

THE LONDON NAVAL CONFERENCE 1930

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LONDON NAVAL
CONFERENCE
OF 1930

By

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PREFACE

In presenting this thesis, the author has purposed to set forth in sequence the political background, aims, objectives, workings and accomplishments of the London Naval Conference of 1930, and to present to the reader a concise picture of conditions that rendered this splendid objective impotent and brought to futility all the earnest endeavors of the great peace loving statesmen of the nations involved.

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CHAPTER I
DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF THE DISARMAMENT PROGRAM
1916-1929

In the early part of 1916 President Wilson made one of his famous "swing around the circle" tours through the middle western part of the United States and delivered a series of speeches on a program of preparedness. Wilson did not desire to throw the United States into the European conflict, but he did see the dire need of adequate protection against invasion. While on this tour, he spoke at the Coliseum, St. Louis, Missouri, Feb. 3, 1916. In his address the President made his momentous pronouncement of the new naval policy of the United States, which was intended to safeguard the "genuine neutrality" against submarine warfare and against the allied blockade. In this address he said, in part:

The danger is not from within, gentlemen; it is from without---the commanders of submarines have their instructions and those instructions for the most part are consistent with the law of nations, but one reckless commander of a submarine, choosing to put his own private interpretation upon what his government wishes him to do, might set the world on fire--There are cargoes of cotton on the seas; there are cargoes of wheat on the seas; there are cargoes of manufactured goods on the seas; and every one of those cargoes may be the point of ignition, because every cargo goes into the field of fire.¹

¹Ray Stannard Baker, The New Democracy, Presidential Messages, Addresses and Other Papers (1913-1917) by Woodrow Wilson, II, 109.

President Wilson pointed out further in his address that, in his opinion, the United States should have a navy more adequate than any other nation in the world. In calling for a program that would give the United States the largest navy in the world, he emphasized the vast coast line that she had to fortify and protect.

President Wilson made this tour of the middle western states to arouse the people of the United States to the necessity of preparing for any emergency that might arise due to the war that was then raging in Europe. This, in itself, was the beginning of a program of national defense and preparedness that paved the way for the huge armament program that followed. The president carried his program to the people simply because Congress had refused to carry out his suggestions. The following current comment shows pretty well the sentiment of the public regarding his move:

Apathy in Congress and dissension in his own party have forced President Wilson to carry the case of preparedness before the real court of authority--the men and women of the U.S. The public will welcome this course and nothing but good will result.²

The speech at St. Louis was his last before he returned to Washington. Bewildered surprise seemed to be the first reaction of editorial writers throughout the country to Wilson's assertion that the American navy ought to be the greatest in the world. This attitude was followed by one of solidarity in an opinion very much in harmony with that

²Editorial, "President Rousing The Nation for Preparedness", Literary Digest, February 5, 1916.

of the president. Evidence of his first victory in Congress came when both houses of that body decisively defeated the "Gore Resolution", a resolution that crippled the President's negotiations with Germany. This change of opinion soon brought about a vast armament and naval building program with Congress furnishing all of the necessary funds.³

The U. S. entered the war, and her fleet grew steadily until, in 1919, when the Versailles Conference opened, its shadow loomed darkly across the Atlantic. In March 1919, at Paris, Mr. Walter Long, the First Lord of The Admiralty, expressed his alarm to Mr. Daniels, and stated that Lloyd George could not support the ideas of the League of Nations unless the United States would agree to cut her big naval program.⁴

Lord Robert Cecil was equally perturbed, and on April 8, 1919, wrote to Colonel House, urging abandonment of the naval program on the plea that competition in armaments between the two chief supporters of the League of Nations would doom it to complete sterility or worse. To Colonel House, Lord Cecil wrote:

My dear Colonel House:

I have found in exalted quarters that some of the recent utterances by high officials connected with the U.S. navy have produced a very unfortunate impres-

³Congressional Record, Congress, Session, LIII, part 4, 3464.

⁴Kenneth G. B. Dewar, "The Naval Conference of 1930", 1920, CVII, 285.

sion. Very possibly they have been misunderstood, but they have in fact conveyed the idea that the naval policy of America is one of expansion: that the American ambition is to have a navy at least as strong or stronger than that of the British Empire, and so on. It is urged with some force that such an attitude is wholly inconsistent with the conception of the League of Nations, and that if it really represents the settled policy of the United States, it could only lead sooner or later to a competition in arms between us and them. To inaugurate the League of Nations by a competition in armaments between its two chief supporters would doom it to complete sterility or worse.⁵

The above letter was discussed by the President and Colonel House, and it was decided that Wilson should authorize Mr. House to reply, agreeing to provide discussions between the two governments regarding naval building of the future, but hinting that the naval program already voted by Congress would not be considered. With these facts in mind Colonel House wrote to Lord Cecil:

I am sure you will find the United States ready to abandon or modify our new naval programme by which I understood you to mean our programme not yet provided for by law, as our naval bill for the next fiscal year has not yet been passed. I am certain that you will find us ready and willing to consult with the British government from year to year regarding the naval programme of the two governments.⁶

Thus a foundation for a disarmament program was laid between the two most powerful nations at the Versailles Conference. It was clearly recognized by both of these countries that there must be a definite disarmament plan set forth by the League of Nations. The delegates at the

⁵Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, 4 Vols., (Boston and New York, 1928), IV, 418.

⁶Ibid., 421.

Versailles Conference realized the importance of the problem of disarmament and were very conscious of the fact that the war which had brought them to Paris was a direct result of the failure of the nations to solve that problem. And, until it was solved, such wars as they had just been through were as sure to come as the dawn of a new day. The peace conference recognized a limitation of national armaments as the very cornerstone of the foundation that it was attempting to lay for a lasting peace, and in two very important chapters of the final treaty it pledged itself to what could be done to bring it about.⁷ In Article 8 of the covenant, it was stated:

The members of the League recognize that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement of common action of international obligations. The council, taking account of the geographical situation and circumstances of each state, shall formulate plans for such reduction--such plans shall lead to reconsideration and revision at least every ten (10) years.⁸

This was the foundation for the conferences of world powers regarding the question of disarmament programs.

France, however, in her contention regarding an armament arrangement between the powers, wished the League to possess sufficient military and naval forces to guarantee her safety against the repetition of an invasion by a re-

⁷Edward M. House, What Really Happened At Paris, (New York, 1921), 371.

⁸"The Covenant of The League of Nations", World Peace Foundation, III, July, 1920, 3.

juvenated Germany. The original French project for a League of Nations submitted to the commission, but not taken as a basis of discussion called for:

A military force supplied by the various member states--to investigate all military questions affecting the League and to inspect international forces and armaments in various countries.⁹

On the two subjects of an international army and armaments control, the debates were prolonged, but France was finally forced to drop her demands for an international army and an international staff. However, she fought strongly for a permanent body to plan and prepare the military and naval program. In her desire for protection and safety, France finally consented to the plan prepared by Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson, and, upon the advice of Clemenceau, at a moment when every delegate at the convention expected the debate to open, voted unanimously to accept the League of Nations.¹⁰

France supported the League of Nations on the definite understanding that the United States and Great Britain would guarantee the security of France. The United States Senate rejected the Versailles Treaty primarily because of the League of Nations, thereby depriving France of the protection that she desired and felt, at the time of her acceptance of the League, that she was getting.

⁹D. H. Miller, The Drafting of The Covenant, 2 Vols., (New York, 1928), I, 207.

¹⁰George B. Noble, Policies and Opinions at Paris, 1919, (New York, 1935), 142.

Following the close of the Versailles Conference, the rejection of the treaty by the United States Senate, and the negotiating of a separate peace with Germany, the world powers met at Washington, D.C. in 1921, in an initial attempt to carry out the foundational plans for disarmament.

It was at the Washington Conference that Mr. Hughes dropped a bombshell by making a definite proposal for the destruction of a number of specific ships.¹¹ To say that the French were not pleased at these proposals at the conference would be putting it very mildly, but the American proposals were sound and practical, because the aim of the United States was parity. When the conference ended, the American People thought that it had been achieved in all classes of ships. This was not the case. A definite proposal had been presented by the United States to limit the total tonnage of cruisers and destroyers to 450,000 tons for the United States and Great Britain, but a thorny discussion on submarines intervened and the whole question was shelved.

