**PERMANENT MILITARY COMMISSION.**

**Subject:** Disarmament.

**Last Paper.**

Memo. relative to difficulties of disarmament. Procedure to be adopted in time to effect it among all nations.

**Next Paper.**

No. 218.
While I am in complete sympathy with the desire expressed in this memorandum to produce at as early a date as possible some concrete scheme for a reduction of armaments, the question requires most careful handling as it arouses violent national feeling.

I am in consultation with the French Government as to the best method of securing advice as to how the Permanent Military, Naval and Air Commission to be formed under Article IX can best be constituted. Personally, I favour an extended Versailles. It will be the first business of the Permanent Commission to formulate plans for disarmament and I think although the procedure may be somewhat slow and cumbersome, we had better adhere to it more particularly as it has been adopted in the Covenant.

I should be very glad if Lord Robert Cecil would give his opinion on the subject.

E.D. July 5th.

I hope we must stick to the procedure laid down in the Covenant. But I doubt if we shall get much out of Versailles, extended or otherwise. When opportunity arises the P.M. should certainly be sounded as to his views. Not much can be done in France till after the approaching election.

Robert Cecil
Secretary-General.

Some further consideration of Lord Colun Stuart's memorandum on Disarmament and of your, Lord R. Cecil's and Sir M. Hankey's remarks thereon has suggested this note to me.

It is perfectly certain (a) as you say, that any action taken must be in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant; (b) as Sir M. Hankey says, that the European powers cannot risk an immediate reduction of armaments while Central and Eastern Europe is in its present condition. But I think that neither of these considerations is necessarily in conflict with Lord C. Stuart's scheme, if it be altered in some details.

The Permanent Military Commission is to be constituted to advise the Council: its constitution therefore is, I take it, a matter for the decision of the Council, which can also to a great extent determine its terms of reference. In place of the elaborate machinery devised by the officers of the Versailles Staff, and described in General Sackville-West's memorandum, I strongly feel that the Commission should to begin with should consist of a small but elastic organism comparable to the present International Secretariat. Similarly its duties should from the first be clearly
clearly defined by instructions from the Council and its personnel should strictly correspond with those duties and expand only if and as they expand. If the Council could be induced to appoint one very high officer and perhaps two assistants of lower rank for each country represented; and at the same time give this body a definite term of reference such as that suggested in Lord C. Stuart's memorandum; we should have a double advantage (a) that the Commission would be an efficient working organism (b) that its reports would carry great weight with soldiers as well as with civilians. The Versailles scheme has neither of these advantages.

It probably would be necessary for three such Commissions to be appointed, one naval, one military and one, sir; with instructions to select two of its members to form a Committee to co-ordinate the three reports. The three together would be the whole Commission provided for in Article 9 of the Covenant.

The Commission ought to sit at the seat of the League, and in London so long as that is the League's temporary Headquarters; above all not at Versailles. Its expenses from top to bottom should be charged to the League, and its secretariat and translators, etc. should be supplied by the International Secretariat.
Secretariat.

As regards Sir M. Hankey's view, it is certain that in preparing its plans, the Commission will take into account the condition of Eastern Europe amongst other things. Its report, also, will not be presented for a period, say 12 months, after its constitution. It seems to me that the F.M. will be willing to initiate so well-guarded a proposal at an early date; if not, I think we ought not to wait for him, unless there are other reasons for waiting. Nothing the League can do would have so great or immediate an effect on public opinion as this; and rightly so, for this is undoubtedly the line along which it can be of most use to the world. Equally certain it is that slackness in this will bring discredit on the League and also on the Governments.

F. W. [Signature]

17/7/19
Secretary-General.

I read Major Buxton's minute on Disarmament. I agree with him that the work of the Permanent Commission during the first few months would probably be best done by the national members working together in their own countries and coming together at a fixed date at the seat of the League to coordinate results and produce their final report. They should, however, on first being appointed hold two or three full meetings in such a way as to make it clear that their work springs directly from the creation of the League.

I am not sure, however, that I agree with him in thinking that each national portion of the Permanent Commission should have a civilian member as chairman.

18/7/19
Secretary-General.

