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Geneva, 7th December 1925.

REPORT OF M. PAUL-BONCOUR

ON THE

WORK OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL ON  
THE SUBJECT OF THE LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR  
EXAMINATION BY THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION  
FOR THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE.

Under the terms of the Council Resolution dated 26th September, 1925, the Committee of the Council received a mandate as follows:-

1. ....
2. To make the necessary studies for determining the questions which need to be submitted to a preparatory examination with a view to a possible conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments, and to draft definite proposals to be submitted to the Council on this subject.

The Committee of the Council is requested to submit a report on this matter in time for examination by the Council at its session in December.

The Committee of the Council has been unable to draw up a complete list of the questions which should be submitted for examination by the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference. Some of these questions were adopted unanimously while others are still under discussion.

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The Committee of the Council had before it

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OF

- 1) A list of questions proposed by the Representative of the British Empire (Annex I);
- 2) A list of questions submitted by the Delegate of France (Annex II);
- 3) A Memorandum (Doc.C.D.C.15) submitted by the Delegate of Spain from which a list of questions has been drawn up (Annex III)

In the opinion of the Delegate of Belgium as the Committee had the previous day decided to recommend to the Council that any Government not represented on the Preparatory Commission might request that questions particularly affecting it should be examined, the same right pertains to Governments having the right to be represented on the Commission, and the lists in question, submitted by the British, French and Spanish Governments, should therefore all be retained and submitted in their entirety to the Council for examination.

In this spirit the Delegate of France agreed to the British and Spanish lists being studied in the text in which they were actually submitted.

The opinion expressed by the Delegate of Belgium gave rise however to two objections:-

The first, submitted by the Delegate of the British Empire, to the effect that Governments that are not represented on the Preparatory Commission would have no other right than that of submitting a memorandum and supporting it, and that this right does not imply that of enlarging the programme of the Preparatory Commission. Other Delegates, without discussing this interpretation, pointed out that the Commission would not be fulfilling its task unless it submitted to the Council definite proposals based on an

agreed text. In consequence the Committee requested the representatives of France and Great Britain to frame the list.

A first list has been examined. In this list the various questions submitted were grouped one after the other while maintaining the original text. During the examination of this list differences came to light on the one hand relating to the order in which the questions were submitted, and on the other hand, to the principle underlying certain questions proposed by the "delegats of France. The experts were then requested to recast the agreed text in order to arrive at a new basis of discussion, and on this basis the following questions were finally unanimously adopted.

QUESTIONS ON WHICH AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED.

QUESTION I.

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

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

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

QUESTION II.-

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

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

The various forms which reduction or limitation may take in the case of land, sea and air forces: the relative advantages or disadvantages of each of the different forms or methods, for example, the reduction of the larger peacetime units or of their establishment and their equipment, or of any immediately mobilisable forces: the reduction of the length of active services the reduction of the quantity of military equipment: the reduction of the expenditure on national defence, etc.

QUESTION III.-

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

QUESTION IV.-

Can there be said to be "offensive" and "defensive" armaments?

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

QUESTION V.-

On what principle will it be possible to draw up a scale of armaments permissible to the various countries, taking into account, for example:

Population,

Resources,

Geographical situation,

Length and nature of maritime communications,

Density and character of the railways,

Vulnerability of the frontiers and of the important vital centres near the frontiers.

The necessary delays, varying with different States, to transform peace armaments into war armaments.

QUESTION VI.

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

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

QUESTION VII.-

How is it possible to judge the military value of commercial fleets in estimating the naval armaments of a country?

QUESTION VIII.

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

As regards the last two points on the French list no agreement could be arrived at in spite of the attempts at conciliation which were made.

These attempts passed through the following phases:

A. Initial Text.

a) Consideration of the prospects, thanks to the previous establishment of plans of action and of economic and financial assistance, in pursuance of Article 16 of the Covenant - of re-establishing a relative equilibrium between the different countries, as regards their means of industrial and economic mobilisation and the rapidity of such mobilisation.

b) Examination of the principle according to which no Power should have the right to maintain armaments susceptible, in the event of its committing an act of aggression, of placing at its disposal forces superior to those which the State which was the victim of the aggression together with the League of Nations could unite in opposition to it, either by virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant, or through the application of the regional agreements provided for in Article 21 of the Covenant.

The representative of the British Empire, having declared that these two questions stated in too tentative a form the problem of assistance for an attacked State, the principle of which had been laid down in the Covenant of the League of Nations itself, certain experts drew up by common agreement the following text:

B. a) The previous establishment of plans of action and of economic and financial assistance, in pursuance of Article 16 of the Covenant, in such a way as to assure to a State attacked means superior to those of its aggressor as regards industrial and economic mobilisation and the rapidity of such mobilisation.

b) Application of the principle according to which no Power should have the right to maintain armaments susceptible, in the event of its committing an act of aggression, of placing at its disposal forces superior to those which the State which was the victim of the aggression together with the League of Nations could unite in opposition to it, either by virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant, or through the application of the regional agreements provided for in Article 21 of the Covenant.

The Representative of the British Empire, supported by the Representative of Sweden, raised serious objections to this text, and asked that it should in any case be drawn up in an interrogative form, and on much more general lines. He then put forward as a suggestion the following text:-

C. What measures should be taken to make Article 16 of the Covenant effective against the aggressor?

This proposal was subsequently withdrawn by its author. In this connection the Swedish Delegate declared that he would have preferred that the question should not be raised, but that he would have accepted this text.

