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# **THE SOVIET'S FIGHT FOR DISARMAMENT**

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Introduction  
by  
**A. LUNACHARSKY**

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THE SPEECHES OF M. LITVINOV, COMMISSAR OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HEAD OF THE SOVIET DELEGATION, AT THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE IN GENEVA. THE LATEST DEFINITION OF THE ATTITUDE TAKEN BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ON PEACE AND DISARMAMENT.

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A companion volume to **The Soviet Union and Peace**

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# THE SOVIET'S FIGHT FOR DISARMAMENT

Containing Speeches by M. LITVINOV  
at Geneva, 1932, and other documents  
in sequel to "*The Soviet Union and Peace*"  
with an Introduction  
by  
M. LUNACHARSKY



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*Note.*—This book contains supplementary documents to *The Soviet Union and Peace*, which, published in 1929, with an introduction by Henri Barbusse, contains the most important documents and speeches of the Government of the U.S.S.R. concerning peace and disarmament from 1917 to 1929. [Published by Martin Lawrence Ltd., 7s. 6d. (paper, 3s. 6d.)]

# THE SOVIET'S FIGHT FOR DISARMAMENT

## INTRODUCTION

WE have lived to see the summoning, at last, of that very Conference of Governments of countries, members and non-members of the League of Nations, which is to be regarded as the most triumphant act in the existence of the League of Nations.

For several years the League has been preparing for this Conference with the aid of every possible kind of Commission. Superficially one could say that it was as though the whole world was preparing for it through these Commissions and around them in the variations of social opinion.

From the very inception of the League of Nations, from the very beginning of the talk of disarmament as the chief condition of the struggle for peace, during all the so-called work in preliminary preparation for the Conference there have been many sceptics declaring that in reality the Governments who set the tone do not want any kind of disarmament ; for these sceptics all the so-called " new era " in which the " transition " is to take place from the epoch of unconditional sovereignty of States to the epoch of the establishment of a powerful international law which will lay genuine obligations on those States and subordinate them to a centre (even though only morally at first)—all this talk of a new era—is only dust in the eyes of public opinion. These sceptics have maintained that it is all merely a smoke screen behind which the former policies are still being pursued—policies for the rapacious egoistical partitioning of the earth hidden behind various diplomatic subterfuges, policies which may at any moment develop into an armed struggle.

But together with these sceptical voices other voices were to be heard, full of faith in the League of Nations, and ready, taking the wish for the deed, to expect the League to inaugurate a genuine beginning of the kingdom of humanity and the reign of law on earth.

Recently the sceptical voices have grown extraordinarily strong. The Press, which by no means adopts our Communist point of view, has of late months spoken extraordinarily harshly of the League, its politics, and its prospects. A little while ago the Spanish newspaper *El Sol* definitely declared that the League of Nations was to all intents and purposes morally dead, that it had committed suicide at the moment it demonstrated its impotence to settle the Sino-Japanese conflict.

Here, the important fact is not the particular paper, but that it expresses the views of a chorus of numerous voices.

In reality, when the League of Nations, despite its own assignation, its own documents, and armed with the Kellogg Pact in addition, not only proved impotent to stop the first really serious war by its intervention, but even to all intents and purposes blessed that war, and blessed it in unusually hypocritical forms, even the most patient, the most short-sighted, could only sit back in amazement.

Blood is being poured out in streams, cannons are thundering, machine-guns rattling, towns and railways are being attacked by bombing-planes, enormous forces of soldiers are marching on China, an entire vast country is being conquered by its neighbour, but the League continues, with a comicality which at first sight seems deprived of all self-respect, to declare that essentially there is no war.

And truly, how can there be a war when there has been no declaration of war?—when none of the documents formally necessary to the recognition of the reality of this war exists?

The Kellogg Pact does not cover China. Japan is "only reducing the chaos of Manchuria to order." Japan, as she herself directly declared in reply to the United States, has even received formal recognition of her military activities from the League of Nations in the form of permission to carry on operations against bandits. And if under the pretence of fighting bandits Japan also fights the regular army of Manchuria entirely as she wishes, it is as the

Japanese declare with unusually cynical *sang-froid*, "impossible to distinguish a bandit from a soldier in the Manchurian army."

Far from restricting themselves even to these operations, the Japanese have extended their attack to Shanghai and Nanking. This has roused certain powers to protest, but the League continues impotent as before.

The proximity of all this to the forthcoming Disarmament Conference is extremely inconvenient. I have already said that superficially all the hypocrisy of the appropriate instruments of the League of Nations, headed by the recent French Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Briand, and later by M. Paul Boncour, may seem extremely comic. It may seem comic from two aspects: first, if the League of Nations really imagines that it still morally impresses anyone when it admits its own extreme impotence; and secondly, if it be granted that the League of Nations and the directing mind of this side of its activities, M. Briand, consciously desire to approve of the action of Japan, but imagine that they are taking in anyone with the stupid camouflage behind which they hide the shame of their own action. The one and the other is ludicrous; an impotent League is ludicrous, a hypocritical League is ludicrous.

Yes, it *would* be ludicrous if it were not terrible, for in reality the scandal of the Sino-Japanese affair in the League of Nations only reveals the complete emptiness of pacifist hopes, only lays bare the truly serious fact that the possibility of war breaking out has by no means lessened, that the terrible means of mutual extinction accumulated to date and continuing to grow vigorously, despite the crisis which has paralysed almost all industry, may quickly be brought into action, sweeping away tens of millions of people and driving humanity to the verge of destruction.

In a New Year's article, the British writer, H. G. Wells, who is by no means a Communist in thought, but who fixedly and objectively is observing the world events, declared: "If the sovereign States, the whole destiny of which consists in mutual annihilation, have not yet annihilated one another, it is because they did not have the technical resources adequate to this purpose; now they have them."

The participants in the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament and those who have followed its labours, long since under-

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stood the real tendency of the chief States, whose will is the decisive factor.

What in reality was this Commission ?

From the very beginning the chief opponent of disarmament, i.e. France and her direct semi-vassals, set up an impassable barrier around the ostensible purpose of the Commission, disarmament. This barrier is the question of "security." "We cannot disarm so long as we have not set up an order under which each State can consider itself free of danger." Such was the tone established at the very beginning of labours of the Commission, and now, on the eve of the Conference on Disarmament, it has been repeated by, among others, the Rumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs—M. Shyka.

We have a group of people sitting, everyone of whom holds a loaded revolver at the ready in his hand, all afraid of one another, all complaining of their disagreeable position, and, as all are complaining, the intelligent proposal is made to throw away the revolvers and so relieve themselves of their burdens. But this proposal is countered by another proposal : to throw away the revolvers, only provided an atmosphere of universal trust and security is preliminarily established.

By this simplified example one can see how childishly unreasonable is such a proposal. But it is unreasonable only provided you accept the view that a genuine equality of position exists in this company of armed men—bandits and victims—gazing at one another. In reality here we have people some weak, some strong, some excellently, and some poorly, armed ; and one can understand that for the strong, disarmament is an unwelcome business, because it will reduce the difference between them and the others. And if to this be added the fact that war industries yield enormous profits, if it be added that all the equilibrium established by the Versailles peace is essentially a complete absence of equilibrium, that causes of war arise at every step, that the air is full of the microbes of catastrophe, then the existence of the enormous and tense human wills of a profoundly class bias, which do not want disarmament, becomes understandable.

But what, then, are these pretences for ? What is the League of Nations for ? Why are these endless commissions with their long



sessions and complicated debates necessary? And why, finally, hold the Conference?

They are necessary, because the advocates of war, who are preparing for war, must nevertheless reckon with the existence of others, scattered, but politically of considerable power, who are sincerely anxious to avoid war and who could cause great "electoral" and other unpleasant difficulties to the war forces.

The proverb runs: "hypocrisy is the tribute of vice to virtue." In the given instance the vice is militarism; the virtue pacifism, and the hypocrisy is the League of Nations and the work of the Preparatory Commission for Disarmament.

The main stages of the work of this commission will still be more or less remembered by everybody. The States of the west could have engaged in all the pretence of nibbling at the problem they had no intention of seriously tackling, without the participation of the U.S.S.R. That would have been much more convenient. As was known in advance, the delegation of the U.S.S.R. would prevent the uneventful course of this ceremony held for the benefit of the "trusting souls." But the most trusting soul would not have had any trust whatever in it if the U.S.S.R. had not participated, for how can there be disarmament if so considerable a political factor is absent?

That is why the U.S.S.R. was invited to send its delegation to the Commission.

