the general criterion, taking into consideration the possibility of newer proposals in this sphere — such, for instance, as that already presented by the Turkish delegation — the Soviet delegation worded the corresponding points in its resolution in a manner enabling to vote for it all those who see the necessity for a general criterion but who do not wish to pledge themselves in advance to the proportional principle.

It is, however, insufficient to establish a method for the reduction of armaments — a decision must also be taken as to the degree of such a reduction. Reduction may be carried out proportionately by fifty per cent, as the Soviet delegation proposes with regard to the great Powers, or by less. The Soviet delegation proposes that this numerical coefficient, or a corresponding formula for the reduction of armaments, should find a place in the draft Convention to be prepared for the Conference. This is the most important point in the problem of disarmament, capable of evoking the greatest controversies. In our opinion, this controversy should be concentrated in the Preparatory Commission if we desire the coming Disarmament Conference to take a final decision. There can be not the slightest doubt that, if the Preparatory Commission does not take up this question, the Conference — which will consist of representatives of about sixty States — will be unable to come to a decision. M. Sato, it is true, yesterday consolde us with the possibility of a regular series of Disarmament Conferences, after the example of the sessions of the Preparatory Commission. It goes without
saying, however, that International Conferences cannot follow each other as quickly as sessions of the Preparatory Commission and thus the prospect held out by M. Sato would probably take a whole generation, even if only the first stage on the way to disarmament were to be carried out. Anybody who does not care for such a prospect and wants to see disarmament realised as soon as possible, in accordance with the demands of the people of all countries, will, of course, vote for this point of our resolution. I think, however, that no International Conference will be able, owing to its dimensions and structure, to engage upon such questions as the establishment of a general coefficient unless it has before it definite proposals which have already passed through some Commission. Thus, even at the best, the Disarmament Conference would have to set up a new Preparatory Commission for the study of this question and the working out of proposals. All those who have the matter of disarmament at heart, and wish its realisation accelerated, will express their opinion that this question should be taken up by the present Preparatory Commission now.

These, gentlemen, are the fundamental principles on which the Soviet delegation proposes that the Preparatory Commission should base its further work.

This, of course, signifies an extension of the scope of the Commission's work, but it signifies also entering upon the path of real preparation for the solution of the problem of disarmament, the preparation of the material for the future Disarmament Conference, absolutely essential for its successful dealing with the problem. Only given such an extension of the programme of the work of the Commission will it be possible to carry out those new proposals which have been brought before the Commission already, such as the Chinese and Turkish proposals, and also others sure to be presented in the future — a fact which we should not allow to alarm us. I should here like to answer briefly my colleague of the Turkish delegation. Unfortunately, I was late and could only hear his last remarks, but I gathered that he wished to say that, by accepting the second part of the Soviet resolution, the Commission would reject the Turkish proposal. I think the opposite is true — that, if the second part of the resolution proposed by the Soviet delegation is rejected, it will not be possible to examine the proposal of the Turkish delegation. On the contrary, if this second part is accepted, the Turkish delegation would be able to bring forward for discussion its own proposal.

The rejection of our three principles and the rigid continuance in what is usually known here as the path mapped out would convert the Commission into a mere technical organ engaged upon drawing up lists of all existing and possible sorts of armaments, without any actual knowledge of the aims for which they are prepared.

Sincerely desiring to co-operate with the other members of the Commission, I refrained in my resolution from including any new points capable of evoking controversy and therefore reduced the introductory part of the resolution to a minimum. As for the technical question of the method of voting, I should like to propose that all three questions be placed before the delegates separately and not the whole resolution en bloc. It is easy to imagine that some of the delegates voting for one of our principles might be against the others. The results of this voting would, however, define the character of the Commission's work, and be equally useful both while considering the Soviet draft Convention and in the case of proceeding to the second reading of the 1927 draft Convention.

Briefly expressed, this vote will mean for or against disarmament.