The conference at Washington ended with parity in battleships with the ration of 5-5-3-1½-1½ for the five powers of the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan. By the Washington Treaty,

¹¹Naval War College, International War Documents, Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, 1921, (Washington, 1923), 7-14.

the United States was to retain a total of 500,650 tons in capital ships; the British Empire, 580,450 tons; France, 221,170 tons; Italy, 182,800 tons and Japan, 301,320 tons.¹²

The total capital ship replacement tonnage of each of the contracting powers was not to exceed in standard displacement, for the U. S., 525,000 tons; for the British Empire, 525,000 tons; for France, 175,000 tons; for Italy, 175,000 tons, and for Japan, 315,000 tons.¹³ None of the contracting powers was to construct a capital ship exceeding 35,000 tons.

Accordingly, by the terms of the Washington Treaty, the U. S. proceeded to scrap twenty-eight battleships, fifteen that she was then building and thirteen old ones. Great Britain followed suit by scrapping twenty built and four that she was building.¹⁴ This was a big achievement, but it left France dissatisfied with the ratio allotted to her.¹⁵

Great Britain and Japan proceeded to design and lay down ten-thousand-ton cruisers, since the Treaty of Washington covered only the retaining and scrapping or building of capital ships. By 1926 both of these countries were

¹²Ibid., 295.

¹³Ibid., 296.

¹⁴Ibid., 302-207.

¹⁵Paul Chock, "French Naval Policy", Brasseys Annual, 1930, 67.

superior to the United States in the class of the ten-thousand-ton cruisers. Suddenly the U. S. awoke to the fact that she had only two ten-thousand-ton cruisers against six for each the British and Japanese had.¹⁶

It was the business of the League of Nations to discover some path to disarmament. Finally, in December, 1925, there was constituted by the council of the League of Nations the preparatory committee. It was the specific duty of this committee to arrange for disarmament conferences.¹⁷ This committee met for its first session on May 16, 1926.

The Washington Conference had failed to settle the question of tonnage ratio of submarines and cruisers, so the first problem of the preparatory committee was one of a complex issue, since Great Britain and Japan had gone materially ahead in the building of ten-thousand-ton cruisers.

Briefly, it was the consensus of opinion that America had been tricked out of parity in the Washington Conference. The President, resorting once more to his constitutional authority, proposed another conference, where additional attempts might be made to disarm. France and Italy sent flat, but polite refusals. Great Britain, the U. S. and Japan met at Geneva on June 20, 1927. This conference

¹⁶Ibid., 237.

¹⁷Charles H. Livermore, Fifth Yearbook of The League of Nations, (Brooklyn, 1925), 57.

accomplished absolutely nothing, and came to a conclusion in August of the same year.¹⁸

Following the Geneva Conference, there came the Kellogg Pact signed at Paris on August 27, 1928, in which all of the leading powers renounced war as an instrument of national policy.

This was followed by the American Cruiser Bill providing for fifteen new cruisers and an aircraft carrier. This bill was signed by President Coolidge on February 13, 1929. In April 1929, the preparatory committee met again to endeavor once more to discover a formula that would reconcile disarmament and security. One of the questions constantly arising was whether naval strength should be measured in terms of total tonnage of all ships, or whether it should be measured in terms of so many individual battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines.

It seemed to be the consensus of opinion of the powers involved that the large battleship was passing out of existence. However, naval authorities were opposed to the abolition of the large battleships.¹⁹ The submarines, aircraft, and mines have limited the activities and uses of the large battleships, but they will not justify the complete abolition of the dreadnaught. So long as one side

¹⁸David Hunter Miller, The Peace Pact of Paris, (New York and London, 1928), 3.

¹⁹Dewar, "The Naval Conference 1930", The Nineteenth Century, CVII, 289.

possessed the naval instruments of warfare, the other side followed suit in order to guarantee security.

Back of the big battleship was the designer who was very anxious to have his country continue to use ships of his creation.

The number and size of battleships are governed by the battle fleet strength of possible opponents, but the number and size of cruisers depend mainly upon the interests they have to defend. The U. S. was very desirous to have parity in this class with Great Britain.²⁰

The destroyer is really a small cruiser required for purposes of torpedo attack and defense with the battle fleet, for anti-submarine duties, and for the protection of trade in terminal areas. Great Britain proposed parity of 200,000 tons. Since the passing of the Cruiser Bill by the Congress of the United States in 1929, the U. S. had gained considerably in the cruiser line. To meet the above proposal of Great Britain would mean the destruction of more than 90,000 tons for the U. S.²¹

However, prior to the opening of the London Conference, there prevailed in the U. S. an atmosphere of optimism. This was due largely to the joint work of Mr. Ramsey McDonald and President Hoover, and all serious difficulties in the naval tonnage question between their respective

¹⁹ ²⁰Ibid., 292.

²⁰ ²¹Ibid., 293.

countries had been taken care of.

Japan, from all accounts, was very anxious to do her share in making the conference a success. She was in sympathy with the Anglo-American views on the postponement of the capital ship replacements, and on the limitation of the so-called auxiliary craft, i.e., cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. The U. S. was known to favor an Anglo-American-Japanese pact, in case another five-power pact failed.²²

According to K. K. Kawakami, a Japanese statesman, Japan went to the London Naval Conference with policies and demands that were reasonable. Of this he stated further: "Japan comes to London with a sincere desire to contribute towards international harmony and accord."²³

France was very much afraid of the London Naval Conference. The Paris Temps declared in October, 1929:

All controversies are premature. The conversations between the interested governments from now to January will permit them to reach a basis for understanding on many questions. Upon the question of interdependence by land, sea, and air, France could only give way with utmost difficulty.²⁴

It was quoted further in the article:

No one knows what the future reserves for nations as for men. That Great Britain and the U. S. have a firm

²²Hector G. Bywater, "The London Naval Conference", The Nineteenth Century, CVI, 718.

²³K. K. Kawakami, "Japan and The London Naval Conference", The Nineteenth Century, CVI, 142.

²⁴Editorial, "French Fears of The London Naval Conference", Literary Digest, October 26, 1929, CIII, 15.

desire to do the best in all circumstances to serve the cause of peace rejoices the whole world. It remains to be seen how without a formal alliance and without a permanent entente, these two powers will acquit their duty while their respective positions, their methods of action, and even the condition of their existence are in no wise the same.²⁵

Although the preparatory committee of the League of Nations had planned that the next naval conference be held at London, in January, 1930, it remained the duty of the British Government to issue the official invitation to the conference. The following is the text of the official invitation which was signed by Arthur Henderson, British Foreign Secretary, and handed to Ambassador Davis in London, on October 7, 1929. It read, in part:

I have the honor to transmit to your excellency with copies of the notes which I am today addressing to the French, Italian, and Japanese ambassadors in London, inviting the French, Italian, and Japanese governments to participate in a five power conference to deal with the position of naval disarmament, which it is proposed hold in London the latter part of January next.²⁶

In the invitation of the British Government, it was stated that the question of parity, the destruction of the submarine, the question of determining battleship strength, and the subject of national security were the chief issues to be considered at the conference.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 16.

²⁷ James Thayer Gerould, "Invitation to The London Naval Conference, 1930", Current History, November, 1929, XXXI, 359.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFERENCE IN SESSION

In the previous chapter an attempt was made to give a brief diplomatic or political background for the calling of the London Naval Conference. Before going into the working of the Conference, it is also necessary to review the situation prior to the opening day.

The preparatory stage of all international conferences is of utmost importance. Their success or failure may depend upon the extent to which difficulties have been foreseen and the thoroughness with which difficulties have been removed. The London Naval Conference was no exception to this rule.

It was the speech of Ambassador Hugh Gibson of the United States, before the Preparatory Commission at Geneva on April 22, 1929, reflecting as it did the views of President Hoover, that offered a new basis for the solution of the Anglo-American Naval Controversy, and led to the renewed diplomatic negotiations between the world's two greatest naval powers. In this address Mr. Gibson said:

Our first duty is for each of us to examine all phases of the problem before us with a view to discovering what measures of concessions can be offered by each delegation-----Since our last meeting, the nations of the world have bound themselves by solemn undertaking to renounce war as an instrument of

national policy. We believe that this agreement affirming that humanities will be at peace will advance the cause of disarmament by removing doubts and fears which have in the past constituted our principal obstacle-----¹ My country's defense is primarily a naval problem.¹

Thus he based his plea for readjustment on the signing of the Kellogg Pact for the renunciation of war.