The U.S.S.R. took and takes the question of the preservation of peace quite seriously. It really has no desire for war. That is not because it was in its essence so peaceable an organisation. The U.S.S.R. with its ideology, the Marxist-Leninist outlook, makes no attempt to hide the fact that it is a militant organisation, but the war which is of its very essence takes other forms. It is the war of classes, as the result of which toiling humanity must shatter its chains. The best road to victory in this war is the enormous peace construction which the great workers' State is developing throughout all its length and breadth. The creative labour which has led to the economic uplift of the land of workers and peasants is carrying us on from victory to victory over crisis-suffering, disintegrating, rotting capitalism. It is that, consequentially, which enables the Soviet Government insistently and boldly to defend the cause of peace. It is that which, to every pacifist, who

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is at all sincere and far-seeing, makes this Government the sole genuine support and hope.

The decisive step of the U.S.S.R. was to put forward such a plan of disarmament as would raise the question seriously, so that the seriousness with which the question was raised would at once lay bare all the deception of the stir that is really going on under the guise of preparation for disarmament.

The Union proposed that the States should consider a plan of genuine and decisive disarmament.

This proposal was turned down under a hail of sophisms and was buried by the Commission.

It is impossible to say that in doing so they attempted to expend any considerable quantity of intelligence and diplomacy. The sophisms which were hurled against the Soviet proposal were extremely frivolous. Before the end of the discussion the Soviet delegation could calmly say that they were interested in seeing that the whole course of that discussion was brought in detail to the attention of every objective and honest man, for every such man would see the justice of the position of the U.S.S.R., the weight of its arguments and the artificial nature of the methods by means of which the Soviet proposal was rejected.

The strongest point of the criticism came in the long speech of the representative of Great Britain, Lord Cushendun. At its conclusion there was a kind of jubilation among the opponents of the Soviet proposal, some triumphant clapping of the noble lord for his handling of the representatives of revolution.

But this culminating point in the argument of our opponents was transformed the very next day into an abyss into which they fell. We can with full confidence declare that comrade Litvinov's answer to Cushendun was a complete triumph. Not one of the noble lord's arguments but was completely riddled. Not one of his statements was allowed to pass without an answering blow. This duel has by no means lost its historical importance even today, and it still sheds adequate light on the position of both sides.

But the workers' State had no intention of withdrawing its delegation after its proposal had been turned down. Such a withdrawal would undoubtedly have enabled the other governments, at heart hostile to any kind of disarmament, to throw all the odium of failure on the U.S.S.R.

“ Ah,” they would have said, “ the U.S.S.R. works under the slogan of ‘ all or nothing ’ ; it puts forward unacceptable, radical proposals and under this pretext does not wish to consider our realistic proposals ; under the pretext that it is impossible to do all at once it does not really wish to do anything whatever for the peace of the world.”

The Soviet Government had no desire to allow such a situation to arise. Consequently its delegation put forward a new proposal for partial and proportional disarmament.

It was extremely difficult to condemn this proposal. Strictly speaking, the League of Nations passed over it almost without criticism. It simply ignored the proposal, declaring that it could, of course, be repeated by the Soviet delegation at the Conference, but that the Commission itself found it impracticable.

After this, in its further sessions the Commission began to occupy itself according to its own programme. The sub-commission for working out measures for “ security ” carried out its truly safe and useless labours. Those labours in no way weakened the declaration of France and its satellites that no condition of security existed, that nothing had yet been done in this direction, that there was still no clarity in the position, and that it was, therefore, impossible to talk seriously about disarmament.

*Seriously*, it was impossible, but it was quite possible to talk *generally* in order to distract the attention of public opinion. And so there were protracted debates in the course of which the strange document which is now to serve as the basis for the labours of the Conference was drawn up.

This document, the formal essence of which is to be the establishment of the nomenclature of all those categories of armed forces which are to be subject to reduction, without indicating any figures, was really intended to prepare the road along which the Conference should travel, so that in no circumstances should it arrive at genuine disarmament.

The Soviet delegation took active part in this work not so much because it hoped by sectional improvements, and fights over isolated paragraphs to lay down a different road, along which the Conference would really arrive at disarmament, as to ensure that the real purpose of the attempts of the majority of the Com-

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mission to render the Conference abortive in advance should be made clear to all.

One session was concluded by a speech from comrade Litvinov, in which he declared : " Before the session began I expressed the conviction that it would not make a single step forward. I was a little mistaken, the result was otherwise : despite even my scepticism, the session has taken quite a number of steps—but backward ! "

That was, quite truthfully, how the debates of the notorious Preparatory Commission proceeded. One after another every question of any serious import was withdrawn. The gigantic war stocks at the disposal of the various countries, their armed reserves were left beyond the horizon of the future Conference. All " nomenclatures " which might seriously affect the intense technical preparations for war were carefully left outside its purview.

But, perhaps, after such an experience the U.S.S.R. should have refused to take further part in the " disarmament " comedy ?

No, that it could not do. The chairman of the Soviet delegation, comrade Litvinov, frankly declared that nevertheless the real labour might begin at the Conference itself, where the powers would be represented by their plenipotentiary delegations, the real directors of their policies, and not, as was the case in the majority of instances at the Commission, by subordinate officials. These powers will be present in person, so to speak, and will have to answer for their position to public opinion. There the pressure of that public opinion might find stronger and more real expression. That is why, said Litvinov, there is hope in the greater significance in the discussion of the disarmament problem at the Conference itself.

This declaration of comrade Litvinov by no means implies that his scepticism has been replaced by faith. It is only a better argument that at the present moment of debates on disarmament the U.S.S.R. cannot abandon them, leaving the responsibility for the failure of the Conference to be thrown on Soviet Russia. She must, on the contrary, firmly defend every prospect of disarmament and must lay bare the more or less clever game of its opponents, who dare not openly renounce the idea of disarmament and wish quietly to bury it, whilst pretending that in reality they are working against war.

The Soviet delegation has the right to renew both their first and their second proposals. In the event of their rejection, the delegation will participate as before in the work to the very end and will endeavour from a position more exalted and more easily heard to speak to the whole world on the serious, tragic, agitating theme of war and peace, or the attempts which are being prepared on the life and well-being of humanity, and on the real methods of wresting humanity from the hands of the sinister forces which are preparing for it a whole sea of suffering.

The general situation is extremely unfavourable to that real struggle for peace which the U.S.S.R. is carrying on. As before, France is the dominant country in Europe. As before, she is surrounded with a whole chorus of satellites, obeying her least gesture, as a well-trained orchestra obeys a strict conductor. As before, England is unbounding in her "concessions" to France. The unyielding Lord Cushendun was replaced by the flexible Viscount Cecil, but the situation has not been in the least changed as the result. Cecil also danced to France's pipe equally with Cushendun, the only difference being that, whilst selling one position after another, he has endeavoured to preserve the virtue of a "great pacifist," and continually casts false balances, which ostensibly demonstrate that what are really monstrous steps backward are little, certainly very little, yet none the less, steps forward.

In the real struggle for disarmament Italy can hardly be regarded as a serious support, for Italy would like to see France disarmed to the level of her own armaments: an obviously paradoxical demand.

Germany has always shone very little in this matter, isolated as she has been during the work of the Commission. And in addition it has been no secret to anybody that her real desire consists not in others being disarmed down to her own level, as she has demanded ostensibly, but in herself being allowed to arm up to their level.

Of recent times America, irritated by the slow payment of the debts outstanding to her, has been disposed to accuse Europe seriously of profligacy, and first and foremost of profligacy in armaments. But America's pacifistic eloquence, which perhaps will give a warm tone to the cold speeches of the American representative, can hardly be taken seriously when neither the pact

proposed by her, nor her present disposition to disarmaments has slackened her feverish haste in building a colossal fleet, her chief, and, in fact, her sole, weapon, since her land forces can hardly prove deciding factors in any future war of the nations.

The little countries are divided into the unconditional vassals of France and the comparatively neutral countries, whose representatives sometimes pronounce an objective word, but afterwards either renounce their statement or else prove impotent to make it at all effective.

Even the position of Turkey has in this regard proved unstable so far, and the delegation of the U.S.S.R. could not count confidently on her support.

It is very unlikely that there will be any essential change at the Conference itself. It may be that there will be certain dramatic moments, as there were even during the sessions of the Commission, but in the last resort "common sense" will prevail, "common sense" in this case being the point of view of France, which consists in not permitting any form of disarmament, whilst "keeping up appearances" at least to some extent.

In the straightforward sense the Conference will be fruitless, of that there can hardly be any doubt. But indirectly it may be very fruitful. Through its labours it may complete the picture of the existing catastrophic condition of the world. It may add some heavy colours to the terrible picture of the present order of society, which reminds one of a live bomb with a lighted and swiftly burning fuse.

There is no such thing as a hopeless situation. Humanity has a way out. The class-conscious, organised workers know that way. They must assemble the greatest possible mass forces in order to undertake the great step of saving humanity from the madness, the deliberate, cold-blooded, "common sense" madness, the class-dictated, fatal, incorrigible madness of the present rulers of world policies.