M. ANTONIADE (Roumania). — I entirely agree with what my Czechoslovak colleague has just said. I consider that an enquiry by the Bureau is very necessary and indeed essential. The three points proposed by the Soviet delegation have been very skilfully drafted and it would be impossible for us to take a vote on each of them without every delegation entering into a detailed explanation of the reasons for its vote. That would involve a discussion which might easily be prolonged indefinitely. Therefore, having regard to the methods and competence of this Commission, I think that the Bureau would greatly facilitate the task of the delegations if it would act as my Czechoslovak colleague has proposed, and thus avoid the necessity for
the delegates having to explain their interpretations and restrictions in regard to each point raised by the Soviet delegation.

MUNIR BEY (Turkey). — If I understood my Czechoslovak colleague rightly he said that, unlike the Turkish delegation, he considered that there was much in the Soviet proposals which deserved our attention. I think that he is under a misapprehension, for the Turkish delegation made no such statement; on the contrary, it said that it considered that there were a great many principles and points of detail in the Soviet proposals which were worthy of our consideration.

M. SATO (Japan). — I stated my attitude with regard to the Soviet proposals yesterday, and fully explained the reasons for it.

We now have before us a fresh proposal by the Czechoslovak delegate, which appears to me very well advised and very reasonable. I think it would be advisable, therefore, for the Bureau to give us an opinion to-morrow in the light of which we shall be able to vote. I accordingly support M. Fierlinger's proposal.

General de MARINIS (Italy). — I am not opposed to the proposal which has just been made by the honourable delegate of Czechoslovakia, but I desire to reply clearly to M. Litvinoff's invitation and to state my views in regard to the draft resolution submitted by him. I must begin by expressing my satisfaction at the fact that the Soviet delegation did not insist upon obtaining a simple affirmative or negative answer to its three points. A reply of that kind, instead of throwing light upon our respective views, would, I fear, have led to a great deal of misunderstanding. To-day we have a draft resolution before us; although it contains the same points, it will enable us to give replies which will not be liable to misinterpretation. I will therefore endeavour to give my views as briefly as possible, in order to avoid repeating what I have already said so many times.

Let us take the first of M. Litvinoff's points, which is to base the draft Convention upon the principle of the appreciable reduction of existing armed forces. To that question I reply clearly Yes! I have already made it clear in statements before this Commission that the Italian Government was prepared a priori to accept a scheme for the reduction of armaments even to the lowest figures, provided that such figures were accepted and applied by all other countries on the Continent of Europe. This means that we are in favour, not only of a limitation, but also of a reduction, of armaments, and even of a very considerable reduction of armaments. But, of course, we make our attitude conditional upon the attitude of other countries. That is my reply to the first point and I maintain that it is in strict conformity with Article 8 of the Covenant.

In the second point of the Soviet draft resolution we are asked to adopt "methods of reducing armaments based upon the proportional principle or a similar impartial criterion". In this connection, it should be clearly explained whether the "proportional principle" is to imply the use of certain mathematical coefficients for the existing armaments of the various countries. If so, I must ask how it is proposed to avoid the very serious difficulty pointed out yesterday by the honourable delegate of France, who drew attention to the obvious injustice of any automatic reduction applied in the same ratio to a country which has already made a considerable effort, and may possibly have reached the minimum, and to another country which has as yet not made this effort.

The Soviet proposal refers to the proportional principle or "a similar impartial criterion" but I would like to ask what is the criterion and what is meant by the word "impartial"? Does it mean a conscientious and equitable — in short, an "impartial" — examination of the circumstances of each country, or does it mean the application of a common ratio independently of the situation of each country?

If the word "impartial" is to be used in the second sense, as appears to be the intention, it appears to me to be a purely arbitrary criterion, for true impartiality necessarily implies that you are going to take account of the real requirements and needs of each individual country. I do not see how it is possible, therefore, to apply criteria which would exclude completely the right of a Government to take into consideration the very complex factors which affect its individual security.

As regards the third point, I entirely agree with what was said yesterday by M. Sato, that we must leave it to the future Conference to fix the numerical coefficients for the reduction of armaments.

The President. — A question of a preliminary character has been raised by M. Fierlinger, Czechoslovak delegate, and I think it is necessary to interrupt the debate in order to take the opinion of the Commission with regard to it. The proposal has been made that the Bureau should give an opinion in regard to the question of how far this Commission is competent to give a decision on the Soviet delegation's draft resolution, having regard to the instructions which it has received and the scope of its work.