With the return of Mr. Ramsey McDonald as head of the second British Labor Government on May 30, 1929, negotiations for the settlement of the British-American cruiser controversy were begun. These negotiations continued throughout the summer of 1929, and culminated in the visit of the British Prime Minister in October. With the exception of a few technical points, an agreement was reached on all outstanding issues. What the Hoover-McDonald agreement proposed was a settlement of the cruiser controversy, which had wrecked the Geneva Conference. At Geneva the United States had asked for parity between the fleets of the two countries at a tonnage level of 250,000 to 300,000 tons, each country having the right ~~to~~ build the type of vessel best suited to its own needs. Because of its lack of naval bases, the United States preferred 10,000 ton cruisers with eight inch guns. The British Government on the other hand preferred small six inch gun cruisers and asked for a minimum of seventy ships of this class, which it regarded as indispensable for the protection of the far

²⁶ 1League of Nations Monthly Summary, May, 1929, IX,
136-137.

flung trade routes of the Empire. The Hoover-McDonald agreement proposed that the cruiser class be divided into two categories--large eight inch gun ships and small six inch gun ships. The large ships were to be limited as to number and the smaller craft limited as to size. The United States was to be allowed a superiority in large ships and Britain was to be allowed superiority in the smaller ships.

This provisional settlement, which came to be known as the Rapidan agreement, because of its conclusions during the talks between the President and the Prime Minister on the banks of the Rapidan River, narrowed the margin of difference to three eight inch gun cruisers. Great Britain abandoned its demand for a total of seventy cruisers and agreed to a minimum of fifty ships totaling 339,000 tons. Fifteen of these were to be eight inch gun cruisers, while thirty-five were to be smaller six inch gun vessels. The United States requested twenty-one large eight inch gun cruisers and enough smaller ones to bring the total to 315,000 tons. The British would agree to only eighteen large eight inch gun cruisers. It was agreed to leave the final settlement of this problem to the Conference.²

No such negotiations were undertaken with France. For ten years France had resisted the Anglo-American method of

²Publications of the Department of State, Press Releases, London Naval Conf., Nos. 1-13, Oct. 5, Dec. 28, 1929, 27-29.

limitation, and at Geneva had put forward a thesis which would make the degree of disarmament depend on the extent of security. Furthermore, France held that land, air, and naval disarmament should be considered as a whole and not separately; and that naval strength should be measured by total tonnage and not by categories. On December 20, 1929, the French Government forwarded to other naval powers a memorandum setting forth its position. She emphasized the following points:

That the size of the French navy must correspond with national needs, the size of the colonial empire, and length of trade routes.

That naval needs may be modified by any guarantee of security giving effect to the League of Nations system of collective action against an aggressor.

That the Kellogg Pact in its present state cannot be regarded as increasing security.

That naval limitations cannot be achieved solely by the application of mathematical ratios.

That the work at Geneva revealed the interdependence of land, air, and naval armaments.³

There were no attempts to discuss the above issues prior to the opening of the Conference, but they definitely showed France's position on the matter.

Following Great Britain's invitation to the Conference, diplomatic conversations between France and Italy were begun. Italy, following a previously announced policy, declared its readiness to reduce naval armaments to any level however low, providing that it was not exceeded by any other Continental European power. France however took the position that naval parity with Italy would in fact mean

²⁸³Ibid., 102.

inferiority for France, as the French fleet must patrol through seas, while the Italian fleet was confined to the Mediterranean. In its memorandum of December 20th, the French government suggested as a possible solution of a regional problem, a pact along the lines of the Four Power Pacific Treaty of the Washington Conference. This issue remained unsettled, however, when the London Conference convened in January.⁴

On its way to the Conference the Japanese delegation stopped at Washington D. C. in December and private conversations with the American delegation began. The Japanese claim for a ratio of seventy percent in auxiliary surface craft, and particularly in the category of 10,000 ton cruisers, was explained to the American delegates and to the press. Points of difference were left for solution at the conference.

The preliminary negotiations had resulted in a virtual solution of the outstanding differences between the United States and Great Britain, and a tentative tonnage agreement based on the Anglo-American thesis of disarmament. They had clarified, but not settled, the American-Japanese differences. No solution for the French issue of security had been found and no basis for a compromise between France and Italy.⁵

⁴Ibid., 103.

⁵Ibid., 103.

The Conference passed through three distinct phases. The first phase was from the opening of the session to Feb. 17, when the fall of the Tardieu Cabinet in France forced a suspension of activities; the second phase was the interlude between Feb. 18 and March 6 when, owing to the absence of the French delegates, discussions were confined to matters concerning the U. S., Japan, and Great Britain; the third phase after the return of the French Delegation, when attempts were made to deal with the question of European security and the differences between France and Italy.⁶

The Conference was opened on January 21, 1930, in the gallery of the House of Lords by His Majesty the King, George V, whose speech was heard over the whole civilized world. To the delegates from the leading powers of the world, he said:

It is with sincere satisfaction that I am present to welcome the delegates from the leading powers of the world assembled with the object of eliminating the evil results of wasteful competition in naval armaments-----

Since the great war all peoples have determined that human statecraft shall leave nothing undone to prevent a repetition of that grim and immense tragedy-----

I earnestly trust that the results of the Conference will lead to an immediate alleviation of the heavy burden of armaments now weighing on the peoples of the world, and also, by facilitating the work of the League Preparatory Commission on Disarmament, hasten the time when a general disarmament conference can deal with this problem in an even more comprehensive manner. In

⁶William T. Stone, London Naval Conference, 104.

this hope I shall follow your deliberations with the closest interest and attention.⁷

After the departure of the King, Mr. Stimson, delegate from the U. S., then arose and nominated the Hon. Ramsey McDonald, Prime Minister of Great Britain, as chairman of the conference. This motion was seconded by Mr. Tardieu of the French delegation.⁸

In his speech accepting the chairmanship of the conference, Ramsey McDonald called attention to the fact that the eyes of the world were upon the meeting they were setting into operation. He pointed out two very definite things that they must consider in their proceedings. They were, first that there was a different need due to different geographical positions, world responsibilities, and points of attack in event of war. A ton used in ships for one purpose was entirely a different thing from a ton used in a ship for another purpose; and, second that armament must be discussed separately.⁹

The first day's session adjourned after delegations of each country voiced a hearty acceptance of the welcome given by His Majesty the King.

As Ramsey McDonald had pointed out, the eyes of the world were upon this Conference. The New York World of

32 ⁷Proceedings of the London Naval Conference 1930, Pub. by the Dept. of State, Conference Series, 6, 27. (Hereafter cited as London Naval Conf.)

33 ⁸Ibid., 28.

34 ⁹Ibid., 30.

that date said:

The Washington Conference failed to apply to ships of 10,000 tons or less and because of this failure, there has been, and is now in progress, competitive building of cruisers and submarines. The London Conference will have achieved its main objective if it succeeds in applying the principal of limitation to all classes of ships. Whatever agreement is reached must be internationally justified and internationally agreed to.¹⁰

This showed that the public was expecting the conference to act on the regulation of cruisers and submarines, which were not included in the Washington Treaty.

Before the further proceedings of the Conference can be discussed, it is necessary to go briefly into the demands of each of the powers attending the sessions, because this Conference must concern itself with new constructions to be authorized for a definite period of years.

The demands of the five powers were as follows:

1. The U. S. asked for parity with Great Britain in all classes, and asked that large and small cruisers be counted as one class. According to the prevailing naval opinion, which was reluctantly modified in Sept., 1929, it was desirable to concentrate the whole American cruiser tonnage in 10,000 ton ships carrying eight inch guns.

2. Great Britain conceded parity in principal but asked that large and small cruisers be considered as separate categories with parity in each.

3. Japan asked for a ratio of seventy percent in big cruisers and for a larger ratio in other categories.

4. The British Empire, particularly Australia, and the United States insisted that Japan remain at sixty percent in big cruisers and desired that she remain at sixty percent in all other categories.