A. LUNACHARSKY.

*January 18th, 1932.*

1932

*Speech at the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, by M. LITVINOV,  
on February 11th, 1932 :*

Our President and previous speakers have told us that this Conference has no precedent, and no one will disagree with this. The Conference is without precedent, not only on account of the number of States represented, but also—and principally—on account of the vast demands made upon it by humanity, and the enormous importance of its outcome, whatever this may be.

This Conference meets as the result of long—we think too long—preliminary work. But this preliminary stage is now over. The present Conference is face to face with the problem of disarmament, which demands a practical solution without further delays or temporising, without digression for the study of continually arising preliminary conditions.

The foundations of this Conference were laid during the Great War, also an event without precedent, both as to scope and consequences. For the first time in history the peoples have been drawn in their millions into the battlefield ; indeed, in some countries almost the whole male population was mobilised, and the correlation of class forces and social-political factors was very different from that in former wars.

In the very thick of the war the voice of protest against war made itself heard and the cry " war on war " was raised. The war itself could only be kept going, and millions of victims engulfed, by calling it " the last war."

And yet the whole history of international relations since this so-called " last war " has been marked by a steady and systematic increase in the armed forces of all States and by a colossal increase in the burden of militarism.

The creation of the League of Nations itself and the 8th Article of its Covenant already referred to by several speakers were nothing but a faint tribute to popular demands for the fulfilment of

the promises given by their governments that the Great War should indeed be the "last war," to the demands of the masses of the workers, grown more enlightened and beginning to take a direct part in political life. In the years following on the war—years of universal impoverishment, of the healing of wounds, both on the part of the defeated and the victorious—the popular clamour for the abolition of war increased, and cannot, in the opinion of the Soviet Delegation, be satisfied by the stabilisation or slight reduction of armaments or war budgets. What is required is to find a way for putting an end to war.

The Soviet Government is not taking part in this Conference on account of formal obligations, and not under any stimulus from outside. From the very first days of its existence it condemned war as an instrument of national policy, by deeds as well as by words, declared against all contributions and territorial annexations, and the oppression of any nation by any other, and proclaimed the principle of national self-determination. Ever since it has in its own policy pursued with strict consistency the line of peaceful and loyal co-operation with other States. Once war is excluded as an instrument of national policy the Soviet Government sees no need for maintaining armies and other armed forces, and, on its first appearance at an international Conference—at Genoa ten years ago—it proposed total general disarmament as the only way of putting an end to war. It renewed this proposal as soon as it was invited to take part in the work of the Preparatory Commission for Disarmament. In making this proposal my Government took into consideration the demands and claims of the peoples throughout the world as well as the spirit of its own people.

The Soviet Delegation urged at the Preparatory Commission the speediest possible realisation of its proposal. At the same time we pointed out the imminent danger of new wars and that the only means of averting this danger, under the economic system existing in most countries, would be total disarmament, and that no treaties, pacts, protocols, or international organisations could create real security for all countries. Our point of view was disputed in the Commission. Our warnings as to the imminent possibility of new wars were ridiculed. We were accused of pessimism and of exaggerating the danger. We were told that it was "security" that was required and that this security



could be achieved by a system of treaties, protocols and other international undertakings, suggested by the League of Nations, and that there was no hurry about disarmament.

Only a few years have passed since this controversy and what do we see now? The Disarmament Conference had to begin to the accompaniment of the distant rumbling of cannon and the explosions of bombs from the air. Two States, mutually bound by the League of Nations Covenant, and the Paris Treaty of 1928, have been in a state of war, *de facto* if not *de jure* for five months. No war may as yet have been registered with a notary public, but vast territories in one of these countries have been occupied by the armed forces of the other, and battles in which all sorts of armaments are being employed and thousands are being killed and wounded, are being waged between the regular troops of both countries.

True, all this is going on far away from Geneva, far away from Europe, but who is so optimistic as to assert in good faith that the military activities which have begun will be limited to two countries only or to one continent only? Who is so optimistic as to assure us confidently that the events in the Far East are not the beginning of a new war, which in extent, scope, and—thanks to the latest technical inventions—horror, may eclipse the sinister fame of the last war? Continents are no longer economically and politically isolated. There are countries belonging to more than one continent. There are not many neighbours in Europe without serious territorial accounts to settle. The extent of disputed frontiers is greater now than it was before the war. Can we be sure that these differences will not be thrown into the melting pot, if a single one of the European States should be dragged into war? Granted that all this may not happen, that the fire in the Far East may be kept within local bounds, even then can we be sure that similar fires will not break out in other parts of the world? What is to prevent this? International organisations and pacts? But we have seen that they are incapable of either preventing or ending military activities in the Far East, with all the consequences of these activities. Public opinion? It is still more impotent. And, after all, what is public opinion? Has it ever been unanimous anywhere, or served a single purpose? Public opinion, as expressed in the Press or through public bodies, serves various

interests, the multiple interests of various countries and of capitalist groups of private enterprise, and even of individuals in these countries. Have not the acts of violence going on under our very eyes in the Far East, their advocates and instigators in the Press, even the Press of countries not immediately concerned? Have we not read, quite lately, articles in both European and American papers urging the necessity and efficacy of the extension of the war in the Far East, and actually suggesting that war would be a way out of the crisis, of that very crisis the acuteness of which must be ascribed to the late war and its consequences.

Nor can the limitation of armaments be expected to prevent the arising of fresh wars. At the present moment all States are sufficiently supplied with armaments—and armaments sharp enough and destructive enough—to conduct a war, in comparison with which the Great War would appear mere child's play. The reduction of armaments is equally incapable of guaranteeing us against any war, especially if such reduction is not very radical and is not carried out with the conscious purpose of placing obstacles in the way of war.

The Soviet Delegation, basing its attitude upon the needs of the present moment, and the demands of the popular masses, those demands which necessitated all the preliminary work of the Conference, and which called the Conference itself into being, would sum up the problem before us in the words: "Security against war." It is this that distinguishes our conception of security from the conception of other delegations, many of whom, when they speak of security, mean the assuring of the utmost possible chances of victory to a State subjected to attack. The Soviet delegation considers that we must endeavour to make war itself impossible since it is the people who suffer, both in the victorious and defeated countries, and moreover, as the last war has shown us, the people in all countries. The Soviet delegation appraises from this standpoint all proposals made to the Preparatory Commission, or to be made to this Conference, including the French proposals, which are worthy of more than a mere passing allusion. It is, indeed, as a mark of respect that I respond to the invitation of the French Delegation, to criticise and discuss its proposal.

First and foremost it must be stated that from the point of view of the reduction of armaments the French proposals scarcely

bring us nearer to our aim, inasmuch as they are preliminary conditions requiring to be accepted before any sort of reduction of armaments is to be made on the part of France. The discussion of these conditions would actually convert this Conference into a Preparatory Conference for a future Disarmament Conference, requiring perhaps no less time than did the Preparatory Commission. It must be remembered that these proposals represent the further development and materialisation of what is known as the Geneva protocol, which has been before the League of Nations for seven years, provoking wide controversy, and so far unaccepted. We have no grounds to assume that the same protocol, pushed to its logical conclusion, will meet with greater unanimity than before. It would become a question of the creation of a new international organisation with considerable powers, and consequently of the creation of a new covenant, with regulations for the disposition of an international army, for the definition of aggression ; a host of problems fruitlessly debated for ten years in the League of Nations, with the addition of new and still more complicated ones would spring up. Even now, as far as I know, there is no precise interpretation recognised by all members of the League, of the 16th and other Articles of the Covenant, and the rules for their application passed in 1921. To spend time over these questions in the present acute state of political and economic international antagonisms would mean, as far as disarmament is concerned, to put the clock back years if not decades.

The French proposals, however, as I have already said, interest us most of all from the point of view of their capacity to create security against war, and I should like to dwell upon this question in somewhat more detail.

What then is the gist of the proposals of the French Delegation ? It is proposed to create a new army, to consist of a certain number of military bomb-carriers, scattered over various countries or concentrated in a single place, and a certain number of troops reserved in various countries for special purposes. In other words, an army, of, say, a few hundred thousand men, is to be adequately equipped, for the purpose of joining the forces of a State recognised to have been the victim of attack. A State which intends to attack another will have in advance to reckon not only

with the forces of its immediate enemy, but also with those of an army, so to speak, allied to it. Does this imply that the aggressive party will inevitably refrain from attack? Have we not had experience enough of allies and allied armies, and have they ever been the slightest guarantee against war? Many a State in the past, when preparing for war, has had to reckon in advance that it would be up against more than one State and this consideration has not invariably prevented it from carrying out its war-like intentions. Either it has provided itself with allies, or made its programme of armaments to outweigh all possible forces of the enemy side. All that an aggressive State would have to do then, in laying its plans, would be to take into consideration the forces of the international army also.