M. LITVINOFF (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — I will only deal with the proposal made by the honourable delegate for Czechoslovakia. It is a question whether the three principles put forward by the Soviet delegation come within the framework of the Commission. In my opinion, they do. It is not a question of procedure, it is not a technical question, but a question of principle, and it is a question for the Commission itself to decide. The honourable
delegate of Czechoslovakia wishes the Bureau to answer for the Commission. He seems to labour under the illusion that the Preparatory Commission has some rigid constitution and that it must seek for legal advice as to whether a particular question is in accordance with that constitution or not. As far as I know, there is no such constitution. I could bring numerous examples from the history of this Commission where the Commission itself set up its programme by its own decision without reference to its mandate. It is a question of principle, which only the delegates themselves, in the names of the Governments of their respective Countries are entitled to answer, and I do not believe that the Bureau can undertake such a task. It is a vote on definite questions dealing with disarmament, and I do not think the Commission can agree to authorise the Bureau to give answers on matters of principle. Therefore I, for my part, definitely object to the proposal made by the honourable delegate of Czechoslovakia.

The President. — I venture to reply to M. Litvinoff that M. Fierlingers' proposal was merely to ask the advice of the Bureau on this point. The Bureau is perfectly ready to furnish such advice, which will, of course, be submitted to the Commission for the Commission's decision.

M. Fierlinger (Czechoslovakia). — The President has already explained the intention of my proposal. I should like to add a few words, however, as I think there is a misapprehension, and that M. Litvinoff has not rightly understood my proposal. It is perfectly true that we are the delegates of our Governments, but we have come here under certain instructions, and we have to be perfectly clear as to the limits of those instructions — that is to say, whether we are competent to take a decision on the Soviet draft resolution. My own opinion is that we are not, but I have referred the question to the authority of the Bureau. It will be able to answer it irrefutably by consulting documents and referring to the decision of the Council in accordance with which the Commission was appointed.

Baron Rolin Jaequemyns (Belgium). — I should like to ask for an explanation on one point. I quite agree with the proposal to take a vote in the sense that has just been indicated, and in this I am in agreement with the honourable delegate of Czechoslovakia — that is to say, that we should ask the Bureau to give us its opinion, and that we should then pronounce our decision on that opinion. There is one point, however, just mentioned by M. Fierlinger, in regard to which there appears to be some doubt and some misunderstanding. I gathered that the Commission was to refer the question purely and simply to the Bureau, and that the Bureau would answer in our place. If that is so, I think that this would be contrary to the views of our President.

M. Fierlinger (Czechoslovakia). — I entirely agree with what the honourable delegate of Belgium has just said, and I think, moreover, that my original proposal was quite clear. Of course, the legal aspect of the question and the limit of our instruction is a matter for the study of the Bureau, and in furnishing us with an opinion the Bureau will no doubt take into account the legal aspect, which is essential, as well as all the factors which may help it to come to a sound conclusion.

Tevfik Rouched Bey (Turkey). — Like the Italian delegation, the Turkish delegation considers that it has already replied clearly to the questions raised by M. Litvinoff in his last speech, and therefore asks to be excused from taking part in the vote which is now suggested.

The President. — If no delegates have any objections to make, I shall consider the Czechoslovak delegation's proposal adopted.

The Bureau will submit its opinion on the matter at the next meeting.

The Czechoslovak delegation's proposal was adopted.

(The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.)

SIXTH MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held at Geneva on Friday, April 19th, 1929, at 10 a.m.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).


The President. — I shall read the document prepared by the Bureau:

"The Bureau, having examined the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet delegation, has agreed upon the following opinion:

1. The Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference has been instructed by the Council, not to effect the reduction of armaments, but to prepare a scheme for the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety..."
and the enforcement by common action of international obligations. This plan is to be submitted for the consideration and action of the Governments taking part in the Conference.

"The Commission is preparing a scheme to enable the Conference, when it meets, to effect as substantial as possible a reduction of national armaments — on the understanding that the Convention adopted shall be subject to reconsideration and revision at least every ten years.

"2. The Commission has not seen its way to adhere to the method of reduction based on the proportional principle. At the same time, there is nothing to prevent the Government representatives assembled at the Conference, when they finally come to draw up the Disarmament Convention, from taking account of this principle or of any other similar objective criterion in addition to those indicated in Article 8 of the Covenant.

