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GRADUATE COLLEGE

HUGH R. WILSON AND AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, 1927-1937

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HUGH R. WILSON AND AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH THE

LEAGUE OF NATIONS, 1927-1937

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PREFACE

At the beginning of the twentieth century the State Department was a small informal organization; in 1908 the Departmental staff consisted of slightly over 150 people. The smallness of numbers made it possible for the employees to know each other professionally and socially; friendships were established which continued even after individuals left the government service. Indeed, the Department had a remote and traditional atmosphere of leisure at the turn of the century. It lost that quality as the size and complexity of organization increased and the problems under consideration grew in magnitude and importance. In 1924, the United States government upgraded its Foreign Service for meeting greater demands by providing for the selection and promotion of candidates and personnel solely on the basis of merit. This evolution of both the State Department and the Foreign Service continued into the 1930's and beyond.

Hugh Robert Wilson witnessed those changes between 1911 and 1940. Born into wealth, he tired of the daily routine of everyday business life and decided to enter the Foreign Service to mix travel, diplomacy, and study; he accepted his first assignments in Latin America, where he served in Argentina and Guatemala. After tenure in Europe during World War I, he decided to make a career of government work. Subsequently, he progressed through the diplomatic ranks in posts in Europe, Japan, and Washington as the Chief of the Division of Current Information and the Chief of the Personnel Section.

In 1927, he became the American Minister to Switzerland, a position which he held for ten years. He spent most of that time handling American contacts with the League of Nations and League-related activities. Throughout the 1920's the United States maintained a nebulous and tenuous association with the League. Invariably encumbered by orders from Washington, as his successors had been, Wilson cooperated with the international organization in a limited manner whether the topic was arms control, the Manchurian crisis, the Italian-Ethiopian incident, or the disarmament problem. The issues primarily concerned Europe, so the United States did not utilize its potentially great diplomatic influence. For several years Wilson held various ranks at the conferences, but at the major disarmament meetings his rank was usually below that of his regular colleagues in Geneva. Finally, he attained an equal status only to have the League decline in international prestige within a short time.

Frustrated that his contribution in Switzerland was minimal, he began searching for another assignment in 1937, in the hope of securing a major field post before retirement. Unable to find one immediately, he served briefly as an Assistant Secretary of State. Within six months the ambassador to Berlin resigned, and Wilson succeeded him, anticipating that this ambassadorship would be the peak of his career. Once again, circumstances thwarted his ambition for he was soon called home as a protest of Nazi persecution of the Jews. He was thus in the awkward position of being unable to serve in Germany, to resign lest his action embarrass the administration, or to be assigned to the field.

At the beginning of war in Europe, he resigned the ambassadorship only to find that all the major assignments were competently filled. For more than a year he did odd jobs around the Department, until, feeling that he was making no special contribution, he resigned. Despite his frustration, he indicated a willingness to return to the State Department if it really needed him.

The author originally undertook this study to examine the career and contributions of Hugh Wilson to American diplomacy between 1911 and 1940. Gradually it became clear that the focus would be on the years 1927 to 1940 because Wilson's work was more significant then and because the period is better documented, especially since his personal papers were destroyed in the Tokyo earthquake and fire of 1923. At the same time, the investigation resolved largely into one of America's awkward relationships to the League which was largely dictated by the prevalent isolationist emphasis in the United States. As such, Wilson's ministerial activities served as the unifying thread in the account. Consequently, the purpose of this dissertation is to show that a wealthy young man entered the Foreign Service as a temporary diversion from business life, chose to make a career of the profession, and, while making little or no contribution to policy-making, did his job well as the representative of a potentially influential nation which largely based its policy on isolation from problems which directly or indirectly affected it.

In the course of research and writing, the author has become indebted to a number of individuals. He wishes to thank Dr. Russell D. Buhite, the dissertation director, for valuable comments and guidance and the members of the examining committee: Drs. Donald Berthrong, Percy Buchanan, Rufus Hall, and David Levy. He acknowledges the most gracious cooperation of personnel at the Hoover Presidential Library, the Houghton Library at Harvard, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress. He extends a very special word of appreciation to his wife Sandra Kay Mitchell Downing, and his friend and colleague, Dr. Charles Ogilvie, for their encouragement. Finally, he recognizes the outstanding work of Mrs. R. L. Brittain, who typed the final draft.

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HUGH R. WILSON AND AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, 1927-1937

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATIONS FOR A POST

Hugh Robert Wilson was born in Evanston, Illinois, on January 29, 1885, to Hugh R. Wilson and Alice Tousey Wilson. Hugh Wilson, Sr., and his brother Milton were partners and co-founders of Wilson Brothers, wholesale manufacturers of men's clothing which provided both men with an upper-class income. Hugh, a Civil War veteran in an Illinois regiment of the Union Army, had four children, Oliver, Morris, Myra, and Hugh. The senior Wilson died in May, 1901, and Mrs. Wilson passed away in 1910, leaving their son Hugh part of a sizeable inheritance which allowed him to pursue whatever activity he wished.

Hugh Wilson enjoyed the benefits of good educational opportunities. He attended the Hill School, a distinguished private preparatory school in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, graduating in 1902. His schooling there contained the element of classical studies, since the institution awarded him a book for "excellence in Greek." Following his graduation in 1902, he enrolled at Yale where he was active in student government affairs and the school newspaper, being a member and, in 1906, chairman of the editorial board of the Yale News. During his undergraduate days he also contributed articles to New York papers. In 1905, his studies were temporarily interrupted by an attack of appendicitis, complicated by peritonitis, which was almost fatal and which left him prematurely bald. He recovered gradually, and the next year he received his A.B. degree.

Hugh had many interests which gave him a broad background for his later diplomatic work. He kept abreast of world developments by general reading of biography, which he especially enjoyed, history, and government. For relaxation throughout his life he enjoyed both mystery stories and humorous works, the latter being at least in part an outgrowth of his keen sense of humor. In the fine arts, he liked paintings, but he devoted more time and attention to music, although he played no musical instrument. He listened to most classical music, and he particularly liked opera which he attended frequently; at the same time, he loathed jazz and other modern music of the 1920's and 1930's.

Besides those interests, he possessed a love of good food and fine wines of which he was a connoisseur. He drank whisky, soda, and sherry in moderate amounts, but he usually declined cocktails which he claimed spoiled the taste buds. His abstemiousness was a matter of personal practice rather than a religious tenet, for he was a nominal Episcopalian and was influenced by deism. Though not a regular attender of any formal worship services, he did believe in a higher being and regulated his life according to his general belief. Ironically, he later greatly admired the Roman Catholic Church and at one point in his life considered becoming a member.[1]

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[1]Maxine Block, ed., "Wilson, Hugh (Robert)," Current Biography: Who's News and Why, 1941 (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1941), p. 926; hereafter cited as Block, ed., Current Biography; Hugh R. Wilson, The Education of a Diplomat (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938), pp. 3-4; hereafter cited as Wilson, Education; Hugh R. Wilson, Diplomat Between Wars (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941), p. 129; hereafter cited as Wilson, Diplomat; Hugh R. Wilson, Jr., to Marvin Downing, March 3, 1970, letter in possession of the author.

He mixed well with people, displaying a mild disposition and geniality which was seldom marked by anger or a display of temper. He insisted on manners being an instinctive part of an individual's character, and he preferred them to sincerity if he had to choose between the two since proper etiquette made daily contacts pleasant. In all this, he possessed a stamina and competitiveness which he expressed appropriately in parlor games, travel, and sports such as skiing, golf, fencing, and mountain climbing.[2]

After graduation from Yale, he marked time for four years prior to deciding upon a diplomatic career. In 1907, upon returning from a pleasure trip to the Far East, he accepted employment with Wilson Brothers of Chicago, the family company. The business, now under the stern direction of his Uncle Milton Wilson, held little attraction for him because he disliked the rigidity of office work and the commuting into Chicago; he felt that the daily routine failed to correspond with his real concern for books, acquaintances, and recreation. Thus, he began to look elsewhere for something more compatible with his abilities and interests.[3]

Diplomatic activity appeared to be the opportunity for expression. It would afford him the advantages of personal study and the

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[2]Wilson, Education, pp. 90-91; Block, ed., Current Biography, pp. 926, 928.

[3]Wilson, Education, pp. 1-3.

cultivation of a taste for languages. Moreover, he could experience a few happy years in the Foreign Service and be an enriched person upon his re-entry into business. Besides, he had small reason for staying at home since both his parents were dead, and he had enough inheritance to do as he pleased.[4]

The announcement of his intentions evoked a mixed response. Some relatives and friends of his father discouraged him by maintaining that diplomacy was the plaything of politics or politicians and that he would make little money. He might have dropped the idea except for the encouragement of his oldest brother, Oliver, who advised him to do what he wished. From a boyhood friend, who had entered the diplomatic service, Wilson learned, "You won't get anywhere, but you will have a lot of fun going there." In a personal interview, First Assistant Secretary of State Huntington Wilson counseled the young man to attend the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris to prepare for the service exams. He stressed the need of a thorough knowledge of French for maximum enjoyment of diplomatic contacts and activities. In later years, Hugh Wilson acknowledged the Assistant Secretary's advice to have been sound.[5]

Accordingly, he went to Paris, and at twenty-five years of age he was two or three years older than his classmates. Yet the French

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[4] Ibid., pp. 1, 6; Hugh R. Wilson, Diplomacy as a Career (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1941), p. 2; hereafter cited as Wilson, Diplomacy.

[5] Wilson, Education, pp. 4-6, 8-11.

students enjoyed an intellectual training superior to his, so he worked hard to reach their level of attainment. From the learned faculty he acquired much information, the desire to express himself precisely, and gradually he realized the relevance of his studies to the European political situation.[6]

Then the preparation for the exams took an unexpected turn. Edwin Morgan, the American Minister in Lisbon, asked him to become his private secretary. Wilson decided the practical experience would be more valuable than a diploma, so he went to Portugal where he had ample time to learn from the minister, study, and travel. He disliked Portugal more than other posts, but he thought the stay assisted in his later adjustment to Latin American assignments.[7]

In the fall of 1911, Wilson prepared to take his examinations, the written portions of which were similar to university quizzes but the oral sections of which were decidedly more difficult. To bolster his confidence before the senior service men, he told himself, "They can't eat me." The experience made a lasting impression on him and made him sympathetic toward candidates when he was on the reviewing board.[8]

Wilson returned to Chicago to await the outcome. During a visit in January with a brother in Evanston, he finally received word in the form of a telegram from the Secretary of State which designated him the

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[6] Ibid., pp. 14-15, 17-18.

[7] Ibid., pp. 18-19, 21-22.

[8] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

Secretary of Legation in Guatemala. The excited family, ignorant about the country, rushed to an encyclopedia to read about it.

Then he proceeded to Washington for orientation. In the process he met many established officials and new appointees, some of whom later became close friends and colleagues. Enthusiastic about his new assignment, he received the commission and instructions and sailed for Guatemala.[9]

On March 11, 1912, Wilson assumed his duties in Guatemala where he served under two different ministers.[10] Reynolds Hitt, the first of them, formally tutored the new secretary in the legation duties, and the Hitts entertained the young bachelor in their home frequently.[11] Wilson had been in Guatemala a little over a month when he became charge d'affaires during the absence of Hitt who took a leave which lasted until January 6, 1913.[12] Consistent with custom upon the election of a new President, Hitt subsequently tendered his resignation; it was accepted, and he departed on March 4. The new minister, Dr. William H. Leavell,

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[9] Ibid., pp. 1, 31-32; Huntington Wilson, Acting Secretary of State, to Wilson, February 23, 1912, Decimal files, Record Group 59, U. S. Department of State, National Archives, Washington, 123.W693/a; hereafter cited by the file number.

[10] Reynolds Hitt, Minister to Guatemala, to Philander C. Knox, Secretary of State, March 11, 1912, 123.W693/1; Wilson, Diplomacy, p. 42.

[11] Wilson, Education, pp. 38-40.

[12] Wilson to Knox, April 23, 1912, 123.H63/telegram #242; Knox to Wilson, June 14, 1912, 123.H63/73; Knox to Hitt, August 30, 1912, 123.H63/74; Hitt to Knox, January 6, 1913, 123.H63/75; Hitt to Knox, January 29, 1913, 123.H63/76; Hitt to Knox, March 4, 1913, 123.H63/78.

a nonservice man and a Presbyterian minister from Texas and Mississippi, did not arrive until November 29, 1913. Consequently, for nineteen months Wilson had "a responsibility of which I was more conscious than of any I have subsequently borne."[13]

Troublesome nationality cases caused Wilson the most difficulty. Many pregnant women of Central America, among them numerous Guatemalan citizens, traveled to the United States for the birth of their babies. Thereafter, the parents claimed American citizenship for their offspring in order to claim for them political immunity from some Latin American legal obligations, such as military duty. The government of dictator-President Manuel Estrada Cabrera naturally refused to accept those contraventions of Guatemalan law. Although the United States did not extend such exemptions to foreign citizens within its boundaries, Wilson and his colleagues claimed the special status for those Central Americans, but their assertions were invariably denied.

A short time after Leavell's arrival, Wilson expressed his qualms about the problem. Dr. Leavell felt that the Guatemalan government, if pressed hard enough, would eventually accept the American position. To the new minister's astonishment, Wilson said that he, personally, would not agree to the United States argument if he were in the Foreign Office. In any case, he officially upheld Washington's stance; he thought it permissible for him to work for State Department acceptance of his contrary line of reasoning until a policy had been firmly decided. At that

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[13]Wilson, Education, p. 47.

point he was obligated to support the official position or to resign. Subsequently, the general question was unresolved since Guatemala strictly adhered to its position.[14]

During the chargéship, Wilson gave considerable attention to protection-of-interest cases which primarily concerned the United Fruit Company, an American corporation. In 1912, the firm imported a large number of new workers from Jamaica who did not adjust well to working in the gangs and who, consequently, became restive. On June 8, 1912, a Jamaican Negro employee murdered a white American contractor on the company railroad. At first, the local police made little attempt to apprehend the suspect, and a few days later another Negro shot a company paymaster. Victor Cutter, the firm's district manager, believing that lax law enforcement would only encourage the criminal elements, requested Wilson to seek immediate and vigorous action.[15]

Wilson acted promptly. He urged the Guatemalan Foreign Office to send an adequate military contingent and advocate the strict enforcement of the laws. Consequently, the government dispatched soldiers to arrest the most dangerous men whom Cutter pointed out.[16]

Under the circumstances, Wilson's moves were appropriate. Since most of the employees were Jamaicans, Wilson also discussed the problem with the British chargé d'affaires, who thought Wilson had proceeded

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[14] Ibid., pp. 55-57.

[15] Cutter to Wilson, June 13, 1912, 314.114Un3/6.

[16] Wilson to Cutter, June 15, 1912, 314.114Un3/6.

wisely to localize a potentially dangerous situation involving British and American subjects. Cutter reported his satisfaction with the steps taken, and the State Department approved Wilson's conduct.[17]

To prevent future trouble, Cutter advocated the maintenance of a garrison in the troubled area. Wilson worked to have the temporary troops remain until the government could establish a permanent station.[18] In June, the Minister of War ordered the formation of an installation, but by October nothing had been done except to notify Cutter that his company would have to pay the wages of the troops. The fruit company executive refused the suggestion as expensive and impolitic.[19]

Then Wilson informally contacted the Foreign Office to present his ideas more fully. First, he expressed a belief that the Minister of War had not consulted President Cabrera on the matter. Surely the President realized that a foreign firm's maintenance of armed forces would infringe on Guatemala's sovereignty which would cause significant domestic and foreign criticism. The use and distribution of soldiers constituted an internal matter, and it would be more expensive to Guatemala to quiet an outbreak if it were not done early. Again, the government indicated its unwillingness to set a precedent which other companies

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[17]Wilson to Knox, June 17, 1912, 314.114Un3/6; Cutter to Wilson, June 15, 1912, 314.114Un3/6; Wilson to Knox, June 24, 1912, 314.114Un3/7.

[18]Wilson to Knox, June 24, 1912, 314.114Un3/7; Wilson to Don Guillemo Aguirre, Secretary of State ad interim for Foreign Affairs, June 20, 1912, 314114Un3/7.

[19]Cutter to Wilson, October 29, 1912, 314.114Un3/17.

might use to have national soldiers protect their property.[20]

Wilson made no further inquiries until an alternate plan was proposed the following year. When more difficulties with Negro workers arose, Cutter explained to Wilson that to curb disturbances in Costa Rica the United Fruit Company had used a small police force which the local government had designated. He indicated that he favored a similar plan in Guatemala if national officials would approve. Since the scheme offered a means of preserving order which, in his view, would be more satisfactory to the government, Wilson presented it to Dr. Luis Toledo Herrarte, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Later the highest Guatemalan authorities consented, and the provincial governor established the force.[21]

Wilson also participated in Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan's effort to promote the conclusion of conciliation treaties. The agreements stipulated that nations would submit their disputes to permanent investigative commissions. Each party refrained from declaring war for a year which was the usual waiting period for investigations. Once the study had ended, the disputants could approve or reject the commission's evidence. Bryan hoped that the parties would reconcile their

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[20]Wilson to Knox, October 29, 1912, 314.114Un3/17; Dr. Luis Toledo Herrarte, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to Wilson, October 26, 1912, 314.114Un3/17.

[21]Wilson to Knox, October 29, 1912, 314.114Un3/17; Knox to Wilson, November 16, 1912, 314.114Un3/17; Wilson to Knox, August 13, 1913, 314.114Un3/21; Wilson, Memorandum of a conversation with Toledo, August 1, 1913, 314.114Un3/21; Toledo to Wilson, August 6, 1913, 314.114Un3/21.

differences during that time and that world opinion would support peaceful settlement.

Chargé Wilson contacted Dr. Toledo who indicated hearty agreement with the principle, the aims, and the object of the proposal.[22] Wilson sent him the Spanish text of the arbitration treaty with El Salvador, the first of the conventions signed, and indicated American willingness to modify the details to Guatemalan conditions since the State Department was anxious to have Guatemala's participation.[23] In early September, 1913, Guatemala City sent instructions and plenary power to its minister in Washington for him to conclude a treaty.[24] On September 20, the representatives signed the treaty, and a few days later a copy was dispatched for Wilson's information.[25]

The most significant diplomatic event of Wilson's tenure related to dollar diplomacy and the British interest in Guatemala. The Latin American government had owed a loan debt for many years, and on various occasions Britain had attempted to force payment to its bondholders.[26] The tempo increased markedly when Sir Lionel Carden, the determined new

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[22]Wilson to Bryan, July 24, 1913, 711.0012/116.

[23]Wilson to Toledo, August 30, 1913, 711.0012/158.

[24]Wilson to Bryan, September 3, 1913, 711.0012/147.

[25]John E. Osborne to Wilson, September 24, 1913, 711.0012/158.

[26]Wilson, Education, pp. 59-60; Dana G. Munro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 238-40; hereafter cited as Munro, Intervention.

British minister, began pressing for fulfillment of Guatemala's obligations. President Cabrera continued the talks for some time as a stalling technique to preclude payment and to avoid offense to the United States which regarded the Caribbean as its special province. Carden maintained contact with Wilson while other British representatives kept the State Department informed.[27]

In April and May, 1913, the matter moved toward a solution. From Dr. Toledo, Wilson learned of Carden's demand for resumption of installments within two weeks and threat of force for collection after that.[28] The British refused to grant additional time, and a British cruiser arrived in Guatemalan waters.[29] Finding Britain unwilling to talk, Cabrera conceded. Thereafter, to Wilson's surprise, the Foreign Minister showed an optimistic tone about the settlement which was strikingly different from the attitude Cabrera and he had previously displayed.[30] In this manner the Guatemalans had temporarily settled the problem of foreign debt payment.[31]

Once Minister Leavell assumed responsibility for Legation affairs, Wilson increasingly wanted to return to the United States. For many

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[27]Wilson, Education, p. 49; Knox to Hitt, February 7, 1913, U. S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1913 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), p. 567; hereafter cited as F.R.

[28]Wilson to Bryan, April 29, 1913, F.R., p. 568.

[29]Wilson to Bryan, May 1, 1913, F.R., p. 569.

[30]Wilson to Bryan, May 13, 1913, F.R., pp. 570-571.

[31]Munro, Intervention, p. 245; Wilson, Education, p. 60.

months he had been away from home, so he wished to see the changes in the State Department under the Woodrow Wilson administration. Besides, the legation secretary was planning to propose marriage to Kate Bogle, the daughter of a Michigan lawyer. Understandably, he sought to acquaint the nonservice minister with the legation duties and to make the Leavells "as comfortable as possible, as independent as possible, as quickly as possible."[32] When Wilson asked for a leave, Leavell disapproved until he learned of the romance. Then despite Leavell's need for him, the minister realized that the young man, whom he considered capable, fit, and cordial, had likely gained what he could at the post.[33] The Department also approved the request, and on February 19, 1914, he left the country of which he had become fond.[34]

The next weeks were full ones. When he was not at the Department, he was visiting friends, making new acquaintances, and traveling around Washington. He found the State Department less calm and more informal than he remembered it under Secretary of State Philander C. Knox. As no official seemed to know or care whether he would return to Guatemala or proceed to another post, he went to Europe to continue his vacation and to visit his sweetheart, Katherine Bogle, whom he hoped to marry.[35]

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[32]Wilson, Education, pp. 85-86; Leavell to Bryan, December 6, 1913, 123.W693/6.

[33]Wilson, Education, p. 86; Wilson to Bryan, January 4, 1914, 123.W693/5.

[34]John Bassett Moore to Leavell, January 17, 1914, 123.W693/6; Wilson, Education, p. 87.

[35]Wilson, Education, pp. 92-94; Wilson to Bryan, April 3, 1914, 123.W693/8; Bryan to Wilson, April 16, 1914, 123.W693/10.

The trip was most significant. On the steamer for France, Wilson conversed frequently with Hugh Gibson, a humorous, entertaining, and intelligent young man who at that time was the Secretary of Legation in Brussels. The two became lasting friends, correspondents, and sometime co-workers in subsequent disarmament conferences. Two days after Wilson's arrival in Paris, Miss Bogle, who was studying vocal music there, agreed to marry him, and on April 25, 1914, they were married at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, in London.[36]

Again the matter of an assignment arose. Before the wedding he had requested appointment as Second Secretary in Spain. While he was on his honeymoon, two messages arrived. The first indicated the unavailability of the Madrid post and named him the Third Secretary at London.[37] About the same time his wife received a cable from a Washington friend and music enthusiast indicating that she could continue her voice study in London since Wilson was going to that embassy. But he did not want the insignificant job as a third secretary in a large post, and the combination of events made him suspect interference by his in-laws in his personal affairs. In that frame of mind, he requested a cancellation of the London appointment, and the Department obliged by designating him

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[36] Wilson, Education, pp. 95-96. While Wilson was taking the Foreign Service exams in 1911, he met her at a friend's house. Obviously she impressed him exceedingly since he even recalled the songs she sang at their first meeting. Ibid., p. 31.

[37] Bryan to Wilson, April 30, 1914, 123.W693/11.

the Second Secretary in Argentina.[38] He was pleased at the prospect of going to Latin America; it would be a more relaxing assignment, and he thought the chances of having significant responsibility, and perhaps being a chargé, were greater there.[39]

On September 20, 1914, Wilson arrived in Buenos Aires to begin what turned out to be an uneventful diplomatic tour. However, he did become close with Frederic Stimson, the new ambassador, and thus established another lasting foreign service friendship. More than this, he had ample time for studying Spanish, traveling, going to the horse races, and attending excellent opera.[40] But he was unimpressed with his work there. The Spanish civilization of Central America appealed to him whereas a more modern one in Argentina seemed incongruous. Furthermore, the country's affairs were decidedly outside the stream of important events then occurring in Europe. The world war would greatly influence the future of the United States, and he wanted to participate more fully and to make a greater contribution than he could in Buenos Aires. Moreover, his wife's illness in the form of a difficult pregnancy and the loss of their first child comprised a most unsettling influence, and when she suffered a

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[38]Wilson, Education, pp. 97-98; Wilson to Bryan, May 2, 1914, 123.W693/18.

[39]Wilson, Education, p. 100; Bryan to Wilson, August 6, 1914, 123.W693/18a; William Phillips to Wilson, July 17, 1914, 123.W693/18b.

[40]Wilson, Education, pp. 111, 117, 124-125.

severe post-delivery depression, Wilson started home with her in mid-April, 1916.[41]

The leave of absence brought about expected and unexpected results. Both the change in environment and the leisurely pace of travel aided in the rapid improvement of his wife's health. Back in the states, she visited with her parents which was also most beneficial.[42] While Wilson was vacationing in Illinois with friends and relatives in early June, 1916, he received a Departmental order to become the Second Secretary of Legation in Berlin, as he was about to tee off at a golf course. He liked the prospect of going into the heart of Germany and European affairs, and Kate Wilson, now fully recovered, shared his excitement. So they began preparing for the new post, and on June 24, 1916, they sailed on the St. Louis.[43]

Before arriving in Europe, he assessed his status. For him, Germany was an unfamiliar area and the assignment "was a jump into the unknown, somewhat awe-inspiring but thrilling." His knowledge and skills

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[41] Ibid., pp. 146-148; Stimson to Robert Lansing, Secretary of State, December 18, 1915, 123.W693/19; Stimson to Lansing, April 16, 1916, 123.W693/20.

[42] Wilson, Education, pp. 162-163.

[43] Ibid., p. 164; Hugh R. Wilson, "Under Three Reichs," undated speech, Hugh R. Wilson Papers, Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; hereafter cited as Wilson Papers; Frank L. Polk, Acting Secretary of State, to Wilson, June 2, 1916, 123.W693/22a and 28a. Among the preparations was an appointment with Joseph C. Grew, the First Secretary of Legation, who had assisted the State Department in the selection of Wilson. The long friendship of Grew and Wilson dated from this time. Wilson, Education, pp. 165-166.

meant that he would be given nonpolitical matters. But he determined to work hard and learn quickly as much as possible in order to qualify for more responsible tasks.[44]

On July 6, 1916, Wilson reached Berlin and took up his duties, and at the embassy headed by Ambassador James Gerard, a wealthy Democratic lawyer from New York, life was different from any Wilson had experienced previously. Most staff members considered that German policy would eventually involve the United States in the fighting. In Gerard's opinion German-American relations were so tenuous that he advised personnel to live in a hotel instead of leasing a house. Outside social activities were restricted because of the American sympathy for the Allied cause, but the Germans continued the excellent opera performances despite the war.[45]

Wilson primarily handled passports, the most difficult problems being those of young men of military age with dual citizenship. Naturally, the cases created emotional strain for him, but he consulted the ambassador about the most complex situations. After some time, Wilson found two fairly reliable criteria for making decisions: where the applicant had been educated during his teens and where he had invested his money.[46]

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[44] Ibid., p. 169.