5. The French position is a much more difficult one to describe because not all the data are publicly available. Broadly speaking, one may say that in fixing the claims the French were subject to pressure from two dif-

³⁵ 10 Editorial, "What They Are Trying To Do At London", Literary Digest, Jan. 25, 1930.

ferent directions. The British and the Americans were pushing down on them to reduce the level for construction of new cruisers and submarines. The Italians were pushing up on them. There were three conflicting national policies. The British wanted the French to reduce their naval equipment so the British could maintain as inexpensively as possible the Two-Power Standard, or at least decisive superiority as against the Continent. The Italians claimed parity with France, while France was determined to maintain superiority over Italy. The essential French claim was for a fleet equal to the Italian in the Mediterranean, to the German in the Atlantic, plus a few ships in other waters.¹¹

In the opening addresses made by the heads of the various delegations, nothing definite was stated by any of them regarding their countries' demands. Each one emphasized the fact that a true spirit of cooperation was necessary in order to accomplish the objectives set forth; namely, naval disarmaments in order to check competitive naval building of light cruisers and submarines.¹²

In a press conference with Secretary Stimson on Jan. 19, 1930, the following statement was released for the press:

Answering questions as to our attitude toward the desires of the French and Italians, Secretary Stimson stated that America is in the position of a disinterested friend. We are anxious that their problems be settled in a way satisfactory to all. Both countries have agreed that the general object of this Conference is to take all classes of naval armaments out of the realm of competition and put them on a basis of agreement and thereby eliminate all possibilities of suspicion, rivalry and irritation. Both countries have agreed that it is essential to accomplish this. They agreed furthermore that each country in the Conference

36 ¹¹Walter Lippman, "The London Naval Conf. and American View", Foreign Affairs, VIII, 503-504.

37 ¹²London Naval Conference 1930, 43-59.

should go away satisfied and Italy and France will do everything they can to promote such a result.¹³

The conference resumed its meeting on January 23, 1930, in the St. James Palace in London. Mr. McDonald presided. The meeting was called to order and the first order of business was the selection of a vice-chairman and a secretary general. The nominations for the latter were called for first. Sir Maurice Hankey of the Italian delegation was nominated and unanimously elected.¹⁴

On the question of vice-chairman, it was agreed that the chair, in case of Mr. McDonald's absence, be filled by the head of each delegation taken in alphabetical order, using the English alphabet.

It was then decided that for the purpose of dealing with the detailed work of the Conference, the whole Conference should be resolved into committees. That meant that the Conference would have two types of meetings: The original meeting of the Conference, giving final effect to the decisions of the committees. There was also to be a working committee of the conference dealing with the detail arrangements of the Conference.¹⁵

The French Government issued a memorandum which declared that the French navy had been reduced by more than 450,000 tons since 1914. It also stated that the French Naval budget was now 18% below the pre-war budget. She

¹⁴London Naval Conf. 1930, 35.

¹⁵Ibid., 46.

said that no other power had made as great a reduction.¹⁶

The state of the French fleet on Jan. 1, 1930, was published in the London Times. It showed a total of 681,808 tons in all classes of vessels. France's proposal was that the other powers take the French naval program as a basis for all rebuilding programs between 1930 and 1936. According to the program, France would have to build 240,000 tons or 40,000 annually. She stated further that she would not reduce this program unless the guarantees of security were greatly increased.¹⁷

Italy objected to this plan because there had not been a determined ratio and a maximum level of tonnage. This objection was recorded in the third plenary session of the Conference in an address by Signor Grandi of the Italian delegation, in which he said:

I must however state that, while the Italian delegation is prepared to take part in the discussions of the above points, it does not see its way clear to committing itself on any of the questions of method or on any special point of the disarmament problem until the two fundamental questions, the determination of ratios and the maximum levels of global tonnage have been settled.

I am fully convinced that only by facing squarely the difficulties to which I have called your attention can we hope to attain our purpose, which is that of reducing armaments to the lowest possible level.¹⁸

This warning of Italy was duly recorded and the Conference proceeded with the question of methods of reductions. Italy again recalled the importance of adjusting the question

39 ¹⁶Stone, London Naval Conference, 104.

40 ¹⁷Ibid., 104.

41 ¹⁸London Naval Conf. 1930, 65.

of ratios. In a speech by Mr. Grandi, the Italian minister, before the plenary session, he emphasized the unfavorable geographical position of Italy, when he said:

Let us now examine Italy's position in relation to the problem of naval defense. To all intents and purposes, Italy is an island, deficient in some of the most essential raw materials; it is set in an inland sea. Although a Continental power----her scanty natural resources make her dependent upon the sea--for us the sea is our life. Italy has a great length of coast. The absolute needs for defense of her very existence would, therefore, fully justify insistence on relative superiority of strength, but in any case she has the right to expect that she will not be asked to deprive herself of her present right to naval armaments on a level with those of any other Continental European power. The Italian delegation hopes that the principal of one power standard may be applied at the lowest possible level by Italy in her relation to continental European countries.¹⁹

Thus it was clearly evident that Italy was demanding parity with France, while France was desirous of maintaining superiority in Continental naval strength. France was still holding out for what she termed her "Transactional Proposal" at the Geneva Conference. This subject was discussed by Mr. Gibson, delegate from the U. S., in an address to the third plenary session. He said that it was most important that the conference get down to business in discussing methods of disarmaments. The problem of methods of limitation of naval armaments was first considered by the Preparatory Commission for the disarmament Conference at Geneva in 1926. The committee on methods at that Conference worked for some months trying to find a single ideal method by which naval limitation could be achieved. The various

¹⁹Ibid., 56.

powers held divergent opinions as to what constituted an ideal method. Out of all this discussion and study grew two schools of thought; that of limitation by categories and that of limitation by total tonnage; Limitation by categories fixes the tonnage which each country may use for each type of vessel and thereby fixes the total tonnage. Limitation by the global method fixes the total tonnage for each navy and allows each country to apportion that tonnage as she sees fit among the various types of ships.

In an endeavor to break the deadlock between these two schools of thought, M. Paul Boncour, a member of the French delegation at Geneva, brought forward a compromise proposal. It provided for the allocation of total tonnage for the navy of each nation, the same to be divided into four categories, capital ships, aircraft carriers, surface vessels, and submarines. The amount of tonnage in each of the above categories was to be decided by each country. However, any change which they might wish to make was to be published to the other contracting powers one year in advance. Briefly this was the French Transactional Proposal.²⁰

The last plenary session that the original French delegation attended was held on Feb. 11, 1930, which met ex-

²⁰Ibid., 67-69.

pressly for the purpose of discussing the status of the submarine.

This meeting was opened by the Chairman Ramsey McDonald and, after preliminary committee reports, he called for a statement from each delegation regarding the position of their respective countries on the submarine question.

Mr. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the British Admiralty, was the first to speak. He asked for the total abolition of submarines, basing his demands on these points: first, for the general interests of humanity; second, submarines are offensive, not defensive instruments; third, abolition of submarine craft would be a substantial contribution to world disarmament and peace; fourth, abolition of submarines would provide a substantial financial relief to the nations; fifth, it would do away with the undue risks submarine service demands of its personnel.²¹

Mr. Stimson spoke for the United States delegation. He too urged the abolition of submarines. His position was based not on an emotional appeal as was that of the British speaker, but was a practical and common-sense argument for destruction or at least drastic limitation of this most expensive and most destructive of all types of modern naval equipment.²²

Mr. Fenton of the Australian delegation and Mr. Ralston

²¹London Naval Conf. 1930, 81.

44 ²²Ibid., 84.

of the Canadian delegation concurred with the First Lord of the Admiralty, taking a definite position for the abolition of submarine craft.

These reports were followed by that of Mr. M. Leygues of France. His position was as follows:

The submarine is a warship, it is an indispensable weapon; the use of submarines can and should be regulated like that of any other warship.

He stated further that the motion to abolish submarines would bring up these questions: first, the legal right of any nation to possess any weapon derived from the process of science and technical improvements; second, the right of the lesser naval powers to possess a navy corresponding to their requirements for national defense; third, the right of freedom of the seas. With these facts in view, Mr. Leygues said that France would not accept the abolition of submarines, but they were willing and ready to concur in an international agreement regulating the use of the underwater craft. He ended his remarks with this motion:

A committee shall be appointed to prepare an agreement open for signature by all naval powers, forbidding submarines to act towards merchant ships otherwise than in strict conformity with the rules either present or future to be observed by surface warships.²³

The Italian speaker, Mr. Grandi, stated that Italy was willing to concur with France in limiting the use of submarines against merchant ships, but that she was also willing to accept the total abolition of submarine warfare,

45 ²³Ibid., 88.

should the other powers reach such an agreement.²⁴

The representative of Japan, Admiral Takarhe, agreed with France, strongly maintaining that the submarine was essential to the safeguarding of Japan's island empire, but expressed willingness to submit to regulations regarding size, number and use of submarine craft.²⁵

After all the delegates had reported, the American delegation brought forward this resolution:

That a committee shall be appointed to study and report to the conference as to the possibility of agreement on the following questions:

- (1) Abolition of submarines,
- (2) Regulation of the use of submarines by subjecting it to the rules of war governing the use of surface craft,
- (3) Regulation of the unit size of submarines.²⁶

Following the acceptance of this resolution, the Conference adjourned for the day.