I am sanguine about disarmament because I believe that the desire for it is not only widespread but extremely violent. The wave of antimilitarism is at its height in the British Empire and from personal information from the Belgians, who were in an excellent position to judge, I feel certain that it is very high in Germany, and much stronger than appears from the Press in France. As a general rule the more fighting any country has had, the greater is its desire not to fight again and the more violent its antipathy to all things military. Now is the moment when Public opinion will be most favourably inclined towards disarmament, and unless the League through its Permanent Commission formulates plans for that end in the very near future, it may miss the tide. The League will probably be gauged this year more by its action as regards disarmament than anything else, and it is doubtful if it will have quite such a backing from the Public for that particular purpose in five years time, as it would have for proposals put forward within the next two years. The present disturbed state of Europe is no excuse for delay in formulating Disarmament Proposals. The proposals should be made as soon as possible, ready to be put into force when the situation warrants it. Unless the Council takes action on Article 9 of the Covenant at an early meeting, the situation may be ripe before the proposals.

I believe that owing chiefly to the pressure of antimilitary feeling and secondly, owing to economic reasons, disarmament on a large scale is coming, with the help of the League or without it, and the greater the part
the League takes in the process, the better for its good name, but if it is too pushing in the first stages it may cause suspicion and defeat its own object.

As regards the Composition of the Permanent Commission the smaller its numbers, the more efficient will it be. It is for the five countries which are permanent members of the Council to take the lead, and I would recommend that a Commission of four for each of these countries be instituted by the League, consisting of a civilian chairman, one military, one naval, and one air officer, each of very high rank, appointed by the respective Governments. The Military, Naval and Air representatives would of course require some assistance from junior officers and clerical staff, and the Council would decide how much assistance was necessary after consultation with the members of the Commission of the five countries. It seems best that they should report at the end of say 6 months through their Governments to the League, which would compare the reports and might make further suggestions if necessary.

If a satisfactory disarmament were affected, the staffs of the Commissions could probably be reduced to a very small number. This plan, it may be argued, shifts the responsibility, put upon the League by Article 9, onto the shoulders of individual countries, but may I think, tend to counter suspicion and distrust. If, when the reports at the end of 6 months are submitted to the Council of the League, A.R.C. & E. are found to have proposed considerable reductions, while E. refuses to do anything, the League's hands will be strengthened into putting further pressure onto E.

[Signature]

July 18th 1919.
I am entirely in agreement as to the great importance to be attached to questions of disarmament both from the point of view of the thing itself, and from that of the procedure of the League. At the same time, the minutes which have been written seem to me hardly to take into account sufficiently the difficulties of the situation. It is apparently suggested that the Council should appoint eminent soldiers, sailors and airmen to advise on the possibility of some measure of national disarmament and that these experts should not be the representatives of their respective War Offices, Admiralties and Air Ministries. Any such attempt would, to my mind, at once bind together all the forces which are in potential opposition to the League and its ideals, and I fear that we are not sufficiently robust at present to be able to withstand successfully such an attack. I believe that if we secure the support of the various war ministries, we can secure some moderate measure of diminution of armaments, but I would much prefer that the pressure towards this diminution should be exerted by the national Prime Ministers under the aegis of the League, which will then have credit.

As regards the details, I am not in any wedded to the idea of Versailles, but it seems to me that, as a considerable amount of machinery will exist there, it might well be adapted to the purposes of the League while our headquarters are in London. Of course, as soon as the League moves to Geneva, it may be desirable that the Permanent Commission should be there also. I am not in favour of the plan that all expenses on the Permanent Commission should be charged to the League. It would be impossible. I fear, for the League to check the number of officers which any one country might claim to be necessary, and I do not see why each country represented on the Commission should not bear the expenses of its representative. I have already expressed my views on this point in a letter to General Sackville-West.

July 21.
5. Observations on Lord Colum Stuart's memorandum on Disarmament.

In notes from Captain Walters and Major Buxton, stress is laid upon the immediate necessity for the formulation of plans for disarmament and the formation of the Permanent Commission which should, however, be as small as possible, thereby making for efficiency.

As regards the actual constitution of the Commission, Major Buxton suggests that a Commission of four for each of the five countries which are permanent members of the League should be constituted by the League, consisting of one civilian (possibly chairman), one naval, one military, and one air officer of very high rank, to be appointed by the respective Governments.

These representatives would require staff, the number to be appointed to be settled by the Council after consultation with the members of the 5 countries. Reports should be made through the respective Governments to the League at the end of, say 6 months. The League would then compare the reports, and make further suggestion if necessary.