[45] Ibid., pp. 171-173, 175, 181; Gerard to Lansing, July 7, 1916, 123.G861/138.

[46] Wilson, Education, pp. 182-183, 185.

Though passports occupied much of his time, he had other and broader interests. On Sunday mornings, he and others gathered at the chancery to discuss the overall work of the embassy and to exchange ideas and suggestions. Gradually he developed greater understanding of political events and the various pressures which influenced persons and nations.[47]

When the United States broke diplomatic relations with Germany in February, 1917, Wilson became a sort of secretary in transit which gave him a feeling that he was a part of the general American effort. The Naval Attaché and Wilson were charged with the task of burning the confidential papers and codes before closing the embassy. When they finished the job, Wilson departed for Berne, Switzerland, to await further instructions.[48] A month later the Department assigned him to Vienna where he again associated, socially and professionally, with Joseph C. Grew, the Counselor of Embassy and the chargé, and where he made the acquaintance of Fred Dolbeare and Allen Dulles, both junior secretaries.[49] With some advanced warning of an Austrian severance of relations, he and other staff members made arrangements for departure.

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[47] Ibid., pp. 185-186.

[48] Ibid., p. 202; Lansing to Wilson, February 13, 1917, 123.W693/30a.

[49] Lansing to American Legation, Berne, Switzerland, March 15, 1917, 123.W693/30b; Frederick Penfield, American Ambassador to Vienna, to Lansing, March 23, 1917, 123.W693/33.

Now that the United States was at war with Germany as of April 6, 1917, Wilson was once again going to Berne, Switzerland.[50]

Much responsibility fell to him there, since his rank as Second Secretary was the highest in the legation except for the Minister Pleasant A. Stovall. The latter, who had been a newspaper editor in Savannah, Georgia, was a political appointee with only a slight background in diplomatic and Central European affairs.[51] While the minister was away for consultation in Washington, between September, 1917, and March, 1918, Wilson was in charge of legation affairs at Berne.[52]

Wilson demonstrated skill and efficiency in the Berne post. His six months' tour established him with State Department officers, and the Department complimented him for the highly satisfactory political reports and administration of the legation.[53] Secretary of State Robert Lansing and Third Assistant Secretary of State William Phillips delayed the expression of commendation until after Stovall's return in order to strengthen the Second Secretary's position with the minister in future work.[54] Once back in Berne the minister, recognizing Wilson's executive ability and superior work, recommended a promotion to First

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[50]Wilson, Education, p. 220; Lansing to Wilson, April 18, 1917, 123.W693/38a.

[51]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 11-12.

[52]Wilson to Lansing, September 15, 1917, 123.W693/45; Grew to Wilson, October 17, 1917, Joseph C. Grew Papers, Harvard University; hereafter cited as Grew Papers.

[53]Polk to Wilson, March 6, 1918, 123.W693/48a.

[54]Phillips, Memorandum to Polk, March 4, 1918, 123.W693/48a.

Secretary.[55] Subsequently, the State Department elevated him to Class Two in the Foreign Service.[56]

Wilson had finally fulfilled his ambition to be an active participant in the running of a legation. Switzerland's location served as a fine observation point, and the furnishing of reports on political, economic, and industrial matters relating to belligerent countries for decision-making and propagandizing in the United States constituted his primary job.[57]

The entire legation staff participated in the task. Each man had a particular country to study and report on, with Wilson taking Germany since he had recently been there. Gradually the practice of gathering at the legation for five o'clock tea developed into a time of combining business and pleasure. The staff also met Friday afternoon to compile the weekly report to Washington, and anyone present commented or criticized the statements after which Wilson generally dictated the message.[58]

The Swiss disliked the type of work the legations were doing. From conversations in the Foreign Office, Wilson learned of that

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[55]Stovall to Wilson, July 12, 1918, 123.W693/54.

[56]Lansing to Wilson, August 29, 1918, 123.W693/55a.

[57]Polk to Diplomatic and Consular Officers, July 21, 1917, F.R., Supplement 2, p. 140.

[58]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 29-30.

government's sensitivity about and preoccupation with the maintenance of neutrality. The Swiss Chief of the Political Department indicated some anxiety in the country about American intentions and thought a statement to the effect that the United States would respect Swiss territorial rights would allay suspicions and even counter some German propaganda. Although the chief suggested the plan informally, Wilson, feeling the need to reassure the Swiss government, complied.[59]

From the time of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, until April, 1919, Wilson divided his time between Berne and Paris. In the first weeks of the period, Wilson made frequent and brief trips to Paris carrying political information which was gathered in Switzerland about general European conditions. Gradually American agencies in France supplied data more proficiently than Berne could, so the Berne legation concentrated more with persons who wanted to go to Paris for personal reasons but who were having difficulties getting to the French capital because of political impediments. At the same time, Wilson conferred with many individuals who had ideas on peace which they wanted to present personally to President Woodrow Wilson of the United States. Often secretary Wilson explained that the President could not possibly hear and consider the projects of individuals, since he was so busy with the official peace proposals.[60]

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[59]Lansing to Wilson, November 30, 1917, F.R., Supplement 2, p. 758; Ador, Chief of the Swiss Political Department, to Wilson, December 12, 1917, ibid., pp. 758-759.

[60]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 69, 72-73.

Still Wilson traveled to the French capital often enough to garner a general idea of the American delegation's progress. However, most of his knowledge on developments at the peace conference came from talks with Colonel Edward M. House, President Wilson's private counselor and personal representative, to whom Hugh Wilson delivered the Swiss political information reports. From bits and pieces of intelligence which Wilson collected in Paris and at Versailles, he felt an element of futility and even apprehension about the peace of Europe under the prospective settlement. Finally, he made an appointment with House and complained that the President could not implement the Fourteen Points and that the League of Nations would be incapable of administering justice. Besides, American assent to the treaty would mean involvement in future European affairs and wars, so he wanted the American delegation withdrawn which would allow the European delegates to resolve their own differences. House replied that the President was convinced that he could accomplish at least part of his program by remaining in France, but Wilson went away from the meeting with the same misgivings he had previously possessed.[61]

In April, 1919, Wilson, his wife, and Hugh Robert, Jr., their one-year-old son, left for home. The serious epidemic of Spanish influenza struck Wilson and developed into pneumonia, so his physician ordered him to take a leave and work no more until autumn.[62]

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[61] Ibid., pp. 74, 76, 79-80.

[62] Ibid., p. 81; Wilson to Phillips, April 5, 1919, 123.W693/61.

The previous three years had meant much to him. Wilson considered that the work constituted "the most engrossing experience" of his life to that time, and thereafter he possessed a lasting interest in Central European affairs. The respect with which he was held by the senior State Department officials bolstered his prospect of even more interesting assignments, so now he wanted to stay in diplomacy as a profession.[63]

Once he recovered from the influenza, he accepted an unsatisfactory assignment in the Division of Latin American Affairs in order to stay in the United States a little longer. From the beginning he disliked the job because of the extreme partisanship in Washington and because of his now limited interest in Latin American conditions. Ellis L. Dresel, the American Commissioner to Berlin, and two assistants--Fred Dolbeare and Allen Dulles--all friends of Wilson, knowing his desire to return to Central Europe, contacted Department personnel and senators and representatives in his behalf. As a result, the Department appointed him the Counsellor of Embassy in Berlin on January 24, 1920, and he eagerly departed for Europe on March 13.[64]

Wilson possessed a profound interest in observing the German nation working to overcome war exhaustion and the Versailles Treaty restrictions. The American Commissioner's assigning him to political

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[63]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 82.

[64]Ibid., pp. 88, 90-91; Polk to American Commissioner, Berlin, January 26, 1920, 123.W693/74b; Polk to Wilson, January 24, 1920, 123.W693/74c; Ellis Dresel, American Commissioner, Berlin, to Wilson, January 29, 1920, 123.W693/75.

and economic tasks made it easier for him to observe the evident hardships and sufferings in the defeated country. Even years after his departure from Berlin, he vividly recalled the extreme shabbiness of the city and the runaway inflation. To learn more about the country, Wilson compiled voluminous notations on many aspects of German life. He even decided to write for publication, so he and Dolbeare talked about producing a comparison between the effects of the Thirty Years War and World War I on Germany. He gathered many notes and read widely, but unfortunately a new service appointment to Japan in August, 1921, and the accidental destruction of his personal papers in 1923 ended the project.[65]

Then Wilson was transferred to Tokyo as the Counsellor of Embassy. The long, lazy voyage over and the rest and relaxation restored him to an optimistic frame of mind which he had lost during his observation of struggle and despair in Europe. On the evening of December 12, 1921, Alexander Kirk and Jay Pierrepont Moffat of the embassy took him to the "No. 2 House" which signified that he ranked next to the ambassador. His first chief was Ambassador Charles Beecher Warren, a Detroit lawyer with some international judicial experience, whose disciplined and trained legal mind greatly impressed and influenced Wilson. From late January to mid-July, 1923, Wilson served as the chargé until Cyrus E. Woods, formerly the Ambassador in Spain, assumed the ambassadorship.[66] Near

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[65]Dresel to Lansing, March 8, 1920, 123.W693/39; Polk to Wilson, June 14, 1920, 123.W693/91b; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 92, 107.

[66]Charles Evans Hughes, Secretary of State, to American Embassy, Tokyo, August 22, 1921, 123.W693/102b; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 128, 130; Warren to Hughes, January 28, 1923, 123.W693/88.

the end of Wilson's tour, he and all other embassy personnel contributed materially and tangibly to American-Japanese relations by cooperating in the relief operations after the great earthquake of 1923.[67]

Wilson remained for only a part of the reconstruction. Prior to the disaster, he had asked for another post, and the Department granted his request on September 1, 1923, designating him the Counsellor of Embassy in Mexico City.[68] Wilson welcomed the chance to return to the United States so that they might replace their destroyed possessions, as well as to appeal his new assignment.[69] In Washington he expressed to Third Assistant Secretary of State William Phillips a willingness to leave immediately for Mexico if the Department required it, but he actually had little interest in Latin America compared to Central Europe and the Far East. Phillips could offer him nothing but the position as Chief of the Division of Current Information which Wilson accepted in early March, 1924.[70]

Initially, he was largely ignorant of the State Department's press section. Fortunately, he was aided by Assistant Chief Michael McDermott, a competent man who was fully aware of news problems and who

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[67] Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 141-142; Wilson to Hughes, March 3, 1923, 793.94/1422; Wilson to Hughes, April 11, 1923, F.R., II, 456-57; Hughes to Wilson, April 13, 1923, F.R., II, 457; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 142-143, 155.

[68] A couple of months before Wilson had requested a change for "urgent personal reasons." Hughes to Woods, August 24, 1923, 123.W693/123.

[69] Wilson, Diplomat, p. 158.

[70] Ibid., p. 159; J. Butler Wright to Wilson, March 1, 1924, 123.W693/136b.

subsequently succeeded Wilson as Chief. The working hours were long, hard, and demanding, especially since Wilson had to be available and prepared at all times to brief reporters. Despite those conditions, he enjoyed the compensation of attending high level meetings of which most chiefs were unaware.[71]

The Current Information assignment brought him into direct contact with Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. The latter enjoyed considerable esteem among his colleagues although he was sometimes caustic, especially about superficial, sloppy, and incomplete work. Having heard those things, Wilson wondered about personal contact with a man who also changed moods quickly at times. He soon discovered that his admiration for the chief suppressed any apprehension he had held, so that he termed association with the judge "admirable training" and "inspiring." In all his diplomatic work and personal travels, Wilson met no one who matched the wisdom and intelligence of Hughes.[72]

Most of Wilson's time as Chief of Current Information, however, was under Frank B. Kellogg who became Secretary of State in March, 1925. Possessing a violent temper which he frequently released, he was more difficult to work with than his predecessor. Most subordinates were touched by it at one time or another, but happily he became angry without

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[71]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 159-61.

[72]Ibid., pp. 162-63; Merlo J. Pusey, Charles Evans Hughes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), II, 414-15; hereafter cited as Pusey, Hughes.

holding grudges.[73] At their first business meeting Wilson told the Secretary of the occasional need to make a statement to the press and then to check with him later because the advantages offset the one mistake which might happen in a month. Kellogg accepted the premise, promising to support the information chief before the public or the President, but he warned of a possible private rebuke in case of an error. On more than one occasion Kellogg acted as he had indicated.[74]

One of the most significant intra-departmental changes during Wilson's tenure in Washington resulted from the passage of the Rogers Act in 1924 to professionalize the Foreign Service by combining the diplomatic and consular services.[75] The law, proposed by Congressman John Jacob Rogers of Massachusetts and fully backed by Secretary Hughes, provided for appointment and promotion strictly on merit, the same pay scale for consular and diplomatic officers, and interchangeable assignment of consular and diplomatic personnel.

Eventually the problem became one of determining the means of administering the law and the degree of amalgamation. Representing the interests of the diplomats, Wilson proposed the appointment of one person as the personnel chief. Assistant Secretary of State Wilbur J. Carr, the longtime director of consular affairs, suggested establishing a

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[73]L. Ethan Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg and American Foreign Relations, 1925-1929 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961), pp. 7-8; hereafter cited as Ellis, Kellogg.

[74]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 74-75.

[75]Pusey, Hughes, II, 419.

board consisting of the Under Secretary, two Assistant Secretaries, a consular officer, and a diplomatic representative. Recognizing the political vulnerability of a personnel chief under the Wilson plan, Hughes compromised by appointing a board composed of the Under Secretary, two Assistant Secretaries, and three voting Foreign Service officers. Wilson later recognized the weakness of his proposal and admitted the wisdom of Hughes' decision.[76]

Wilson participated reluctantly in the administration of the new machinery. He tried vainly to avoid being named Chief of the Personnel Section and an ex-officio officer of the Personnel Board. He indicated the fullness of his work load and the desire not to decide the future status of his colleagues; he considered the position to be thankless and even foreign to his disposition. Nevertheless, he served as the head of two physically separated and divergent divisions.[77]

Criticism of the personnel board fulfilled all of his doubts. Consular officials correctly complained that the diplomatic branch had a disproportionate number of promotions compared to the consular division. The Foreign Service Personnel Board examined the records of the diplomatic and consular services separately and a significantly greater

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[76]Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., American Ambassador: Joseph C. Grew and the Development of the United States Diplomatic Tradition (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), pp. 105-106; hereafter cited as Heinrichs, Grew; Wilson, Diplomat, p. 169.

[77]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 170-171; Grew, Acting Secretary of State, to Diplomatic and Consular Officers of the United States, July 29, 1924, Box 8, Wilbur J. Carr Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; hereafter cited as Carr Papers.

percentage of diplomatic personnel were promoted. Second, consular individuals alleged that the board showed preference and partiality toward diplomatic individuals and their friends in promotions and assignments. To buttress their arguments, the critics pointed to the appointment of J. Butler Wright and Wilson, both board members, to choice posts in Hungary and Switzerland during the winter of 1927, and a short time later Under Secretary Grew, the chairman of the board, was named Ambassador to Turkey. This second general criticism was really unfounded, since Secretary Kellogg himself had recommended Wright and Grew and since the latter had reluctantly taken the assignment. In Wilson's case, Hugh Gibson, who was moving from Switzerland to Belgium, had made the original recommendation which Grew favored. Given those conditions and the prospects of working in Switzerland where American association with the League was increasingly interesting, Wilson enthusiastically gave up the most distasteful position of his diplomatic career.[78]

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[78]Heinrichs, Grew, pp. 116-117; Wilson, Diplomat, p. 172; Graham H. Stuart, The Department of State: A History of Its Organization, Procedure, and Personnel (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), pp. 287-288; hereafter cited as Stuart, Department.

CHAPTER II.

SWISS-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND THE INTRODUCTION TO CONFERENCE DIPLOMACY

Wilson looked forward to years of service in Switzerland. The tenure was pleasant because his wife and he liked the charm of the country, its people, and the institutions.[1] He had many friends in Berne with whom he wanted to talk after years of being separated from them, and, indeed, Fred Dolbeare, who worked with him in Japan, was the Counselor of Legation.[2] On June 11, Wilson was formally received by President Guiseppe Motta, and his official duties began.[3]

In the main, Wilson's contacts with the Berne government were routine, but those concerning the Kellogg-Briand Pact were momentous. On August 27, 1928, the United States sent a text of the Kellogg-Briand Pact to the Swiss government and asked the Federal Council to consider the chances of signing the peace arrangement. Motta replied that his government would favorably study a collective treaty so much in line with its traditional policy.[4] To expedite mutual consideration, Wilson

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[1]Hugh R. Wilson, speech, March 13, [1932], Wilson Papers; Wilson, speech, July 4, 1927, 123.W693/155.

[2]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 198; Speech by Wilson to President Guiseppe Motta of Switzerland, June 11, 1927, 123.W693/154.

[3]Leon H. Ellis, Secretary of Legation, to Kellogg, June 18, 1927, 123.W693/154.

[4]Wilson to Kellogg, August 30, 1928, 711.5412Anti-War/2; Wilson to Kellogg, August 28, 1928, 711.5412Anti-War/4; J. Pierrepont Moffat, Chargé d'affaires in Switzerland, to Kellogg, 711.5412Anti-War/3, letter #569.

suggested that the Minister in Washington could sign the treaty if Switzerland wanted to handle it in that manner. Motta declined the offer since he had already given a moral or juridical commitment which he considered similar to a signature of adherence. Instead, he preferred to leave matters as they stood until he could give definite consent. In the meantime, he expected approval by the Parliament shortly after his positive recommendation, but it was necessary, however, to wait three months after that in case 30,000 people desired a referendum. Anticipating no problem from any source, he incorrectly predicted final word by April, 1929, so the Department accepted Motta's words in good faith and awaited the results of the constitutional procedure.[5] The Parliament acted more slowly than Motta had expected, but the Swiss government decided to sign the Pact of Paris.[6]

But Wilson's association with the negotiations for a proposed Swiss-American treaty of friendship, commerce, and consular rights was less fruitful. In September, 1927, he asked Paul Dinichert, the Chief of the Division of Foreign Affairs of the Political Department, whether his government was prepared to discuss the American draft which it had received on November 2, 1926. Although individual departments were still studying it, he expected officials to be ready soon.[7] It was early

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[5]Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, November 8, 1928, 711.5412 Anti-War/11.

[6]Marc Peter, Minister of Switzerland, to Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of State, October 29, 1929, 711.5412Anti-War/22.

[7]Gibson to Kellogg, November 2, 1926, F.R., II, 968; Wilson to Kellogg, September 12, 1927, 711.542/14.

March, 1928, before Motta raised the subject informally with Wilson, and the Swiss official planned to propose to the Federal Council the negotiation of separate treaties of amity and commerce. He thought that the arrangement might better clarify general problems and allow either government to denounce one agreement without affecting the other. Having a busy schedule, he preferred to delay discussions until after Wilson's return from the next session of the League's Preparatory Commission on disarmament. The Minister made no comment on the new proposal, as he was without instructions on the point.

Wilson favored joint consideration of the proposals. Since Berne wanted an American statement of respect for Swiss neutrality, he advised the negotiation of both treaties at one time. The idea was to use American acceptance of neutrality as a means of countering the objections which Wilson knew informally would be given to the Washington text.[8]

Then Motta began implementing his idea of two agreements. On March 14, 1928, he delivered a draft of a treaty of friendship, juridical protection, and consular rights, the scope of which was less broad than the American proposals. Wilson learned confidentially that a disagreement between the Political Department and the Department of Public Economy about some provisions accounted for his not receiving the treaty of commerce at the same time. He only partially examined the text at that time because he was preoccupied with a Geneva assignment.[9]

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[8]Wilson to Kellogg, March 8, 1928, F.R., III, 895-897.

[9]Wilson to Kellogg, March 18, 1928, F.R., III, 897-898.

Upon returning to Berne, Wilson contacted the Foreign Office which arranged meetings with several officials to clarify divergent points. Motta, with whom he had the most meaningful contact, wanted to know whether the Swiss copy provided a basis for agreement. Wilson unofficially expressed doubt about his government's readiness to conclude an agreement which drastically restricted consular privileges. Motta was willing to hear criticism of the point in the preliminary text and to exclude any topic on which the two governments could not agree.

Then Wilson introduced the two major causes of Swiss-American difficulties for possible inclusion in future copies. The first was the different interpretation of nationality by which Americans were claimed as Swiss, eligible for military service. Motta saw little chance for reconciliation of the profound difference in concepts although he was willing to discuss the subject. The second was the interpretation of domicile which allowed cantons to tax American citizens. Motta thought that the national government might make a treaty which would limit the taxing power of the individual cantons.[10]

Wilson continued the contact with Motta, Dinichert, and their advisers merely to discuss Swiss views, not to negotiate. On the question of residence, Dinichert offered no hope for agreement, and he was less optimistic than Motta about concessions on property taxes. Concerning consular matters, the Swiss official saw little chance of improving those provisions.

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[10]Wilson to Kellogg, April 4, 1928, F.R., III, 908-911.

Thereafter only slight progress was made. Until the Swiss clarified their views on dual nationality and interpretation of domicile, Wilson could not present a specific proposal about the Swiss draft. To him, Swiss officials were proposing no more, and possibly less, than was contained in the Swiss-American Treaty of 1850. After those conversations, Wilson doubted strongly the wisdom of further talks. Yet he wanted to wait until the Swiss had fully expressed themselves on the important points. The Swiss government did submit a draft for a commercial treaty which was similar to the commercial clauses of the American text of 1926. But early in 1930, the State Department temporarily suspended efforts since no immediate progress was being made.[11]

In 1929, Wilson became associated with a Swiss-sponsored conference to revise the Geneva Red Cross Convention of 1906 and to frame a code for prisoners of war. Wilson himself played an important part in the personnel arrangements for the American delegation. Since the conference was not using League facilities and personnel, the planning was more difficult and expensive for each nation. Moreover, French was the official language and each delegation had to provide its own translators and interpreters. Subsequently, when the State Department assigned fewer workers than were necessary, Wilson feared possible embarrassment from a decrease in work quality. His staff needs clashed with the Department's attempt to fulfil the conference commitment without a congressional appropriation. Finally, Washington alleviated the personnel problem by

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[11]Wilson to Kellogg, April 24, 1928, F.R., III, 919-926; Stimson to Wilson, January 18, 1930, 711.542/26a.

assigning more members of the Geneva consulate and by sending J. Pierrepont Moffat from the Division of Western European Affairs.[12]

For a time, it appeared that Wilson would lead the American representatives. Indeed, one State Department official suggested that he be the only delegate and that other appointees be advisers. Gradually, the Department realized the importance of the chief's possessing a national reputation and a humanitarian and military interest in prisoners of war. Since the conference was to be in two divisions, the Department decided on Eliot Wadsworth, a former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, to direct the group and Wilson to be a delegate.[13]

At the assembly the delegates studied copies of two agreements drafted by the International Red Cross of Geneva. Wadsworth participated in the discussion of the proposed Red Cross convention which the first commission handled, and Wilson attended the second commission which considered prisoners of war matters. In fact, he became the chairman of a committee on juridical, diplomatic, and penal questions when the second commission began group study for simplifying the text and removing unnecessary details. On July 4, the second commission agreed that retaliation against prisoners of war was prohibited. Likewise, the first commission reached a consensus, and the signing of the

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[12]Stimson to American Legation, Berne, May 17, 1929, 514.2A12/37; Wilson to Stimson, May 18, 1929, 514.2A12/40; Wilson to Marriner, May 30, 1929, 514.2A12/46; Memorandum, May 31, 1929, 514.2A12/46½; J. Reuben Clark to Hoover, June 1, 1929, 514.2A12/49a.

[13]Memorandum, May 9, 1929, 514.2A12/38½; James C. Dunn to Kellogg, undated, 514.2A12/57; Clark to Wadsworth, June 17, 1929, 514.2A12/71a.

two conventions at Geneva on July 27, 1929, climaxed what Wilson termed "one of the few conferences which were happy episodes from start to finish."[14]

During the 1920's, the American Ministers to Switzerland increasingly handled affairs which related to the League. When Wilson arrived, an uncertain relationship still existed between the League and the United States. Officially, the State Department remained cautious toward the organization although the number of contacts increased as the years passed. More and more, after 1925, the United States sent representatives to the meetings on economic, commercial, and arms problems. Generally, it accepted invitations to League-sponsored conferences, and gradually relations with League bodies became cordial. Otherwise, the American Minister at Berne and the Geneva consulate usually reported on League developments. During his ten years there, Wilson noticed changes in the relationship but his instructions invariably restricted him.[15]

Most of Wilson's work in Switzerland concerned the League activities, especially several conferences on international problems of

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[14]Wadsworth to Kellogg, July 5, 1929, 514.2A12/83; Wilson to Kellogg, August 24, 1929, 514.2A12/141; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 228-229.

[15]Denna Frank Fleming, The United States and World Organization, 1920-1933 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 219-222; hereafter cited as Fleming, The United States; Francis P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), I, 348-350; hereafter cited as Walters, League; Wilson, Diplomat, p. 212.

transportation, trade restrictions, narcotics, and counterfeiting. Sometimes he handled preliminary arrangements until the Department officially designated someone else to assume the responsibility for the project. The expense of sending experts to the meetings was frequently prohibitive, so circumstances forced him to become acquainted with the subject in a short time. Since the topics varied considerably, he had to study and prepare continuously. At one technical gathering he chaired a commission, and most of his effort was designed to conceal his ignorance of the matter. Those early experiences caused him to urge the early appointment of American representatives to allow them ample time for preparations. Also American opinions were often decisively influential particularly if they were stated before positions crystallized. In October, 1927, Secretary Kellogg, increasingly realizing that fact, indicated that Wilson might be sent to many future meetings, and the following years bore that out.[16]

One of the early assemblies which Wilson attended was the Third General Conference on Communications and Transit. League officials desired American representation to present information about procedures and to develop an information exchange system.[17] For the United States, participation constituted a practical means of fostering some of its economic policies. Since the conference did not intend to formulate any general conventions, the government could safely participate without

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[16]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 227-228; Kellogg to Wilson, October 3, 1927, Wilson Papers.