As agreement had still not been arrived at, the Delegate of Belgium, in the course of semi-official negotiations with the Delegate of the British Empire, proposed the following text:

- D. a) With a view to enabling comparisons to be made between peacetime armaments, to what extent is it possible, under the regime of Article 16 of the Covenant, to supply a State which is the victim of aggression with the necessary economic and financial assistance to ensure its defence by making good the insufficiency of its resources in the face of an aggressor who is placed in a superior position by his economic equipment and by the fact that preparation has been made for the aggression?
- b) How can reductions and limitations of armaments be calculated so that the reduction of a State's forces should be compensated for without any doubt by the aid of those which could, in the event of aggression, intervene rapidly either by virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant or by virtue of the regional agreements provided for in Article 21 of the Covenant?

This text was not, however, acceptable to the Delegate of the British Empire, to whom the Delegates of Belgium and France eventually submitted the following proposal by way of compromise:

- E. In order to enable comparisons to be made between peacetime armaments, to what extent is it possible:
- a) Under the regime of Article 16 of the Covenant, to supply a State which is the victim of an aggression with the economic and financial assistance necessary to ensure its defence;

- b) Under the regime of Article 16 of the Covenant, or under that of the regional agreements provided for in Article 21, to supply it with the necessary military assistance for the same purpose?

How will the effectiveness of this aid be taken into account in calculating reductions and limitation of armaments?

As this last proposal was not accepted, the Committee of the Council could but transmit the question to the Council for examination, after the Delegate of Belgium had read the following declaration, to which the Delegates of France and Czechoslovakia adhered:-

"Belgium cannot understand that a plan for the reduction and limitation of armaments should be drawn up without taking into account the nature, extent and promptitude of the aid which a State against whom an act of aggression is committed might receive.

"If the investigation of this question is not included now in the scheme of preparatory work, Belgium formally reserves the right to demand its inclusion at a later date."



ANNEX I.

QUESTIONNAIRE prepared by Lord Cecil as  
programme for the Preparatory Commission.

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- (a) Is it practicable to limit the ultimate war strength of a country, or must any measures of disarmament be confined to the peace strength?
- (b) By what standards is it possible to measure the armaments of one country against the armaments of another, e.g. numbers, period of service, equipment, expenditure etc.?
- (c) On what principles would it be possible to draw up a scale of armaments permissible to the various countries, e.g. population, resources, geographical position etc?  
(?)
- (d) Admitting that disarmament depends on security, to what extent is regional disarmament possible in return for regional security; or is any scheme of disarmament impossible unless it is general? If regional disarmament is practicable would it promote or lead up to general disarmament?
- (e) Is there any, and, if so, what device by which civil and military aircraft can be distinguished for purposes of disarmament? If this is not practicable, how can the value of civil aircraft be computed in estimating the air strength of any country?
- (f) Is it possible or desirable to apply the conclusions arrived at in (e) above to parts of aircraft and aircraft engines?

## ANNEX II

### MEMORANDUM PRESENTED BY M. PAUL-BONCOUR

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

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

b) Enquiry into the various elements which constitute the armaments of a country in time of peace: the different forms of armaments, the methods of recruiting, training, etc., and their characteristics.

II. What is to be understood by the expression "reduction of armaments"?

The various forms which reduction may take in the case of land, sea and air forces: a critical examination of each form of reduction: the diminution of the larger peacetime units; the diminution of the forces composing them or of those available for military use: the diminution of the length of active service: the diminution of the quantity of war material in use or in stock: the diminution of the expenditure on national defence, etc.

III. For what defensive needs can the various armaments be used?

Length of maritime communications, vulnerable frontiers and great "vital" centres near the frontiers, etc., etc.,

Can there be said to be "offensive" and "defensive" armaments ?

IV. Methods of estimating the effective strength in case of war of a country's peace armaments of all kinds, taking into account the necessary delays in transforming such peace armaments into war armaments.

The special case of States where there is a professional army.

The special case of agricultural States, which do not manufacture war material.

V. Consideration of the prospects - thanks to the previous establishment of plans of action and of economic and financial assistance, in pursuance of Article 16 of the Covenant - of re-establishing a relative equilibrium between the different countries, as regards their means of industrial and economic mobilisation and the rapidity of such mobilisation.

VI. Examination of the principle according to which no Power should have the right to maintain armaments susceptible, in the event of its committing an act of aggression, of placing at its disposal forces superior to those which the State which was the victim of the aggression together with the League of Nations could unite in opposition to it, either by virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant, or through the application of the regional agreements provided for in Article 21 of the Covenant.

ANNEX III

LIST OF QUESTIONS ARISING OUT OF THE MEMORANDUM  
PRESENTED BY L. COBIAN.

- (a) Definition of the term "armaments".
- (b) Is it possible to establish a formula expressing the "level of armaments" of a state, including or excluding potential armaments?
- (c) Has the idea "level of armaments" an absolute and general value, or merely a relative value depending on the conditions of the state concerned and on the general situation at the moment?
- (d) Is there a method by which it would be possible to fix for each State limits within which its armaments might vary without prejudice to the interest of other States and without constituting a threat of the latter?
- (e) Is there any method of ascertaining whether a certain force is organized for purely defensive purposes (no matter what use may be made of it in time of war), or whether on the contrary it is constituted in a spirit of aggression?