Captain Walters, while being in general agreement with the above proposals, also suggests that the national members of the Commission, after working together in their own countries for a period, should meet together at the seat of the League to coordinate their results and produce the final report.

He further suggests that the Commission should hold two or three full meetings so as to make it clear that their work springs directly from the creation of the League.
Don't C Smart

If E.D. agrees I think we ought to take steps to find out whether the P.M. will not agree to move something of this sort at the 1st or 2nd meeting of the Council. If he will, the S.G. must have good warning so that other P.M.'s may know in time to attend the meeting.

? Consult Lord R Cecil

P. Kerr
S. G. US

Feb 30/6
DISARMAMENT.

Preliminary Measures.

Apart from the avoidance of the horrors of war, the principal advantage to be gained by disarmament is the saving of national funds for purposes other than the means of destruction—notably for social reform.

The difficulties in the way are twofold:-

Firstly, the technical problem of forming a scheme whereby a nation may in any degree disarm without incurring a greater risk of defeat in a possible war, than its government is justified in running.

Secondly, the prejudice against disarmament, which grows from the fact that a considerable section of the population of most countries is trained to arms, and has been educated to believe in the arbitrament of arms as a necessary evil; that officers, at least, depend upon the profession of arms for their livelihood. Many officers wield a powerful influence on account of the services that they rendered, and their defence of war is not necessarily vicious, but partly genuine and partly instinctive.

The difficulties in the way of disarmament are of such a kind that it is probably vain to hope for any great and immediate reduction of forces. The best means for achieving the end in view is probably a continuous system of propaganda, that shall steadily increase in public mind the knowledge of the advantages, in particular, the financial and concrete advantages, to be gained by disarmament. The powerful hostility of eminent soldiers and sailors will probably be the less aroused in proportion as reductions are effected gradually.

The most practical answer to those who proclaim war to be
a necessary and inevitable means of settling disputes is to show by the action of the League of Nations, in cases which may arise, that peaceful procedure can take the place of arms.

The Reduction of Forces.

It is of no use to make population the basis of any reduction of armies, because a small nation often has to contribute more per head of population to armaments than a large one, and the only possible basis is the strength which national experts consider necessary for the defence of their country in all the known conditions in which it is placed. The reduction must be arrived at must be from the trained troops of the nation, having regard to the strength of its possible enemies, and this postulates an equivalent reduction in the forces of the states regarded as possible enemies.

If this principle is adopted, it seems clear that the actual size of national forces must be the subject of particular agreements between each nation and its neighbours, which will not alter the relative strength of the forces, the only general agreement being that the condition will enter into negotiations in the earnest desire to achieve the end which all have in view.

Once definite measures are taken by the Great Powers to reduce their forces, the smaller states will not be allowed to follow the same course. Great Britain, the United States, France, Italy, and Japan are the states between whom arrangements must be arrived at before any progress can be made, and the first steps would seem to be the easier by reason of the reduction in Germany's forces, a change in the international military situation which should permit at once of sensible modifications in the preparations of neighbouring Powers, as compared with those deemed necessary before the war.

Disarmament
Disarmament is such a critical question and arouses such passionate sympathy and hostility that it should form an object of the personal attention of the national Prime Ministers, who can most fully appreciate the greatness of the concrete advantages to be gained by it, and alone possess the authority to insist upon the dispassionate examination of the issues at stake. It is proposed that the matter should be brought before the Prime Ministers now in Paris, and the following proposals should be submitted to them:

1. They should agree that at a meeting to be held in about a year they will inform one another what are the forces, which their respective General Staffs consider necessary for the national defence of their country, and state the considerations upon which each estimate is based.

2. They will forthwith select an officer or officers, personally well-disposed towards the principles of the League and towards the idea of disarmament, who will be charged with the duty of examining and reporting on the technical problems awaiting decision before practical steps can be taken for the reduction of forces, and armaments.

3. They will approve of a meeting or meetings of the officers, to be appointed under 2 being called by the League of Nations for the discussion of the above-mentioned problems, under the chairmanship of the Secretary General of the League. Alternatively, these subsidiary meetings should be called by one of the Prime Ministers, for in view of the extreme delicacy of the questions involved it would seem advisable that no publicity should be given to the results of any meetings which may take place, and the avoidance of publicity might be difficult in the case of meetings held under the official auspices of the League.

C. C. S.