[17]Arthur N. Young, American Delegation to the Economic Conference, Geneva, Memorandum, "Conversation with Colonel Hiam, Mr. Haas, and Mr. Sweetser," June 2, 1927, 570.B3/1.

worrying about commitment to any objectionable ideas.[18]

Wilson directed American affairs. After preparing plans for the prospective work, he and his advisers called on M. R. Haas, the Director of the Communications and Transit Sections of the League Secretariat. Wilson indicated the scope of his instructions, and Haas invited American officials to attend whatever sessions they found relevant. Further, he presented the proposed plan for three commissions to consider the collection and exchange of statistics, laws, and regulations of particular countries concerning transportation and communications media which might be of international interest, to identify documents for individuals of unknown nationality, and to revise rules which were presented at previous sessions. He asked Wilson to be the chairman of the First Commission since an American in that capacity would enhance the stature of the body. Wilson contacted the State Department which to his gratification approved the offer, so he agreed to serve as the head.[19]

Generally, the conference work in which Americans participated from August 23, to September 2, 1927, went smoothly. In the First

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[18]Memorandum, Office of the Economic Adviser, "Forthcoming Conference on Communications and Transit at Geneva," June 22, 1927, 570.B3/2; Kellogg to Coolidge, August 5, 1927, 570.B3/4; Castle to American Legation, Berne, August 11, 1927, 570.B3/9.

[19]Wilson to Kellogg, August 22, 1927, 570.B3/18; Kellogg to American Consul, Geneva, August 23, 1927, 570.B3/18. Wilson asked Castle informally about his relationship to the League, "whether I could feel a little freer in participation than I had previously felt it admissible." Castle cautioned against Wilson's conveying any impression that the United States was becoming involved with League political activities. So, if Drummond invited the Minister to a dinner for the League Council, the Department preferred him to stay home. Wilson to Castle, August 26, 1927, Wilson Papers; Castle to Wilson, September 8, 1927, Wilson Papers.

Commission the only notable conflict resulted from some powers initially questioning the utility of establishing a system for collecting communications information, but they shortly withdrew their objections to its creation. Then Wilson divided the group into four subcommittees to study carefully the type of information of value to the Transit Section concerning parts and maritime navigation, inland navigation, railways, and road traffic and air travel. The subcommittees worked harmoniously and easily agreed that the data which was to be collected be of a general character and be supplied at the discretion of the individual governments. Likewise, the Second Commission submitted much the same results. After adjournment, the United States sent pertinent information to the Secretary General of the League.[20]

In 1927, Wilson participated in the more important Conference on the Abolition of Export and Import Prohibitions and Restrictions. He headed a delegation consisting of four experts and a secretary. The days and nights were very busy for Wilson who had to familiarize himself with the conference draft quickly. He considered some Washington comments justified while he also recognized the greater merit of the other groups at times, but eventually he accepted modified instructions from Washington.[21]

The large number of exceptions appeared to be the major difficulty in the way of agreement. From other delegates, Wilson learned of

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[20]Wilson to Kellogg, September 13, 1928, 570.B3/50.

[21]Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, October 8, 1927, 560.M2/18; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 224-225.

the French and German determination to refuse agreement and to insist on more reservations if the British refused to give up their dye restrictions. In his opinion, most of the conference revolved around this point although it was not formally debated. Soon the participants became aware that so many amendments would be presented that the governments would have to reconvene in about six months to consider the changes. The situation left the conference with two choices. After the exploration of all aspects, it could announce in plenary session that agreement was impossible, but it might conclude, however, an agreement which would permit reservations. The second alternative would accomplish something and be a step toward abolition of restrictions.[22]

Faced with those two choices, Wilson thought that the United States needed to consider carefully its future plans, following one of three courses of action. Washington might merely say that it would not sign because the draft would actually perpetuate current conditions. Also, it might refuse to sign the agreement until events showed the extent to which reservations would weaken the convention. Instead, Wilson opted for participation as an American gesture of willingness to eliminate international barriers. Besides, no statement had been made about automobiles, radio equipment, and films, and the United States would benefit perceptibly by the abolition of restrictions on those items. Furthermore, only signatories to the agreement would be eligible

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[22]Wilson to Kellogg, October 20, 1927, 560.M2/43; Wilson to Kellogg, October 25, 1927, 560.M2/57.

to receive information. Moreover, the government could use the convention provisions in further discussions with other signatories concerning prohibitions and restrictions. In addition, the American involvement would tend to strengthen the weak document and to encourage the Central European governments who genuinely wanted to remove trade obstacles.[23]

The State Department itself was somewhat unsure of the appropriate steps to take. Nonetheless, Robert E. Olds, the Acting Secretary of State and Undersecretary, instructed Wilson to continue working for an agreement which would improve on the international situation. The United States deplored the apparent inclination to increase the number of reservations and urged him to work against that trend which might defeat the conference's purpose. Confidentially, Olds informed him, the Department would allow him to proceed along the line of the third alternative which he suggested.[24]

Progress came only with difficulty. The French and Germans still opposed British efforts for retention of dye restrictions, and their efforts to exact a price from England resulted in no settlement of a sore point.[25] Most delegates agreed on the obligation to arbitrate legal disputes. Wilson worked for general optional arbitration, but Italy, Britain, and Germany refused to agree unless two particular

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[23]Wilson to Kellogg, October 27, 1927, 560.M2/64.

[24]Robert Olds to American Mission, Geneva, 560.M2/69.

[25]Wilson to Kellogg, October 29, 1927, 560.M2/71.

articles were exempted. Since their instructions were "absolute," he requested orders from Washington because the action exceeded his instructions. The State Department saw no reason for him to object to the conference decision after he had reasonably tried for noncompulsory application.[26]

Thereafter the conference drew to a close so rapidly that time ran out before Wilson could present a number of exceptions. He argued that Washington was not fully informed about developments because of the lack of direct telephone connections between Geneva and the United States. Also, the speed of negotiations in the final days had prevented the Americans from adequately developing their position. Consequently, the United States, lacking adequate time for reflection on the agreement and consultation among the government branches, abstained from signing at the final session on November 8, 1927, when eighteen foreign governments affixed their signatures.[27]

After adjournment, Wilson evaluated the meeting. No other assignment to that time had been as complex and difficult as this one. He was very sorry that he had failed to accomplish as much as Secretary Kellogg had wanted, but the late arrival of instructions constituted a decided handicap. His experiences and observations convinced him of

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[26]Wilson to Kellogg, November 1, 1927, 560.M2/77; Kellogg to American Mission, Geneva, November 3, 1927, 560.M2/78.

[27]Wilson to Kellogg, November 7, 1927, 560.M2/103; Wilson to Kellogg, November 9, 1927, 560.M2/109½; Wilson to Kellogg, November 9, 1927, 560.M2/114.

European eagerness to have the United States cooperate in the handling of world economic problems. In fact, during the conference several delegates indicated privately a willingness to alter the entire document if the United States would sign it. Despite the lack of desired achievement, he noted the evident progress of significantly reducing the hundreds of reservations to only a few. Perhaps American goods would fare better once the convention eliminated actual or proposed restrictions.[28]

On January 30, 1928, Wilson signed the convention and protocol of November 8, abolishing import and export prohibitions and restrictions. At the time, he indicated no American obligation under the agreement concerning the Philippine Islands and expressed other reservations. The United States reserved restriction on exported items and the domestic handling of them as allowable under the conventions if the stipulations were not applied in an arbitrary and discriminatory manner. The American government stipulated that the convention did not alter the tariff arrangements, the treaty-making machinery of participants, or the means of countering unfair competition and practices. Because the State Department objected to parts of the final act which consisted of opinions and aspirations of the other delegations, Wilson did not sign it.[29]

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[28]Wilson to Kellogg, November 9, 1927, 560.M2/109½.

[29]Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, January 27, 1928, 560.M2/132.

On July 3, 1928, the next session began for consideration of reservations and ways to implement the agreement. Once again Wilson headed the delegation. He thought maybe this meeting would deal with more difficult matters than the one in the fall.[30]

Almost immediately the delegations debated the conference's competence to interpret the provisions of the text. Wilson insisted on the assembly's ability to say whether a state's reservation was already included under the existing articles. Quickly, the President and the Secretariat opposed the suggestion because of a lack of readily available information on which to base a decision. The French delegate proposed the compromise of allowing speakers to indicate the similarity of an exception to the terms of a specific article and then the conference voting on whether the exception could be included under a particular provision. The body approved the procedure, and, after the admissability of an item was established, the group examined the substantive merits of the exemption. Wilson, dubious about the technique, foresaw the possibility of governments' claiming more exemptions after ratification unless the opinions of other governments could keep individual states in line.[31]

Naturally, the reservations themselves remained a major consideration. By the voting process, the number of exceptions was reduced to

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[30]Wilson to Young, February 17, 1928, 560.M2/149.

[31]Wilson to Kellogg, July 18, 1928, 560.M3/77.

thirty-four on twenty products, and fortunately, no additional requests could be made after that action. In this area, the United States was most interested in the elimination of restrictions on the importation of cars and films.[32] The Portuguese voluntarily dropped the request for an exception on cars, but Czechoslovakia retained its item for a time. Wilson claimed that that limitation was inadmissible and would tend to increase the number of requests. He asked if that government considered the proposal so essential that it was willing to chance the undermining of the general agreement. The pressure proved enough to cause the Czechs to withdraw their provision. Concerning films, Wilson made a speech for removal of French restrictions, but he received a stinging rebuff from the French representative and little support among other European delegates.[33]

Finally, general discussion ended, and the conference gave its attention to ratification. It stipulated that a minimum of eighteen states would have to ratify and specifically designated fourteen nations which would have to consent. The name of the United States which was included in the second group was placed in parentheses because the short session of the American Congress might delay approval. The delegations took that action despite Wilson's strangely claiming that his government

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[32]Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, June 21, 1928, 560.M3/23.

[33]Wilson to Kellogg, July 18, 1928, 560.M3/77; Wilson, Diplomat, p. 226.

should not be included since it had no restrictions to abolish. Only the French delegation gave him some support for removal of the United States from the required list, and the Swiss, Germans, and Japanese rejected the argument outright. Otherwise, Wilson talked little because he considered the problems primarily those of Central Europe.[34]

Before adjournment, all representatives except those of the United States and Bulgaria signed the supplementary agreement and the final act.[35] Wilson signed both documents on July 31, 1928. Despite unsatisfactory provisions, he and the State Department considered the agreements acceptable enough, and they worked to secure the benefits.[36] Unfortunately, few countries ratified the convention, so economic competition increased in the next months and years.[37]

Another world-wide problem of the twenties in which the United States and Wilson were less intimately involved concerned the League efforts to control the sale of narcotics. Usually, the State Department sent an unofficial representative to the meetings of the League Advisory

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[34]Wilson to Kellogg, July 5, 1928, 560.M3/42.

[35]Wilson to Kellogg, July 6, 1928, 560.M3/46; Wilson to Kellogg, July 8, 1928, 560.M3/53.

[36]Wilson to Kellogg, July 11, 1928, 560.M3/55.

[37]Memorandum, "Supplementary Agreement on Import and Export Prohibitions and Restrictions," Treaty Division, July 27, 1928, 560.M3/64; Wilson to Kellogg, July 31, 1928, 560.M3/72.

Committee on Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs.[38] Washington also cooperated by completing quarterly and annual reports on the amount of drugs in the country.[39] It granted permission to the League Commission of Inquiry into the Control of Opium Smoking in the Far East to study the regulatory system in the Philippines.[40] American officials, fearful that their government might be required to pay the visitor's expenses, authorized Wilson to state that the League would assume the bill. From the Secretariat he learned that the committee had intended from the first to pay its own way, so he withheld the message.[41]

The State Department was less cooperative concerning membership in the League's Permanent Central Board of Control which also dealt with dangerous drugs. The Council invited Washington to participate fully in the appointment of members to the agency which was to be established in September, 1928. The government declined, since it considered the

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[38]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 227; League of Nations Association, An Eleven Year Review of the League of Nations with Supplement Covering the Events of 1931 (New York: League of Nations Association, Inc., 1931), pp. 84-85; hereafter cited as League of Nations Association, Review; Walters, League, I, 428.

[39]Grew to Marriner, November 29, 1926, 500.C1197/43; Castle to Wilson, July 25, 1927, 500.C1197/42; Nelson T. Johnson to Wilson, January 13, 1928, 500.C1197/229a; Johnson to Wilson, December 26, 1929, 500.C1197/332.

[40]Johnson to Wilson, 500.C1197/143, #175; Wilson to Kellogg, September 7, 1928, 500.C1197/216; Unsigned to Wilson, January 12, 1929, 500.C1197/233; Wilson to Stimson, June 8, 1929, 500.C1197/297; Wilson to Stimson, September 4, 1929, 500.C1197/308; Wilson to Stimson, December 19, 1929, 500.C1197/334.

[41]Wilson to Stimson, October 18, 1928, 500.C1197/218; Wilson to Stimson, January 7, 1929, 500.C1197/254.

Geneva convention of 1926 on narcotics an unsatisfactory substitute for the Hague Convention of 1912. It did promise, however, to continue sending information when the agency requested it.[42] Before publishing the response, the Council asked Wilson about publicity. He indicated that the United States would allow other governments time to receive a draft prior to releasing this information publicly.[43] Unfortunately, so many people obtained the information early that the League was forced to release the complete text before the State Department had fully received it.[44]

The League still wanted an American member. Sir Eric Drummond, the League's Secretary General, was prepared to submit a name to the League Council without publicity if the United States had no objection to one of its citizens participating. Washington was not opposed in principle, but the government would not make any move which might be interpreted as a proposal or approval of an individual. Since it did not help in the selection of the board, it could not officially express an opinion.[45] Later the Council appointed Herbert L. May of Pittsburgh

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[42]M. M. H., Memorandum, Division of Far Eastern Affairs, September 10, 1929, 500.C1197/306; Wilson to Stimson, September 17, 1929, 500.C1197/309.

[43]Wilson to Kellogg, September 7, 1928, F.R., I, 448; Wilson to Kellogg, September 29, 1928, F.R., I, 448-449; Wilson to Kellogg, December 15, 1928, F.R., I, 452-453.

[44]Wilson to Kellogg, December 17, 1928, 511.4A2A/34.

[45]Wilson to Kellogg, December 6, 1928, 500.C1197/239; Kellogg to Wilson, December 8, 1928, F.R., I, 452.

on the nomination of New Zealand.[46]

Wilson also participated in the negotiations for the proposed accession of the United States to the statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice. Of course, the long-standing question was one of whether the United States would become a member of the Court. After 1926, the major obstacle to participation remained the reservation that the Court could not give advisory opinions on any dispute concerning the United States without its consent. In February, 1929, Secretary Kellogg thought that the adherents of the Final Act of the 1926 conference could informally arrive at a statement which would safeguard American rights and interests.[47]

The work of the Committee of Jurists, which met March 11-19, 1929, helped clear the way for American membership. It essentially removed the conditions to which the United States objected. Drummond unofficially and personally expressed a willingness to have an American representative at a special September conference to consider the committee's report.[48] Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson found that the draft protocol answered American reservations and provided an acceptable foundation for approval. After the signatory states accepted the draft text, he planned to ask President Herbert C. Hoover's

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[46]Wilson to Kellogg, December 11, 1928, 500.C1197/247; Rand, American Consul, Geneva, to Kellogg, December 15, 1928, F.R., I, 452.

[47]Ellis, Kellogg, pp. 226-227; Kellogg to Austrian Minister, February 19, 1929, F.R., I, 1-3.

[48]Gross, Third Secretary of Legation, Berne, to Stimson, July 18, 1929, F.R., I, 21-22.

authorization to sign and to propose submission for Senatorial consent.[49] Those opinions greatly pleased the Secretary General who promised Wilson to handle the information discreetly.[50] The State Department wanted to name no one lest his attendance at Geneva lead to unfounded assumptions that he was presenting official views.[51] Even though Wilson was authorized to attend one or more sessions informally, he was hesitant since his inability to answer questions might produce embarrassment or more misunderstanding.

Instead, he had his own ideas for combatting hearsay. From the newspapers the public had received the impression that the draft was satisfactory. Similarly, the League Council members were probably making their own interpretations since Washington had not officially answered their inquiry about the Jurists report. Therefore, an authoritative declaration would cause little surprise and would end speculation. Believing direct action to be most beneficial, he proposed that Drummond be authorized to read a formal statement to the Council. If an announcement by the Secretary General smacked of inappropriate association with League affairs, Wilson might personally deliver the message as the American Minister to Switzerland. The approach would foster approval of the draft with only a minimum of debate, but the State Department

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[49] Stimson to Wilson, August 14, 1929, F.R., I, 22.

[50] Wilson to Stimson, August 17, 1929, F.R., I, 23.

[51] Stimson to Wilson, August 15, 1929, F.R., I, 22-23.

disapproved of the plan.[52]

In a closed session the Council gratefully accepted the American views which Drummond judiciously stated were from "a dependable source." Nevertheless, it deplored the indirect method by which the United States had presented its answer. The body decided against a public statement concerning American approval until Washington had released its own account.[53]

Ratification remained the most difficult obstacle. On September 5, 1929, Stimson indicated publicly the acceptability of the Jurists' report. He did not say that the submission to the Senate might be delayed as much as a year because other pressing international matters would likely consume that body's time and attention in the upcoming session.[54] Drummond wanted the fact kept quiet lest such news discourage the Council delegates, Wilson agreed because of the considerable weight given to American opinions and difficulties.[55] About a month later, fifty states signed the agreement and on December 9, 1929, the United States also signed. A year afterwards, President Hoover sent the documents to the Senate which did not approve them.[56]

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[52]Wilson to Stimson, August 20, 1929, F.R., I, 24; Stimson to Wilson, August 20, 1929, F.R., I, 25.

[53]Blake, American Consul, Geneva, to Stimson, September 4, 1929, F.R., I, 27.

[54]Stimson to Wilson, September 5, 1929, F.R., I, 27-28.

[55]Wilson to Stimson, September 7, 1929, F.R., I, 28-29.

[56]Wilson to Stimson, October 8, 1929, F.R., I, 29-31; Moffat to Stimson, December 16, 1929, F.R., I, 43; Clarence A. Berdahl, The Policy of the United States with Respect to the League of Nations (Geneva: Librarie Kundig, 1932), p. 90; hereafter cited as Berdahl, Policy.

In 1929, Wilson also represented the United States in the highly technical monetary meetings which stemmed from the League's interest in sound currency. The International Conference for the Suppression of Counterfeiting Currency resulted from a Hungarian bogus franc incident and the work of the League Financial Committee which had studied the subject since 1926. The League's Mixed Committee for the Suppression of Counterfeiting Currency drafted a convention and sent a copy to the State Department for its comments. Drummond intentionally postponed the meeting till April, 1929, to allow participants time for consideration of American observations before the opening session.[57]

When American personnel were selected for the meeting, Wilson was also in charge of this delegation. Elbridge D. Rand, the Consul at Geneva, was made an alternate delegate in case Wilson's work on the Preparatory Commission for disarmament necessitated his being away. Also, William H. Moran of the Treasury Department acted as a technical assistant.[58]

The conference worked primarily through committees. Originally, it established subcommittee "A" which discussed legal matters, and subcommittee "B," which considered administrative and enforcement aspects. When the problems proved too unwieldy for group "A," a Special Subcommittee was formed which handled most debates but which, strangely enough,

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[57]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 228; League of Nations Association, Review, p. 78; Wilson to Kellogg, October 11, 1928, F.R., I, 394.

[58]Kellogg to Wilson, March 18, 1929, 551.58B1/27; Castle to Wilson, March 22, 1929, 551.58B1/35c.

did not keep any minutes. Wilson participated in that group and also served on a committee of draft and coordination.

An early problem involved assurances that the conference's provisions would be implemented. The draft text obligated the signatories to take appropriate steps to incorporate the rules into their legal and administrative systems. The United States knew that it could not agree to commit the legislative branch to particular laws by the treaty-making process. When the Rumanian delegate proposed an addition to read that the parties could recommend adoption of the rules to the legislatures, Wilson quickly seconded the motion. Then the matter went to the Special Subcommittee where he worked vigorously for its acceptance. The Eastern European states were doubtful of the good faith of other governments, so the members adopted a formula which made ratification dependent on legislation conforming to the convention. He consented since the American objections were satisfactorily met and Washington approved his action.[59]

Accordingly, the United States Criminal Statutes required modification to prevent conflict with the draft text. The American laws against private reproduction of domestic currency were more severe than against duplication of foreign securities. As the treaty was finally written, the State Department needed to consider a bill which would equalize the penalties. Otherwise, Wilson and Moran thought that the

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[59]Wilson to Stimson, April 22, 1929, F.R., I, 404; Stimson to Wilson, April 18, 1929, 551.58B1/46.

only particular legislation which Congress would have to pass to comply with the convention stipulations.[60]

In the course of debates the conference defined and delimited letters of request. The majority of the delegates evidently wanted a clarification because some countries used such means even in criminal cases. Some wanted a broad application to include requests for speedy action to preclude disposal of the evidence and petitions for provisional incarceration and detention. The United States, adhering only to the usual uses of such letters, refused to approve modification, but Wilson believed the final wording of the article in line with the State Department's wishes. The agreement allowed each signatory to inform others of the method which it would follow concerning such correspondence and required a government to grant letters only within the limitations of its own internal legislation.[61]

Extradition comprised the thorniest problem for the assembly and Wilson. In fact, this article produced one of the longest discussions of the meeting. According to the text, the procedure was to be governed by the domestic legislation of the country granting extradition. Yet American laws on the subject were narrow and did not include some

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[60]Wilson to Stimson, April 20, 1929, F.R., I, 404-405; Stimson to Wilson, March 22, 1929, F.R., I, 395.

[61]Wilson to Stimson, April 20, 1929, F.R., I, 405-406; Wilson to Stimson, April 11, 1929, 551.58B1/42; Stimson to Wilson, April 18, 1929, 551.58B1/42; Wilson to Stimson, April 18, 1929, 551.58B1/47; Stimson to American Mission, Geneva, April 18, 1929, 551.58B1/47.

problems which United States extradition treaties covered. Also, the statutes did not allow surrender of a person except for a definite crime and in compliance with a treaty or law. The State Department wanted the offenses specified and proposed an article to meet the difficulty, but the practical effect of the convention would still be delivery of persons in all instances. Consequently, the United States would have to surrender its citizens whereas most other nations would not. So, it wanted a statement that a government would not be required to release its nationals under the convention's articles. The Special Subcommittee suggested many different proposals and eventually agreed to several provisions which collectively were satisfactory to the State Department.[62]

The conference moved toward an acceptable conclusion. When twenty-three states approved on April 20, 1929, Wilson did not consent. Instead, he followed the usual United States procedure of temporarily withholding his signature. The ostensible excuses were the great distance from Washington and the difficulty of communicating with it. The real reason lay in the precedent of waiting to give the State Department ample time to study the text before making any official comments. He feared immediate approval might make it difficult, if not impossible, to secure future extensions.[63] Yet, he counseled the officials to act

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[62]Wilson to Stimson, April 8, 1929, 551.58B1/39; Stimson to Wilson, April 9, 1929, 551.58B1/39; Wilson to Stimson, April 20, 1929, F.R., I, 406.

[63]Wilson to Stimson, April 8, 1929, F.R., I, 402; Wilson to Stimson, April 17, 1929, 551.58B1/53.

favorably within a short time, if it intended to do so. His signing would demonstrate full support for the movement and allay any doubts about his government's readiness to cooperate in the project.[64] Subsequently, Wilson signed the convention on July 20, 1929, but withheld consent to the final act and the optional protocol because of objections to some points. Thus, the machinery was established for combatting the counterfeiting of currency.[65]

After three years of conference diplomacy, Wilson almost resigned from the Foreign Service. During the fall of 1929, he vacationed in the United States, and in Chicago, Lee, Higginson and Company, a commercial banking firm, offered him a job in its Paris office which was to be opened soon. The prospect of a good private position in contrast to the modest government salary of which he could save only a small portion strongly tempted him to accept the offer. The idea appeared so attractive that he visited several company locations in Europe, once he returned to Berne, but finally Wilson opted to remain where he could participate in the more absorbing events of Geneva.[66]

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[64]Wilson to Stimson, April 20, 1929, F.R., I, 407; Stimson to Wilson, July 16, 1929, F.R., I, 408; Wilson to Stimson, July 20, 1929, F.R., I, 409.

[65]League of Nations Association, Review, p. 78.

[66]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 231-234.

CHAPTER III.

PRELIMINARIES TO A DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Disarmament constituted one of the major recurring international topics in the interwar period. If World War I was fought to end war, then armament limitation was designed to implement that goal. The Washington Naval Conference marked one of the first steps in the drive to reduce competition, tensions, and expensive building programs. Also, the League of Nations concerned itself with the subject, and the United States sent observers or delegates to the conferences and meetings of the League's Temporary Mixed Commission which had handled disarmament problems since 1921. After 1925, American ministers became associated with such assemblies as the Geneva Naval Conference of 1927 and the Preparatory Commission for a Disarmament Conference.

On February 10, 1927, President Calvin Coolidge of the United States proposed that the League's Preparatory Commission consider the application of ratios to naval vessels not included in the Five Power Treaty of 1922. That convention, concluded at the Washington Conference of 1921-1922, had restricted only the building of capital ships and aircraft carriers, but, since the conclusions of that agreement, the armaments production had shifted to the unrestricted smaller vessels. Thus the Washington Conference provisions had brought about only a temporary lull in naval construction. France declined to attend, contending that disarmament should be considered as a whole instead of singling out naval problems, and Italy used the French refusal as an

excuse to remain away. Still hoping for a new agreement, Britain, the United States, and Japan decided in March to hold a three-power conference in Geneva during June.