Again it is obvious that such an international army is not likely to be very big. We cannot assume that even more States which are adjacent to the theatre of war will be able or willing (except in very special cases) to send large forces to take part in a war not directly concerning them, especially when they themselves have accounts to settle with the State they are called upon to assist. Supposing then that a strong State, capable in time of war of mustering an army running into millions, attacks a State many times weaker than itself! It is quite obvious that a few hundred thousand more soldiers on the side of the weaker State would not be a decisive factor, and therefore, such an international army, far from preventing war, could not even always ensure the victory to the side attacked.

And this is not all. What guarantees would there be that such an international army would be put into operation, and that in good time, before the weaker party to a conflict was crushed? What guarantees would there be that the aggressor will really be found and that when he is found who it will really be? These questions are by no means idle, by no means theoretical, but have been suggested by well-known facts of international life very present in the minds of us all. Supposing an armed conflict is going on somewhere, whether it has the official stamp of war or not. First of all it must be established who is the aggressor and who the victim, and whether there has been an infringement of international treaties and undertakings binding upon both parties. In most cases this is by no means a complicated matter. The

unsophisticated man in the street would have little difficulty in giving an answer to these questions and no doubt his answer would be the right one. But when it is international organisations and individual governments who have to give the answer they are not always ready with it, and are reduced to issuing appeals, exhortations and threats simultaneously to both sides. I merely use this supposition for the sake of argument. But now I would ask, should such a conflict arise in the future, what guarantees would there be that the existing or some new international organisation, at whose disposal the international army would be, would be able or desirous to establish which is the guilty side? After all, it can hardly bombard both sides simultaneously, so as to make sure of hitting the aggressor! What, I ask, are the guarantees that a new international organisation, or the existing one with increased actual power, will really be able or willing to use such power for the defence of the weaker, for the protection of the attacked against the attacker.

National egoism has been mentioned here as an obstacle to international action. Apparently this egoism shows itself not only in the decisions of individual governments, but finds its way into the proposals and decisions of the representatives of these governments at international organisations, paralysing their action or giving it an undesirable turn. If such cases have occurred in the past, what is to prevent them from occurring again. More, what are the guarantees that, since this egoism admittedly exists, an international army would not be exploited in the interests of some State which has won for itself a leading position in the international organisation through separate alliances, ententes and agreements? There is not a word about the prohibition of such alliances in the French proposals.

I shall be told that the stronger and more actual the means of pressure at the disposal of an international organisation, the more resolutely will it act. I venture to doubt this. If States represented in such an organisation, either from fear of upsetting their relations with the aggressor, or from other egoistic nationalist considerations, cannot always agree to the use of even feeble means of pressure for the avoiding and ending of conflicts, how much more are they likely to hesitate before applying such a powerful weapon as the dispatch of their own armies. This being so is it to be

expected that States will be sufficiently imbued with the necessary confidence in an international organisation and its impartiality, to entrust their security to it, and place their own national troops at its disposal ?

The question of an international army arose and was discussed, if I am not mistaken, thirteen years ago, when the Covenant of the League of Nations was being drawn up, and it was then decided in the negative. And at that time there was much more faith in international organisations than now. Even five months ago there was more faith in international organisations. As for international differences and national egoism, surely these have not been diminished during the last thirteen years ! A glance over events in the sphere of international economic relations will suffice to convince us of this.

I pass over the question of the extent to which the Soviet Union could be expected to confide its security and a part of its own armies to an international organisation consisting largely of States openly hostile to it, even to the extent of refusing to maintain normal relations with it. The workers and peasants of the Soviet Union are more likely to see in an international army created in such conditions a threat to their country.

I feel bound, therefore, to state frankly that as far as security against war, and, therefore, security of States, are concerned, the French proposals arouse grave doubts in our minds. The Soviet delegation is thereby only strengthened in its conviction that the only infallible way to the solution of the problem of the organisation of peace, the problem of averting war, the problem of assuring security to all nations, is the way recommended by it, the way of general and total disarmament.

It would, however, be wrong to infer from what I have said that the Soviet delegation denies the importance and efficacy of all other ways of consolidating peace short of total disarmament. The Soviet Government has shown its readiness for international co-operation by taking part in a series of international congresses and organisations and by the proposals which it brought before them.

Nor do we underrate the importance of international treaties and undertakings for peace. My Government adhered to the 1928 Paris Treaty at the time and even put it into force with neighbouring States earlier than was done by the Treaty's own

initiators. My Government itself makes a practice of concluding mutual non-aggression pacts which it considers infinitely more significant than multi-lateral or general treaties. It has always proposed non-aggression pacts to all States. These pacts are a kind of acid test for making other States display their spirit, whether peaceful or the reverse. When a pact proposed by us to a State is immediately accepted and put into force, a certain stability in the relations between the two States may be affirmed. When such a proposal is not immediately accepted but considered for years, and even after the first letter of the signature has been appended to it a period of meditation ensues, and the completion of the signature is postponed, there is, naturally, less feeling of confidence. But still more serious doubts of a peaceful spirit arise with regard to States which categorically reject proposals for the conclusion of a pact of non-aggression, either on some excuse or other, or without giving any excuse. It is then obviously impossible to deny the importance of international pacts as a means of discovering the peaceful or hostile attitude of another State. In addition it must be admitted that the conclusion of a non-aggression pact increases the guilt of the aggressor in cases of disturbance of the peace. Such pacts cannot, however, be considered an actual guarantee against war. Total and general disarmament is the only effective guarantee against war and its devastating effects.

The Soviet delegation submitted to the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference a draft Convention for total disarmament, to be realised in the course of four years. This was four years ago, and it will hardly be denied that if our proposal had been accepted at the time, the events in the Far East would not have occurred, there would have been no threats of a new world war, and the economic crisis now being almost universally experienced, would undoubtedly have been less acute.

The idea of total universal disarmament is distinguished from all other plans by its simplicity and by the ease with which it could be carried out, and with which its realisation could be controlled. A plan for total disarmament would eliminate all those difficult and thorny questions which made the work of the Preparatory Commission so long-drawn-out, condemned to sterility the innumerable international conferences of the last few years, held in various capitals on the question of disarmament, and gave rise to

those gloomy forecasts with which this Conference has met. Identical security and equality of conditions for all countries could only be arrived at by means of total disarmament. As regards control it is sufficiently obvious that it would be much easier to find a State out when making tanks, cannon, machine guns, bombing-planes, in spite of international undertaking, than if it were only increasing its output of these weapons above the percentage internationally established. It would be easier to find a State out when training its population in the use of machine guns and bomb-throwing, in the face of international prohibition, than if it were merely increasing its army above the percentage laid down.

I must, however, once again emphasise the fact that the Soviet Delegation has by no means come here merely to put before you yet another time its proposal for total and general disarmament, or to declare that we are determined to have all or nothing, complete disarmament or none at all. We have no illusions whatsoever as to the fate in store for our proposition. Our delegation, ladies and gentlemen, is ready to discuss with you any proposal tending to reduce armaments, and the further such reduction goes, the more readily will the Soviet delegation take part in the work of the Conference. Considering the draft Convention drawn up by the Preparatory Commission altogether inadequate, the Soviet delegation will advocate here its own draft for the reduction of armaments, which, however, it regards merely as the first step towards total disarmament.

I would remind the Conference that the Soviet delegation was the first to propose in its second draft Convention put before the Preparatory Commission, the complete destruction of the most aggressive types of armaments, including :

1. Tanks and super-heavy long-range artillery.
2. Ships of upwards of 10,000 tons displacement.
3. Naval artillery over 12 inch calibre.
4. Aircraft carriers.
5. Military Dirigibles.
6. Heavy bombing-planes, all stock of air bombs and any other means of destruction for use from aeroplanes.
7. All means and apparatus for chemical, incendiary and bacteriological warfare.



The Soviet delegation proposed the complete prohibition of air-bombing, and not only beyond the limits of a definite area. It also proposed not merely to refrain from chemical warfare, but actually to refrain from preparing for it in time of peace.

All these proposals remain in full force for the present Conference.

The Soviet delegation will recommend the progressive proportional method as the most impartial and equitable method for the reduction of armaments, allowing for facilities and exceptions in favour of weaker countries in danger of aggression. It will warmly support any proposals approaching or outstripping its own. It will support the equal rights of all participants in the Conference and equal security for all States.

The country I represent is in a less favourable position as regards security than other countries. Only fourteen years ago, it was the object of an armed attack on all its frontiers, of blockade and of political and economic boycott. For fourteen years it has been the object of indescribable slander and hostile campaigns. Even now many States, including one of the strongest naval powers, do not conceal their hostility to it, even to the extent of refusing to establish normal peaceful relations, and many States maintaining normal relations with it have refused to conclude or confirm pacts of non-aggression. The present events in the Far East, which have evoked universal alarm, cannot but cause special anxiety in the Soviet Union, owing to its geographical nearness to the theatre of these events, where huge armies are operating, and where anti-Soviet Russian *émigrés* are mobilising their forces. Despite all this I am empowered to declare here the readiness of the Soviet Union to disarm to the same extent and at the same rate to which the other Powers, first and foremost those actually on its borders, may agree.