The American delegation was highly pleased with the work of this session, as was shown in the remarks of Mr. Stimson at a press conference on this same date. Mr. Stimson's words were to the effect that this agreement regarding submarines was the first definite agreement to be reached by the Conference. This alone, he said, was worth the visit of the American delegation to London, and the fact that the proposal to limit the use of submarines was made by the French delegation was the most hopeful omen yet to appear at the

²⁴Ibid., 89.

⁴⁶ ²⁵Ibid., 91.

⁴⁷ ²⁶Ibid., 92.

Conference.²⁷

Senator David A. Reed, a delegate at the Conference, voiced the same opinion in a radio address delivered on Feb. 16, 1930. Senator Reed said in part:

We believe that this agreement is in itself an important accomplishment because we remember that it was the submarine campaign that brought America into the World War.²⁸

Thus ended the first phase of the Conference. During the absence of the French delegation, the American, British and Japanese continued informal discussions on matters concerning only these nations and by March 6th had laid the framework of an agreement that it was hoped would be fitted into a five power treaty.

The main problem in the minds of the delegates was to find a solution to the security question as advanced by France. Before leaving the Conference, the French delegates had insisted that France must be guaranteed security before she would consider limiting her existing naval program of 724,000 tons. To solve this problem, the idea of establishing some sort of Consultative pact to supplement the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact was suggested and given favorable consideration by some of the delegates.²⁹

This brings us up to the third phase of the Conference.

²⁷London Naval Conference, Speeches and Press Statements by Members of the American Delegation, 23.

²⁸Ibid., 26.

²⁹New York Times, March 10, 1930.

Following the formation of the second Tardieu cabinet and with the return of the French delegation, with M. Briand as chairman, the Conference took up in earnest the work of preparing a treaty that would be acceptable to all five nations and would accomplish the avowed purpose of the Conference, the limitation of naval armaments and the furtherance of World Peace.³⁰

In March there began a series of highly important political conversations. Mr. Briand conferred with Mr. Stimson and, with Mr. McDonald, broadcast an address in which he implied a British refusal to give further guarantees of military security to France. Mr. McDonald declared in part:

We will not agree to any treaty based on an entangling military alliance. Such a treaty would undo in spirit and in policy the work of the Conference. But we will try to secure as a part of the agreement a pledge of good will and pacific intention similar to that made by the President of the United States and myself after we had convinced ourselves that a naval agreement was possible-----

Such a pledge ought to allow programs to be reduced to a minimum if we have any confidence in each other's signatures.³¹

The position of Great Britain was influenced no doubt by the views of the American delegation concerning the proposed consultative pact. The American position on this subject was not made public until March 11 when, at a tea, a select group of correspondents were informed by Mr. Stimson that, as far as the U. S. was concerned, the possibility

⁴⁹ 30Stone, London Naval Conf., 106.

⁵⁰ 31Ibid., 106.

of a consultative pact had been excluded.³²

This attitude of the American delegates was due to the fact that it was highly improbable that a treaty containing any such provisions could obtain the approval of two thirds of the U. S. Senate.

In London Mr. Stimson's declaration closed all further discussion of the issue of French security and the Conference drifted rapidly toward a dangerous impasse.

On the day following the Stimson statement, Mr. Briand informed Mr. McDonald that as far as he was concerned there was nothing more to be done in London.³³

On March 14th it became evident that Japan and the U. S. had reached an agreement on their problems, so the French delegates were faced with the prospect of being isolated by the three powers and blamed for the partial failure of the Conference. To avoid this, efforts were made to keep the Conference alive, but no solution to the existing deadlock could be found. On March 17th Mr. Tardieu returned to France, to be followed in a few days by Mr. Briand.

Correspondents reporting the conference agreed that a crisis had been reached and that only the injection of some new element could keep it alive. This new element came as a surprise to all interested. At midnight on March 25th, Mr. Stimson made a statement, as he said, clarifying the

³²London Naval Conf., Speeches and Press Statements,
(London, 1930), 29.

5/ ³³Stone, London Naval Conf., 107.

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position of the American delegation. To many persons, this statement seemed a reversal of his March 11th statement, although Mr. Stimson averred that the attitude of his delegation had not changed. He said, referring to the March 11th statement:

At that time it was made clear that America had no objection to entering a consultative pact as such--- It will not, however, enter into any treaty where there is danger of its obligations being misunderstood as involving a promise to render military assistance--Such a misunderstanding might arise if the U. S. entered into a treaty for the reduction of naval forces of another power. That danger has hitherto inhered in the present situation where France has been demanding military security as a condition of naval reduction. If, however, this demand for security could be satisfied in some other way, then the danger of a consultative pact would be eliminated and the question approached from a different standpoint. In such case, the American delegation would consider the matter with an open mind.³⁴

The effect of the American statement was at once apparent. Mr. Briand returned at once to London and immediate efforts were made to find a solution of differences existing between France and Great Britain. France informed Great Britain that she would be satisfied with a formula clarifying the obligations of the states under Article XVI of the League of Nations covenant.³⁵

On April 8th an apparent solution of the question was reached and Mr. Briand reported that France was ready to reduce its naval force from 724,000 tons to 600,000 tons, pro-

⁵² ³⁴ London Naval Conf., Speeches and Press Statements by Members of the American Delegation, 35.

⁵³ ³⁵ Stone, London Naval Conf., 109.

vided the Italian claims were withdrawn. As there seemed to be no immediate solution of the differences of these two powers, Mr. McDonald announced that the preparation of the treaty would go on and that Great Britain would endeavor to find a solution to the Italian-French problem and a three power agreement would be made similar to that made by Great Britain, Japan and the United States.

The Conference met for the last time on April 22, when the delegates assembled to sign the treaty as drawn up by the Committees. This treaty will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

The work of the Conference can best be summed up in the words of Chairman Ramsey McDonald when he said:

The Conference has done a great work. We have secured a three power agreement on building programs, which in itself is no mean or unimportant achievement. This, with other points embodied in the treaty, has repeatedly defied solution and has brought conference to naught. On the apparently simple matter of settling the method by which the relative strengths of navies may be agreed, hitherto there have been unsurmountable differences of opinion.

These have gone. We have stopped the replacement of battleships and reduced their numbers. We have limited the tonnage of auxiliary craft. We have shown how the equipment, the building, and the replacement of fleets can be brought within the realm of international order. We have proved how, when the world so desires, the menace of arms can be removed by treaties regulating their development.

True, the work as yet has been but partially achieved. But all great advances in international relationships must be done in stages, and we have gone much further than has hitherto been possible.³⁶

⁵⁴ ³⁶London Naval Conference 1930, 103-104.

So ended the plenary sessions of the Conference when the delegates met to sign the London Naval Treaty as drafted by the Committees. This meeting took place on April 22.

CHAPTER III

THE LONDON NAVAL TREATY

It was indeed a solemn occasion when the twenty-eight delegates of the five great naval powers of the world met in St. James Palace on April 22, 1930, and signed the London Naval Treaty of 1930. This treaty, the product of the London Naval Conference, went further than any other agreement ever heretofore made between the leading nations of the world. For three months these men had labored with vast and at times seemingly insoluble problems before them. Mr. Stimson, chairman of the American delegation, expressed the feelings of the Conference when he said:

We feel that we have accomplished a long step on this road to peace. By this treaty, competition will be completely ended between the navies of the three greatest naval powers of the world--America, Britain, and Japan; and with the other two powers--France and Italy--we have also reached agreements which though not complete are leading in the same direction. Eventually we confidently hope competition will be abolished among all five powers.¹

The main provisions of this treaty were as follows:

1. The Capital ship holiday was extended till 1936. This meant that the five powers agreed not to construct the battle-ships authorized for replacement under the provisions of the Washington Treaty.

⁵⁵ London Naval Conf., Speeches and Press Statements by Members of the American Delegation, Conf. Series No. 3-23.