For more than two months, Washington officials considered appropriate personnel for its delegation. When Japan designated a distinguished group, headed by Admiral Viscount Makato Saito, the Governor General of Korea, the Coolidge administration began searching for prominent figures to designate. Having no success in that venture, it named the regular delegation to the Preparatory Commission which consisted of Hugh S. Gibson, the Ambassador in Belgium, and Rear Admiral Hilary P. Jones, a member of the General Board of the Navy. The only notable addition was Hugh Wilson as an adviser and the Secretary General of the conference. In rank, prestige, and experience, the American delegation was below that of Japan and Britain which sent W. C. Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Earl Jellicoe, the hero of the Battle of Jutland, and Lord Robert Cecil of Chelwood.[1]

On June 20, 1927, the meeting convened and differences quickly became apparent. Britain wanted to discuss capital ships, but the United States early refused since the conference was called to consider auxiliary vessels. Gibson indicated parity with Britain was fundamental to the position of the United States, a view he maintained throughout the talks. The tonnage of cruisers presented one of the thorniest problems due to divergent defensive requirements. Britain contended for a

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[1]Ellis, Kellogg, p. 165; Kellogg to Gibson, June 2, 1927, F.R., I, 43-45.

large number of 6,000-ton cruisers with 6-inch manually-operated guns for its scattered empire while the United States wanted a small number of 10,000-ton vessels with 8-inch manually-operated weapons to meet its territorial needs.[2]

On several occasions Wilson talked with British naval officers about the difference over cruisers. They honestly believed the small ship to be extremely practical and considered the Americans in error for wanting only crafts with the large weapons. Like other civilian colleagues in the delegation, Wilson counseled against firm adherence to Washington's position, as intransigence might mean the failure to reach an accord. He attempted to impress on Admiral Jones the importance of the British posture, but the naval delegate stubbornly rejected any settlement which did not allow his country to construct its cruiser tonnage in the crafts that it wanted.[3]

Essentially, the representatives still maintained those divergent points when the conference ended on August 4. In the evening of August 3, personnel of the naval powers met at Wilson's residence in Geneva to assess general progress. Seeing the inability to conclude an agreement satisfactory to all parties, Gibson warned that public speeches would tend to make a future settlement more difficult, so he asked the delegates, especially the British, to refrain from controversial addresses. When Jones thought further requests to be futile, Gibson ended his efforts, being unable to prevent additional impairment

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[2]Ellis, Kellogg, pp. 168-170.

[3]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 217.

of Anglo-American relations. The next day at the final session, the British, American, and Japanese delegations presented speeches justifying their national positions and issued a joint statement which returned the naval disarmament problem to each government for any additional action. The refusal of the two large naval powers to compromise brought Anglo-American cordiality to a temporary low ebb.[4]

At that assembly Wilson's primary responsibilities related to the Secretariat and press matters. Prior to the convocation Japan sugtested Wilson, who still "was most pleasantly remembered in Tokyo," to be Secretary General of a body which consisted of one representative from Japan, Britain, the United States, and the League. Washington consented and Wilson assumed the position upon his arrival in Geneva. Among the group's other duties, at the end of each day's meeting the Secretariat issued a joint communiqué about developments; otherwise, each country's representative on the Secretariat conducted press relations for his own delegation.[5]

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[4]Wilson to Kellogg, August 5, 1927, Wilson Papers.

[5]Castle, Memorandum of Conversation between Sawada, Counselor of the Japanese Embassy, and Castle, May 10, 1927, 500.A15A1/228½; Castle to Wilson, June 3, 1927, 500.A15A1/259a; Wilson to Kellogg, June 5, 1927, 500.A15A1/263; Kellogg to Wilson, June 9, 1927, 500.A15A1/263. Admiral Jones later expressed his appreciation for the cooperation and cordiality Wilson and others had shown him. Jones to Secretary of Navy, August 17, 1927, F. W. 500.A15A1/568; Castle to Wilson, September 26, 1927, 500.A15A1/568. Kellogg wrote Wilson, "What I wish to say to you is how deeply I appreciate your work and that of all the other members of the Delegation and their assistants. I think the conference was managed with great ability and you are all entitled to credit." Kellogg to Wilson, August 18, 1927, Wilson Papers.

In disarmament affairs Wilson next became associated with the Preparatory Commission. The body originated in a League Council resolution of December, 1925, to work for a draft convention and the eventual calling of a general conference on arms reduction and limitation. President Coolidge accepted the invitation to participate in a preliminary investigation which possibly might develop into concrete recommendations. By the spring of 1927, two draft texts were submitted concerning restriction of land and naval armaments. Since full accord was not possible on any important item, the Preparatory Commission planned to meet in November to consider a single copy which was a summary of the two drafts.[6]

In September, 1927, the Eighth Assembly of the League introduced a new element. The Assembly, genuinely concerned about the slow progress in disarmament, attempted to expedite a solution. The representatives saw the need for a thorough and technical analysis of security and arbitration problems, the Assembly proposed the creation of a Committee on Arbitration and Security to be composed of participants on the Preparatory Commission. Initially, the United States was excluded from the proposed group, but later the Assembly invited it to participate. Thus

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[6]Wilbur Lee Mahaney, Jr., "The Soviet Union, the League of Nations and Disarmament, 1917-1935" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, 1940), pp. 47-49; hereafter cited as Mahaney, "Soviet Union;" Merze Tate, The United States and Armaments (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 75-77; hereafter cited as Tate, Armaments; Benjamin H. Williams, The United States and Disarmament (New York: Whittlesey House, 1931), pp. 250-252; hereafter cited as Williams, Disarmament.

the Preparatory Commission was to talk about the establishment of the new body in the November session.[7]

A number of personnel from the League's Disarmament Section genuinely hoped the United States would attend since its participation would help foster cooperation and understanding. Moreover, its prestige would be of great assistance in itself and its experience in arbitration, conciliation, and disarmament would help markedly. They believed that the mere stating of American opinions would contribute significantly. Besides, the committee would only be consultative and investigatory with no form of commitment. Their hopes were dashed when the State Department instructed Wilson as the chief American delegate not to help organize the committee and not to accept membership on it.[8]

The fourth session of the Preparatory Commission began under inauspicious circumstances. Some delegates and powers were suspicious of each other, and a large factor in their attitude was the presence of the Soviet Union for the first time. At the beginning, no one seemed especially concerned about the first item on the agenda which dealt with

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[7]Tuck to Kellogg, September 10, 1927, 500.A15c/--; Tuck to Kellogg, October 7, 1927, 500.A15c/4.

[8]Tuck, speaking from a European vantage point, counseled the practicality of an American's presence even as an observer. Tuck to Kellogg, October 7, 1927, 500.A15c/4. Gibson, who headed the delegation to the third session of the Preparatory Commission, favored an American's sitting with the Committee on Arbitration and Security only to give opinions when asked and to observe events. Gibson to Kellogg, October 27, 1927, 500.A15c/5. Kellogg to American Embassy, Brussels, November 8, 1927, 500.A15c/5; Kellogg to Wilson, November 15, 1927, F.R., I, 210.

the progress of the commission's work until Maxim Litvinov, the chief Soviet delegate, spoke up belatedly. He accused the capitalist nations, the League, and the Preparatory Commission of working slowly and insincerely, and then he proposed the complete elimination of land, naval, and air forces.

Joseph Paul-Boncour of France, feeling a need to answer the accusations, denied that the group deserved such scathing criticism. He wondered if the Russians appreciated the problems of bringing about armament reduction, and he assured them of the delegates' sincerity of purpose. Wilson intended to protest that the proposition was a definite deviation from the official program but to abstain if a roll-call vote was taken. He did not have to make any statement because the commission, despite Soviet insistence on immediate action, postponed deliberations until the next session. The delegates seemed much relieved, as they really did not want to discuss it.[9]

Then President J. J. Loudon, the delegate from the Netherlands, asked about American representation on the Committee on Arbitration and Security.[10] Wilson answered that the United States was both physically and politically separated from strictly European difficulties and that Washington's record on arbitration, conciliation, and consultation was

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[9]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 57-63; Wilson to Kellogg, November 30, 1927, 500.A15/602.

[10]Wilson to Kellogg, November 30, 1927, 500.A15/603.

evident in the Four Power Treaty of 1922 and other pacts. For those reasons his government could not accept membership in the new committee; it would evaluate the committee proposals to the Preparatory Commission according to traditional policies. After Litvinov declined active membership and promised to appoint a spectator, Loudon asked Wilson to inform Washington of the Soviet action and the commission's desire to have the United States name an observer. As he had promised, Wilson relayed the message, but the American officials refused to change the instructions.[11]

On December 3, the commission met to set a date for the fifth session. Litvinov and Count Johann H. A. von Bernstorff of Germany wanted a convocation as early as possible. All the other delegates chose March 15, 1928, and the fourth session ended on that note.

Wilson felt that the attendance of the Soviets and the determined German push for an immediate second reading of the draft convention kept the commission meeting from being routine. Loudon treated Litvinov and Bernstorff with courtesy, and the other representatives cordially endured their near filibuster. Perhaps the German achieved some success, but the Russian did not impress the commission. Likely his recommendations were stated primarily to affect the radical news media of the world. Although Wilson was not sure that the maneuver was

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[11]Wilson to Kellogg, November 30, 1927, 500.A15/602; Wilson to Kellogg, November 30, 1927, 500.A15/603; Kellogg to Wilson, November 22, 1927, F.R., I, 211-212; Kellogg to American Mission, Geneva, December 1, 1927, 500.A14/463a.

correct, he was positive that the Soviet official had failed to provoke a general discussion, if that was his secondary purpose. Anyway, Wilson intended to observe his actions in future gatherings.[12]

In a despatch to the State Department on December 16, 1927, Wilson evaluated the overall American relationship to the Preparatory Commission. Such an inventory was necessary, he said, to formulate future policy because of the Soviet participation and the establishment of the Security Committee. Concerning the Soviet resolution, possibly the United States should consider whether it would definitely oppose the recommendation in the next session. If Washington wanted to have only a minor part, it might say that the form of the proposal would not permit American discussion or voting on it. That action would not isolate the United States because other European governments, really more involved, would oppose the Soviet approach. Yet, the meeting would offer a good chance to present views if the State Department so desired.

Wilson also included his comments about the nature of the March 15th meeting. He doubted that the Preparatory Commission would hold a long session primarily because the Security Committee probably would not have definite proposals to make. In that case he expected the German and Russian delegations to work for prompt consideration of the draft convention. Other representatives certainly could not ignore the insistence of the small powers in the League Assembly for a definite and speedy progress on disarmament. He expected the Preparatory Commission to resolve itself into frequent Security Committee meetings.

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[12]Wilson to Kellogg, December 7, 1927, 500.A15/629.

Then he gave his opinions on the composition of future American delegations. Most, if not all, technical questions had been analyzed thoroughly, and the American experts had fully presented their comments on those topics. Thus, the Preparatory Commission would engage in the diplomatic work of negotiating and harmonizing political needs and views. Under those circumstances he counseled eliminating the large number of ranking advisers and designating an individual spokesman who could operate without hindrance. Accordingly, he thought a few knowledgeable junior officers capable of making a more definite contribution whereas a big staff would be hard to handle and would draw attention to themselves which Wilson hoped to avoid.

He observed what the American attitude might be if the discussion became more than routine. Surely the United States had nothing to add constructively if it had no concessions or modifications to make. With little to offer in substance or procedure, it might be accused of obstructionism, as it had been in the third session. To avoid that charge again, he proposed active participation on important points. Early in the next session the delegate might relate American thoughts on how the United States could be most helpful in reaching an agreement. Its army was small enough that any accepted plan would allow the country considerable room for development. Consequently, it could refrain from talks on that problem and hope the other large military powers could arrange a plan themselves. Accordingly, the governments most concerned might solve their own difficulty, and then the United States would decide whether it could subscribe to the scheme. Wilson was prepared to

elaborate if the State Department believed his policy approach worthy.

On naval limitation, he thought that Washington should thoroughly consider its attitude on limitation of navies since its position might possibly isolate the United States from the other conferees. He felt that the Japanese wanted to maintain the 5:5:3 ratio without further building, whereas the British appeared most concerned about additional construction. Consequently, the British interest in maintaining that posture rather than limitation by tonnage brought the British, French, and Japanese fairly close. Although Wilson genuinely believed in the soundness of the American thinking on naval construction, still he advised the State Department to study the possibility of isolation and ways of continuing its stand without being charged with obstruction. Perhaps Washington might deliberate on whether it could bargain for mutual concessions.[13]

By February 16, 1928, the provisional agenda for the Preparatory Commission was taking shape. It called for discussion of the work of the Committee on Arbitration and Security, the Soviet resolution, and the progress of the Preparatory Commission. On the last point, there would be debate on whether to conduct the second reading of the draft convention. In order to prepare for that meeting, Gibson and Wilson needed Washington's response to Wilson's recommendations of December 16. The two men were especially concerned about the attitude toward the Russian proposal and proceeding with the second reading. Unless directed otherwise, they hoped to be silent about the text until necessary to comment.

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[13]Wilson to Kellogg, December 16, 1927, 500.A15/633.

If pressed to act, they would go along with the majority, but they preferred not to make a proposition.[14]

The State Department definitely wanted no statement at the opening of the session. The proposed naval program modification by the House Committee on Naval Affairs dictated that. Besides, a preliminary policy address seemed unnecessary since essentially the same personnel remained on the Commission. Also, any United States move might convey the impression of a need to defend or apologize for its disarmament stance. The Secretary anticipated no British criticism on naval matters without provocation, and, indeed, no nation would have such an opportunity before the naval sections of the text. The impractical and drastic Soviet plan was unworthy of debate, so the delegation should support the convention's provisions.

If the other nations decided on a second reading, the American attitude on security was well stated in the diplomatic exchanges on the Briand proposition, the extension of arbitration agreements, and the statements of the representatives at the Havana Conference. Of course, if American attitudes were specifically criticized, then the delegation would vigorously defend them by referring to the statements at the Geneva Naval Conference and in the altered naval program. Accordingly, it should speak candidly in the event of adverse comment. In naval affairs, it appeared that the French might modify the Boncour proposal on tonnage while still holding for the idea of total weight in principle.

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[14]Wilson to Kellogg, February 16, 1928, 500.A15/642; Tuck to Kellogg, February 25, 1928, 500.A15/645; Wilson to Kellogg, February 27, 1928, 500.A15/646.

The Navy Department felt the plan acceptable in principle, and it might be a genuine step toward eventual accord. Otherwise, the instructions on land and air armaments remained the same from the third session.[15]

On March 12, Gibson and Wilson talked about the meeting with Erik Andreas Colban, the Chief of the Disarmament Section of the Secretariat. Colban predicted Preparatory Commission acceptance of the Security Committee report, but he saw divided opinion on the Russian resolution and two ways of disposing of it. One means was an immediate, complete consideration to show public opinion the impracticality of the measure; another was close subcommittee study in order to point out its shortcomings and to delay the second reading. Feeling was practically unanimous among participating delegations that it would be unwise to hold the second reading before the completion of a thorough attempt to harmonize views by direct contact among the governments. Colban foresaw a mild German demand for prompt discussion and a German willingness to accept a proposal for the Assembly's Third Committee on disarmament to analyze the status of the work in September. Probably that body would invite the United States, Russia, and Turkey to participate.[16]

The American delegation remained essentially unaltered for the fifth session. Gibson again headed the group because of his previous experience and the anticipated importance of the meeting. He had strongly recommended full delegate status for Wilson since it would add

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[15]Kellogg to Wilson and Gibson, February 28, 1928, 500.A15/646.

[16]Gibson to Kellogg, March 12, 1928, 500.A15/661.

to his prestige in other conferences and since other countries had two representatives; the State Department gave no reason for assigning him his usual advisory role. Rear Admiral Andrew T. Long replaced Admiral Jones who was ill, and the rank and numbers of Army and Navy personnel were significantly decreased. Generally, the chairman was gratified over the quality of the personnel.[17]

Between March 15 and 24, 1928, the delegates took up three topics. The Committee on Arbitration and Security submitted three model drafts concerning arbitration and conciliation and three regarding security. Even after several days of discussion, the commission reached no conclusion about them. Four days after convening, the body began to discuss the Soviet resolution for immediate disarmament. Britain's critical remarks about the Soviet government and the proposal were accepted by most other representatives, including Gibson who commented about the unacceptability of the drastic recommendation. Of the nineteen delegations that spoke, only Germany and Turkey supported it, so the commission postponed a decision on that item. Also, it delayed the second reading because most governments had not fully explored all parts of the text. Subsequently, on March 24, the meeting adjourned with the

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[17]Gibson to Kellogg, February 7, 1928, 500.A15P43/194; Olds to Gibson, February 6, 1928, 500.A15P43/194a; Olds to Wilson, February 6, 1928, 500.A15P43/193b; Kellogg to Gibson, 500.A15P43/194; Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, February 23, 1928, 500.A15P43/199a; Gibson to Kellogg, February 28, 1928, 500.A15P43/202; Jones became ill and was replaced by Long. Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, February 28, 1928, 500.A15P43/204a.

date of the next session to be set by the President.[18]

Nine months later, Wilson and Drummond talked about the prospects of the sixth session and their fears of a possible quarrel between Britain and the United States at that time. With the Russians in attendance it was nearly impossible to avoid publicity and debate on naval aspects. Drummond reasoned that it would be strategically important to summon a short February gathering and attempt to omit naval problems from the program. Thus, the time for a meeting on all matters, including naval questions, could be scheduled far enough ahead to permit the two big naval powers to work out an accord.

Wilson favored another approach. Loudon had proposed a postponement of the session, and the minister urged the following of that plan. Surely nothing could happen in the Preparatory Commission that was more important than cordial Anglo-American relations.[19]

Basically, the Drummond scheme was followed so it was necessary to decide on a date. At the League meeting in Lugano, Britain, France, and Germany favored a convocation between April 8 and April 15, 1929. They were indefinite about the date because delegates traveling from the United States might want to observe Easter before their departure. Wilson assured Drummond that he would secure an informal State Department

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[18]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 67-78; Tate, Armaments, pp. 94-96; Williams, Disarmament, pp. 258-263; League of Nations Association, Review, p. 148.

[19]Kellogg to Wilson, December 15, 1928, 500.A15/835a; Wilson to Kellogg, December 6, 1928, 500.A15/822; Wilson to Kellogg, September 28, 1928, 500.A15/808.

opinion on the most convenient date. The response indicated a readiness to despatch personnel at any time, and Loudon set the session for April 15.[20]

The Washington decision came quickly because of a rumor. On December 8, a New York Times writer reported an American Minister in Europe as saying that the discussion of naval disarmament had to be delayed until President-elect Herbert C. Hoover and his advisers had time to study the problem. According to the journalist's account, the diplomatic officer requested also that the Preparatory Commission meeting should be deferred a month or two to allow the chance for Anglo-American talks to bring results. Supposedly, he had rejected the idea of instructing Loudon to call a consultative gathering of the big naval powers because of that difficulty. Five days later, a similar article named Wilson as the official. To counteract those allegations, Coolidge denied any American desire for postponement and reiterated a readiness to cooperate with the commission.

Naturally, the State Department contacted Wilson about the situation. It knew that he had not made such comments and told him so. Actually, Washington genuinely wanted a delay in the date, but the President's public position had to be firmly upheld since the government could not afford for its real attitude to be publicized.[21]

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[20]Wilson to Kellogg, December 28, 1928, 500.A15/839; Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, December 17, 1928, 500.A15/834; Wilson to Kellogg, December 18, 1928, 500.A15/835; Wilson to Kellogg, December 17, 1928, 500.A15/834.

[21]Kellogg to Wilson, December 15, 1928, 500.A15/835a; Castle to Wilson, December 17, 1928, Wilson Papers.

The agenda was a source of concern for weeks before the meeting. In a private and informal conversation with Wilson, Colban, who had traveled to the major European capitals to secure views on various topics, indicated major items which he expected to comprise the program. He anticipated taking up the remaining work of the Security Committee which could be handled in one day by the Preparatory Commission. Also, the Russian recommendation on progressive reduction of armaments would receive attention. Colban predicted that the commission President would urge the treatment of individual parts of the Soviet proposition as amendments to the relevant articles of the draft convention. Wilson imagined that the Russians would eagerly accept that procedure because the whole plan would be killed otherwise. He predicted that the Colban plan would provide the best propaganda situation which the Soviet Union had yet found. In addition, Count Bernstorff's proposal for publication of arms production statistics which he presented in the fifth session would occupy the attention of the delegates. Furthermore, they would discuss the second reading of the draft convention which included questions about poison gas, budget limitations, war material in reserve, land effectives, and naval problems.

From the standpoint of American naval policy, Wilson saw a very practical value in the agenda order. The League Secretariat had already estimated that it would take about three weeks to progress through the items to war materials in reserve. By then the representatives would be prepared for adjournment in the face of the major matters ahead of them. He ventured that the Preparatory Commission might designate another time

for resumption of talks and adjourn.

Colban also brought up the question of whether naval advisers would be included in the American delegation. Although the minister was without instructions, he assumed that the contents of the program would make their presence necessary. That news was gratifying to the League official who hoped the naval personnel would find a solution to the naval deadlock in informal discussions. Here Wilson expressed his personal skepticism that technical personnel alone could solve such a political subject. In his opinion only high political officials could effectively sponsor an agreement and make the necessary concessions.[22]

On February 26, 1929, the two men talked about Colban's second trip to the European cities. The League official found no opposition to his proposals but encountered a markedly noncommital attitude except in Germany. So he really had little to add about political postures, and his agenda ideas remained the same. Since the plan was solely tentative, he especially desired an American statement of preference on procedure which he could use discreetly in conversations with other representatives. Wilson presumed that a statement might be adopted because most other delegates were displaying a negative attitude.[23]

The State Department was less responsive than Colban had wished. It felt the general design to be sound and logical and permitted Wilson

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[22]Wilson to Kellogg, January 23, 1929, 500.A15/852; Wilson to Kellogg, February 9, 1929, F.R., I, 65-67.

[23]Wilson to Kellogg, February 27, 1929, F.R., I, 68-69.

to inform him so. It refrained from any recommendation about procedure.[24]

The United States sent a small delegation to the first sitting of the sixth session. Gibson was the chairman, and Wilson, Admiral Jones, and Major John W. Greely were the diplomatic, naval, and military advisers, respectively. Moffat and Commander Harold C. Train acted as the technical assistants.[25]

On April 15, 1929, the convocation convened. Loudon informed the assembly that no second reading of the draft convention would occur because too many questions remained unresolved, so he suggested a discussion of the Soviet draft on armaments reduction. If that was disapproved, then the delegates might consider some individual points of the 1927 draft text. Only three delegations favored the Russian plan, and the others decided to follow the 1927 proposal.

On April 22, during the discussion of armament limitations, Gibson stated the general American policy on disarmament in the hope of moving the powers toward an agreement. Only the large powers could inaugurate moves toward abridgment, and the United States advised reduction rather than merely restriction. Further, he indicated a readiness to concede enough on land armaments to bring about an accord. On the primary problem of interest to his government, he still

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[24]Kellogg to Wilson, March 1, 1929, F.R., I, 69.

[25]Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, March 27, 1929, 500.A15 P43/229e; Kellogg to Gibson, March 23, 1929, F.R., I, 70.

maintained that limitation of tonnage by categories constituted the most practical route to control, but he would agree to the French naval proposal of April, 1927, as a basis for discussion. Also, the United States would study any other procedure that would bring about tonnage reduction. He concluded that an effective avenue toward disarmament would have to come not only from methods of limitation but also from an altered attitude concerning the role of force in international quarrels. Although several delegates complimented the ambassador on the conciliatory tones of his remarks, the commission made no progress on the disarmament issue.

The group did reach agreement on some less controversial points. Within a short time, the delegates prohibited the use of lethal gases and bacteriological agents. After protracted discussion, they excluded from their text the problem of limitation of trained reserves. Both the United States and Britain favored such a restriction, but they dropped their insistence in order to promote harmony. The participants were unable to choose between an indirect control by budgetary means and a direct method of limiting the materials of war in stock and in service. Gibson spoke against the indirect methods for constitutional reasons and substituted full disclosure of expenditures for armament. With agreement apparently impossible otherwise, they accepted the alternative.

Adjournment occurred shortly after reaching the question of naval armaments. The representatives of the five large sea powers moved that the commission delay study of the matter until the interested

governments had time to analyze fully Gibson's recommendations of April 22. The Preparatory Commission deferred the problem until another time.[26]

During the sixth session, Wilson divided his time between the Preparatory Commission and the Counterfeiting Conference, an arrangement which kept him especially busy. One evening during a hectic week, he arranged to play bridge with Dolbeare, but at 8:10 Wilson was still involved in currency matters. At that time he learned that Gibson, who had gone to bed ill, wanted him to represent the American delegation at a Preparatory Commission meeting. Wilson hurried over only to find that group adjourning from 8:30 to 10:00 that night. His bitterness and frustration showed in his remark that the simultaneous assignment to two conferences should be ended. "In fact, one of the first rules of limitation and reduction should be limitation and reduction of the number of conferences." Once both convocations ended, he welcomed the chance to sleep more and to enjoy the relatively calm routine in Berne.[27]

In spite of those feelings, he was happy about the results of the Preparatory Commission. He classified it as one of the most interesting and fascinating that he had attended, particularly because of

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[26]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 79-80, 83-85. In September, Wilson reported that no resumption of the session was likely in the near future. Wilson to Stimson, September 24, 1929, F.R., I, 110.

[27]Wilson to Dolbeare, April 18, 1929, Wilson Papers.

the progress. "All hands and the cook, with the exception of the Russians and the Germans" and possibly some small northern countries, appeared gratified over the accomplishment. Actually, some Europeans might have been scared at the likelihood of a disarmament conference. In addition, the United States had given a good account of itself largely because of Gibson whom Wilson credited with adding spirit and optimism to what initially appeared to be a rather deadlocked gathering.[28]

The Preparatory Commission, therefore, was beginning to achieve some of the movement that League members and the United States expected. The London Naval Conference and the Preparatory Commission's second sitting of the sixth session were to remove other obstacles in the way of a general disarmament conference. Before considering those developments, it is necessary to understand the League's efforts in 1928 and 1929 to control the private manufacture of arms and Wilson's role in that attempt.

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[28] Wilson to Dolbeare, May 9, 1929, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Marriner, May 9, 1929, 500.A16/122.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL THE PRIVATE MANUFACTURE OF ARMS

In an era of disarmament meetings, the League deliberated on the related topic of private manufacture of arms, ammunition, and implements of war. The organization brought up the subject under Article 8 of the Covenant which called for Council action on the problem. In 1921, the League's Temporary Mixed Commission rejected absolute prohibition as a means of regulation. Reasoning that civilian production would be a less dangerous factor if the arms and munitions trade was adequately supervised, it recommended a world-wide arrangement which relied heavily on a system of licensing. Since an international agreement was essential to make control effective, the League next concentrated on an arms traffic accord. A large number of the League members contended that such a convention would not be completely effective without including non-government production. The United States disagreed with the idea and the proposals to implement it because private companies did most American arms manufacturing. Besides, the Washington government could not constitutionally regulate private production since it was not interstate commerce. Yet, in June, 1925, several nations signed an Arms Traffic Convention in Geneva, though they did not ratify it for several years.