Here I feel bound to express once more that no measures for the reduction of armaments can meet the pressing needs of the present times.

The political and economic differences existing between various States which have become considerably intensified since the Great War and owing to the crisis, are inevitably and rapidly leading to a new armed conflict between nations. This conflict, owing to modern improvements in the weapons of destruction, threatens

humanity with incredible disasters, unprecedented devastation. The impending menace of war is causing universal alarm and arousing universal suspicion. This alarm and suspicion, together with the burden of taxation imposed upon the people for the maintenance by States of huge armed forces, are nourishing and intensifying the present economic crisis, which is felt in all its weight first and foremost by the working classes. In these circumstances the task of the hour is not the repetition of any attempt to achieve the reduction of armaments or war budgets, the realisation of which is bound to come up against tremendous obstacles, but the actual prevention of war, through the creation of effective security against war. This task can only be carried out by means of total and general disarmament.

The Soviet delegation will move a resolution to this effect, convinced as it is that there would be no external obstacle to the carrying out of general disarmament if Governments here represented show their readiness for it.

The sole aim of the Soviet Government is the building up of socialism on the territory of the Soviet Union, and in the face of the successful accomplishment of the first Five Year Plan, of colossal achievements in every sphere of economic life, it seems to the Soviet delegation that what has been obvious from the beginning must by now be as clear as daylight to all and sundry—namely that the Soviet Union requires, neither the increase of territory, nor interference in the affairs of other nations, to achieve its aim, and could therefore do without army, navy, military aviation and all other forms of armed forces. It does, however, require the assurance that there will be no attempts against Soviet territory either and that other States will not interfere in its internal affairs, and that its peaceful economic construction will not be tampered with from without. It will only feel this assurance if other States also agree to give up their armed forces.

Now, when the whole world is going through an unprecedented economic crisis, which is shaking the edifice of the capitalist system to its foundations, the masses of the people suffering from unemployment to an extent hitherto unknown, from universal wage reductions, threatened by still further economic upheavals, the full burden of which the ruling classes readily shift on to their shoulders, must be relieved as far as possible from the threat of the

catastrophe of war which the course of the economic crisis is making more and more imminent. Security against war must be created. This security can never be achieved by roundabout ways, but only by the direct way of total general disarmament.

This is no communist slogan. The Soviet delegation knows that the triumph of socialistic principles, removing the causes giving rise to armed conflicts, is the only absolute guarantee of peace. So long, however, as these principles prevail only in one-sixth of the world, there is only one means of organising security against war, and that is total and general disarmament. One proof of its practicability is the fact that it is proposed by a State with a population of over 160 million. This idea is by no means Utopian in itself ; but it can be made Utopian by its rejection by the other States represented here.

We hope that the responsible representatives of States here present will treat the idea expressed by the Soviet delegation with the seriousness which the problem of assuring to all nations real security against war, real peace, deserves.

*Speech by M. LITVINOV, at a Luncheon given to him by the International Club and the American Committee, Geneva, on February 20th, 1932:*

I thank you for the honour you have done me in inviting me to take lunch with you to-day and giving me an opportunity of speaking to American citizens, a pleasure which I often have to deny myself. Your invitation reminds me once more of the discrepancy between reality and official admissions. Officially, no relations exist between our countries, but nevertheless we know the enormous interest with which everything that goes on in the Soviet Union is followed in your country. The fact that there are more permanent newspaper correspondents from America in Moscow than from any other country is a sufficient proof of this. More visitors from America arrive annually at our capital even than from the continent of Europe. Finally, immense quantities of American machinery and tractors are in use in our factories and giant industrial enterprises, as well as in collective farms, and thousands of American engineers, mechanics and workers are taking an active part in the construction of our country. The people of the Soviet Union are also following the life and literature in America with the greatest interest.

I read in the papers yesterday that as many as 65,000 Chinese troops are gathered at Shanghai, where fighting is going on. It must be assumed that there are at least as many, if not more, Japanese troops. This means fighting between armies running into hundreds of thousands, but officially there is no war. Here we have another example of the discrepancy between official testimony, official admissions, and reality.

But that is not what I wanted to talk about. It seems almost impossible to speak here on any other theme excepting those which are the centre of interest in Geneva—at any rate, international Geneva. Everybody here has one ear filled with talk of

peace and disarmament, and the other with the voice of war, the clash of arms on the field of battle. We are all valiantly pretending that the discourses on future peace drown the voice of present war. When people here exchange impressions of the first weeks of the Conference, it is the thing to answer in a spirit of optimism, referring to the good beginning made and even to the defeat of those pessimists who had shaken their heads dolefully at the start. If I could really believe that optimism would help the Conference to succeed, would be of any use to the cause of disarmament and peace, believe me, Ladies and Gentlemen, you would hear from my lips the most sanguine utterances and rosy prophecies. We all know the Coué system, according to which any illness can be cured if only the sufferer assures himself continually that he is not ill at all, but is, on the contrary, "every day, in every way," better and better. I would agree to adopt this system, telling myself and others every minute that the Conference is going simply splendidly, that every day in every way we are disarming more and more, that peace and quiet prevail in the Far East, that the political independence of China has not been infringed, that the announcement of the separation of Manchuria from China merely happened to coincide with the occupation of Manchuria by foreign troops, and that moral disarmament has blunted the bayonets of both Japanese and Chinese troops, converted cartridges, grenades, and bombs into harmless squibs and fireworks.

Without wishing to cast any aspersions on the methods of the late Dr. Coué, and his disciples for the treatment of the individual, I am bound to confess that I do not believe in this system when applied to the ills of the body politic. Here it seems to me that mere optimism does not always inspire buoyancy and is not invariably a stimulus to action. Indeed, history has taught us that contentment and complacency are far from being the motive powers of progress, while the colouring of facts is fraught with grave danger.

Turning to facts I cannot see that we have more reason for optimism now than we had on the eve of the Conference. The Conference, it is true, has only just been born, after heavy and prolonged birth pangs, and has not yet put on weight or acquired a voice of its own, but the movements it has so far made, the

sounds it has emitted, have not been such as to enable us to discern tokens of its future strength, capacity and powers.

For, after all, up to the present we have had nothing but the general declarations of delegations, we have learned the positions taken up by various Governments in these declarations. There was nothing fresh in all this ; we knew it from the time of the Preparatory Commission. It seems to me that anything new we have heard points rather to a retreat from these positions still farther away from disarmament. While the Preparatory Commission did, at least, discuss limitation and reduction, we now learn, at the Conference itself, that certain Governments declare their entire disagreement with any reduction of armaments whatever, unless preliminary conditions, which, moreover, will be found to be quite unacceptable to the Conference as a whole are fulfilled. We have even heard demands for the increase of armaments, and that by no means from weak States with low armaments. Then there is any amount of questions involving serious principles on which the states represented in the Preparatory Commission differed widely. These differences prolonged the life of the Preparatory Commission by several years, and to judge by the first speeches made at the Conference they are no nearer to solution now.

Taking it all round I can see no grounds for optimism.

If, in addition to all this, you take into consideration that in my opinion, the opinion of the Soviet Delegation, even the reduction of armaments (not to mention limitation) is but a weak palliative, bringing us no nearer to the only aim justifying the Conference being held in the present international situation, after thirteen years of arduous preparations, and that this aim ought to be security against war, and that our appeal for total general disarmament, for the creation of this the only guarantee against war, has found no response at the Conference, you will readily understand that I am the last person from whom to expect a note of optimism.

Those new proposals which *have* been made at the Conference raise fears that the Conference itself might be sidetracked. We have always held that disarmament could only be interpreted either as the abolition or reduction of armaments, and that the Conference should deal with the question of armaments. It

appears, however, that this view of the task of the Conference is not unanimously held. Even at the Preparatory Commission attempts were made to substitute the question of security for that of armaments. The Commission actually went out of its way to discuss questions relating to security, and no little time was spent thereon. These discussions either led to no results or to results which were unsatisfactory to those concerned. I am not a little afraid that this attempt may be repeated at the Conference.