2. A redefinition of aircraft carriers was made to include ships under 10,000 tons.
3. A limitation agreement was made under which the same three powers established tonnage levels for cruisers, destroyers and submarines beyond which they agreed not to build before Dec. 31, 1936.
4. A safeguarding agreement was reached, by which each of the three powers was given the right to exceed the tonnage levels established for cruisers, submarines and destroyers, if in its opinion new construction by powers not included in the treaty endangered its national security.
5. A humanitarian clause was inserted in the treaty, by which the five powers agreed to apply to submarines the same rules of international law which govern surface vessels in relation to merchant ships.

A series of regulatory agreements were included under which the five powers established rules for replacement, scrapping and conversion of warships.²

There were, of course, other provisions in the treaty, but those outlined above were the most vital and the ones with which we shall be concerned in this chapter.

Under Article I of the treaty, the contracting parties agreed to build no new battleships before 1936; in another they suspended the Washington Treaty and made no provision for

²Stone, London Naval Conference, 111.

capital ship building in the immediate future. France and Italy were allowed replacement tonnage to the amount of 70,000 tons each. This was the amount of tonnage to which they were entitled to construct under the Washington Treaty between the years of 1927-29. Since they had not made this construction prior to 1930, they were allowed to proceed with this amount of construction.³

In addition to curtailing the replacement of capital ships, Great Britain, Japan and the United States agreed to scrap nine battleships within thirty months after the treaty went into force. Of this number, Great Britain was to destroy four ships and retain another as a training ship after it had been rendered unfit for combat service. The U. S. agreed to dispose of two ships, retaining a third for training purposes. Japan was to render one ship unfit for combat purposes and use her own discretion as to the advisability of destroying it or using it as a training ship.⁴

Thus by 1936 the three fleets would be as follows:

Great Britain--15 ships with a tonnage of 474,750 tons;
 United States--15 ships with a tonnage of 462,400 tons;
 Japan----- 9 ships with a tonnage of 266,070 tons.⁵

Under the provisions of the Washington treaty, aircraft

57 ³London Naval Conf., Digest of London Naval Treaty, Pub. by Dept. of State, Conf. Series No. 4, 1. (Hereafter cited as Digest of London Naval Treaty.)

58 ⁴Ibid., 1.

59 ⁵Ibid., 12.

carrier levels were fixed at 135,000 tons for Great Britain and the same amount for the United States, while Japan was to have 81,000 tons and Italy and France were to have 60,000 tons each. These levels were not changed by the London treaty, but definition of an aircraft carrier was amended to include vessels under 10,000 tons used for this purpose and it was stipulated that such vessels must not be armed with greater than six inch guns.⁶

The Washington and Geneva Conferences failed to place any limitation on auxiliary vessels, but the London Conference succeeded somewhat better than its predecessors in that respect. A three-power agreement regulating these categories was made by Great Britain, Japan and the United States. This agreement established the maximum tonnage levels which might be reached by 1936, in the categories of cruisers, destroyers and submarines. The levels were as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>U. S.</u>	<u>G. B.</u>	<u>Japan</u>
Cruisers	180,000 145,500	146,000 192,200	108,400
Destroyers	150,000	150,000	105,000
Submarines	52,700	52,000	52,000 ⁷

"The Escape" or "Loophole" clause of the treaty, as Article 21 came to be known, was one of the most interesting parts of the whole treaty because its effects were so far reaching. Article 21 provides that:

60 ⁶Ibid., 12.

61 ⁷Ibid., 12.

If during the term of the present treaty the requirements of national security of any of the contracting parties are in the opinion of that party affected by new constructions of any power other than those who joined in part three of this treaty, that party will notify the other contracting parties as to the increased requirements of their own tonnage-----8

In effect, this clause meant that the limitation imposed on the United States, Great Britain and Japan by Part III of the treaty could be exceeded on notice of any one of these powers. The other powers were then to make proportional increases in their own tonnage. The extent to which this article impairs the value of the other vital parts of the treaty was a matter of much discussion.

An American delegate, Senator Joseph T. Robinson, said in commenting upon this phase of the treaty:

Of course, it may be said in criticism that this clause permits a disturbance of the figures agreed to on the sole responsibility of either the United States or Great Britain or Japan; and if any one of the three adjudges it to be necessary to build in excess of the treaty program, this will increase the building of the other two. But even should this happen, the relation of the fleets and the principle of limitation would still be maintained. It should also be remembered that the limitation of armaments must proceed only through the voluntary action of nations and that no power can impose on another restrictions of the means of defense without assuming responsibility for its safety. It is of first importance that the limitation of armaments shall be regarded as increasing rather than diminishing the safety of peoples, and if emergencies arise threatening immediate danger, a people should be free to respond to the requirements of their situation. Otherwise the fate of nations must forever be bound up with the maintenance of large armaments and the imminence of war. It leaves the responsibility of determining the require-

(2)⁸London Naval Treaty of 1930, Pub. by Dept. of State, Conf. Series No. 2, 15.

ments for national security where it belongs, namely, on the respective nations. This clause is based upon the good faith of the three nations and it is inconceivable that it will be used except upon necessity.⁹

There were those who felt that this clause virtually undid all the good accomplished by the rest of the treaty. Among those holding this view was John B. Whitton, in writing in the Current History magazine of June, 1930.

The humanitarian agreement concerning submarine warfare has been discussed at some length in Chapter II of this thesis. This provision occurred in Article 22 of the treaty and differed from the other parts of the agreement in that, while they were to be in force only till 1936, this particular clause was to be in effect for all time to come.

Perhaps the best summary of this treaty was given by Senator David A. Reed in a radio address to the United States, delivered from London on the day the treaty was signed. Mr. Reed said, in summing up the treaty and the work of the Conference in general:

What then has been accomplished? To begin with, we have all agreed to keep our present battleships, which are perfectly seaworthy and effective, and to take a holiday in new battleship construction to Jan. 1, 1937. In that one stroke we have saved an outlay by the United States of about \$400,000,000. When we think of the number of miles of improved roads, or the number of bridges, or the number of public buildings that can be had for that sum of money, I for one am convinced that civilization is the gainer by this agreement. Then in cruisers, although our present fleets are pitifully small compared with the cruiser fleets of Japan and Great Britain, our building power

63⁹ London Naval Conference, Speeches and Press Statements by Members of the American Delegation, 50.

has been recognized and Great Britain has readily agreed to parity, and Japan has agreed to a satisfactory relationship between the fleets, with the result that, while we build at a moderate speed during these seven years, the British and Japanese fleets are either reduced or will remain at about today's level. To the great relief of the taxpayers of all three countries, the same is true of destroyers. We will scrap some of our war time vessels, Great Britain scraps some and Japan scraps some; and the resultant fleets, which will be large enough for each of us and for all normal police work that such vessels are called upon to conduct, will nevertheless represent parity with Great Britain and a satisfactory relationship with Japan. In submarines, our problem has been different, because, while we are encouraged by the agreement of the five powers to use the submarines in a humane way, nevertheless the temptation to sink merchant ships without warning is very great, and we felt that the world would be better insured against such a murderous submarine campaign as occurred in the last world war if the submarine as an instrument of warfare were altogether abolished. Some of the other nations were not ready to go so far, however, and the best we could do was to agree to a parity in such vessels at a low figure between Great Britain, Japan and ourselves, a figure that requires the destruction of a number of these vessels in the British fleet, and to that extent removes the menace that results from the existence of these rattlesnakes of the sea. I have not undertaken to burden you with a lot of statistics on tonnage, but have tried to give you in outline the substance of the treaty that has been made. The benefits to all concerned are very obvious.¹⁰

The treaty was hailed in the various countries as a great stride forward in human relationships and international understanding. The Japanese Prime Minister on Oct. 27, 1930, said in part in a radio address to his nation:

The treaty of London has opened a new chapter in the history of human civilization. We have once for all escaped from what I may call the pioneer stage, in which every nation's hand is actually or potentially against every other. We have entered on the sane and friendly "settlement" stage in which everyone is united to suppress intrusions by anyone on another's sphere. A momentous step forward on the road of international peace

^{6/}10 Ibid., 61-62.

and friendship has now been taken. Let it prove a prelude to still greater triumphs for that lofty cause.¹¹

President Hoover, on this same date, in his address relating to the signing of the treaty, said:

The sessions of the five powers at London have served to strengthen mutual trust and confidence among them, and they give me assurance that the hopes of the world will not be disappointed.¹²

While the British Prime Minister, also on the same date, says in the prelude to his address:

It is with perfect satisfaction that I now add from London a few words to those already spoken by Premier Hamaguchi in Tokyo and Pres. Hoover in Washington on this very wonderful occasion-----The friendly relationship and collaboration between our countries which is directly attributable to this treaty should be a great source of encouragement to those endeavoring to reach agreement among themselves and afterwards with us.¹³

The final ratification of the London Naval Treaty was proclaimed by President Hoover Jan. 1, 1931, and each of the five nations involved turned to the great task of putting into effect the terms which it was devoutly hoped would make for peace and safety of the entire world of nations.