Then the League created a Special Commission to establish a method of management. Although Washington considered the draft

convention an inadequate basis for discussion for the above reasons, still the State Department participated to prevent speculation that the United States was unwilling to cooperate. During the committee's first session in March, 1927, the nations accomplished little, and they reached no agreement on the publishing of government and private output.[1]

Since the second session was set for August 27, 1928, the State Department planned its approach. It needed to know the feelings of delegations in Geneva in order to determine an appropriate course. In response to a State Department request, Wilson reported the general opinion that the second session would be both short and simple. It probably would consider only the alteration in the Italian and Japanese views on arms production. Then the commission would establish a small subcommittee of rapporteurs to develop a proposal which would be sent to the participants. After each nation had expressed its comments and criticism, the draft would become the basic document for a conference in 1929. If the commission worked in that manner, a tentative American text could be given to the rapporteurs.[2]

During the time that the State Department was assessing those opinions, it designated Wilson to represent the United States with

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[1]Grew to Gibson, February 28, 1927, 500.A16/21a; Gibson to Kellogg, April 21, 1927, 500.A16/24.

[2]Marriner to Wilson, July 14, 1928, 500.A16/34d. On May 19, 1928, Italy and Japan both indicated their agreement in principle to publication of information about government production of arms. Kellogg to Wilson, August 9, 1928, F.R., I, 293; Wilson to Kellogg, July 26, 1928, 500.A16/37.

Elbridge D. Rand, the Consul at Geneva, to be the technical assistant. In addition, two military and naval officers in the Paris Embassy were ordered to be ready in case the Minister required their assistance. Wilson was delighted with the assignment and the flexibility of the personnel arrangement.[3]

On August 9, 1928, the State Department speculated about prospective action at the second session. Most governments seemed ready to discuss the application of publicity to public and private manufacture while they also appeared to want the convention limited to information about production. So the commission would probably fulfill its purpose of formulating a text for a general agreement. Under those circumstances the United States could approve unless the final document called for an unequal amount of publicity for government and private manufacture and a system of supervision, control, and inspection.

Washington also sent Wilson a draft which was satisfactory as a foundation for accord. The text designated the arms, ammunition, and implements of war intended for either military and civilian purposes or land, sea, and aerial combat specifically. Further, it allowed each contracting party to issue publicity in accordance with its own domestic statutes. The State, War, and Navy Departments intentionally made the

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[3]Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, July 25, 1928, 123.W693/181; Castle to Wilson, August 3, 1928, 500.A16/36; Wilson to Kellogg, July 26, 1928, 500.A16/37. Basically, the instructions were the same as those of the American delegate at the first session. Grew to Gibson, February 28, 1927, 500.A16/21a; Castle to Wilson, August 3, 1928, 500.A16/36.

provisions like those of the Arms Traffic Convention in order to preclude the introduction of new points and to streamline the execution of the two agreements. Wilson was not to present the material at the beginning of the convocation unless he thought the circumstances favorable. Preferably, he was to observe the tenor of the debate to see if the American text would be accepted as a whole. If not, he could introduce individual articles in the hope of gaining approval of as many as possible. Thus the Minister could use his own judgment about the best time and method of presenting the recommendations. He was not to participate in any report to the League but to despatch the results to Washington.[4]

Events moved rapidly in the three-day meeting. The limited amount of time prevented Wilson's closely consulting the State Department about strategy. So, at every opportunity, he attempted to advance the policies contained in his instructions and to introduce exceptions where necessary.

Though Wilson fully meant to recommend acceptance of the American draft, that intention soon went by the boards. Despite the optimism which pervaded the commission upon its convening, the delegates were as far apart as before on the amount of publicity for public manufacture. Consequently, with little hope of more than a rehash of previous arguments, Wilson withheld the proposal. Because of the lack of unanimity, the commission chose to draw up a text and attach individual reservations

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[4]Castle to Wilson, August 23, 1928, F.R., I, 301-302; Kellogg to Wilson, August 9, 1928, F.R., I, 292-294.

as the states wanted to add them. By the end of the second day, he foresaw the likelihood of adjournment shortly after the composition of "an inconclusive and contradictory report."[5]

Wilson found Article 5 of the American text unclear about aviation. The provision seemed to include civil aircraft among those produced under military specifications; if that was the intention, then the wording was contrary to the Arms Traffic Convention. The difficulty necessitated a clarification from Washington and the summoning of the military adviser to Geneva. Washington firmly opposed requiring publication of information on all privately manufactured American airplanes and engines since to admit such a condition was a move toward limitation of materials as potentials of war. Consequently, the State Department directed him to work for the inclusion of only aircraft and engines made according to military stipulations. If that was unacceptable, Wilson might designate only aircraft and engines prepared for armed forces of the particular countries. Subsequently, he and the military adviser decided on a reservation against admission of all aircraft and airplane motors as instruments of war.[6]

The delegates extensively discussed a licensing system and publicity. On the first topic, Wilson inserted a remark about the American

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[5]Wilson to Kellogg, September 10, 1928, F.R., I, 311; Wilson to Kellogg, August 28, 1928, 500.A16/55.

[6]Wilson to Kellogg, August 27, 1928, F.R., I, 301; Castle to Wilson, August 28, 1928, F.R., I, 301-302; Statement by Wilson in the Fourth Meeting, August 29, 1928, F.R., I, 303; Wilson to Kellogg, August 29, 1928, 500.A16/56.

constitutional inability to regulate civilian producers although he participated little otherwise. The second subject evoked even more debate. Italy, Japan, and Britain worked for publication according to the value of the item only, and the other delegations contended for publication according to and including number and weight. Wilson stressed the need for complete disclosure and equal handling of state and private construction. The representatives were unable to reconcile their views, but the Minister thought that the American position was well covered.[7]

Wilson also submitted an amendment to Article 6 on naval construction. The commission's article provided for publication of information about proposed or actual construction of naval vessels. His modification called for disclosing the number and calibre of guns and torpedoes and the number of bomb throwers and machine guns at the time of delivery. No one objected to the principle, but Japan was unwilling to include battleship data in the provision. The British had no instructions on the point, so they did not give their consent. In general, the delegations wanted the article to conform to a similar statement in the Arms Traffic Convention.

Ratification and deposit of ratification were briefly considered. The French did not want their government designated the place to send approval and notification. Instead, they wished the League Secretariat to receive the documents. The American did not object to the point since the French declined to serve and since the State Department had earlier authorized him to sign a convention which was left with the Secretariat

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[7]Wilson to Kellogg, August 27, 1928, 500.A16/54.

General. Concerning the number of approvals for the agreement to come into effect, the delegate from Salvador suggested fourteen. Wilson opposed the proposition as untimely because so little had been decided and because the conference of plenipotentiaries would also consider it.[8]

The session had mixed results. The report to the Council admitted the failure to resolve fundamental differences and thus the inability of despatching a single draft to it.[9] Yet, Wilson considered the willingness of some governments to accept a measure of publicity about state manufacture an accomplishment. Previously, those countries had rejected any such disclosure.[10]

The scheduling of the next session for December 5, spurred Washington into investigating the general circumstances. The Department asked Wilson if the deadlock persisted and if any better chance for agreement existed.[11]

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[8]Wilson to Kellogg, September 10, 1928, F.R., I, 313; The State Department ordered Wilson not to encourage efforts to make the League the depository if another place could be designated. Also, Washington wanted the decision delayed until a convention assumed a more definite form. Kellogg to Wilson, November 22, 1928, F.R., I, 320-321.

[9]Wilson to Kellogg, August 30, 1928, 500.A16/58.

[10]The commission chairman was unable to predict a date for an international convocation, so the report was sent to the Council which could decide the matter. Wilson to Kellogg, September 10, 1928, F.R., I, 313-314.

[11]Wilson to Kellogg, October 2, 1928, F.R., I, 314; Wilson to Kellogg, October 2, 1928, 500.A16/76; Kellogg to Wilson, October 4, 1928, F.R., I, 314.

Other than some slight optimism among the members of the League's Third Committee on disarmament, Wilson replied that he saw no change since August. He doubted that the commission would accomplish anything worthwhile. Indeed, he believed that disarmament advocates had called the meeting in order to mollify public opinion and to uphold the League's stature.

In a despatch of October 12, he related his ideas of what the State Department might do. It could courteously inform the Secretary General that the United States would not send a delegation since its position had already been stated clearly and definitely. Wilson believed that the presence of American officials might impede progress toward a construction program which Washington earnestly wanted formulated. When the other countries reached an agreement, the United States would carefully compare it with its own position. Wilson was aware that his government might be held accountable for the commission's failure, but he thought the point of less consequence in a technical session than a political one.[12]

The State Department chose not to follow his plan. Like the Minister, it frankly thought that the chances of a tangible accomplishment were nil; nonetheless, it needed a delegation there and cited several reasons for attending. The first and chief one was the fear that the government might receive the blame for failure because, in all likelihood, the news media and the public would not distinguish between

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[12]Wilson to Kellogg, October 12, 1928, F.R., I, 315.

a political and a technical meeting. The second was the possibility of comparing American action with the Russian refusal to attend. The press had given little attention to the commission, but withdrawal might publicize the futility of the proceedings which would strengthen the Soviet thesis about the project. The third was the possible accusation of trying to undermine the body if Washington objected to a draft. Upon receiving those arguments, Wilson concurred that the Department's general considerations were more basic than the benefits which might be felt only in Geneva.[13]

Generally, the American arrangements for the December session were the same as for the one held in August. Officials in Washington thought of sending Rand as the only delegate, but Gibson persuaded them to despatch Wilson because of the other representatives' rank. The fundamental position remained the same, but the instructions were a little more flexible on some points. Concerning reservations, the United States was willing to accommodate other views if the approach would lead to a broad understanding. Also, Wilson could work for the adoption of his recommendation on naval information though he did not have to insist on it, if the other governments continued their opposition.[14]

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[13]Clark to Gibson, October 16, 1928, 500.A16/72; Wilson to Kellogg, October 20, 1928, 500.A16/74; Gibson agreed with Wilson's comments concerning the effect in Geneva which was the only phase he considered himself qualified to comment on. He did suggest a small delegation unless the prospects for agreement improved. Gibson to Kellogg, October 18, 1928, 500.A16/73.

[14]Clark to American Embassy, Brussels, October 18, 1928, 500.A16/73; Gibson to Kellogg, October 22, 1928, 500.A16/75; Kellogg to Wilson, November 22, 1928, F.R., I, 318-320.

A subcommittee did most of the work in the third session which lasted from December 5 through December 7. During the first meeting Count Bernstorff, the chairman, proposed a general debate, but the participants were reluctant to hold one. So he called for the convening of the small group which had operated in the second session. Thus, representatives of Germany, Salvador, Italy, Belgium, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Japan, Spain, and the United States took up the problems.

The discussion of Article 1, concerning the five categories of arms, ammunition, and implements of war, set the tone for the meeting. The personnel first considered Remark No. 1 by the Belgian delegation which proposed more study of the classifications. Immediately, Wilson perceived that no agreement would result from this session and that each article of the draft might be discussed again. Despite the opposition of others, the Belgian declared the inability of his government to sign a document without a complete analysis of those divisions. Then the French delegate stated that he would have to know the exact contents of Article 1 before he could formulate his response to Article 5. Quickly the participants realized that they lacked instructions or advisers for further consideration of the point, and they saw the necessity for experts to confer on the problem about March 1, 1929. Wilson saw no need for inserting the American view if the Belgian reservation was not fully considered.

Next the committee took up the American remark on aircraft and aircraft engines.[15] The European military powers and Japan, generally aligned as they had in the Preparatory Commission on potentials of war, immediately voiced strong objection to retaining the amendment. Similarly, Wilson's readiness to restrict the category to machines for armed forces use found little favor. Indeed, his two proposals were lightly dismissed because of the alleged impossibility of differentiating between civil and military aircraft. Of the major powers only Britain agreed with the American approach, so, with no hope of consensus then, Wilson stated his willingness to maintain the reservation but move on to other points.[16]

The most heated comment occurred on Article 5 which dealt with annually reporting the value of total production by private industry. The same arguments had been stated so many times before that the Minister did not bother to summarize the discussion for Washington. The Dutch delegate and Wilson tried persistently and unsuccessfully to obtain an explanation why France, Japan, and Italy declined to publish information

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[15]The German delegate withdrew his Remark No. 2 which allowed the subcommittee to proceed to Remark No. 3 of the United States. Wilson to Kellogg, December 13, 1928, 500.A16/97.

[16]Someone in the Western European Division attached a "Confidential Informal Comment" to the effect that Wilson should have discussed commission disposition of aviation in more detail in his report because of the great importance the State Department gave to the point. In reply, Wilson reiterated that the delegates did not take up the intrinsic worth of the proposal, but settled for the inability to define civil aircraft. So they proceeded no further. He was sorry that the manner of the debate did not allow him to relate the basic arguments of those opponents of the American amendment. Wilson to Kellogg, March 7, 1929, 500.A16/117.

fully. In a vote on the equal handling of public and private production, only Italy voted against the principle, and the French representative abstained until he had the text of the article. Wilson thought that the nations would concur in the principle only if the stipulation was "very limited publicity," a basis on which the Japanese rested their case. Finally, the delegates adopted an altered wording which constituted merely a minimum of agreement, but even the proponents of full disclosure, including the United States, and the adherents of a distinction between public and private manufacture offered amendments.

Wilson noted some movement on Article 6 about naval construction. The British agent agreed to the American remark, but the Japanese initially did not. The Minister desired to conciliate the Japanese if necessary and requested him to ask if his government could change his orders. At the last meeting the Japanese delegate removed the objection and allowed the inclusion of the opinion. In a related development, a commission subcommittee of naval experts from Italy, France, and England redrafted the provision analogous to the Washington Treaty of 1922. The American acceded but reserved the right to confer with his naval authorities on the question.[17]

On December 7, Wilson expressed his views on full publicity for the record. He found the move necessary when he realized that the subcommittee's report would not be sent to the commission. He noted the progress toward agreement, especially in the subcommittee, and he spoke of what the nations could do until the Special Committee met again.

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[17]Wilson to Kellogg, December 13, 1928, 500.A16/97.

The marked divergence of views on complete publicity for public and private construction, a vital point to his government and the effectiveness of the convention, caused him to doubt the benefit of accepting the minimum of agreement. Promoting the United States' belief that complete disclosure would foster peace and eliminate distrust, he called for opposing delegations to explain why they objected to adequate publication. In conclusion, he urged them to examine the text in the light of the large number of delegates wanting publicity for removing false hopes and moving toward peace. Advocates of more information were highly gratified by the address.[18]

Six days later, Wilson transmitted his thoughts about future meetings to Washington. Since the other countries knew well the American opinions about the major items, especially publicity, perhaps the United States should now concentrate on the minor issues, such as the Belgian amendment to Article 1. If Americans attended the experts' meeting, they could participate in single provisions without accepting the responsibility of designating any alteration as inadmissible. If the other states rejected the Belgian modifications, then the American personnel could join them. Wilson's purpose was to prevent the commission's having to choose between American and Belgian participation,

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[18]Declaration by Wilson in the Second Meeting of the Third Session of the Special Commission, December 7, 1928, F.R., I, 321-323. Since many delegates had to go to Lugano for a League meeting, the commission members had too little time to consider the subcommittee's report, and it informed the Council so. Wilson to Kellogg, December 7, 1928, 500.A16/94.

a non-member and a member state, respectively, for either way the American stance would be disliked.

Furthermore, he included a tactic for disposition of civil aviation. He was dissatisfied with the French statement that no distinction could be established between aircraft constructed for military uses and that for other application. He recalled the commission's voting down the Dutch proposal for the experts to decide the difference. In order to expedite the discussion of the problem, he worded a draft which stated the incongruity of placing civil aviation in the convention and listing private and military aircraft in the same category. He ventured the opinion that the commission's views would be unchanged by the time of the fourth session; therefore, he advised the presentation of a statement which would place the United States with the majority. If the government could do that, then it could devote its efforts to publicity.[19]

The State Department's opinions were stated in the orders to the experts. They were not to support the Belgian reservation, especially on small arms munitions, unless a good chance of its being adopted existed. The United States primarily opposed the proposition for fear that it would be a tool for a new discussion of categories and the submission of other objectionable alterations. The representative could withdraw his objection if the other delegates accepted the reservation and if he understood that all classification changes were completed. On aviation, the delegation was to secure as much support as

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[19]Wilson to Kellogg, December 13, 1928, 500.A16/97; Wilson to Kellogg, December 13, 1928, 500.A16/98.

possible for inclusion only of aircraft and airplane engines manufactured under military specifications. The officials were to make others understand that they had only expert capacity and that the government would send its decision through its commission delegate.[20]

Next, the State Department designated the representatives. By mid-February, 1929, the other countries planned to have only technical men, so Wilson advised the sending of an army officer with staff experience and a naval officer in case naval matters arose in association with the categories discussion. Subsequently, Washington named a navy captain to be chairman, two army majors to comprise the technical authorities, and the Consul at Geneva to advise the group. Before the meeting of March 11, Wilson conferred with the personnel and discussed their instructions with them.[21]

Several weeks afterwards, the idea of a session of the Special Commission cropped up. Bernstorff related orally his intention of calling one for August 26, mainly to discuss acceptance or rejection of the experts' report. He expected no general debate, but participants that wanted to make statements would have the opportunity.[22]

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[20]Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, February 27, 1929, 500.A16/109.

[21]Wilson to Kellogg, February 12, 1929, 500.A16/104; Kellogg to American Legation, Berne, February 27, 1929, 500.A16/109b.

[22]Wilson referred to the group as the Committee for Manufacture of Arms, but he evidently meant the Special Commission. Wilson to Marriner, May 9, 1929, 500.A16/122.

From that conversation, Wilson projected three courses which the government might pursue. One, it might continue to insist on full publicity and equal treatment. Two, it might state the American position on the first day. Here it could indicate that it certainly was no obstacle to the conclusion of a treaty to control private arms construction. It would not, however, ink a treaty with less than complete disclosure and equal treatment. American failure to sign might make little difference to the other nations since the country already released information fully and since it could not constitutionally control production. Consequently, those governments might formulate a treaty on their own because the United States would be silent unless its opinion was sought. Third, he counseled the following of the recommendation which he suggested on October 12, 1928, except to deliver the message to the Secretary General by letter. With the alteration of the general situation by the Preparatory Commission, he advised that the plan be considered.[23]

Again, the State Department rejected his idea, and in the fourth session of August 26-29, 1929, Wilson based his conduct on two criteria. First, he doubted that the meeting would produce anything tangible since the December differences on publicity persisted and since the April Preparatory Commission convocation increased the importance of defining publicity. Therefore, the Special Commission members would delay their consideration for the Preparatory Commission. Second, he kept in his

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[23]Wilson to Marriner, May 9, 1929, 500.A16/122. Gibson concurred on the third point. Wilson to Marriner, May 21, 1929, 500.A16/123.

memory the Department's order that he might make a statement of withdrawal from the gathering, if necessary. Circumstances placed the United States in the majority rather than the minority, so it was unnecessary to deliver the address.[24]

The discussion of categories opened the debate. The first item was the report on the Belgian reservation to Article 1. The Commission accepted the changes and also adopted other minor alterations of the provision. The only point of interest to the United States consisted of the German proposal to transfer the provision on aviation manufactured for the armed forces of various countries to another category. Wilson stated his readiness to vote for the amendment and remove the American remark if the German amendment was accepted. Only the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States supported the unsuccessful move. Basically, the commission handled the reservation as it had a similar one by Wilson in the third session.

Then the commission took up Article 5 on publicity. The chairman was interested in whether any modification had arisen which might open the way to an accord. The French delegate declared the close connection between publicity and the Preparatory Commission resolution of May 4, on publication about material in stock. Plainly, he was unable to decide prior to a more definite Preparatory Commission stand. Thereafter, proponents of separation and supporters of association of the two recommendations engaged in a lively exchange. The Japanese delegate

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[24]Stimson to Wilson, July 25, 1929, 500.A16/121.

importuned so strongly on the need to re-discuss the fundamentals of the problem that the majority finally gave in. The body talked an entire day without any change which merely confirmed the initial reluctance to conduct a futile debate.

Finally, the Special Committee looked at reports. It approved the subcommittee statement of December as amended in the fourth session and adopted a report on the status of the commission's work. Although Wilson abstained from voting on the account to the Council, he really thought that it could have been markedly "more decisive." It mentioned nothing about a future session, but it would have been more candid to admit the uselessness of an assembly in the immediate future.[25]

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[25]Wilson to Stimson, September 4, 1929, 500.A16/127.

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER PRELIMINARIES TO A GENERAL DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

In 1929, events opened the way for a conference on the limitation of naval armaments. Both President Herbert C. Hoover and Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson were committed to the idea of controls similar to those of the Washington Conference. Obviously, the United States and Britain would have to reach some understanding on sea power in order to increase the chances for a successful assembly. In April, Gibson suggested the reduction of naval crafts at the Preparatory Commission, and the following month Hoover declared for action to implement the idealism of the Pact of Paris. Duly impressed with the President's message, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin of Britain explored avenues of contact until he was replaced in June by Ramsay MacDonald who had even more interest in arms restrictions. After some maneuvering, MacDonald and Hoover met in October at the Rapidan Conference where the two men basically agreed that their governments would cooperate toward achieving limitation. Concurrent with the Prime Minister's visit, London formally invited the major naval countries to a conference in England the next year, and all responded positively.[1]

In January, 1930, the United States sent a large delegation to the meeting. Stimson himself headed the group which included such

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[1]Robert H. Ferrell, American Diplomacy in the Great Depression: Hoover-Stimson Foreign Policy, 1929-1933 ("Yale Historical Publications, No. 17;" New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 68-69, 73-74, 86; hereafter cited as Ferrell, American Diplomacy.

diplomatic personnel as Charles G. Dawes, Dwight W. Morrow, and Hugh S. Gibson, the Ambassadors to Britain, Mexico, and Belgium, respectively. Charles Francis Adams, the Secretary of the Navy, was the ranking official from his department, and Senators Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas and David A. Reed of Pennsylvania represented Congress. A total of nine advisers from the State, Navy, and War Departments assisted the delegates. In general, the personnel were as distinguished a group as the United States had despatched to an international assembly in more than a century.[2]

Wilson was ordered to help at London. In early December, 1929, he was designated as an adviser, and shortly Stimson assigned him to handle contact with journalists. Press representatives had come from the State Department, but they had little working knowledge of technical aspects of naval matters. Wilson qualified to fill the position because of his acquaintance with some newsmen. Upon their request, Wilson received the job, so his work was primarily with the press.[3]

Evidently, he had more trouble with the American delegates than the reporters. The personnel who usually granted personal interviews in the United States continued the practice in London which made it

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[2]Ibid., pp. 87-88. The advisers included Wilson, Admiral William V. Pratt, Rear Admiral Jones, Arthur Wilson Page, J. Theodore Marriner, the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs, Ray Atherton, the Counselor of Embassy in France, George Rublee, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Burnett. F.R., 1930, I, 1.

[3]Stimson to American Embassy, London, December 3, 1929, 500.A15A 3P43/76; Stimson to Wilson, December 17, 1929, 500.A15A3P43/141; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 241-242.

difficult to achieve a common front, an essential in negotiations. Consequently, the newspapers contained divergent reports of American views and opinions. On one occasion, Stimson told Wilson explicitly that no advanced information was to appear about a conversation which the Secretary and Aristide Briand of France had held. Accordingly, Wilson circumspectly answered various inquiries about the contact, but, to his amazement, a New York newspaper published a detailed story the following day. On learning from a journalist that Senator Robinson had given him the account, Wilson met the solon to explain the need for presenting the official position with one voice. Besides, such indiscretions gave rise to jealousy among the newsmen and embarrassed Wilson in his relations with them. The Senator apologized and promised not to speak freely in the future.[4]

Gradually, the conference took up its work. On January 21, 1931, the opening day, it accomplished little except for the selection of MacDonald as the permanent chairman and the delivery of perfunctory speeches by some chief delegates. In early February, the delegates presented tentative recommendations for control, and the assembly established committees and subcommittees to study technical problems. Those experts became so enmeshed in their technical controversy that they gave little attention to political problems, usually showing a greater

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[4]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 242-243. As usual, Wilson was quite busy. During a recess occasioned by the absence of the French representatives from London, Wilson welcomed the break, "for I certainly need it." Wilson to Grew, February 19, 1930, Wilson Papers.

interest in details than actual limitation and reduction.

Finally, at the beginning of February, Stimson and other chiefs, weary over the lack of technical achievement, turned to informal discussions outside the plenary sessions.[5] Soon Briand injected the idea of a security convention, and thereafter the problem of French national welfare underlay the entire effort to obtain an agreement. By the end of March, the Secretary had given up hope for a security pact, a solution to German-French rivalry, and a five-nation sea power treaty. Instead, he was willing to accept an accord involving only Britain, Japan, and the United States.[6]

By mid-April, the private discussions produced the London Naval Treaty which a plenary session adopted on April 14, and which the powers signed a week later. The document continued the holiday on capital ships and the limitation of tonnage for cruisers, destroyers, and submarines until 1936. The agreement contained an "escalator clause" which allowed a nation to disregard the restrictions of its neighbors' construction adversely affecting its security needs. Also the provisions

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[5]Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 88-90, 92-93.

[6]Ibid., pp. 94, 96-98, 100. Senator Reed and Tsunco Matsudaira, a Japanese delegate and the ambassador in London, agreed on the Reed-Matsudaira compromise for heavy cruisers which allowed the principle of 10:10:6 for Britain and the United States and 10:10:7 for Japan. Wilson congratulated the Senator and remarked that he had "never seen a negotiation which was carried through with more patience, good humor and ingenious resources than that which you undertook with Matsudaira." Wilson to Reed, April 3, 1930, Wilson Papers.

regulated the replacement, scrapping, and conversion of ships.[7]

The conference actually accomplished little positive action. It did publicize and fulfill the intent of the Rapidan Conference. Japan accepted a 10:10:6 ratio on large cruisers and really got a 10:10:7 proportion for which it had worked years before that meeting. French and Italian relations were worsened because of the airing of their political and naval differences. Thus, the assembly aggravated previous problems and introduced a small amount that was new, although, whatever its limitations, it did reaffirm faith in the control of armaments.

The London Naval Conference helped to clear the way for another meeting of the Preparatory Commission, and in May, several delegates spoke for resuming that work. Wilson anticipated that some technical accomplishments of the recent treaty would assist in the writing of naval clauses which the body had vainly debated for five years. Loudon contacted members informally about that possibility. He felt that grave material problems precluded a summer session, a position which Wilson and others presented to him, so the official set November 3, 1930, as the date for the convocation.[8]

In September, the Eleventh Assembly of the League felt that the session would constitute the first definite step toward disarmament. Since the major naval powers had developed some consensus at London, the

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[7]Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 102-103.

