CHAPTER XII.—MORAL DISARMAMENT.

PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE POLITICAL COMMISSION, MARCH 15TH, 1932.

The General Commission of the Conference, on February 25th, 1932, decided to set up a Political Commission, it being understood that it would discuss, in the first instance, matters which did not raise questions of principle.

The Political Commission, on March 15th, 1932, decided to take up first the subject of moral disarmament.

The Polish Government had, on September 17th, 1931, communicated to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations a memorandum on moral disarmament, requesting that it should be circulated to the Governments invited to the Disarmament Conference. And, on February 13th, 1932, it had submitted definite proposals based on the suggestions and considerations put forward in the memorandum.

The representative of Poland, on March 15th, 1932, formally moved these proposals in the Political Commission. He suggested that:

(1) An international Convention should be concluded whereby Governments would agree to make certain specified actions punishable offences under their law, such actions to be defined as incompatible with satisfactory international relations and dangerous to the peace of the world. These actions would include inciting public opinion to warlike sentiments, propaganda which aimed at inducing States to violate international law, and the deliberate spreading of false or distorted reports or forged documents likely to embitter the relations between States.

(2) A conference should be held as soon as possible of qualified representatives of journalists and publishers’ associations to consider what steps could be taken to put the idea of moral disarmament into effect so far as the Press was concerned, the result of the proceedings of the conference to be taken as a basis for concerted action by Governments and professional Press associations.

(3) Recommendations and suggestions, such as had already been adopted with a view to interesting young people in the organisation of international peace, should be progressively put into effect by international undertakings, special attention being given to the desirability of a general revision of school textbooks and the introduction into educational institutions of instruction concerning the League, international co-operation and the life of the various peoples. Governments should realise the importance of encouraging closer relations between students and teachers in the different countries.

(4) A general Convention should be concluded on the subject of broadcasting, the Governments undertaking to adhere to the principle of moral disarmament in their supervision of broadcasting programmes. Governments should undertake to prohibit the exhibition of films or plays likely to embitter international relations and to encourage films and plays likely to favour the cause of peace.

(5) The international policy of Governments should be in harmony with their efforts in the direction of moral disarmament.

WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON MORAL DISARMAMENT, MARCH 15TH TO JULY 20TH, 1932.

The Political Commission, on March 15th, 1932, appointed a special Committee of twenty-two members, selected for their personal qualifications, to study the question of moral disarmament.

The Committee grouped under three headings the questions selected for examination:

(1) Questions concerning intellectual co-operation and the technical means of spreading information, including the problems of education, use of the cinema and broadcasting;

(2) Questions concerning the co-operation of the Press;

(3) Questions of a legal character.

The Committee adopted, as a basis for the discussion of the first of these items, a draft text prepared by the Intellectual Co-operation Organisation of the League of Nations in the light of various proposals laid before the Committee.

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The draft text consisted of a brief preamble and four chapters, which contained suggestions on the following points:

1. Education of the younger generation;
2. Co-operation of the intellectual world;
3. The use of technical means of spreading information;
4. Ways and means of giving effect to possible undertakings.

The Committee, on completing the first reading of the text, appointed a Drafting Committee with a view to its revision and examination on a second reading.

The Committee further appointed a Legal Committee to study the legal and constitutional questions involved in the problem of moral disarmament and, in particular, a memorandum submitted on the subject by M. Pella (Roumania).

WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON MORAL DISARMAMENT, MAY TO DECEMBER 1933.

The Committee on Moral Disarmament met again on May 26th, 1933, and adopted, on June 2nd, 1933, a resolution to the effect that provisions concerning moral disarmament should forthwith be drawn up, to stand on the same footing as the provisions regarding material disarmament in the final Convention to be adopted by the Conference.

The Committee arranged in three groups the questions coming under the heading of moral disarmament. First, there were questions relating to teaching, co-operation between intellectual circles, broadcasting, the theatre and the cinematograph. Secondly, there were questions which related to the adaptation of municipal laws to the present development of international relations. Thirdly, there were questions relating to the Press.

TEXTS SUBMITTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON MORAL DISARMAMENT, DECEMBER 1ST, 1933.

The Chairman of the Committee on Moral Disarmament, on December 1st, 1933, forwarded to the President of the Conference a text, consisting of a preamble and four articles, covering the first group of questions. The text thus submitted to the Conference was based on drafts considered by the Committee in June 1933, revised by the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation in July 1933, and further amended by the Committee on Moral Disarmament in October and November 1933.

The contracting parties undertake to use their powers or their influence to see that education at every stage, including the training of teachers, is so conceived as to inspire mutual respect between peoples and to emphasise their interdependence. They further undertake to do what they can to ensure that persons entrusted with education and the books used in education should be inspired by these principles, to encourage the use of the cinema and broadcasting for increasing the spirit of goodwill among nations, and, incidentally, to use their influence to avoid the showing of films, the broadcasting of programmes or the organisation of performances obviously calculated to wound the legitimate sentiments of other countries. They finally engage to facilitate co-operation in moral disarmament, both in administrative and other circles working generally on behalf of peace.

The Committee on Moral Disarmament pointed out that these drafts were submitted under reservations made by the delegations. It was clearly understood that the texts were subject to decisions to be taken by the General Commission and that they were liable to reconsideration and amendment.

ADAPTATION OF MUNICIPAL LAWS: WORK OF THE LEGAL COMMITTEE, JUNE TO DECEMBER 1933.

In order to facilitate the Legal Committee’s work, the Committee on Moral Disarmament, meeting on June 2nd, 1933, requested M. Pella (Roumania) to prepare a preliminary draft text dealing with the adaptation of the municipal laws of the various countries to the present conditions of international organisation. M. Pella, responding to this invitation, submitted the text of a preamble and three draft articles, providing that the contracting parties should introduce legislation enabling them to publish certain acts detrimental to good international relations. The acts to be covered by this legislation would include the preparation and execution in the territory of a State of measures directed against the safety of a foreign Power, efforts to induce a State to commit certain specified acts in violation of its international obligations, the aiding or abetting of armed bands formed in the territory of a State.

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2 See letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Moral Disarmament to the President of the Conference, dated December 1st, 1933: Report of the Committee on Moral Disarmament; Text adopted by the Committee on Moral Disarmament (document Conf.D./(Bureau 54). Conference Documents, Volume III.
and invading the territory of another State, the dissemination of false information likely to disturb international relations or the false attribution to a foreign State of actions likely to bring it into public contempt or hatred.

It was further proposed that the contracting parties should undertake, when reviewing their Constitutions, favourably to consider the introduction of articles forbidding any resort to force as an instrument of national policy, thus embodying the principles of the Pact of Paris as an integral part of the positive law of the State.¹

The Legal Committee framed a questionnaire with a view to obtaining the opinions of the delegations on these proposals, the questionnaire being subsequently circulated to the members of the Committee on Moral Disarmament and to the delegations not represented on that Committee for their observations.

The Chairman of the Committee on Moral Disarmament, on December 1st, 1933, informed the President of the Conference that the question of the adaptation of municipal laws to present international life, together with the question of the co-operation of the Press in moral disarmament, would be considered by the Committee at a later stage.