No one can have anything against security, nor has the Soviet Delegation, but we do say that under the political and economic conditions prevailing in most countries, nations and states will only *have* security when no one can attack them, when there are no arms with which to attack, with which to occupy foreign territory, with which to subjugate other nations. The exponents of the opposite view see only security in the more or less levelling of the chances of victory, by the redistribution, or even the increase of armaments. But pre-war history also knew this form of security. Does it really amount to anything more than the time-honoured principle of the balance of power, which ruled pre-war diplomacy? This principle which, at the best, only increased the security of some nations at the expense of others, did not save the world from the most terrible war it has ever known, from which it emerged with even less confidence in security than it had before. Was it really necessary to undergo all the horrors and disasters of World War, to spend thirteen years preparing for a Conference, to contrive all sorts of pacts and international treaties, in order to end up at the old principle of international diplomacy, merely slightly modified and modernised?

We are hearing a great deal about moral disarmament just now. Although we have not yet diminished existing military aggregates by a single unit, we are being asked to go in for moral disarmament. Again, nobody is going to say a word against moral disarmament, against the abolition of chauvinism and jingoism in press, literature, the cinema, school books, toys and the like, against the exposure of forged documents and the whole bag of tricks. I should be the last to object to such proposals, since there can hardly be any other country which has been the object of so much moral poison in press, public speaking, even official documents, as the Soviet Union. I might cite you, citizens of the

United States, to bear testimony to the truth of this. No one knows better than you the attempts continually being made to poison the relations between our countries by systematic organised campaigns of slander, libel and forged documents, campaigns instigated by certain commercial and banking circles, with interests of their own to serve, political adventurers, counter-revolutionary *émigrés*, ready to sell themselves to-day to Japan, to-morrow to China, the next day to any old country.

It is not, then, for us to object to measures directed against such gangsters of the printed and spoken word. But there is a time and a season for everything. Moral disarmament has just been made the subject of an international conference convened by the Danish Government, and the Soviet Union took part in it gladly and played an active part in it. But all this has little to do with the abolition or reduction of armaments, and for my part I am convinced that it is precisely the existence of armaments, and of big scale armaments, and the hopes, by means of these armaments and the help of alliances and treaties of conducting profitable and successful wars, which create chauvinism, that poisoning of the wells of intelligence, which we are being invited to put an end to by administrative means alone.

Nobody will deny that profound differences—economic, political and even territorial—exist between capitalist states. There are countries which consider that neighbouring states are wrongly and illegally occupying land which belong to themselves, hence the agitation for the restoration of infringed rights, for the revision of frontier lines, and the like. But these differences are not to be settled by the fortunate owners of disputed territory merely saying to their neighbours: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive you yours." Not thus is history made, not thus are international relations changed. What we have got to see to is that these grievances, these dissatisfactions should not lead to attempts to alter the situation by armed force, attempts which can only be prevented by the abolition of armaments, by the abolition of armed forces. So long as armed force exists there will be faith in it, and in the possibility of getting the upper hand of neighbours by increasing armaments, and through political combinations, inside or outside of international organisations. And so long as armed force exists chauvinism and militarism in education will



continue. Moral disarmament cannot help here. It is bound to follow on actual disarmament, but can never be a substitute for it. Only when we have finished with the immediate task of the Conference and achieved appreciable success with regard to actual disarmament, shall we be free to discuss measures of moral disarmament also, which then, and then only, are sure to be crowned with a certain degree of success. Until then, in my opinion, the Conference ought not to waste its time and energy on anything else, but should concentrate on the fulfilment of the task for which it was convened, and it will need all its time and energy for that.

I may be told that governments are often compelled by public opinion in their own countries to maintain armaments and pursue chauvinistic policy, and that, therefore, as public opinion becomes more enlightened its pressure will lessen and governments will be more amenable to the idea of disarmament. I cannot share this view. Campaigns of chauvinism and national hatred, the setting of nation against nation, have never yet come from the heart of the masses. Such campaigns are always organised and artificially nourished by small groups interested in war-like preparations, the manufacture of munitions, and war industry, potential war profiteers. They very often succeed in poisoning the minds of the masses for their own ends. Deprive these groups of their base, remove them from war industry, destroy this industry, destroy their hopes of war, and of profits to be drawn from war, and these campaigns will die out of themselves, for they will become pointless. Then you will have true moral disarmament, without the need of any special administrative measure. And so you see moral disarmament can only be brought about through physical disarmament, that is through the abolition of armaments. Once real soldiers have been got rid of, the world will have nothing to fear from tin soldiers.

That, then, is our opinion of proposals for moral disarmament. Such proposals, foreign to real disarmament, are not conducive to optimism at all. It seems to me that those who make them are sure in advance that the Conference will produce no real results; they tell us beforehand: the conference will not bring about disarmament or even any reduction of armaments, so let us go in for less ambitious matters and thus make sure of something.

Anyhow, I consider to spend time on such proposals now would imply a declaration of bankruptcy for the Conference, and would imply that we are convinced that the Disarmament Conference can only pay a penny in the pound.

Perhaps you will now understand why I abstain from hopeful forecasts.

If we attach any importance to the pressure of public opinion on the Conference we must realise that the better informed public opinion is as to all that goes on at the Conference, and the less it buoys itself up with false hopes, and consoles itself with illusions as to progress made, the stronger will that pressure be.

I should be sorry to leave you under the impression that we can see one point only to the exclusion of all others. As I have already said, we do not ignore the importance of security, moral disarmament and all other good things, which may be proposed to the Conference, but we are definitely against their being substituted for disarmament. The more time we spend talking about security and moral disarmament, the less we shall disarm, and the more we really do disarm, the more security and moral disarmament will be achieved.

In conclusion, I should like to remark that people do not always look for the causes of insecurity in the proper place. Some delegates at the Conference, for instance, even regarded the fact that the Soviet Union does not belong to the League of Nations as a cause of insufficient security. It is noteworthy that such misgivings were expressed by representatives of states themselves maintaining no relations with the Soviet Union. This is almost like trying to get a man, whose acquaintance you do not desire, to join your club. If, however, we are to look anywhere, outside of armaments themselves, for factors creating an alarming political atmosphere, mistrust and instability, we are more likely to find them in the existence of political and economic estrangement between several states on the one hand and the Soviet Union, with its 160 million inhabitants, on the other. In this respect we only have to glance at the events now going on on the shores of the Pacific, where three of the biggest Pacific countries, namely, the U.S.S.R., China and U.S.A., are involved in such estrangement. I don't think much imagination and political perspicacity are required to show the extent to which this circumstance has

influenced, if it did not actually cause, present occurrences in the Far East, or to understand that but for this circumstance these unfortunate occurrences might not have arisen, or might have looked quite different.

I am afraid, however, that I am getting on to slippery ground and digressing somewhat from my subject, as well as, it seems to me, abusing your patience. I will, therefore, only return for a moment to my original theme to express the wish that the work of the Disarmament Conference may justify the hopes of the most optimistic of you, and put my more cautious appraisal completely to shame.

## From 1929 to 1931

*Extracts from the speech of M. LITVINOV, delivered on November 6th, 1930, to the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission of the International Disarmament Conference :*

The catastrophic upheavals and disturbances caused by the world war are only now beginning to make themselves felt in all their implacability, and are peremptorily presenting their account to humanity. When advocating the Soviet Draft Conventions for disarmament at the 1927 and 1929 sessions of the Preparatory Commission, I referred to the ever-growing danger of a fresh war; but the Commission at that time regarded this as a too pessimistic view of the international situation, not justified by the circumstances. If the Preparatory Commission were to adhere to this appraisal now, it would find itself at variance with recent declarations by statesmen and the Press of capitalist countries, pronouncing the most gloomy diagnosis of the present international situation, pointing to the anxiety and alarm felt by all with regard to the imminent development of this situation, and even making definite analogies between the times immediately preceding the world war and the present moment.

Indeed, does not the extraordinary intensification of political and economic antagonisms confront us steadily and threateningly—antagonisms finding new and fertile soil in the general economic crisis at present experienced—a crisis not even to be shaken off by anti-Soviet incantations? Does not the existence in Europe alone of something like fifty million persons belonging to national minorities, in some countries comprising one-third to one-half of the whole population, and ever more insistently urging their rights, continue to press upon the international situation? Can we really ignore the significant intensification of the influence on

the destiny of certain states of the most irresponsible, reckless and aggressive groups and parties, in its turn the result of the intensification of international and inter-class antagonisms within capitalist society itself, constituting, as this influence does, a special danger to peace in countries which are fully armed? Does not the determination with which various States are resisting the slightest attempt at disarmament and the energy with which they are carrying out further increase of their armaments, speak to us of the danger of war? Have not the war budgets of five of the biggest States increased by half a billion dollars (i.e. 27 per cent.) since 1926—i.e. during the existence of the Preparatory Commission.

We are not to be misled by any talk of the reduction of armed forces on a national scale in any country. Figures are only convincing when they have been subjected to meticulous and impartial verification and analysis. The number of effectives, for instance, may be reduced, the terms of actual military service curtailed, and at the same time bodies of reserves may be increased, their mobilisation facilitated, the number of aeroplanes and reserves of military stores increased, so that the result is not the diminution but the increase of the destructive power of the armies concerned. If we aim at disarmament, it is the reduction of the general potential of destruction and not partial shifting of items within a given military war budget which we mean.