[8]Ibid., pp. 104-105; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 33-34; Wilson to Stimson, May 10, 1930, 500.A15/1056; Wilson to Stimson, May 10, 1930, 500.A15/1057; Wilson to Professor Ernst Bovet, May 7, 1930, Wilson Papers.

body should meet again in November. The Assembly resolved that the commission should complete its job in the fall which would allow the Council to summon a general disarmament conference shortly thereafter.[9]

On September 9, Wilson and J. Theodore Marriner, the Chief of the Western European Division, conversed with French representatives in Berne about the prospective meeting. René Massigli, the Chief of the League of Nations section of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was visibly annoyed by the Italian accusation that the Paris government was trying to delay the next session. Understandably, the two Americans made no effort to discuss details with him, especially since Wilson expected to see him after the Third Committee debates.

Then Wilson and Marriner contacted ranking Italians. The Minister attempted to learn from Dino Grandi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Augusto Rosso, the Director General of the League section of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, how they would handle their general reservation on publicity. Wilson and his colleague showed that all governments really subscribed to that amendment because the Commission considered nothing final until the disarmament conference established definite figures. Actually, Wilson wondered if Rome would be satisfied merely to submit the exception without elaboration or debate which Grandi could not do because he would not jeopardize his government's stand vis-à-vis France.

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[9]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 88-90.

Generally, delegates felt the need for the Preparatory Commission meeting to be the final one. In a survey Wilson found them unanimous that the session should be the last one regardless of the outcome. Also, they agreed that it should convene on the date scheduled.

Thereafter, Wilson was summoned home for consultation on the prospective gathering. The State Department wanted Gibson and him to be in Washington at the same time and to return to Europe together. Along the way back, they participated in pertinent discussions involving British and Japanese ambassadors.[10]

In mid-October, the American approach began taking shape. The State Department designated both as delegates, and five advisers and two technical assistants from the State, Army, and Navy Departments assisted them. Washington hoped for a solution of agenda items and the conclusion of a final draft in order to do practical work. Accordingly, it instructed them to use every opportunity to promote general disarmament. On naval problems, they were to accommodate the small navy countries as much as possible without making alterations which would undermine the London Naval Treaty. The position on civil aviation remained unchanged except that it was permissible for individual states to attach their views by a resolution. The representatives could not make any concession on the budgetary limitation of military spending. Instead, they

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[10] Wilson to Stimson, September 10, 1930, 500.A15/#81; Stimson to Wilson, September 23, 1930, 123.W693/250; Norman Armour to Stimson, October 27, 1930, 123.W693/260.

were to indicate the impracticality of direct budget controls and to emphasize that the United States disclosed its expenditures, numbers, weights, and units of material. Regarding publicity, the Department, expecting new French and British proposals, was willing to cooperate internationally in any exchange of information and elaboration which would contribute to peace. Concerning emergency derogations, it suggested a broad statement which simply declared a nation to be released from the obligations after a public announcement of the reasons for thinking its security threatened.[11]

On November 6, 1930, the second sitting of the sixth session convened. Loudon recommended no general talks on disarmament but proposed a study of the draft convention. The delegates agreed that the text submitted to the disarmament conference should retain the outline of the 1927 draft.[12]

Some changes on material were approved. Some delegates felt that the mere publishing of data about land war material offered a very weak means of discouraging the construction of armaments. Besides, they had supported the measure in 1929 only because a majority had not favored direct limitation or indirect restrictions. Lord Cecil presented a proposition which the body adopted. It urged the most possible exchange of figures among signatories and recorded the wish of most members to

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[11]The advisers included Moffat, then the First Secretary of Legation at Berne, Pierre de L. Boal, the Assistant Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel George V. Strong of the Army, and Captain William W. Smyth and Commodore Thomas C. Kincaid of the Navy. Stimson to Gibson and Wilson, October 16, 1930, F.R., I, 187-189.

[12]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 90-91.

have a more precise means of control than only publicity. Furthermore, it recorded the majority's acceptance of budgetary limits while acknowledging the preference of some members for direct action through enumeration and others for a combination of methods.[13]

On naval equipment, the commission adopted the direct approach of the Washington and London Conferences. Lord Cecil again moved for budgetary allowances, but the American and Japanese representatives objected. Then the British and Italian personnel claimed that final approval was contingent upon the attitude of the other sea powers. Concerning air armaments, the delegates directly restricted the number and horsepower of planes. Although the Americans and the Germans objected to budgetary measures on the overall expenditures for land, sea, and air forces, their colleagues included such a provision in the draft convention.[14]

The commission also established a Permanent Disarmament Commission at Geneva. In 1927, the French text proposed the creation of an international agency to oversee disarmament work. Initially, both the Americans and the British opposed such surveillance, but by 1930 they concurred in an arrangement for inspection. The board consisted of members who were appointed by their governments but who did not represent their country's official position. It was to supervise the administration of the convention provisions, to collect and compile armaments

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[13] Ibid., p. 92.

[14] Ibid., pp. 92-96.

data, to receive complaints about the operation of the agreement, and to submit a report on disarmament progress to the League annually.[15]

The commission also considered derogations for which an American resolution was the basis of discussion. The purpose of the article was to provide a means of adequate defense preparation in case circumstances developed which a government considered threatening to its security. In that situation, a state could temporarily suspend all or a portion of the convention if it informed the other signatories of the modified conditions which necessitated the action. Once the emergency passed, the suspending party was to comply with the accord again.[16]

Heated debate occurred on whether the draft convention affected existing treaties. The British moved that the text would not alter provisions of previous agreements on the limitation of land, sea, or air armaments. The intent was to make sure that the Washington and London treaties were not altered. The statement would have been harmless enough had not France wanted the inclusion of the Treaty of Versailles obligations, which meant German compliance with those armament restrictions. Seemingly, the amendment was the French price for its cooperation in the future conference. Immediately, Bernstorff responded with a wholesale criticism of the disarmament program to that time. Lord Cecil replied that the commission had accomplished much despite the lack of German cooperation. After more discussion, the commission approved the French reservation.[17]

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[15] Ibid., p. 27.

[16] Ibid., p. 98.

[17] Ibid., pp. 98-101.

Also, the personnel considered a date for the disarmament conference. Bernstorff proposed the meeting for November 5, 1931, a move which was influenced by the growth of Nazism in his country and the realization that several nations were impatient over the slow work of the Preparatory Commission. If the countries were not ready by that date, ten years would be inadequate time for preparation. The delegations from Britain, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Japan, and Yugoslavia displayed quick and strong opposition. Then Lord Cecil suggested that the League Council designate a date in its next session, and the delegates approved the recommendation.[18]

At the last meeting on December 9, various delegates gave critical evaluations of the session. At one extreme, Russia and Germany totally rejected the draft; at the other, Lord Cecil spoke optimistically about the framework for a treaty which materially offered the prospect of progress. Taking a middle position, Gibson expressed both a disappointment and a hope. Frankly, the text was much less than the United States had expected and anticipated, especially since it did not include many provisions which Washington firmly believed were essential to reduction. Although it did not contain the assurance of immediate arms decrease, he was happy about the degree of accomplishment. He sincerely believed that a suitable foundation had been constructed if the machinery could be implemented by the formal convocation.

Gibson thought that perhaps the conference would achieve more. If it did, the progress could come because the governments were more

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[18] Ibid., pp. 101-102.

willing to make concessions there than in the Preparatory Commission and because the conference improved on the commission's work. Gibson cautioned the other delegates not to mislead their public into thinking the agency had actually accomplished a great deal; instead, they should inform their people of the accomplishments in moderate tones. They should candidly indicate the imperfections of the draft and the preliminary work which was necessary to insure the success of the disarmanent conference.[19]

Running concurrently with the disarmament discussion, the strained political relations between France and Italy comprised one of the major impediments to international agreement on disarmament and arms control. Basically, Rome was miffed because Paris would not allow Italy naval parity in all categories. Both countries emerged from the London Naval Conference with worsened political relations as indicated by their refusal to sign the naval ratios portion of the treaty. In the months following the London meetings, Wilson was among the many diplomats who worked for resolution of the French-Italian naval construction problem.[20]

In mid-May, 1930, Wilson grew curious about the state of affairs. About that time, newspaper accounts stated that Italy and France were negotiating to finish the work of the London Naval Conference. On May 15, he went to Geneva where he interviewed several British, French, and Italian officials to the League to ascertain whether the facts justified

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[19]Gibson to Stimson, December 4, 1930, F.R., I, 201-203.

[20]Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 103-105.

the reports. He learned that Briand and Grandi had decided to defer the naval problem for the time being until they could resolve their political difficulties. They considered different means of contact, but decided to conduct talks through regular diplomatic channels. Grandi felt that the question of the Tripoli frontier and the nationality problem of Tunis could be solved in a friendly manner. In fact, if Paris would make a conciliatory gesture regarding Tripoli, then the drastically changed relations would greatly enhance the chances of naval harmony. Briand promised to study the contents as a possible step toward a settlement. Wilson also learned confidentially that Rome was considering an "Italian yardstick" which would achieve parity by a comparison of the number of ships instead of tonnage. Basically, he thought that the diplomatic climate had improved although no specific accomplishment could be reported.[21]

The British officials were as greatly concerned as other interested outside parties. Wilson was informed that Arthur Henderson, the British delegate in Geneva, was using every opportunity to stress the importance which his government attached to those discussions. He was anxious for France and Italy to become signatories of the London Treaty in order to relieve British apprehensions about their naval building. More important, the American Minister discovered that MacDonald had recently asked Grandi why his government had announced a large program after the London Conference. Grandi answered that the London participants were cognizant of Italy's intent to construct at the same level

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[21]Wilson to Stimson, May 16, 1930, 500.A15A3/931.

as its neighbor which meant that the Italian plans for 1930 and 1931 were in line with the French projection. While the two countries were trying to settle their difficulties, Rome was prepared to restrict its construction to the identical degree that Paris was. According to Wilson's source, MacDonald was satisfied with the Italian response.[22]

By August, 1930, enough obstacles having been removed, Massigli and Rosso began French-Italian formal talks. On September 4, Rosso introduced a plan which called for nine cruisers with 8-inch guns and a maximum tonnage and number of units for cruisers with 6-inch weapons and destroyers. By combining the two types of vessels into one class, Paris would possess more tonnage, and Rome would have equality in numbers. Concerning submarines, the French government would finish its construction for 1931, and a naval holiday would be observed, a move which would give France approximately 77,000 tons and Italy about 50,000 tons. Massigli believed some of the provisions worthwhile and promised to convey them sympathetically to his superior. The contact ended on September 5, and the Frenchman went to Geneva.[23]

By September 10, when Wilson and Marriner checked on the situation, less reason for optimism existed. Massigli, noticeably depressed and definitely silent about details, seemed intent on demolishing whatever hope had been built up by Rosso's proposals. He was more concerned

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[22]Wilson to Stimson, May 16, 1930, F.R., I, 132.

[23]Norman Davis to Stimson, August 11, 1930, F.R., I, 132-133; Walter Edge, Ambassador in Paris, to Stimson, September 6, 1930, F.R., I, 133; Wilson to Stimson, September 10, 1930, 500.A15A3/1081.

about the size of the figures being discussed and whether Britain would approve them without exercising the escape clause of the London Treaty. In response to his prompt statement that Britain had repudiated its option for eighteen 8-inch cruisers, the two Americans indicated that the renunciation applied only to the limitations which Britain, Japan, and the United States had established. Besides, London was the judge of its own naval welfare, and the Washington government had no right to question its invocation of the escalator provision. Likewise, Grandi was not optimistic although he had shown a willingness to talk with Briand whenever the latter wanted to hold fruitful talks. Wilson and Marriner presented the danger of the tonnage figures becoming large enough to upset the treaty equilibrium, and the Foreign Minister reiterated the continuing Italian hope for lower figures.[24]

When rumors spread of progress in the naval negotiations, American newspapers, especially the New York Herald Tribune, were publishing such information. Unfortunately, Wilson saw little reason for such statements, although one incident possibly accounted for the reports. On September 15, Rosso and Massigli had conversed, and the latter particularly objected to the parity in tonnage figures which Rosso felt were the heart of the Italian plan. For some reason, then Rosso partially outlined his scheme in a sanguine manner to American reporters who apparently developed their accounts from those remarks.[25]

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[24]Wilson to Stimson, September 10, 1930, 500.A15A3/1081.

[25]Wilson to Stimson, September 19, 1930, 500.A15A3/1081.

On September 25, Wilson was back in Geneva to talk with personnel at the League session. He heard that Massigli had submitted a counter-proposal to Rosso which contained two types of surface vessels not included in the Washington Treaty. They were ships with 8-inch guns and craft of smaller size and caliber of which an undesignated portion would be less than 3,000 tons. Submarine construction was also separated into divisions above 2,000 tons and those under. Furthermore, the two countries were to have parity in the number of craft without any stipulation concerning tonnage. The Italians, viewing the suggestion as a step backward, were reportedly disillusioned. They reasoned that the French position on vessels with 6-inch weapons would disrupt their current practical equality in that class and place France ahead by a three-to-two margin in 1936. The offer was so unacceptable that Grandi abruptly ordered the talks to end. Later Briand contacted another Italian member of the League Council and convinced him to concur that both parties had temporarily interrupted the discussions. Wilson, seeing little hope for an improvement during that League assembly, predicted that the irritation would continue unless Cabinet officials resumed the contact.[26]

At this point, the United States began making its own diplomatic moves. Since France was supposedly about to announce its building program for 1931, Stimson wanted unilateral efforts by Britain, Japan, and the United States to maintain the construction levels of the London Treaty free of disruption by the two European naval powers. Furthermore,

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[26]Wilson to Stimson, September 26, 1930, F.R., I, 133-134.

he wanted to preclude their complicating the Preparatory Commission work by inserting their naval difficulties into the agenda. So, London, Tokyo, and Washington should urge Paris and Rome to discontinue their attempts toward gaining diplomatic triumphs over each other on parity and postpone that discussion until 1936.

In the interim, France and Italy could independently declare their plans which the major powers hoped would not necessitate the invocation of the escalator clause. Stimson emphasized to the French and Italian ambassadors that their governments' attitudes created instability and not security. Also, a large French increase which would mean a change in the 1930 treaty level might cause an adverse public reaction among the British, Japanese, and Americans. Thus, Stimson sought to impress upon the two European capitals that the naval question was one of international interest.[27]

While Gibson and Wilson were in Paris en route from the Washington consultation in October, they discussed the French-Italian problem. They found that the London and Tokyo governments had misinterpreted the Secretary's proposal to be only a protest against the French naval plan for 1931. In a private meeting, they explained away the British ambassador's misconceptions. They indicated that the proposed French building

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[27]Stimson to Charles G. Dawes, Ambassador in London, October 15, 1930, F.R., I, 137-138; Stimson to Cameron Forbes, Ambassador in Japan, October 16, 1930, F.R., I, 138-140; Stimson to Edge, October 16, 1930, F.R., I, 140-141; Stimson to Garrett, Ambassador in Italy, October 16, 1930, F.R., I, 141. The British, thinking the United States had in mind joint statements, declined to cooperate until the matter was explained otherwise. Stimson to Dawes, October 23, 1930, F.R., I, 145-146; Dawes to Stimson, October 24, 1930, F.R., I, 147.

comprised a further reason, not a determining one, for action before the difficulty was intensified by the announcement of its program or by debate in the Preparatory Commission. Then the Ambassador saw the wisdom of the American recommendation and astonished Gibson with the opinion that Premier Andre Tardieu of France would possibly consider it favorably within a short time. Likewise, a conversation with the Japanese Ambassador also removed his misgivings. Thereafter, Gibson went to Brussels to prevent press conjectures about his prolonged visit in Paris, and Wilson remained in the city.[28]

Later, Wilson learned the French view of the developments from the British Ambassador who had visited the French Foreign Office. The Ambassador commented on his government's concern over the interruption in the negotiations and indicated his government's readiness to help through mediation or other ways whenever the two disputants wanted assistance. The French official responded that Massigli's offer at Geneva was the last move made which Italy had not yet answered, but Rome had stated that the talks were open. Subsequently, the Fascist Grand Council had passed a resolution for parity which altered the relations. Thus, as things stood then, Italy would have to initiate the resumption of contact, and the gesture might be productive only if Rome modified its position on parity. Unfortunately, Benito Mussolini, the head of the Italian government, felt that his country had been the last one to

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[28]Gibson and Wilson to Stimson, October 25, 1930, F.R., I, 148-149.

offer compromise measures, so Paris would have to be willing to make concessions first.[29]

On October 27, the controversy was somewhat clarified. On that day, Gibson discovered that the French government completely misunderstood Stimson's maneuver. In fact, Tardieu was highly annoyed that Paul Claudel, the Ambassador in Washington, had misinterpreted the intent and purpose of the proposal. Once the American explained the Secretary's viewpoint, the Premier, who was impressed that Gibson would make a similar explanation in Rome, became calm and receptive. Tardieu predicted that the two governments could agree on terms in less than an hour if Italy accepted the American recommendation and if the parity problem was circumvented. Because developments seemed so promising, Gibson and Norman Armour, the American chargé in Paris, asked Wilson to stay there until Gibson could contact him after talking to Grandi in Italy.[30]

For a time, Tardieu hesitated to tell Gibson one important point. Confidentially, the primary impediment was one of determining levels which would be satisfactory to London. When that stage was reached, agreement with the Italians would be comparatively easy. He hoped that the talks with the British officials which had been held for several days would markedly clarify conditions. Initially, he recommended that Gibson stay in Paris pending a settlement, but later he agreed that it

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[29]Gibson and Wilson to Stimson, October 27, 1930, F.R., I, 151-152; Memorandum by Castle of a Conversation with the Italian Ambassador, October 28, 1930, F.R., I, 150-151.

[30]Gibson to Stimson, October 27, 1930, F.R., I, 153-155.

would be better for the Ambassador to proceed to Rome.[31]

On October 28, the Japanese Ambassador related much the same thing to Wilson. The preceding evening he had asked Philippe Berthelot, the Secretary General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, if there was any way to end the French-Italian deadlock. The Frenchman opined that the three big naval powers could talk with France about fixing a level in auxiliary ships which would satisfy them and France. A success in that would greatly simplify the Italian difficulty.[32]

As promised to Tardieu, Gibson and Wilson related the developments to Massigli. The latter, apparently happy about the prospects, asked Gibson to inform the Italian government of the desire to take up talks momentarily. He followed with an outline of a tonnage arrangement in auxiliary ships which he had discussed with the British Ambassador. In the main, the plan provided for the French construction of 8-inch gun cruisers to replace similar craft and Italian abstention from corresponding building. If so, then the total French-Italian strength would conform to the British standard. Regarding submarines, he projected a possible decrease in French crafts which would improve the English standing by 1936. Throughout the conversation, Massigli often stressed the Paris government's sincere wish to dispose of the vexing difficulty. The comment reinforced Tardieu's remark about serious matters so besetting him that he would be most happy to settle that one problem which was more

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[31]Gibson to Stimson, October 27, 1930, F.R., I, 155.

[32]Gibson to Stimson, October 28, 1930, F.R., I, 155-156.

bothersome than its real value warranted.[33]

In Rome, Gibson essentially heard the opposite side which basically named France as the obstacle to a settlement. Grandi informed him of the French suggestion that Rosso return to Paris to resume the talks. Italy had declined to send him a second time, but promised to have him or some other representative in Geneva for the Preparatory Commission. Grandi stated frankly that the government needed to save face and had really relinquished the essence of parity earlier in the year.[34] The Italian interest rested more in continuing the semblance of equality than the expenditure of large sums. In the final analysis, the Foreign Minister doubted the possibility of concluding an accord satisfactory to Paris.[35]

Then the American press complicated its government's efforts by publicizing Gibson's work. Wilson reported the Paris branch of the New York Herald Tribune as saying that the United States had given Gibson freedom to reconcile the negotiators and possibly to visit Rome. Wilson declined immediate comment and asked Washington if he should state anything. He really considered it proper to leave unless the State Department had a specific assignment for him there. Stimson

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[33]Gibson to Stimson, October 27, 1930, F.R., I, 154-155; Gibson to Stimson, October 28, 1930, F.R., I, 159-160.

[34]Grandi's reference was to the material that Wilson referred to in Wilson to Stimson, May 16, 1930, F.R., I, 132.

[35]Gibson to Stimson, October 30, 1930, F.R., I, 163-164.

counseled Armour to say as little as possible about the matter and Wilson to return to Switzerland.[36]

On November 5, Gibson, Wilson, and other members of the American delegation to the Preparatory Commission reflected on a way to bring about a solution in Geneva. Primarily, the need was to harmonize the French aim of superiority in auxiliary vessels with the Italian goal of ostensible parity. Gibson and his colleagues thought of distinguishing between new construction and replacement by terming a large part of the French building reconstruction because so many of its ships in operation were old. Thus, France might announce the restoration program to stop in 1936 and thereby have a situation almost tantamount to a holiday on construction. Since the representatives of Paris and Rome were still negotiating, the Americans intended to hold the proposal until the opportune time for making an informal offer. Stimson believed the distinction completely acceptable if the levels remained within the figures which the London Naval Treaty established.[37]

Word circulated that the American representatives might be an instrument in reconciling the two disputants. Various sources spread the French opinion that the Americans could favorably influence the negotiations. Because the point was passed so freely, Gibson's group felt that Paris had sent such orders with its experts. Likewise, the

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[36]Armour to Stimson, October 30, 1930, F.R., I, 160; Stimson to Armour, October 30, 1930, F.R., I, 160.

[37]Gibson to Stimson, November 5, 1930, F.R., I, 171; Stimson to Gibson, November 6, 1930, F.R., I, 174-175.

Italians had expressed hope that the United States delegation would assume a conciliatory role. Consequently, the Americans themselves might play that part whenever the circumstances permitted, but until then, they were stating that the United States did not want to mediate or use its good offices. They really thought, however, that direct contact between the two parties constituted the optimum approach.[38]

Within a week, Gibson, Wilson, and their advisers had misgivings about the chances of a reconciliation. Rome became nervous about press accounts that France might possibly adhere to the London Treaty when it found a building level satisfactory to London, Tokyo, and Washington. Assuming that happened, Italy felt that its rival might veto or stipulate prerequisites for Italian membership. If the southern government wanted admission at a comparable weight level, the American delegation anticipated possible embarrassment for the big naval three. Should that trio allow a French rejection of Italian entrance, it might appear to Italy that they favored France by judging the parity problem themselves. Yet, they might be charged with partiality by pressuring Paris to allow Italian participation. In case direct agreement was unsuccessful, the Americans foresaw no way that Paris could approve the London Treaty without worsening relations with its southern neighbor. Certainly, it was important to gain adherence to the 1930 naval convention, but they considered it a mistake to forget the long-held American view that naval

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[38]Gibson to Stimson, November 7, 1930, F.R., I, 175.

limitation was an unceasing process. Thus, they also needed to remember the overall interest in getting all of the major sea powers to future conferences voluntarily. The delegation reported those apprehensions to Stimson only in order to submit all the facts garnered from their Geneva conversations.[39]

During the Preparatory Commission session, England assumed a more active role in the naval problem. It became increasingly obvious that the two competitors favored the use of Robert L. Craigie, the head of the League Department of the British Foreign Office, as an intermediary instead of direct negotiations. When Massigli submitted a plan which was noticeably inferior to his government's recommendation at the London Conference, the Englishman proposed a substitute. Basically, it offered a naval holiday in construction of 8-inch gun cruisers and submarines and replacement only for cruisers with 6-inch weapons and destroyers. After some discussion, the French official accepted the plan.[40]

Thereafter, a couple of factors caused significant delays. First, the illness of both Craigie and Rosso curtailed the negotiations. Second, a French Cabinet crisis, a larger obstacle than the first one, necessitated the formation of another government. In the main, the situation remained largely unchanged when the Preparatory Commission adjourned on December 9. At that time, Craigie, Massigli, and Rosso thought that the

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[39]Gibson to Stimson, November 13, 1930, F.R., I, 179-180.

[40]Gibson to Stimson, November 20, 1930, F.R., I, 180-181.

chances of an accord were better than in November, and once the French government machinery was operative again, they expected to resume their efforts. In the meantime, they all recognized and appreciated the initiative of the United States in getting the talks renewed.[41]

In mid-December, Wilson saw Craigie in Berne. The Britisher thought that the single important remaining difference between Paris and Rome concerned the latter's demand for 8,000 additional tons of submarines. Rosso had promised to discuss the matter with Grandi in the Italian capital and let Craigie know whether he could profitably travel to Italy. To await that word and enjoy a brief vacation, the Englishman decided to stay in Switzerland temporarily. He informed Massigli of the Italian Minister's mission, but the Frenchman withheld comment because no Cabinet yet existed in his country. Soon the invitation arrived, and Craigie went to Rome.[42]

Thereafter Wilson was seldom associated with the negotiations. At the end of 1930, the overall positions remained much the same with Craigie thinking that problems were being removed and that eventual accord was nearer as a result of diplomatic exchanges. The problem carried over into 1931 still hampered by the instability of the French government.[43] By September, the talks were in a critical last stage of

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[41]Gibson to Stimson, December 9, 1930, F.R., I, 183-184.

[42]Wilson to Stimson, December 15, 1930, 500.A15A3/1317; Wilson to Stimson, December 16, 1930, F.R., I, 184.

[43]Armour to Stimson, December 23, 1930, F.R., I, 185; Wilson to Stimson, May 16, 1931, F.R., I, 417-418.

having to be settled then or be sent to the General Disarmament Conference in February, 1932.[44] Nothing materially was accomplished there, and negotiations dragged along until their collapse in January, 1932.[45]

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[44]Wilson to Stimson, September 20, 1931, F.R., I, 430; Wilson to Stimson, September 7, 1931, 500.A15A3/1634; Wilson to Stimson, September 17, 1931, 500.A15A3/1637; Wilson to Stimson, September 18, 1931, 500.A15A3/1644.

[45]H. Stuart Hughes, "The Early Diplomacy of Italian Fascism, 1922-1932," eds. Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert, The Diplomats: 1919-39 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 231.

CHAPTER VI.

1931, THE DESIGNATED YEAR OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Throughout 1931, American officials made preparations for the General Disarmament Conference. Even before the last session of the Preparatory Commission adjourned, Gibson was already sending his thoughts on the prospects. He saw little hope for other than a minimum effort to limit armaments and forecast the continuation of construction. He viewed Berlin and Rome as two specific obstacles to agreement. Probably Germany would try to abolish the Versailles Treaty military clauses which attempt the continental powers would definitely resent and resist. Also, Italy would present a big problem unless it could settle the naval trouble with France. Possibly Rome might continue its move toward conciliation with Germany, Russia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey which meant that the European governments would proceed to the assembly divided into two camps. Nonetheless, some step had to be taken to accomplish as much progress on disarmament as possible.