"3. The numerical coefficients for the reduction of armaments constitute a method of applying the proportional principle laid down in Point 2 of the Soviet draft Resolution. Consequently, the arguments set forth above in connection with Point 2 apply equally to Point 3.

"Having regard to the foregoing considerations, the Bureau is of opinion that the Preparatory Commission, while continuing the examination of its Draft of 1927, should decide, if the Soviet delegation so desires, to append the Soviet draft Convention to the report to be submitted by the Commission on the conclusion of its proceedings, and to be subsequently laid before the Disarmament Conference, without prejudice to the right, shared by the Soviet delegation with all the other delegations, to bring forward amendments to the articles of the 1927 Draft in the course of the discussion in the Preparatory Commission."

I will ask the Commission to say whether it agrees with the opinion expressed in this document, especially with regard to the procedure laid down in the last paragraph. If the Commission agrees, we can pass to the next item on the agenda.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — The honourable delegate of Czechoslovakia, in his anxiety not to exceed the limits of his mandate or the limits of the competence of this Commission, sought legal advice from the Bureau as to whether he would be within his rights in dealing with the proposals presented by the Soviet delegation. We here do not take our mandate from anybody except our Government, who sent us here to work for disarmament, and from the demands of the peoples of all countries, who are extremely anxious that disarmament should be realised as soon as possible.

The honourable delegate of Czechoslovakia, having sought the advice of the Bureau, has now received it in the form of the text which the President has just read. I may say that the considered opinion which has been given is quite satisfactory to the Soviet delegation, but this considered opinion is contained only in the first paragraph of the text. It is stated there that the Preparatory Commission "has been instructed . . . not to effect the reduction of armaments" — but it was never claimed that the Commission itself should actually carry out disarmament; that, of course, would be impossible — "but to prepare a scheme for the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety." It is evident from this that the Preparatory Commission has the right, even from the point of view of the Bureau, to deal with the question of the reduction of armaments, and not only the reduction but the substantial reduction of armaments. In this we find the answer to the first principle of our resolution, an answer in the affirmative. It rests only with the delegates here to give an answer from the political point of view and to say whether they and their Governments are willing to work for the reduction of armaments. But if we agree that we are going to deal in this Commission with the reduction of armaments, we must work out a scheme showing how we are going to reduce armaments; we must find some principle on which this reduction is to be based. We have put forward such a principle. Propose to base the reduction on the principle of proportionality. Therefore, the second principle of our resolution is also evidently within the competence of this Commission, and the Bureau says that the question of numerical coefficients can also be considered only in connection with the acceptance of proportionality, if we agree to include in the draft Convention this principle of proportionality, we may also establish its coefficient. As you will see, to the whole of the three questions the considered opinion of the Bureau gives an answer in the affirmative. All these principles which we have proposed come within the framework of the Commission. Therefore there is nothing, from the point of view of the constitution of the Commission, to prevent the discussion of these principles or the taking of a vote on them, or the consideration of the draft Convention of the Soviet delegation.

But in the second paragraph of the text the Bureau comes to quite different conclusions. Allow me, gentlemen, to draw your attention to the character of this second paragraph. In the first paragraph we have the considered opinion of the Bureau, but in the second paragraph the Bureau says that "the Commission has not seen its way to adhere to the method of reduction based on the proportional principle." Here the Bureau does not give its own opinion, but already anticipates the opinion of the Commission, whereas the Commission has not yet taken any vote on this question. That seems to me quite inconsistent with the first paragraph. It is precisely in order to ascertain whether the Commission wishes to adhere to the method of reduction based on the proportional principle that we have put the three points in our resolution, and have asked you to vote on them. Only after the vote has been taken will the Bureau be able to know what the Commission thinks of it. The Bureau really anticipates...
Count Bernstorff (Germany). — Mr. President, I understand that your intention is that, after this discussion, we should proceed to the next item on the agenda. For that reason, I only desire to say a few words in order to give my reasons for assenting to your proposal.