The opponents of disarmament have for many years been singing hymns to "security," which is in their eyes, apparently, a sufficient and exclusive guarantee of peace. They have attained the creation within the Preparatory Commission of a special "Committee on Arbitration and Security." This Committee successfully concluded its work and drew up model security treaties; treaties have already been signed between many countries, and arbitration agreements concluded; more, the Paris Pact is in existence for the renunciation of war, to which almost all European and non-European States are parties. And has international tranquillity ensured? The danger of war becomes less? The resistance to disarmament weakened? Alas! All these questions must be answered in the negative. The State which I represent can testify from its own experience about a year ago that the Paris Pact has not saved it from incursions from a neigh-

bouring country, party to the Pact, of armed bands and detachments, with all the consequences entailed.

It is perfectly obvious that the mere conclusion of arbitration, regional, or any other treaties whatsoever, and even the solemn signing of a general pact for the renunciation of war, are incapable of creating that international confidence which should enable States to forget the danger of war and to cease intensive preparations for war. Add to this the fact that, under the system of "security" measures, conceived by their authors and exponents, comparative security is only to be created for a single group of countries, at the expense of the "security" of other countries—in other words definitely national or group aims are pursued, and by no means the insurance of the conditions of general peace, so that the chances for general disarmament become in their turn still slighter. Thus the theory "security first," and then "disarmament," must be boldly rejected and the fact recognised that the thesis of "security" at the present time and in the form advocated by its exponents militates against disarmament, and that the exponents of this doctrine are actually working against disarmament or even the reduction of armaments. It is, therefore, no wonder that, among the countries which were the loudest in their demands for "security" guarantees, and which made provident requests to the League of Nations for financial aid in case of attack on themselves, were some in which the chiefs of military staffs were, as is now common knowledge, at the same time devising and carrying out plans for the provocation of war with their neighbours.

What conclusions should be drawn from all this? How are we to protect ourselves against the imminent danger of war? To us, the representatives of the Soviet Union, and exponents of definite socio-economic theories, the impossibility of removing the politico-economic antagonisms of capitalist society, and hence the ultimate inevitability of war is perfectly clear. We believe, however, or we should not be here, that the danger of war might be considerably diminished, or made comparatively remote, by some measure of real disarmament. The greater the degree of the reduction of armaments the less will be the danger of attempting to solve existing antagonisms by armed conflicts.

Not wishing to prolong the session by fruitless discussion, the

Soviet delegation would like to fix the attention of the Commission on at least the more important of them, without the positive solution of which the whole draft Convention will be but an empty shell, in which no contents appertaining in the slightest degree to disarmament can be poured. First and foremost we once more invite the Commission to substitute throughout the draft Convention the words "Reduction and limitation of Armaments" for the term "Limitation of Armaments." Only thus can the impression remaining from the first half of the sixth session be slightly modified—the impression that the Preparatory Commission intends to propose, instead of a reduction, a mere limitation of armaments at the present level, even leaving scope for further increase. The Soviet delegation next proposes a re-examination of the question formerly decided in the negative, of the inclusion among the objects of the Convention of trained reserves, as one of the principal elements of the belligerent power of modern armies, appalling as much on account of the millions which will be sent to the front in time of war, as on account of the hundreds of thousands they maintain under arms. Further, the Soviet delegation holds out for the inclusion in the Convention of reserves of military materials enabling vast armies to be equipped for war. The apparent diminution of armed forces in the form of the numerical reduction of troops is at present more than compensated for by the impregnation of armies with military technical supplies. The same applies, of course, to military aeroplanes in reserve.

Inviting the Preparatory Commission to revert to at least three questions I have enumerated, the Soviet delegation also has in mind a certain alteration in the membership of the Preparatory Commission itself, arising partly out of the coming into power of new Governments in some countries, and also the change in views on the questions discussed in the Commission on the part of some other Governments represented in it previously. We have recently heard from representatives of Governments of certain great States official speeches on the question of disarmament, which are far from corresponding to the views expressed by the representatives of these same States in the Preparatory Commission. We are bound to afford these Governments an opportunity to bring speeches and voting of their representatives at the Preparatory Commission into line with their own public official speeches.

The Soviet delegation contents itself with a proposal for the reconsideration of a minimum number of questions, but a second negative decision on these questions will deprive the Soviet delegation of all interest in the majority of the other questions on the agenda, as being quite unconnected with the question of disarmament or the reduction of armaments.

*Extract from the speech of M. LITVINOV, delivered on November 8th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

Indeed, the shorter the term of service, the greater may be the number of able-bodied men passed through active service. It is only if the Commission decides on the limitation of trained reserves that the question of reducing the term of service becomes of any importance, so that if the Conference agrees to the limitation of trained reserves we shall certainly support the proposal for the reduction of the term of service.

*Extract from the speech of M. LITVINOV, delivered on November 8th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

By adopting the Polish proposal, I think we would not further the cause of disarmament or the reduction, nor even the limitation of armaments. By itself, it might be quite a harmless proposal, if the Commission had adopted some measures of real effective reduction of armaments, but I am very much afraid—judging by what has transpired from to-day's speeches—that we are hardly entitled to expect any real decisions with regard to the reduction of armaments in this Commission.

If the draft Convention should consist only of such innocent and ineffective proposals as the Polish one, it might give a false idea of the work of the Commission, and whatever we do here I think we ought to see that the public at large should understand what has been done. There should be no illusions, no camouflage, and people should see all the shortcomings of the Commission, and it seems to me that such proposals as the Polish one may just



throw a veil over the shortcomings. It is for that reason that I think this proposal of the Polish delegation may be rather harmful than harmless.

*Extract from the speech of M. LITVINOV, on November 12th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

It must be remembered that the Commission is not deciding anything or imposing any obligations. It is merely preparing material for the coming Disarmament Conference. It seems to me that the work of the Conference will be greatly facilitated and stimulated if it be confronted with a draft Convention containing effective measures for the reduction of armaments, even if some powers maintain reservations with regard to certain questions. In any case, there can be no question of unanimous acceptance of the Draft Convention, as the many declarations already made in this Commission plainly show. What does it matter, then, if some reservations come from States opposing this or that measure for the reduction of armaments? Thus isolated, with their reservations, such States might, under pressure of public opinion, change their attitude by the time the Conference is convened, and then unanimity might be reached, not on minimum, but on maximum measures of disarmament. The Preparatory Commission will be performing but poor service to the cause of disarmament and the cause of peace if, instead of this, it aims at screening Governments making reservations and at protecting them from the criticisms of public opinion.

I am speaking here with complete frankness, without any attempt at diplomacy, thinking of nothing but the interests of disarmament, for the Soviet delegation cannot, at this critical moment, speak otherwise with regard to this question which is of such exceeding import for humanity.

*Speech delivered by M. LITVINOV, on November 17th, 1930, at the First Meeting of the Naval Sub-Committee of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

I wish to answer the criticisms made by Lord Cecil in the first place as regards special vessels outside of existing categories.

Lord Cecil's arguments are not convincing, and I cannot see why such vessels should not be limited under the general category of light vessels. We have, for instance, in the list of special vessels attached to the London Naval Treaty vessels built as recently as 1924—surely these should be limited in one way or another. Then I understood Lord Cecil to say that it was impossible to draw any distinction between the Naval Powers because it was difficult to agree as to figures. And that, if we take the figure of the Soviet proposal of 200,000 tons, States with 200,001 tons would have to be treated differently from States which have 199,999 tons. This seems to me almost as metaphysical as the problem of when baldness may be said to begin: After the loss of the two-thousandth or the two thousandth and first hair. Naturally, if we want to draw a distinction between Naval Powers we must insert some figure as to their tonnage. The Swedish delegation also gives figures, namely, 100,000 tons; so Lord Cecil's objection ought to apply to their proposal too, and go to the Spanish amendment which put an "x" to be replaced by a definite figure. If we follow up the argument of Lord Cecil we shall have to treat small and great Powers alike, which is exactly what the Soviet delegation is opposed to.

Lord Cecil has said we cannot reduce armaments until we know what existing armaments amount to. But surely we can get more or less precise information as to existing armaments from the figures given in the *Armaments Year Book* of the League of Nations.

What will be the position if the Soviet proposal for the reduction of naval armaments is rejected and we keep strictly to the limitation of armaments? What would be the tonnage of the various navies? Some idea may be formed from a study of the London Naval Treaty, which is offered to us as the prototype of any future Convention on naval armaments, and has been commended to us in the letter referred to by the President and by the President himself. The outstanding fact is that the total figures for the displacement of the navies of the three Parties to the Agreement came, on March 1st, 1930, to 2,979,000 tons, and by 1936 these figures for the same three Powers are to be 2,989,000 tons. Thus the treaty gives no reduction in naval armaments for the next six years, but at the best stabilisation at the present level of

naval forces. If this Treaty is to become a prototype of a common agreement with regard to general, and not merely naval disarmament, then, indeed, not merely disarmament, but the very reduction of armaments is decided in advance in the negative.