¹¹Ibid., 300.

¹²Ibid., 301.

¹³Ibid., 301.

CHAPTER IV

THE END OF NAVAL LIMITATIONS

While the great powers of the world were much enthused over the work accomplished by the London Conference of 1930, this hopeful attitude was not to be long lived.

The hates and suspicions engendered by the World War were still so active that anything like a sympathetic understanding between nations was impossible. The ever present fear of aggression and the uneasy consciousness of impending danger impelled each nation to take such steps as would place it in a position of security among its neighbors, whose promises of friendship were not to be taken seriously so long as there was an inequality in armed equipment and this inequality, in the mind of each participant, could only be met by the superiority of its own defense.

As previously stated in Chapters II and III, France and Italy would not come to any agreement during the London Conference. Italy demanded parity with France and France would not consent to such an agreement, but instead demanded parity with Italy in the Mediterranean, parity with Germany in the Atlantic and various other items of armament in excess of these two powers, Germany and Italy. To bring the London Conference to a close and to facilitate the actual treaty-making, Great Britain proposed the three power agreement between Japan, United States and herself, allowing France and Italy to

accept such parts of the resulting treaty as they saw fit. In addition, Great Britain offered to act as mediator between France and Italy and to endeavor to form a three power European agreement between them and herself similar to the three power agreement between the United States, Japan and Great Britain.¹

To this end, a number of proposals and counter-proposals for the solution of the France-Italian controversy were involved during the final weeks of the London Conference, but, when the Conference adjourned, the two powers were almost as far apart as they had been at the beginning of the session, three months before.

Subsequent efforts to reach an agreement were not encouraging. On April 30, 1930, Italy had published its naval program for the coming year, which provided for the construction of 42,900 tons, matching the French program ton for ton.²

On May 12, 1930, Mussolini had delivered the first of a series of provocative speeches, declaring that:

There is something inescapable, inevitable, in the march toward destiny of Fascist Italy----Nobody can halt it.-----Words are very fine things, but muskets, machine guns, ships, airplanes and cannon are still finer things; they are finer because right, if unaccompanied by might, is an empty word.³

The announcement of Italy's naval program and those re-

¹William T. Stone, "The Franco-Italian Naval Dispute", Foreign Policy Reports, III, 152.

²Ibid., 152.

³New York Times, May 18, 1930.

marks of Il Duce created much concern in France and so, when Foreign Minister Grandi made an effort to arrange, with the help of the League, a compromise at Geneva on May 12, 1930, France was in such a suspicious frame of mind that no progress could be made.

On June 3, 1930, Mr. Grandi announced that Italy was willing to suspend its program of new construction, pending the course of negotiations, provided that France did likewise. France refused this offer and Franco-Italian relations seemed to have again reached an impasse.

On July 7, 1930, however, Mr. Briand announced that he had officially informed Mussolini of France's readiness to suspend construction of new ships until Dec. 1, 1930, in order to permit a renewal of negotiations between the two countries. Mussolini accepted the proposed holiday; however, reaching a definite accord was a more difficult matter. Negotiations began in Paris in August 1930, with Mr. Massigli, of the Foreign Office, representing France, and Sr. Rosso representing Italy, with Mr. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, representing the British interests and endeavoring to act as an impartial broker between the two disputing parties. No solution had been reached by October 1930, when Ambassador Hugh S. Gibson from the United States also tried to act as intermediary; his efforts, like those of Mr. Alexander, were of no avail. When the naval holiday expired Dec. 1, 1930, no agreement had been reached.

In February 1931, Great Britain again sent the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, to Paris for the purpose of arranging a compromise. The rumor that had alarmed Great Britain was the report that the French Marine Ministry was preparing a naval program for 1931-1932 which would include a new 23,000 ton "pocket battleship", to offset the German ship, "Deutschland", on which work was rapidly proceeding.

The British Foreign Office foresaw that once France proceeded with the construction of a new type of battleship before reaching an accord acceptable to Italy and Great Britain, this would inevitably lead to a renewed armaments race.⁴

The month of February 1931 was a busy one for Mr. Henderson and Mr. Alexander. During this month they made several trips to both Paris and Rome and on March 1, 1931, it was announced that a basis for agreement between France and Italy had been reached.⁵

The text of this agreement, which subsequently proved so illusory, actually embodied only the Bases of Agreement and contained no details of building programs. The definite agreement was to be drafted by naval experts of the three powers before final ratification. To the layman, the Bases of Agreement were so abstract and the phrasing so obscure as

⁴New York Times, Feb. 13, 1931.

⁵New York Times, March 2, 1931.

to be well-nigh unintelligible.⁶

The three main provisions of the agreement were, first, the stabilization of the French and Italian fleets; second, France was to have superiority over Italy in battleships and submarines, as well as in older cruisers, while, in new construction to be completed, the tonnage of the two powers was to be equal; third, no permanent ratio was to be set up for Italy, France and Great Britain, that is, like the 5:5:3 ratio provided by the London Treaty for the United States, Japan and Great Britain.⁷

The breakdown of this agreement came when France disagreed with Italy and Great Britain on the replacement of over-aged equipment, and, following this breakdown, further negotiations seemed useless.

In the face of these conditions, another conference was called by the League of Nations. In December 1925, the League had created a Preparatory Disarmament Commission for the purpose of preparing for a General Disarmament Conference. It was finally arranged to hold such a conference in 1932, and on May 23, 1931, the League Council unanimously selected Arthur Henderson, then Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Prime Minister Ramsey McDonald's second Labor Ministry, for president of the General Conference. Geneva was selected as the meeting place and February 2, 1932, as the date for the op-

⁶Stone, Franco-Italian Naval Dispute, 154.

⁷Ibid., 154.

ening session.⁸

The Conference was disrupted by Germany's resignation from the League and announcement that Germany was arming for any emergency that might arise. To prevent the complete disruption of all disarmament limitations, Great Britain brought out the "Draft Convention Plan". This plan would not alter the arrangement between the parties of the Washington and London Treaties. France again refused to accept these terms, basing her refusals on the grounds that Great Britain, the United States and Japan were free to lay down new ships for replacement each year between 1933-36, while France would be limited to a program designated for a single year.

Under Clause 21 of the London Treaty, Great Britain had the right to increase its destroyer tonnage, if Italy and France should increase their tonnage in the "pocket battleship" class so as to endanger Great Britain's naval security. This danger seemed imminent at this time and, if Great Britain should exercise the rights given her under Clause 21 of the London Treaty, the whole question of naval limitation between the United States, Japan and Great Britain would be reopened.

Ambassador Soto of Japan dropped a bombshell into the Conference when he declared that Japan regarded the London and Washington Treaties as unstable in character and warned

⁸ Disarmament Conference, World Progress, IV, 23.

that his country would expect higher ratios at the next naval conference in 1935.⁹

The period from October 1931 to April 1934 was darkened by the constant and ever growing threat of a new naval armament race despite the treaty limitations. The United States and Japan had embarked on the largest ship building programs since the World War. The United States enacted the Vinson Bill, designed to bring the United States Navy up to the maximum levels of the London and Washington treaties. This bill carried authorization for the construction of 102 vessels of various categories, at an estimated cost of from \$475,000,000 to \$1,000,000,000.¹⁰

Japan, too, had launched a "replenishment program", designed to bring their navy up to the maximum tonnage levels on the expiration of the existing agreements. France and Italy were competing in the Mediterranean, while Great Britain was striving to maintain her relative position in Europe as well as overseas.¹¹

This competition within the framework of the naval limitation treaties was due in large measure to the efforts of the leading powers to place themselves in the best possible

⁹William T. Stone, "Disarmament Crisis", Foreign Policy Reports, IX, 193.