The text submitted to us today again refers, in the terms of the Covenant, to national security. In accepting these words, I should like to observe that, in preparing the Convention which we wish to submit to the Conference and the Preparatory Commission should give to the Conference the opinion on this draft Convention in the terms of the Covenant is again shifting its ground, and passes over to its considered opinion, basing this opinion on the anticipated decision of the Commission. There are three inconsistencies. I would therefore propose, for the time being, to disregard the last two paragraphs of the text, and to accept as the considered opinion of the Bureau only the first item, which admits the discussion of the three principles put forward by the Soviet delegation, and consequently to put these three principles to the vote of the Commission.

I should like to point out another inconsistency. Having said in the second paragraph that the Commission has not seen its way to adhere to the method of reduction based on the proportional principle, the text goes on to say that the representatives may take account at the Conference of the principle of proportionality “or of any other similar objective criterion in addition to those indicated in Article 8 of the Covenant”. The Bureau wishes the Commission to say that it does not see any obstacle to taking account of the principle of proportionality. That is in contradiction with the first sentence of the same paragraph. If the Commission cannot adhere to this principle, then it cannot take account of it. If the Commission take account of this principle, then it can adhere to it. Further, the Bureau admits the possibility of appending, and indeed recommends to the Commission to append, the Soviet draft Convention to the report to be submitted to the Disarmament Conference. Evidently the Bureau regards this draft Convention as worthy of attention and discussion. That being so, why not discuss it? Why not give the opinion of the Commission on this question to the Disarmament Conference? If it is not to be brushed aside, if it deserves the attention of the Conference, then the Preparatory Commission should give to the Conference its opinion on this draft Convention which it will annex to its report. What is the Preparatory Commission for, if not for finding out the opinions of the Governments represented on the Commission in regard to the proposals which are going to be discussed by the Disarmament Conference? For the moment, I shall limit myself to these few remarks on the text.

M. Sokal (Poland). — I should like to suggest that a vote should be taken and explain the Polish delegation’s vote.

We are all very grateful to the Bureau for having prepared the opinion which some of our colleagues asked it to give yesterday. That opinion has now been submitted to the Commission with a proposed resolution, and certain delegates have spoken to-day on the opinion and on the conclusion.

It seems to me at present undesirable to go back to the three questions put by the Soviet delegation. I myself, however, was quite prepared to answer them. As the Commission has adopted a different procedure, I think it would be needless for each delegation now to return to the question. Nevertheless, in to-day’s discussion certain interpretations of the terms of the Bureau’s proposal have been made, and I should like to ask you to vote, not on the text of that opinion as a whole, but solely on its conclusion, for if everyone begins to interpret the opinion, the discussion is bound to be very long.

The present conditions of security set up by the Covenant of the League of Nations, by the Treaties of Peace, and in particular by the reductions in the armaments of certain countries under these treaties, and also by the Locarno Agreements, would allow of the conclusion at the present time of a first General Convention for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments.

This means that, as regards the first Conference on Disarmament, the question of security is already settled so far as we, the Members of the League of Nations, are concerned, subject, of course, to a reservation in regard to the figures themselves, which will be decided upon at the Conference.

Point 2 speaks of the proportional principle. We understand, of course, that the idea of equilibrium so often mentioned by this Commission is not excluded by this proposal.

As regards the conclusions, they are entirely acceptable, and I, for my part, welcome them. I trust that the Soviet delegation will find an opportunity of repeating its proposals in the course of our subsequent proceedings as amendments to the point under discussion.

I think it would be very useful to continue the discussions on these lines. I may say that, in voting as I am doing, I show the utmost conciliation. It was perhaps not very necessary for us to ask for an opinion, because, like General de Marinis yesterday, we could easily have replied to the three questions put by the Soviet delegation. I could have replied to the first two by a simple affirmative and to the third by saying that we wished the figures to be decided upon at the Conference. As I have always said, the object of all our work and of all our efforts here is directed towards this end, namely, the holding of this first Disarmament Conference as soon as possible. As regards methods, I have already said that we do not wish to prevent the Powers which desire to disarm from doing so in whatever manner seems to them best and most desirable.
The Bureau proposes to say that:

"The Preparatory Commission, while continuing the examination of its Draft of 1927, should decide, if the Soviet delegation so desires, to append the Soviet draft Convention to the report to be submitted by the Commission on the conclusion of its proceedings, and to be subsequently laid before the Disarmament Conference, without prejudice to the right, shared by the Soviet delegation with all other delegations, to bring forward amendments to the articles of the 1927 Draft."