Actually, the United States armaments were so limited and low already that its situation would figure little in the conference outcome, but still Americans needed to be present and active. The chief of the delegation would be expected to represent his country in the full sessions, sit with the political committee, and possibly meet with a steering committee which was being contemplated. For the committees on air, naval, and land equipment, the delegation required personnel who were fully aware of technical problems. Although the War and Navy

Departments needed some time to outline their plans and moves, the political representatives would devote many more hours to studying the attitudes and stands which nations had assumed in the Preparatory Commission. Since the future debates would largely revolve around those discussions, it was essential to decide upon the membership early enough to allow for the necessary preparations.[1]

Because the League figured prominently in the preliminary work, the State Department wanted events observed as they occurred. After it appointed Wilson to be available for consultation at the Council's January meeting, he despatched his comments on possible developments at that time. He expected Eduard Benes, the Czechoslovakian Minister for Foreign Affairs, to be the chairman of the General Disarmament Conference. After his selection, that official would ascertain the general situation in European relations and reconcile positions as much as possible. In that light, both Gibson and Wilson believed Benes an excellent nomination because of his conciliatory disposition and his many years of public service. Likely, he could promote harmony better than any other individual. Concerning the date, the Minister thought that the conference would convene at Geneva in February, 1932. Some persons had spoken about the expediency of holding the meeting in another place, but he foresaw the Secretariat's objecting to the impracticality of relocating itself. The schedule was convenient, for the time would allow the Secretariat to devote its attention to the armaments discussion

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[1]Gibson to Stimson, December 6, 1930, F.R., 1931, I, 471-476.

from February until the Assembly met in September.[2]

Early in January, 1931, he heard of a movement to choose an American as Vice President of the conference. Evidently, Germany and the other former Central Powers exerted some pressure in that direction, but the Minister had no idea how seriously that preference would be promoted. In informal conversations, Wilson stated that the choice would be unwise for two reasons. First, the designated person would be obliged to spend 1931 working toward the convocation, and his assignment would primarily deal with the reconciliation of European differences. Second, the American chosen might be a citizen whom President Hoover could not in good conscience appoint to the delegation.[3]

Subsequently, Stimson sent orders to scotch the attempt. He decided against cooperation in that manner because he considered the general preparatory procedure to be both inadequate and futile. It was especially so in view of the conference's importance and the significant impact that it might have on the world. He preferred direct contact among the nations which were most concerned about land armament restrictions. Since the United States had nothing either to insist upon or to concede, it was less involved in the matter.

Consequently, American assumption of the primary responsibility for preparation might become detrimental to itself and others. While American acceptance might mean less involvement by those governments

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[2]Wilson to Stimson, December 7, 1930, F.R., 1931, I, 476-477.

[3]Wilson to Stimson, January 8, 1931, 500.A15A4/7.

whose participation was essential, it might mean that Washington would receive "the blame for the ultimate inevitable failure." Although the Preparatory Commission had dwelt on technical aspects and methods, it had not considered the fundamental problems of principle nor had individual governments expressed opinions about their disarmament obligations. Under the best of circumstances a successful conference would be most arduous, and Washington believed one utterly impossible without a readiness of the European diplomatic officials to discuss directly beforehand. By early 1931, France, Italy, and Germany, the powers most affected by land disarmament, had indicated no intention of personally confronting the vital problems. Thus, to remove obstacles, the principals needed to meet as Britain and the United States had prior to the London Naval Conference. For those reasons, Washington declined to participate in any preliminary action officially or informally until European powers undertook essential steps.[4]

Wilson reported considerable confusion in Geneva about the Secretary's position. The British representatives contended that he objected to officers from the small governments and the Council's nomination of officials. They inferred that conclusion from their discussions of American participation, and they desired a procedure completely satisfactory

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[4]Stimson to Dawes, January, 1931, F.R., I, 481-482; Stimson to Wilson, January 10, 1931, 500.A15A4/9; Wilson to Stimson, January 16, 1931, 500.A15A4/16; Stimson to American Legation, Berne, January 16, 1931, 500.A15A4/18; Wilson to Stimson, January 17, 1931, 500.A15A4/20.

to the United States. Acting on misinformation from Washington, Julius Curtius, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, suggested to Arthur Henderson, a British delegate, that the concerned powers name the personnel in direct talks. Also in doubt, the French ordered Paul Claudel the Ambassador in Washington, to inquire about the matter. Those who advocated the original plan insisted that the designation of persons for preliminary activities was in line with Stimson's views. In addition, feeling existed that the Council should delete disarmament from its agenda of January 20, pending the Secretary's clarification. Moreover, Germany and Italy were opposed to the naming of Benes, but Wilson expected only limited objection unless Stimson, whose judgment on all these problems was expected to be the decisive element, opposed that nominee.[5]

Stimson remained aloof about the conference's personnel, continuing adamantly against American representation and refusing to state a preference about the nomination procedure.[6] With that information, Wilson countered erroneous opinions about the Secretary's attitude, and no one expressed opposition to Stimson's ideas. Everyone with whom Wilson conversed agreed that direct contact constituted the best way to handle matters of principle. Upon hearing Wilson's statements, the Council restricted disarmament discussion to speeches about adoption of the Preparatory Commission's report. Further, it allowed more time to consider future plans concerning conference organization. In general,

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[5]Wilson to Stimson, January 18, 1931, F.R., I, 483-485.

[6]Stimson to Wilson, January 19, 1931, F.R., I, 485.

the Council talked about ways to initiate the talks and methods of applying pressure on the negotiators. Once he had presented the American ideas, Wilson returned to Berne rather than to risk the possibility of his being publicly or profoundly enmeshed in the transactions. In the meantime, the Secretariat promised to relay information to him.[7]

Progress continued to be slow, however, because of misinterpretations of the American policy. In a secret session, Quniones de Leon, the rapporteur, accurately conveyed the material which Wilson had verbally given him. The German delegates denied the reliability of those comments, contending that Stimson objected to immediate organization. After more wrangling, the Council ordered Joseph Avenol, the League's Deputy Secretary General, to contact Wilson for elaboration, and the Minister's brief response resembled his previous replies to similar inquiries. The same day, the Irish delegate nominated General Charles G. Dawes of the United States for chairman of the conference. For a short time, the press gave most of its attention to that suggestion.[8]

Finally, the Council decided some points and deferred others. It set the conference convocation date for February 2, 1932, and reserved Geneva as the place if enough facilities were available. With Henderson working against the selection of a President then because of the German and Italian opposition and the alleged American reluctance,

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[7]Wilson to Stimson, January 21, 1931, F.R., I, 485-486.

[8]Wilson to Stimson, January 23, 1931, 500.A15A4/29; Wilson to Stimson, January 23, 1931, 500.A15A4/31.

it postponed the nomination until a later session. The rapporteur recommended direct negotiations, but a majority voted against the proposal. The opponents stressed the need for a mediating official or government to prevent the possibility of deadlocks occurring which would cause the participants to enter the conference thinking that nothing could be accomplished. The opposition certainly did not rule out the possibility of direct contact if an outside party scrutinized developments. At every opportunity, Wilson emphasized the vital necessity of such meetings. Instead, the Council delegated the preparatory measures to the rapporteur and the Secretariat at least until May.[9]

In April, Wilson transmitted to Stimson points of which he garnered from a conversation with Secretary General Drummond. Drummond believed that he could no longer support the nomination of Benes because London opposed the Czech nominee. In that case, the Council would make the choice without the Secretariat's advice. In the meantime, Henderson had become concerned about the chairmanship, had tried unsuccessfully to draft Briand for the position, and, finally, became interested in it himself. Anyway, he planned to promote the appointment of a committee of two or three members to assist in the conference preliminaries. Since Drummond made no mention of an American for that office, the Minister concluded that everyone completely comprehended the stand taken by the United States.[10]

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[9]Wilson to Stimson, January 24, 1931, F.R., I, 488-489; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 105.

[10]Wilson to Stimson, April 17, 1931, F.R., I, 492-493.

At the May session, Wilson observed more concern for economic depression than for disarmament. He doubted whether a comprehensive account of the Council's activity would indicate "the uniqueness and strangeness of this meeting." The static European economic positions were precipitately altered by the possibility of a German-Austrian Customs Union. Subsequently, the conditions were so fluid that only a prophet could foretell what the outcome would be. Of course, Wilson saw the potential effect of preferential conventions on cereals being contrary to the American most-favored-nation agreements. So apprehensive and embarrassed were the Ministers of Foreign Affairs that they were reading their speeches on economic subjects rather than using their usual extemporaneous delivery. Their comments resulted from the demands of their excited publics for some action to alleviate matters. The American ventured that the economic depression might have the beneficial effect of bringing about genuine concessions on disarmament.[11]

Most delegates were apprehensive about the prospects of the General Disarmament Conference. They looked upon disarmament as an explosive topic which might "go off in anyone's hands." Furthermore, they were fully aware of the evasive debates in the Preparatory Commission and of the disagreeable nature of the facts which would be presented to the future assembly. Also, they were convinced that the conference would test the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty. Most were ready to delay the meeting indefinitely, but the German insistence on immediate

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[11]Wilson to Stimson, May 26, 1931, F.R., I, 498-499.

consideration was too strong to allow such a suggestion. According to Wilson, their governments were "between the hammer of a public demand for reduction and the anvil of a public demand for security."

The exception to that mood was the British, who, in contrast to most other personnel, were enthusiastic and optimistic. Perhaps the most delighted of that group was Henderson, concerning his appointment as the President of the conference. In order to show the public the gravity of the effort, he, wanting as many outstanding persons as possible at Geneva in the early days of the convocation, hoped to have MacDonald, Mussolini, and Stimson there for the first sessions.[12]

In May, the sixty-third session of the Council also considered other old business. The body accepted the report from the Committee of Experts on Budgetary Questions which was established to find a means of limiting war materials expenditures by restricting purchase, manufacture, and maintenance. The proposition provided for governments to submit expense reports for all their armaments, so the general problem could be fully considered at the Disarmament Conference. In addition, the League received a subcommittee statement on problems of air armaments limitation by horsepower. Those specialists submitted a plan even though the method was agreed on merely because it contained fewer disadvantages than other formulas. Also, the Council chose Geneva as the site and approved Henderson as the President.[13]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 105-106.

The body took up a related disarmament problem. At the January meeting it decided to secure information about armament positions and all data which would assist the conference in drafting specific recommendations. Accordingly, Drummond began making the contacts about that material.[14] The British and the German governments sent him recommendations for a uniform form in which arms figures should be despatched, and the former urged the completion of the blank tables which were appended to the draft convention. The German note which provided for a questionnaire with information about trained reserves and war material in stock caused much anxiety in League circles. The apprehension was accentuated by the Secretariat's inability to ascertain what Berlin would propose in May. In general, Wilson and others presumed that country would ask for new tables which would require more information than the English measure. Drummond expected Germany to be completely alone when that part of the agenda was reached. At the May session, the Council adopted the British procedure because the other plan might bring up technical problems about which the Preparatory Commission had previously decided.[15]

The United States elected to participate in the program. By early May, American figures were already compiled, but Wilson suggested that they be withheld pending his report on the Council's decision. In case

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[14] Ibid., p. 107; Wilson to Stimson, February 19, 1931, 500.A15A4/56; Wilson to Stimson, February 19, 1931, 500.A15A4/82.

[15] Wilson to Stimson, March 20, 1931, 500.A15A4/84; Wilson to Stimson, April 17, 1931, 500.A15A4/120; Wilson to Stimson, May 3, 1931, 500.A15A4/126.

foreign representatives wanted his views during the Assembly, Wilson proposed to say that the tables represented years of effort and compromise and that the short time was too brief for formulating another form.[16]

After the May Council meeting, Wilson proposed a plan of action. Previously, Russia had submitted armament figures in a sealed letter to the Disarmament Conference with the stipulation that the Secretariat was not to examine them.[17] Considering the Soviet approach, the Minister felt that the United States could beneficially present its data with the reservation that the Council would not circulate it before mid-September and only then to those nations which had submitted figures. Further, Washington could publicize its transmission of the material, including the budgetary figures. That portion could be accompanied by a statement which called attention to the American attitude in the Preparatory Commission. The maneuver would preserve the stance and still allow publicity about armament figures. If the Department concurred, Wilson might give Drummond the information and say that budgetary and horsepower statistics would be delivered later.[18]

To Wilson's gratification, Stimson was willing to go further by authorizing the Secretariat to publish the figures. When asked for his

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[16]Wilson to Stimson, May 2, 1931, 500.A15A4/126.

[17]Earlier, Wilson had characterized the Russian data as "very scanty." For some reason the Secretariat opened the material which was reportedly fantastic and did not conform to the draft convention tables. Wilson to Stimson, May 2, 1931, Jay Pierrepont Moffat Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[18]Wilson to Stimson, May 26, 1931, 500.A15A4/174.

views about this approach, the Minister telegraphed his hearty agreement and recommended possible steps. He stressed the desirability of making the most of the submission to avoid the appearance of the act being merely routine. Of course, the United States could say that it did not object to the public release of figures if Drummond felt that move would have the beneficial effect of encouraging the other powers to publicize their details. As a means of emphasizing the importance of the Secretary's proposed communication, Wilson later offered to hand it to the Secretary General.[19]

On June 6, the State Department sent the note which Drummond was to receive. It contained material on armaments and budgetary expenses which was only for information and publicity uses. The United States withheld its report on the horsepower of airplane engines to see whether it needed to revise those figures which were compiled before the arrival of the Experts' Committee plan. For a time, Wilson thought the Secretary's request for publicity so strong and definite that Drummond might be embarrassed if the Council resolution prohibited the release. The problem constituted only a slight difficulty, and both Stimson and Drummond arranged for publication on June 15.[20] By

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[19]Stimson to Wilson, May 28, 1931, 500.A15A4/176; Wilson to Stimson, May 29, 1931, 500.A15A4/179; Wilson to Stimson, June 3, 1931, 500.A15A4/194.

[20]Stimson to American Legation, Berne, June 6, 1931, 500.A15A4/199; Wilson to Stimson, June 7, 1931, 500.A15A4/201; Stimson to American Legation, Berne, June 8, 1931, 500.A15A4/206; Wilson to Stimson, June 9, 1931, 500.A15A4/207. Drummond desired no release before June 15, which would divert attention from the impact of the account. Subsequently, Wilson was embarrassed because the Paris editions of the Chicago Tribune

September 18, 1931, Wilson reported that twenty-two nations had complied with the resolution, and, eventually, fifty-five governments submitted reports.[21]

Shortly after the May Council session, word circulated that Stimson favored a delay in holding the General Disarmament Conference. According to Avenol, the French Foreign Office felt that the Secretary wanted a postponement, and another source told Wilson of Italy's desire to persuade Stimson that success would be more likely after a deferral. Also, the American Minister heard that the Paris and Rome governments would propose that the United States, a government separate from European problems, initiate such a movement.

Wilson saw serious consequences for his country if it took that action. In such an instance, the government would be vulnerable to the censure of Germany and the press of those nations which most desired a delay. Probably it would also be burdened with the blame for obstructing disarmament progress. To Wilson, the difficulty of timing was a distinctly continental matter for which those powers had to assume the responsibility. Consequently, he suggested a definite restatement of

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and the New York Herald Tribune printed complete reports early. The State Department had prohibited the newspapers inside the United States from carrying the story that morning, but the papers, taking advantage of an instructional loophole, ordered publication by their European branches. Stimson to American Legation, Berne, June 13, 1931, 500.A15A4/218; Wilson to Stimson, June 16, 1931, 500.A15A4/224; Stimson to American Legation, Berne, June 17, 1931, 500.A15A4/231.

[21]Wilson to Stimson, September 18, 1931, 500.A15A4/393; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 107.

the neutrality which the Secretary had previously implied in news conferences. That maneuver might preclude any foreign diplomatic inquiries which would lead to disappointment.[22]

Despite American countermoves, rumors continued that the conference would meet later than originally scheduled, and the number of press accounts increased in August due to old and new developments. France had long been an advocate of delay, and possibly England currently preferred to give full attention to economic restoration. Besides, Henderson, now only a party leader instead of the Foreign Secretary, might be reluctant to be away from England for so long. Disapproving of such thinking, the State Department informed the press in Washington and instructed Wilson to use every appropriate occasion to deplore the rescheduling idea.[23]

On September 8, 1931, an important new element in the conference preparations was introduced. That day, Dino Grandi, the head of the Italian delegation to the League, addressed the League Assembly about the possibility of a temporary cessation in arms building. He proposed that the governments which had accepted conference invitations agree to an armaments truce during the preparatory and conference periods. By prompt action they could end the construction of new items, which

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[22]Wilson to Stimson, June 10, 1931, 500.A15A4/210.

[23]Memorandum by Castle of a Conversation with President Hoover, August 28, 1931, F.R., I, 520; Castle to Wilson, August 28, 1931, F.R., I, 520-521. Stimson expressed the same position two weeks later. Stimson to Wilson, September 10, 1931, F.R., I, 522-523.

progress would indicate a spirit of goodwill and foster a wholesome milieu that might effectively move the conference toward success.

Wilson considered the address as significant. He ascertained that Grandi was still trying to formulate the plan more definitely, but that the Italian Minister really preferred to know foreign responses before he acted further. If enough support generated for the suggestion, then he would submit a resolution. The American requested the State Department to send along counsel for his use in conversations about the proposition.[24]

Wilson observed considerable interest in and support for the speech among the other representatives. Perhaps most obvious was the enthusiastic Scandanavian attitude toward the step. Lord Cecil, a British delegate, placed his government squarely behind the idea of an arms truce and hoped that the proposition would be submitted to the Third Committee on disarmament. He expressed a dislike of postponing the conference and a desire for Germany and France to effect a genuine rapprochement which he felt would eliminate most of the world's political restiveness. Stimson was delighted and showed his sympathy by directing his Minister to assure Grandi confidentially of the Secretary's interest. He was to relate the conviction that the General Disarmament

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[24]Wilson to Stimson, September 8, 1931, F.R., I, 440; Wilson to Stimson, September 10, 1931, 500.A15A4/366.

Conference should not be bothered by continued arms building.[25]

Later Wilson spoke with him about the prospects of the plan. The Italian told him informally that the truce proposal would likely be discussed in the Third Committee on September 18. The backing had been less enthusiastic than he desired, and he fully expected Japan and France to oppose the abridgment in army material and naval increase, respectively. Despite that prospect, he planned to continue in the hope that the nations would accept some approach. Basically, Grandi's simple plan prohibited the construction of new ship keels, the increase of outlays for land equipment, and the building of aircraft except for the replacement of old ones. He feared that opponents might obstruct the plan by arguing that the nonparticipation of Russia, Turkey, and the United States precluded the possibility of a truce. To counter that, he might move that the Third Committee order Drummond to obtain their opinions or attendance at the committee meeting. Wilson promised to ask the Secretary of State for his advice.[26]

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[25]Wilson to Stimson, September 10, 1931, F.R., I, 442; Stimson to Wilson, September 11, 1931, F.R., I, 442-443. Briand was less responsive to the idea, and in a long address in the Assembly he ignored the proposal. He did, however, indicate that his government objected to postponement. Wilson to Stimson, September 11, 1931, 500.A15A4/371.

[26]Wilson to Stimson, September 16, 1931, F.R., I, 445-446. The Danish proposal, or the Scandinavian resolution, as Wilson most often referred to it, was introduced on September 10. It asked the Council to influence Disarmament Conference attendants to refrain from any step which would increase armaments beyond their current level and as a consequence increase their expenditures for that construction. Wilson to Stimson, September 11, 1931, F.R., I, 444.

Stimson favored the ideas which Grandi had advanced. Depending on the effective date of the truce and the extent of foreign approval, the State Department considered the three points a satisfactory foundation for debate. Certainly the United States would accept a League invitation to sit with the Third Committee on the arms recommendation. He felt that his government would do so because of its concern for disarmament and because of a definite and fresh proposition for consideration. Likely a naval truce would mean a greater loss to the United States because of its slow construction of cruisers than the other governments, but Washington would accept it in order to support Grandi's effort. Wilson would have to make clear to the foreign representatives, however, that the United States was letting contracts for destroyers which were a vital portion of the Hoover administration's employment program. Naturally, the government would have to resolve that difficulty and retain the economic recovery features, so Stimson asked the Minister for any proposition that he might have in mind.[27]

In reply, Wilson offered a possible solution. Certainly, the United States should participate in order to bolster the powers which supported Grandi's design and possibly to persuade the reluctant governments to consent, also. Undoubtedly, the American posture would be stronger if the destroyer problem could be solved at home. If the Secretary wanted a solution in Geneva, the Minister cautioned against weakening the State Department's position by making a reservation at once.

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[27]Stimson to Wilson, September 18, 1931, F.R., I, 446-447.

So, the representative could merely indicate a sincere agreement with the Italian measure and the existence of minor problems which could be overcome later, an approach which would maintain the influence of American approval. Also, possibly by listening to the difficulties of other countries, Washington might be able to resolve its problem without any reservation. Perhaps an agreement that new contracts would not be issued for naval units instead of the laying of keels might eliminate the dilemma.[28]

Stimson elaborated on the construction situation before he advocated a more straightforward approach. His earlier reference to destroyers meant the replacement of old ships. The Navy Department had received the bids for new crafts, but the contracts would not be assigned for a week or two which meant that the keel laying would not start for a month or even six weeks. Subsequently, when Wilson addressed the Third Committee, he was to indicate particularly the circumstances concerning those vessels. While the United States wanted to foster the adoption of the Grandi truce, it wished to avoid the contradiction of asking other governments to accept the holiday and of maintaining exceptions to be requested later. Hence, he was not to minimize the American intention of constructing the destroyers. In the matter of substituting naval units for the laying of new keels, Stimson preferred the other delegates to advance the scheme which Wilson would support, but the

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[28]Wilson to Stimson, September 18, 1931, F.R., I, 447-448.

Minister could propose it if necessary.[29]

Then the Third Committee took up the matter of invitations to nonmembers. Initially, it considered only those states which had been members of the Preparatory Commission, so the chairman recommended that Drummond contact those powers about participating in the debate. The idea was cordially discussed without modification until Salvador de Madariaga, the Spanish representative, successfully urged the inclusion of all outsiders in the invitation. Later, the Third Committee referred the matter to the Assembly's General Committee which invited those states to attend the sessions in a consultative capacity. Subsequently, the State Department ordered Wilson to participate only in the discussion of the Grandi proposal.[30]

Once the nonmember states were present, the Third Committee resumed its formal consideration of the truce proposal. General Alberto de Marinis, an Italian representative, urged each power to announce formally its observance of the holiday. In the main, the personnel from Hungary, Austria, India, Denmark, South Africa, Greece, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany declared for it. The last delegate explained that Berlin regarded the measure as a stopgap move which did not obviate the responsibility to reduce armaments. The Japanese delegate urged a delay until the conference convened so that experts and data would both

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[29]Stimson to Wilson, September 20, 1931, F.R., I, 451.

[30]Wilson to Stimson, September 18, 1931, F.R., I, 448-449; Stimson to Wilson, September 19, 1931, F.R., I, 449.

be available for proper discussion. Then Wilson delivered the comments upon which Stimson and he had agreed, and, because of the Japanese stand, he also stressed the salutary aspects of quick action. Likewise, Lord Cecil spoke for prompt application in order to preclude the stockpiling of arms and to improve the international political environment.[31]

At this point, the Third Committee became concerned about unanimity. Although Madariaga would support any motion to which the rest of the committee would agree, he recommended a flexible plan that the Assembly ask all General Disarmament Conference participants to reduce their arms budget by ten percent for a year. If the plan became a resolution, Wilson was prepared to oppose it on the basis of the government's position on budgetary limitation in the Preparatory Commission. Then the French delegate criticized the technical facets of the Italian suggestion before he offered his own pattern. He urged those nations in January, 1932, to transmit statements of the way that they would adhere to the Italian measure, and early in the conference those declarations would be debated to find an agreement if enough states were favorable. Wilson assumed that many exceptions would be attached to the announcements. When the delegates divided in favor of the Scandinavian, Italian, Spanish, and French propositions, the group chose a drafting committee in what Wilson termed "the remote hope" of achieving a consensus.

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[31]Wilson to Stimson, September 21, 1931, F.R., I, 452-453; Wilson to Stimson, September 22, 1931, F.R., I, 453-454; Wilson to Stimson, September 22, 1931, F.R., I, 453; Wilson to Stimson, September 23, 1931, F.R., I, 454-455.

Wilson met with that committee as a consultant.[32] World economic conditions were responsible for some tendency to prohibit the enlargement of the expenditures or armaments. Thereupon, Wilson reminded the members of the American attitude on budget limitation in the Preparatory Commission. Since he was unsure of Stimson's opinion on the association of those restrictions with a truce, he presented his own suggestion, urging the avoidance of steps which might cause higher allocations and which in turn might raise the arms level. Generally, his listeners favored the approach.

Initially, draft committee opinions diverged too greatly for the entire French or the Italian proposal to be the basis for a truce. Cecil was dissatisfied with the Scandinavian measure which required no announcement to observe the holiday, and he required a declaration no matter how general it was. Wilson concurred in that contention because it represented the most that could be accomplished, but, despite the varied opinions, he anticipated that approval could be secured to prohibit an armaments increase. Although not fully satisfied with the suggested general proposal, Wilson thought that it constituted the maximum which could be accomplished then. He felt that it was possible to agree on a method which "would create an excellent psychological effect," and he hoped that the United States might consent to it.[33]

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[32]Wilson to Stimson, September 24, 1931, F.R., I, 455-456; Wilson to Stimson, September 24, 1931, F.R., I, 456.

[33]Wilson to Stimson, September 25, 1931, F.R., I, 456-457.

On September 25, Stimson was less enthusiastic about the drafting committee's action. He saw no holiday in the Minister's wording because governments could extensively scrap and replace naval vessels. Perhaps the provisions would even prevent the United States completing the cruisers which were currently underway. Frankly, Stimson preferred no holiday rather than a draft which the powers might circumvent disingenuously. On expenses for land forces, Stimson would acquiesce even though it was not a practical way to handle the air and naval areas. Instead, the Secretary acknowledged a preference for countries halting the building of a new naval craft after October 1, except for those vessels which were already contracted. In addition, the governments would not exceed their current standing in land and air armaments, which procedure would allow replacement construction in air and land equipment and possibly remove the need for a destroyer reservation.[34]

Wilson was unable to alter the draft in line with Stimson's position. In the draft committee and in private talks, he expressed the Secretary's opinions on the weaknesses of the text, but most delegates viewed the draft as the most likely measure to produce unanimity. In fact, the majority of the group believed that the weak draft proposal was a valuable move for the European governments. Furthermore, European public opinion would view its acceptance as an act of good faith and a

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[34]Stimson to Wilson, September 25, 1931, F.R., I, 457-458. Stimson wrote those comments before Wilson had sent the draft texts to him. The texts permitted the United States to continue its cruiser and destroyer construction already initiated. Wilson to Stimson, September 26, 1931, F.R., I, 458-460.

means of creating a favorable environment for the conference. With the feeling running so strong in that direction, the United States would be isolated or grouped with France and its continental allies in opposition to the majority. Every effort to consider a definite declaration was confronted with such formidable technical arguments that it was hopeless to make further gestures. Consequently, no chance existed of pursuing the formula Stimson indicated on September 25.[35]

For a fleeting moment it seemed that unanimity might be attained. At least that was the appearance until Grandi learned that the French text would allow the Paris government to keep building according to its five-year plan and would prohibit new construction by other governments. With the refusal of the Italian to accept the resolution, Wilson predicted no unanimity except on the Scandinavian resolution.