If we consider that the total displacement for cruisers and aircraft carriers (newer than twenty years) built by March 1st, 1930, comes to 814,000 tons, and that for the same categories the London Naval Treaty allows for a total tonnage of 1,222,000, i.e. an increase of 407,200 tons or 50 per cent.—with the disposal by the three Powers of only nine battleships, and precisely those which are oldest, weakest, and perhaps obsolete, we shall have an actual increase in the destructive powers of those navies.

That gives an idea of the result of a disarmament conference conducted only on the methods proposed by the seven States. It is for that reason the Soviet delegation must earnestly insist that something be done for reduction and not only for limitation.

The figures given by me are taken from official American documents which can be put at the disposal of the Commission if desired.

*Extract from the speech of M. LITVINOV, on November 18th, 1930, at the Third Meeting of the Naval Sub-Committee of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

I think the question is a simple one. . . . Even the Covenant of the League of Nations speaks in Article 8 of reduction of armaments, not of limitation. If the Sub-Committee has substituted for the words "reduction" the word "limitation," it has practically infringed the rules of the League of Nations. It is not for me to defend the Covenant of the League of Nations, I only mention this in order that delegates should not be able to take refuge in this Covenant of the League of Nations, as has so often been done here. In any case, we think this question is of the utmost importance and that the world should know what the Preparatory Commission is preparing for. Is it preparing for limitation, augmentation or a decrease of armaments ?

We cannot have too clear an answer to that question. There are no rules which do not admit of exceptions. I can imagine that if we accept a quite rigid form on this point with regard to reduction, that some countries may come before the Conference and

demand some exemption in their favour, but it is not necessary to weaken the meaning of the word "reduction" by introducing such words as "if possible." This would mean that the Preparatory Commission itself is not sure that any reduction is possible. I therefore object to this new amendment.

*Extract from the speech of M. LITVINOV, on November 18th, 1930, at the Third Meeting of the Naval Sub-Committee of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

We know of difficulties in negotiations in London, Washington, and Geneva, dealing with limitation only, and it would therefore seem logical to add the words "if possible" wherever the word "limitation" is used, and even to call the Commission itself "Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament-if-possible Conference."

*Statement by M. LUNACHARSKY, made on November 21st, 1930, at the Twelfth Meeting of the Plenary Commission of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

I do not see how it is possible to argue that budgetary limitation will follow automatically on the figures inserted in regard to the limitation of personnel and war material. You could quite well limit the quantity, and at the same time improve the quality, which would necessarily increase expenditure. This is not provided for in the British text, and the Soviet delegation proposes to provide for and prevent it. If, as Lord Cecil argues, these figures were automatically correlated, budgetary limitation in general would be unnecessary. Unless reduction is mentioned, the British amendment will lose a great deal of its value. I should like a separate vote to be taken on the two amendments, and I shall have a few words to say later in regard to the other amendment.

*Statement by M. LITVINOV, on November 21st, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

We have just finished with that part of the draft Convention which is taken up with questions directly referring to limitation

and reduction of armaments. The Soviet delegation has taken a most active part in this work, trying to get the utmost possible results attainable, if only within the limits of the present draft Convention. Unfortunately, our efforts have been practically in vain. Formally, no doubt, we can, and probably shall, suggest amendments during the third reading, but we entertain no illusions as to the fate of these amendments.

I will refrain at present from a general appraisal of the work of the Commission, merely stating that that part of the draft Convention which has already been gone through does not satisfy the Soviet delegation in the least, and is not in the least in accordance with the tasks which confronted the Preparatory Commission in the opinion of the Soviet Government when it agreed to take part in it. We consider that the chapters drawn up are incapable of even being an adequate framework for decisions as to real reduction of armaments. The Soviet delegation in coming here had in mind nothing but disarmament, or at least considerable reduction of armaments, and not the mere stabilisation of existing armaments—still less their increase for the sake of establishing some sort of military equilibrium between States, which is apparently all that is provided for by these chapters.

The President : I would remind M. Litvinov, that we are not having a general discussion.

M. Litvinov : I am only making a general reservation in regard to Chapter V. The Soviet delegation cannot attach serious importance to the technical and organisational questions which the Commission is now proceeding to discuss. The attitude of the Soviet Government to these questions will depend ultimately upon the measure of the reduction of armaments which may be decided not by the Commission but by the Conference. The Soviet delegation will, therefore, probably abstain from voting on most of these questions. I would like, however, here and now, to give notice of the fact that any solution of these questions which binds the fulfilment of the Convention, control and so on, with the League of Nations and its organs will be unacceptable to the Soviet Government.

Having made this general reservation, the Soviet delegation reserves to itself the right of making supplementary reservations

on individual points in Chapter V if the discussion takes a turn calling for this.

*Statement by M. LUNACHARSKY, made on November 26th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

All the derogations have a common object—namely, to enable any particular State to cancel the whole Convention at a favourable moment, and thus nullify its value, which is small enough already. It is useless to add that a breach of the Convention by one of the signatory States will necessarily serve as a pretext for its infringement by other signatories. I must, therefore, declare that the Soviet delegation cannot accept any system which by means of articles providing for derogations will deprive the Convention of all value and furnish a legal pretext for an increase in armaments.

*Extract from the statement by M. LUNACHARSKY, on November 28th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

What do we find? On the one hand the majority of the paragraphs drafted up to date are calculated rather to provide for the maintenance and sometimes even the increase of armaments than for their reduction; and again we find several delegations trying to transform the discussion on publicity, and the decisions to be taken on the subject, into formulæ legalising and sanctioning the principle of military secrecy.

Not only is publicity being substituted for the reduction of armaments, but an attempt is being made to make such publicity purely ephemeral.

The Soviet delegation adheres to its view that questions of publicity are of no importance until real disarmament becomes an accomplished fact. In view, however, of the present situation, the Soviet delegation supports the opinion of the experts who have endeavoured to insist that publicity should be something more than a mere empty formula.

*Statement by M. LUNACHARSKY, on December 2nd, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

In 1929, the Soviet delegation proposed not only the renunciation of the use of gases in warfare, but also of their preparation in peace time ; this proposal, however, was rejected by the majority of the Commission.

We interpret this paragraph to mean that the use of all gases, including irritant gases, is prohibited.

As regards the text proposed by the French delegation, the Soviet delegation is of opinion that it is not for the Preparatory Commission to legalise the use of these gases by police forces, and it accordingly regards the third paragraph as unacceptable, particularly as one speaker referred to the use of gases by police forces for the purpose of controlling mobs.

*Statement by M. LUNACHARSKY, on December 5th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

Sir, the vote on the draft Convention as a whole has not taken place, and I should like to avoid any misunderstanding. It is understood that the Soviet delegation has only noted the adoption of the text of the draft Convention by the majority of the Commission, and is not included in that majority.

*Statement by M. LUNACHARSKY, on December 9th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

The Polish delegate's logic seems to me somewhat strange. Some dozens of countries are represented here ; how can we be quite certain that after the Conference all these countries will sign the Convention ? I do not see how we can be certain. Dozens of Governments are not represented here, and yet the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics is singled out as the one country which will, perhaps, not sign the Convention. Why ? By what right

do you refer in this manner to my Government rather than to any other Government? I feel obliged to emphasise my point even more strongly since General Kasprzycki's statement, because I cannot see any logic at all.

*Statement by M. LUNACHARSKY, on December 9th, 1930, at the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Disarmament Conference :*

The Soviet delegation has never asked for its reservations or the statement of its attitude to be deleted; it has never urged any such thing.

What we said was: We will not take any share in the preparation of the Commission's report; the majority will draw it up as it thinks fit. Our idea was that the report was to be a true photograph; and we added that, although we were not taking part in that work, we wished to be given an opportunity of making a statement to be appended to the report.

It is quite true that the President told me that that was impossible, for one reason or another. I promptly asked why, and I recalled to the Commission's notice what M. Politis had said in the earlier part of the Session. He then promised that there would be a third part of the report which would embody the statements of all the delegations. No one replied to me, but I was merely asked whether I wished to throw any light on the situation at that juncture. I replied in the negative, and added that it would be time to raise the question after I had made my statement.

And so the question was not settled. The Commission made a very radical alteration in this objective photograph by deleting from the report our proposals and the various reflections of our attitude here; it deleted them from the first part, but kept them in the second. It seems to me that the Rapporteurs ought to say in their Report that, in these circumstances, the document is not an accurate report.



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