It seems to me that that is the only conclusion upon which the Commission should vote. Nevertheless, if the Commission thinks it desirable to give a decision on the opinion as a whole, I propose that we should vote upon the opinion and conclusion without comment, on the understanding that no individual interpretation by any delegation is valid.

The President. — I quite agree with the last portion of M. Sokal's proposal, that is to say, that we should adopt this text as a whole, without any commentary. Any comments made by the delegates will, of course, be inserted in the Minutes of the meeting.

M. Litvinoff (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics). — It appears, from what has taken place in the Commission yesterday and this morning, that a number of delegations are prepared to answer in a direct way the questions put by the Soviet delegation. The first delegate of Turkey told us yesterday that he would not take part in the discussion of the considered opinion of the Bureau, because he was in favour of an immediate examination of the Soviet proposals. The Turkish delegate has already given a reply to the principles put forward and embodied in our draft Convention. The honourable representative of Italy also gave a reply in regard to the three principles of our resolution. The honourable representative of Poland has informed us to-day that he would be quite willing to reply to the three questions. I take it from the speech of Count Bernstorff, the honourable representative of Germany, that he also would not object to answering our questions, or even to the examination of our draft Convention. I am quite sure there are many other delegations who have not yet spoken who would also adopt the same attitude.

That being so, I make my last appeal to the President to find out whether the delegates are really reluctant to answer our questions or not. A large number of the delegates have expressed their opinion and would be willing to express it in a more formal way if the vote were put in the accepted manner.

General Tsiang Tsoping (China). — We wish to say a word on that point. With due respect to the decision which the Bureau has just pronounced, I fear I am constrained to make clear the attitude of the Chinese delegation towards the question under discussion. The President has proposed that the opinion of the Bureau be adopted as a whole. I do not think that is quite a fair way of dealing with it, because, in the first place although the first principle has been approved by the Bureau, the second question of principle, which I think has not yet been sufficiently discussed or voted on, is whether the method of proportionality should be discussed or not. The honourable delegate of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics declares that the Bureau has anticipated the opinion of the Commission. If we are to vote on the text as a whole, we shall be unable to accept it, because we believe the second principle enunciated by the Soviet delegation is also sound. We may not accept the principle of proportionality in the sense of the Soviet delegation, that is to say, that the present forces of certain countries should be reduced by half, but the principle itself is a sound one. As the honourable representative of Germany has stated, by accepting the proposition of the Bureau, which says that the principle of proportionality is not adhered to by the Commission, we must not eliminate the possibility of applying that principle. You cannot have an equal reduction of armaments, because that would run counter to the provisions of the Covenant; Article 8 of the Covenant says that account must be taken of the individual national situation of each State. Whether we should adopt the proportion of 10, 20 or 50 per cent is quite another question, but we accept the second principle as a suitable basis for calculating reduction. In the third paragraph of the text proposed by the Bureau, it is said that the numerical coefficients for the reduction of armaments constitute a method of applying the proportional principle, and my remarks apply to that also.

The Chinese delegation wishes to make a reservation in regard to the second principle proposed by the Soviet delegation. With that reservation we can accept the opinion of the Bureau. The alternative would be for the Commission to consider whether it wishes to discuss the question or not. With all due deference to the opinion of the President, who has taken so much trouble in making clear to us the proposals of the Soviet delegation — for which we thank him very much — may I add a few words as to the competence of the Commission? I do not think that we should try to avoid this or that question at all. I think, if we are going to do our work properly, we must do it in a very thorough manner. We cannot say of this principle that we are not going to discuss it, that we avoid it because we do not like it, or that this question is not acceptable to a certain delegation and therefore we do not want to discuss it. If we did that, then all questions could be avoided, and we should fail in our preparatory work. We therefore respectfully propose that the question of the principle of proportionality should also be discussed before we take the vote.

The President. — Gentlemen, I think the discussion might now be closed.

The very interesting observations of the Chinese delegation will be recorded in the Minutes and the Commission will therefore be able to refer to them later.