¹⁰Ibid., 194.

¹¹William T. Stone, "Impending Naval Rivalry", Foreign Policy Reports, X, 30.

bargaining position at the next naval conference. With the then existing treaties about to expire, Japan, France and Italy were striving to improve their positions, while the United States and Great Britain were seeking to preserve the existing ratios by building to the maximum level permitted by the Washington and London agreements.

By the impartial observer it must be admitted that, according to the then existing agreements, the United States and Great Britain enjoyed distinct advantage as individual units and that, taken together, a coalition that any European crisis might easily produce would prove vastly superior to any European or Asiatic alignment.

Under the provisions of the London Naval Treaty, the five principal maritime powers were to meet in 1935 to review the status of the existing treaties. Unless a new agreement was reached, the London and Washington treaties would expire on December 31, 1936. Japan had already announced its intention to ask for a higher ratio. France and Italy had come to no definite agreement so that, although the London and Washington treaties had more than two years yet to run, the future relationship of the leading sea powers was being shaped by events which would predestine the 1935 Conference to failure even before it could meet. The outlook for naval limitation was indeed dark. Confidence in international agreements and the efficacy of peace machinery had been shaken by the collapse of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, the withdrawal of Japan and Germany from the

League of Nations and the inability of the League to enforce its verdict in the conflicts in the Far East and in South America.¹² The Pacific settlement reached at the Washington Conference had been virtually nullified by Japan's invasion and continued domination of Manchukuo.¹³

Other signs pointed unmistakably to the end of all armament limitation. On December 29, 1934, Japan formally denounced the Washington Treaty. On March 13, 1935, Hitler proclaimed Germany's freedom to rearm, and it was revealed that the German Navy had already been strengthened without regard for the provisions of the Versailles Treaty.¹⁴

When the Reich's construction was given British sanction in the Anglo-German naval pact of June 18, 1935, France declared herself to be resuming full liberty of action in the field of naval rearmament.¹⁵

On July 22, 1935, Great Britain, taking advantage of Clause 21 of the London Treaty, declared herself to have abandoned the ratios set up by the treaty.¹⁶

In return, the President of the United States declared, on September 27, 1935, that the United States would maintain under all circumstances the ratio of strength provided by the treaties, which of course meant increased naval construct-

¹²Ibid., 31.

¹³Ibid., 32.

¹⁴David H. Popper, "End of Naval Disarmament", Foreign Policy Reports, XI, 202.

¹⁵Ibid., 202.

¹⁶Ibid., 203.

ion to keep the United States Navy in its former ratios with Japan and Great Britain.¹⁷

Thus we see that the nations, one by one, motivated by suspicion, jealousy and a feeling of insecurity, refused to be bound by treaty or conference agreements. This was no doubt partly attributable to the inability of the League of Nations to enforce or even direct the policies set forth by the treaties or agreements already adopted.

Previous to the events just outlined, Great Britain had made in 1934 and 1935 several serious attempts to find a basis for agreement for a New Treaty to be made in 1935, to take the place of the London 1930 treaty, which was to expire at the end of 1936. These attempts were thwarted at every turn; Japan refused to consider any treaty unless the ratio principle was abandoned and establishment of a "Common Upper Limit" for the Powers was substituted. Too, Japan insisted on parity in global tonnage, which would allow each nation to allot the tonnage in each category as it saw fit.

The demands made by Japan included a severe reduction in large battleships and airplane carriers. Should these proposals have been accepted, Japan would have indeed been mistress of the Pacific, but of course such reductions were at cross-purposes with the plans of the United States.¹⁸

¹⁷New York Times, Sept. 28, 1935.

¹⁸Editorial, "The Naval Conference", Current History, XLIII, 507-509.

Several other proposals were made, but they likewise met with failure.

Balked in its attempt to prepare for a naval Conference, Great Britain apparently abandoned hope for anything but a makeshift agreement.

The atmosphere of crises had become chronic in Europe and the Far East and precluded any serious effort to curb the armament race. The world instead was confronted with the possibility of two forms of naval competition: quantitative and qualitative.¹⁹

By quantitative competition, the tonnage of each navy would be increased--each trying for domination in the field of capacity--the qualitative provided for production of new types of fighting craft designed to meet the special and geographical needs of each individual nation.

For example, while the United States felt the need of large battleships and airplane carriers for protection of the Philippines, Japan demanded submarines and pocket battleships for use in her Island Kingdom.

In spite of the apparent uselessness of the effort, the London Conference met in December, 1935, and, after discussions much the same as the preliminary conversations, drew up a treaty which was signed March 25, 1936. This treaty may be summed up in the words of Helen Fisher in the Foreign Policy Reports of October 1, 1936. She said, in speaking

¹⁹Popper, The End of Naval Disarmament, 211.

of the ratification of the 1936 Treaty by the United States:

Many Senators---agreed to its ratification without customary opposition, because they considered it a harmless gesture binding us to no important commitments.²⁰

The above statement was borne out by the Congressional Record of the Senate for May 18, 1936.

So the first and greatest collective experiment in disarmaments succumbed to the forces that lead to war. The utter futility of the effort of the nations, through their statesmen and diplomats, to build up world security and immunity to war through the reduction of armaments can be attributed to the age long enmity of races and the ambition of power-loving leaders brought into being by the breakdown of the morale of people suffering from the devastations of the World War. Germany, smarting under the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty, hating with implacable fury the nations that had contributed to her defeat, was ripe for a Hitler. Italy, flushed with the success of the allied armies and jealous of France over the division of the German colonies, and fearing the spread of Communism, was ready for a Mussolini with his promises of a restored Roman Empire and his dream of World Peace through force. The weakness of the Versailles Treaty seemed a justification of this theory of the solution of world conflict.

France, remembering old enmities and fearing Italian domination more than German aggression, was skeptical of any

²⁰Helen Fisher, "Future Naval Limitations", Foreign Policy Report, XII, 178.

agreements or advances on the part of Italy.

Japan, with her vision of expansion, had no mind to accept any curtailment in armament necessary to gain her objectives, and, while cannily accepting certain provisions demanded by England and the United States, evidently did so with her fingers crossed.

Great Britain, feeling secure in her position as Mistress of the Seas and heartened by her increasing friendship with the United States, could see no reason why the peace of the world could not be maintained, especially since these two great powers were willing to mediate and champion the cause of reduction of armaments and the stabilization of Europe.

The United States, having, by its participation in the World War, abandoned the policy of isolation, was eager to lend a hand in the reconstruction of European policies and the fulfillment of the dreams of Woodrow Wilson for a fair and just alignment of European Power. Thus cross purposes, cross currents, ambition and intrigue brought to naught the dream of a world freed by the reduction of armaments from the menace of war.

SUMMARY

As stated in the foreword of this thesis, an effort has been made to give a complete and yet concise picture of the London Naval Conference, its background, the resulting treaty and the consequence of this conference and the treaty.

In Chapter I an effort was made to give the political background for the conference by tracing the development of disarmament movement from the Versailles treaty, through the Washington Conference, to the assembling of the Conference in London in February, 1930.

Chapter II deals with the actual working of the Conference from its organization with Ramsey McDonald as chairman, through its three phases, to the signing of the Treaty on April 22, 1930. No account of the workings of the various committees of the conference could be given since the records of these committees and their work are not available. The work of the six plenary sessions was given in some detail to show the difficulties that had to be surmounted before the treaty could be framed and adopted. In this chapter we found France and Italy to be recalcitrant and to conclude the Conference which had run on for three months. Great Britain proposed the three power agreement to be signed by the United States, Japan and herself. Great Britain then proposed to act as mediator between France and Italy and to endeavor to form some sort of agreement with these powers, similar to the Japanese, United States and Great

Britain limitation agreement.

Chapter III deals with the treaty itself, setting forth its main features and discussing them at some length. In the concluding chapter, the naval disarmament movement is traced from the ratification of the treaty through the various steps of disintegration to the expiration of the treaty in 1936. Through all this the ever growing jealousy and distrust between France and Italy is shown and the unwillingness of these nations to compromise or agree on any form of limitation.

The author feels that his contribution lies in the fact that in this thesis the complete working of the Conference, its background, and the final breakdown of all naval limitation is given in a concise manner and will help the reader to have a much better understanding of the naval limitation movement, its rise and fall, than can be found in the separate sources from which this data was secured.

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