To Stimson, the latest developments were unsatisfactory.[36] Not only was the failure to adopt the Italian proposal disappointing, but also the Scandinavian approach was inadequate because it might preclude the construction of craft already underway and allow unrestricted naval replacements. Therefore, he instructed Wilson to meet with Grandi and Massigli about the possibility of their writing an acceptable draft. He was to indicate the unacceptability of the Danish resolution and the

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[35]Wilson to Stimson, September 26, 1931, F.R., I, 460-461.

[36]Wilson to Stimson, September 27, 1931, F.R., I, 661; Stimson to Wilson, September 27, 1931, F.R., I, 461-462; Wilson to Stimson, September 27, 1931, F.R., I, 462.

French proposal, if it allowed Paris to continue its five-year program during the truce. The latter provision would undermine the entire holiday idea, and the Secretary would not accept such a sham. Subsequently, Wilson tried unsuccessfully to bring France and Italy together.[37]

On September 29, Wilson spent a full day on the resolution work. When it appeared that opinion was shifting to the Scandinavian proposal, Wilson stated the American objectives and advocated continuing the effort to produce a more tangible result. In the drafting committee the majority favored the interpretation which would allow replacement, and the Minister noted the impossibility of complete prohibition of that right. Wilson pointed out that the interpretation would place his government at a disadvantage compared to Japan and Britain, so Washington would closely examine the point. Later, he had the statement deleted from the subcommittee report because each country would naturally decide the issue for itself. Near midnight of September 28, the Third Committee approved a resolution which basically was the French text. Although the draft was okay, the interpretations were unsatisfactory, so he refrained from any statement of American responsibility.[38]

Thereafter, arms truce developments progressed smoothly. The next day, September 29, the Assembly accepted the Third Committee's

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[37]Stimson to Wilson, September 27, 1931, F.R., I, 463; Wilson to Stimson, September 29, 1931, F.R., I, 463.

[38]Besides, Cecil indicated in the formal and later private discussions that the three countries could negotiate directly or possibly that London might ask Japan to give up replacement privileges during the holiday. Wilson to Stimson, September 29, 1931, F.R., I, 463-464.

resolution and report. So, the Council was directed to request the participants of the Disarmament Conference to indicate by November 1, 1931, if they would abide by the truce for one year. Accordingly, the information was sought, and the United States and fifty-three other governments return affirmative responses along with accompanying interpretations. On November 14, the Council President, having received no formal opposition to the measure, declared it effective as of November 1.[39]

For the remainder of the year, disarmament preparations claimed Wilson's and the State Department's attention. Gibson suggested that his colleague be called home to give an account of the Geneva situation and other recent developments before the arrival of French Premier Pierre Laval in Washington for a state visit.[40] On October 2, Wilson left for Brussels and Paris, and six days later he sailed from England on the George Washington.[41] In the United States, he conferred with State Department officials, and by December 14, he was once again in charge in Berne.[42]

That month's events moved toward the selection of the Disarmament Conference delegation. Since MacDonald had published the names of some

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[39]Drummond to Stimson, November 14, 1931, F.R., I, 470-471; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 107-108.

[40]Gibson to Stimson, October 1, 1931, 123.W693/288.

[41]Wilson to Stimson, October 1, 1931, 123.W693/291; Dawes to Stimson, October 6, 1931, 123.W693/292.

[42]Wilson to Stimson, December 14, 1931, 123.W693/314.

British representatives, the press had importuned President Hoover to reveal the names of his choices. Before the disclosure, Wilson requested that his rank be the equivalent of his foreign colleagues who were usually in Geneva and who were to attend the conference since to have less status than they would be repugnant even though a title would not affect his work.[43]

On December 29, Wilson learned of the appointments. Charles Dawes was made the chairman, but he was replaced by Stimson on January 19, 1932, when the Ambassador became the President of the recently established Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Senator Claude A. Swanson of Virginia, a member of the Senate Naval Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee, Dr. Mary Emma Wooley, the President of Mt. Holyoke College, and Gibson, who handled the chairman's duties in the absence of Stimson, rounded out the list of regular delegates with Wilson as an alternate. So, Hoover appointed an unusual combination of two Democrats, two professional diplomats, and a woman whose party affiliation was unknown to Wilson. Thus, the delegation was constituted for the work of 1932.[44]

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[43]Moffat to Wilson, December 5, 1931, Moffat Papers. When Wilson made the inquiry about rank, he thought that the delegation might be announced before Moffat received the Minister's letter in the Division of Western European Affairs. Wilson to Moffat, December 21, 1931, Moffat Papers.

[44]Stimson to Wilson, December 29, 1931, F.R., I, 534-535; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 268-271; Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 205-206.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GENERAL DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE AND BUREAU MEETINGS OF 1932

General world conditions worked against the prospects of a successful conference with economic depression still burdening all nations in February, 1932. The financial distress was particularly evident in Germany where the Communists and Fascists had secured a notable advance in the latest election. The extreme Right government of French Premier Andre Tardieu was expected not to accommodate the moderate Berlin regime of Chancellor Heinrich Bruening. In addition, Japan and China continued their hostilities after September, 1931. Arthur Henderson, no longer the British Foreign Secretary, was handicapped as chairman by an illness which was eventually fatal. Wilson and other diplomats knew that those factors constituted unfavorable omens, but they could do little to alter the course of events. They could only hope for a miracle to reverse the trend, but none materialized.[1]

To Wilson, the fundamental obstacle which blocked the way to achievement was the French-German dispute over security and armament equality. As a result of the Versailles Treaty, Germany possessed an insufficient force for an effective assault on its equipped neighbor. However, the former's edge in industry and population was definite and increasing, and French officials foresaw that arms equality might mean

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[1]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 204; Ferrell, American Diplomacy, p. 194; Walters, League, II, 501.

Berlin's domination of Paris. Although France enjoyed a great prestige and a number of alliances, it continually pressed friends to guarantee its security in return for arms reduction. Only the London and Washington governments could have fulfilled those requests, but neither their national interests nor their people were involved enough to be willing to do so.[2]

Wilson doubted the readiness of the French to relinquish continental hegemony, especially regarding Germany. At a delegation meeting, Hugh Gibson, who was acting chief delegate, requested Wilson to explain the French demand. Wilson then fully detailed the French argument that security should be guaranteed before any agreement was made on disarmament, and his explanation seemed sympathetic to Paris. Senator Claude Swanson then asked him if he considered it "a righteous claim." Wilson replied that, in fact, he condemned the approach since it might possibly wreck the conference; actually, he dismissed the moral aspect since France definitely had enough strength to insist on its position without resorting to moral emphasis.

When Wilson compiled his autobiographical account of that exchange, he elaborated on the moral approach to international affairs. He observed that the Senator's comments reflected a common attitude of his countrymen who generally evaluated an event as "good," "bad," "righteous," or "unjust." The instant assessment was in terms of American criteria which the censured government might not consider valid

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[2]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 265-266.

within its borders. In his thinking, the application of conscience which was given by God for the judging of one's own personal conduct to others was a most inappropriate and dangerous use of moral judgment.[3]

On February 2, the World Disarmament Conference began what Wilson termed "a colossal effort" about which most delegates were sincere, for the majority of them had some glimmer of the future troubles if they failed and had considerable knowledge of the strong disarmament sentiment in each of their countries. Early in the proceedings, a day was set aside on which peace societies, veterans organizations, religious groups, labor unions, and women's clubs could express their hope for significant progress. Wilson, personally, was profoundly impressed by the presentations of the private American representatives. Despite his knowledge of the impediments before the conference, he thought for a short time that public opinion might bring about success. Diplomatic maneuvers shortly pushed those sentiments into the background, and the delegations conducted endless and fruitless debate.[4]

For about three weeks, the conference consisted of speeches by the delegations. On February 5, Tardieu introduced a plan which would create an international police force and largely disallow the use of powerful and dangerous equipment except by League orders or in self-defense. The move did not solve the German problem, but it made French action appear

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[3]Ibid., pp. 268-270.

[4]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 263-265; Walters, League, II, 502; Ferrell, American Diplomacy, p. 207.

to be a justification for continued restrictions on its neighbor.[5]

The British and American plans, delivered on February 8 and 9, respectively, were very similar. Both wanted to move cautiously on the abolition or reduction of means of attack, a subject which was increasingly known as qualitative disarmament. They also urged the continuation of the Washington and London treaties and the reduction of effective soldiers as low as possible.[6]

To the general relief of most delegates, Bruening of Germany spoke calmly for arms equality through a decrease by other governments. Grandi of Italy bolstered that position by supporting Berlin's claim for equality and the elimination of the most dangerous kinds of weapons. He objected to the French insistence on new security guarantees, a point which Britain and the United States ignored. Because of the cordial tone of those addresses, Wilson felt that a hopeful attitude existed in the conference. In fact, Britain, Russia, Italy, and the United States were fairly close to the German position, if Berlin's specific demands were not too great. Once again, international conditions prevented the quick pursuit of that prospect, however, and on February 24, the general debates ended with no more plenary sessions being held until July 23.[7]

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[5]Walters, League, II, 502-503; Ferrell, American Diplomacy, p. 507; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 110-111.

[6]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 112-114; Address Delivered by Gibson at the General Disarmament Conference, Geneva, February 9, 1932, F.R., I, 25-30.

[7]Walters, League, II, 503, 505; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 114-116, 121; Wilson to Moffat, February 10, 1932, Moffat Papers.

After that stage, the conference assigned the work to groups for analysis. On February 25, the General Commission, which was composed of personnel from all the delegations, set up the Land, Naval, and Air Committees to examine the possible application of qualitative disarmament. The early meetings showed that the parent agency would have to establish guiding principles before much progress could be made. On April 22, the General Commission adopted a resolution favoring qualitative disarmament and one directing the study groups to designate definitely offensive weapons and those which were dangerous to civilians. On April 26, upon receiving those instructions, the commissions, aided by specialists, resumed their assignments which they debated for about six weeks. In the meantime, the General Commission delayed consideration of other agenda items until those reports were available.[8]

Wilson was assigned to the Land Committee which considered the caliber and mobility of arms, the size and utility of tanks, and the value of training in the development of soldiers. No one proposed numbers for specific nations, but the delegates attempted to define offensive and defensive armaments with each person contending that his country's equipment was defensive. Wilson considered appropriate the statement of Salvador de Madariaga of Spain that the designation depended on which end of the weapon a nation was viewing.[9]

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[8]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 131-133.

[9]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 268.

The reports of the three committees were far from satisfactory. Because each contained highly subjective interpretations and no unanimous statements, the agencies merely recorded the opinions and positions of the delegates. Since the accounts indicated no overall agreement on qualitative disarmament, the Bureau, which was also known as the Steering Committee, consisting of the chief delegates from some countries for planning, asked the delegations to talk privately as preparation for a possible consensus in the General Commission. Although most representatives participated in those conversations, many felt that the method offended those delegates from small countries who were not specifically consulted. In particular, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United States opposed the approach because it allegedly impeded the progress.[10]

In mid-April, 1932, Stimson was in Geneva as chairman of the delegation. Actually, he visited the conference building only once, and he did not even participate in the committee's discussions. Most of his work consisted of private talks with personnel of the major European powers, including Prime Minister MacDonald and Chancellor Bruening with whom he even arrived at a possible agreement. However, they could not get the cooperation of Tardieu. When those statesmen returned home, another chance for agreement had passed without accomplishment because of a French-British conflict on security requirements.[11]

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[10]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 135.

[11]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 271-272; Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 208-212.

After Stimson's visit, the conference delegates continued their meetings, but they were accomplishing nothing substantial. They considered technical problems in much the same involved and unprogressive manner as in the Preparatory Commission proceedings years before. To further complicate matters, many points were injected to prevent specific recommendations for arms reduction.

Possibly, the only way of moving forward was the meeting of the chief delegates of the major powers. Usually, only MacDonald and Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, Premier Eduard Herriot and Joseph Paul-Boncour, the French Foreign Minister, and Gibson attended those gatherings. Not much really resulted because France was unwilling to concede anything regarding armaments and Britain refrained from adequate assurances to Paris for assistance against aggression.[12]

A different tack was necessary to get the conference off dead-center, and on June 22, at the first general meeting in six weeks, Gibson submitted the Hoover Plan for that purpose. The United States' proposal urged the abolition of obvious offensive weapons including tanks, bombers, large mobile artillery, and chemical agents. Land forces and battleship numbers and total tonnage were to be reduced by a third, and other warships were to be cut by a fourth. At the same time, no country was to exceed a total of forty submarines or 3,500 tons. If the proposition was adopted, the United States would scrap many items, but the increased economic savings and the enhancement of peace prospects

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[12]Walters, League, II, 508.

would be well worthwhile.[13]

The reaction in Geneva was immediate. Grandi demonstrated his hearty support by adding after his reading of each point in the Hoover Plan, "Italy accepts." To Wilson, the growing enthusiasm was checked by the suave approach of Simon who praised the American proposal and personnel but included so many loopholes that other delegates sensed British opposition to the recommendation. Germany and Russia approved the proposition, but France noted the lack of any statement about security.[14]

Despite the popularity of the Hoover Plan, the conference did not move perceptibly. Eventually, all that the convocation accepted was a resolution on July 23, which summarized the accomplishments of the session to that date and which projected what preparations needed to be undertaken for the fall meetings. While openly dissatisfied with the statement, most nations supported its adoption. Germany constituted the most notable exception by withholding its consent and by declaring that it would not attend in the autumn unless the conference recognized the principle of equality of rights. Thus, the Assembly was primarily a failure to this point, and its future was clouded by Berlin's remaining away, awaiting proper acknowledgement of its claims.[15]

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[13]Stimson to Gibson, June 21, 1932, F.R., I, 211-214; Gibson to Stimson, June 22, 1932, F.R., I, 220-221.

[14]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 273; Walters, League, II, 507-508; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 139-140. Wilson's account is in contrast to the Gibson evaluation that Simon was friendly to the plan and that he would support it. Gibson thought that the press would list the Englishman as opposed because the speech was long and cautiously worded. Memorandum of a Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Gibson and Davis and Hoover and Stimson, June 22, 1932, F.R., I, 215-216.

[15]Walters, League, II, 511-512; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 140-142.

In the summer, Wilson looked forward to a vacation. Since he believed that the conference would continue through most of June, he resolved to demand two months away from the pressure of his duties; he had not had that much time off during his five years in Switzerland. He was adamant as he confided to Moffat, "I will not give up my leave."[16]

The leave did not materialize as he anticipated. He was planning a three weeks' vacation in August with another week in September, and on August 8, he indicated that he was leaving Berne. However, a few days later the relaxation with Hugh Robert, Jr. in Corsica was interrupted by a State Department telegram that mission chiefs were not eligible for furlough because of salary reductions and economic moves during the depression. Disturbed by the news which "shattered the only two weeks of rest I had," he cut short his stay and returned to his post because the loss of a month's income would have been too great for his budget. Actually, he wanted to "wring someone's neck" for the failure to inform him fully when he first submitted his request for leave.[17]

The tight money situation in the United States also had a noticeable effect on preparations for the Bureau meeting. The allotment for

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[16]Wilson to Moffat, March 15, 1932, Moffat Papers.

[17]Gibson to Stimson, July 24, 1932, 123.W693/324; Wilson to Stimson, August 8, 1932, 123.W693/326; Moffat to Wilson, September 27, 1932, Moffat Papers; Wilson to Moffat, September 15, 1932, Moffat Papers. Thus, by August 26, Wilson was once again in charge in Berne. Wilson to Stimson, August 26, 1932, 123.W693/328. Wilson also planned to be in England for a week beginning September 4. Wilson to Stimson, August 31, 1932, 123.W693/329.

offices would not permit the renting of hotel rooms together, so Wilson intended to find space elsewhere, although the separation was a definite handicap. Despite the monetary squeeze, the Washington officials established an allocation for working accommodations which were acceptable to the Minister.[18]

The penurious policies of the American government also affected the personnel assignments for the meeting. According to Allen W. Dulles, the Legal Adviser of the disarmament delegation, the financial crisis continued so acute that probably the conference personnel would be without military and naval consultants. In response to that news, the Minister specifically requested that Colonel George Strong, who had previously worked on disarmament in Geneva, be allowed to come. Two weeks later, the Army officer, whose knowledge was especially vital for the complicated effectives problem, was assigned to advise the Minister.[19]

Before the Bureau meeting convened, Wilson found himself ignorant of some naval details. On September 13, he and Thanassis Aghnides, the Chief of the League's Disarmament Section, went over a general account that the latter had compiled about work on the resolution of July 23. Wilson considered himself amply informed about all the items except on the large naval power talks. Thus, he needed the Secretary's

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[18]Moffat to Wilson, August 18, 1932, Moffat Papers; Wilson to Stimson, September 2, 1932, 500.A15A4Personnel/351; Wilson to Moffat, September 15, 1932, Moffat Papers.

[19]Wilson to Moffat, August 27, 1932, Moffat Papers; Stimson to American Legation, Berne, September 10, 1932, 500.A15A4Personnel/763.

views on the appropriate answer to Henderson's anticipated query regarding naval progress. Stimson replied that the Anglo-American naval talks were currently suspended and that the two nations had not determined a specific date to resume them. The State Department presumed that the other concerned governments had been preparing individually in order that multilateral discussions could be arranged. Stimson proposed that the Minister consult Simon about the drafting of an identical statement for submission to the conference chairman. The Englishman had nothing to report other than a hope for conversations to begin soon, so Wilson still lacked adequate naval information.[20]

On September 21, the Bureau convened and directed its attention to procedural matters. Henderson read his correspondence with the German Foreign Minister about Germany's absence and recommended the postponement of discussion to allow Berlin a chance to respond. Then he distributed questions in four categories which were based on the July 23rd resolution. When the group chose to examine the program itself to ascertain whether it would handle the questions or give them to committees, Wilson proposed that work could proceed on several items in committees. On effectives, he proposed the inclusion of political officials in the body which would be permitted to draft "its own mandate" for the Bureau to approve. The majority reacted favorably to his remarks, but they delayed the decision until the next day.[21]

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[20]Wilson to Stimson, September 14, 1932, F.R., I, 328; Wilson to Stimson, September 22, 1932, F.R., I, 335.

[21]Wilson to Stimson, September 21, 1932, F.R., I, 332-333.

As planned, the Bureau resumed its discussion. It selected individual rapporteurs to learn delegation positions and to inform it of a basis for conversations "arranged in two instances." It requested a preliminary report from the Chemical and Bacteriological Committee before general debate on the subject, and the Bureau opted for groups on the production and trade in arms and also on effectives. Concerning the last point, the Steering Committee accepted the American Minister's suggestion. It then adjourned until the following week because some members had to attend the League Council on September 23.[22]

On September 24, Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia, a rapporteur, conversed confidentially about future action. According to him, on September 26, Henderson intended to stress the hesitance to take up the important points of the July 23 resolution. Consequently, he would urge the assemblying of the General Commission about November 10, possibly to get the Bureau to work fast and to assemble a group which undoubtedly could consider major political issues.

Wilson viewed such procedure as an attempt to evade responsibility. He thought that method would delay the work by encouraging the Steering Committee to return the difficulties to the General Commission. He interpreted the July statement as obligating the Bureau to draw up various provisions and to make arrangements for arms reduction and for restricting the means of attack. Pending a definite attempt to resolve those problems, it could report no accomplishment, so he disapproved of

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[22]Wilson to Stimson, September 22, 1932, F.R., I, 334-335.

establishing a convocation date then for the larger body. He wanted the Bureau to learn whether it could achieve anything or whether it had to admit failure. To him, it would have to test its instructions first, and he would work for that goal in preparation for setting a time. Besides, he felt that the obligation to work on certain problems would still be binding even if a General Commission session was scheduled.[23]

Stimson had some words of caution for the Minister. Wilson should keep in mind that procedural disagreement among Britain, France, and the United States would be distorted much beyond the scope of the issue itself. Even though Washington might differ on policy matters with London and Paris, the Secretary desired to make it seem that the three countries were cooperating. That appearance might be accomplished through an informal understanding before the next Bureau session. Accordingly, he instructed the American delegate to work toward an understanding with Simon and Paul-Boncour since the American approach was a good one which should be promoted. If the French and British representatives failed to concur with him, then he could independently take his stand.[24]

On September 26, as expected, Henderson brought up the matter of a date. First, Madariaga of Spain questioned the practicality of that move, and then, Wilson spoke for the Bureau's attempt to fulfill its

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[23]Wilson, Diplomat, p. 267; Wilson to Stimson, September 24, 1932, F.R., I, 335-336.

[24]Stimson to Wilson, September 25, 1932, F.R., I, 337.

assignment instead of postponing decision for a more general body. Paul-Boncour and Simon, with whom Wilson had previously agreed on the procedure, supported those arguments. The group decided to consider the problem again about October 10, when it might assess the degree of actual achievement.[25]

On October 9, Wilson conversed with Benes about the Czech's prospective plan. He wanted Henderson to set the Bureau meeting for about October 19, to allow time for the submission of the reports from the rapporteurs and committees. Then the conference President might urge that Italian, French, British, and American personnel informally discuss the major political matters in the hope of concluding some agreement. If possible, the talks might precede the Manchurian debate in November. Personally, Wilson approved the procedural advantages because his government was more willing to consider disarmament matters than many other topics. He stressed the need for consulting Berlin lest that government think that the four countries were drafting an ultimatum to it. He urged that he be kept informed of developments in order to secure Stimson's opinions if a proposal was suddenly put forward. Benes promised to do so since the plan was tentative and would have to be discussed with Herriot before any suggestion could be made to Henderson.

The Minister did not disclose other thoughts to the rapporteur because he had not contacted the Secretary of State about them. Benes' approach toward the German's insistence on equality was a natural

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[25]Wilson to Stimson, September 26, 1932, F.R., I, 338.

outgrowth of events after the British suggestion of a five-power convocation at London. Later developments indicated French reluctance to conduct the talks outside of Geneva and the determination of the French and some small governments to include the latter states. According to the Benes plan, Henderson would possibly be informed of progress, and he could brief the diminutive countries. In addition, Wilson saw the need of telling Berlin of the plan if it materialized and of inquiring whether its authorities would participate in the informal session as a method of settling problems. By that procedure Germany would participate in a politically acceptable way.[26]

At a secret Bureau meeting on October 13, Wilson was brought up to date on Bureau progress. In a summary of his efforts to have French-German discussion, the chairman remarked that Baron Konstantin von Neurath, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, had declined to come to Geneva. Instead, his acceptance of the invitation to London precluded that trip. Henderson also relayed Herriot's prediction that a French disarmament plan would be submitted near the end of the month.

Regarding future Bureau meetings, Henderson reported the opinion of Drummond and the conference officials that the President should be authorized to set the next session for November 3. The new schedule would permit the committees more working time and allow an opportunity to transmit the French proposal. The officials wanted the General Commission to convene the week of November 21, which arrangement would allow

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[26]Wilson to Stimson, October 9, 1932, F.R., I, 341-342.

three weeks for the General Commission to consider Bureau reports, the French plan, and possibly German-French difficulties. Probably, the body would not meet in January, 1933, since the World Economic Conference was to convene then.[27]

During the procedural discussions, the Committee for the Regulation of Trade in and Manufacture of Arms was functioning. On October 6, it conducted the first general discussion during which Leon Jouhaux of France urged the complete elimination of private manufacture of war material. If that could not be accomplished, he proposed rigid supervision and limitation, and Madariaga recommended the same control method for government and private production. His approach included those two areas, stored surpluses, and increased traffic regulation by placing copies of licenses for arms shipments with a Geneva office. Wilson favored consideration of the license proposal which might provide a solution, and he outlined his government's stand on constitutional complications and for complete publicity on private and state construction.[28]

Within a short time, he needed some instructions on the posture to take. The general discussions of arms regulation were over, and no significant movement had been made toward removing differences of opinion by the first reading of the draft agreement of 1929 on manufacture. He expected the committee to start its detailed scrutiny of that text on October 17, and he anticipated a definite effort to abolish private

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[27]Wilson to Stimson, October 13, 1932, F.R., I, 342-343.

[28]Wilson to Stimson, October 6, 1932, F.R., I, 340.

production. If the committee failed to adopt the abolition of the private and government output, then it probably would try for a regulatory system including arms traffic, stock inventory, and state and private building. Consequently, the delegate needed to know the Department's attitude on Madariaga's suggestion and on the responsibility which the United States would accept for a license program. Besides, excepting expediency, would the elimination of private arms activities be unconstitutional?[29]

On October 17, Stimson focused on the last question. He frankly did not see that the government could exclude the aspect of utility from the question of abolishing private arms construction because that sector constituted a vital part of national defense. Certainly, the United States was interested in precluding the production of forbidden weapons which was a logical corollary of President Hoover's recommendations. Tne State Department, having completed a thorough study recently, was now willing to alter its old position that it was unconstitutional for the national government to control private producers. Although no one could categorically say that such action was valid, Washington was willing to covenant for manufacturing restrictions on all prohibited arms. At this point Stimson requested the Minister's view as to whether to remain quiet about legal doubts. He also wondered whether to state that, if Congress or the federal courts ruled void a Department negotiation, the decision

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[29]Wilson to Stimson, October 8, 1932, F.R., I, 340-341; Wilson to Stimson, October 14, 1932, F.R., I, 343-344.

would not be "regarded as a breach of our international undertakings."

Furthermore, the responsibility for licensing of arms imports and exports was within the treaty making power and Congressional authority to regulate commerce. Stimson actually questioned the value of the conference making new regulations before the 1925 convention was approved. Probably, a resolution favoring ratification or the inclusion of a statement in the new disarmament agreement would accomplish the same purpose. Accordingly, Wilson might assure other delegations that his government would try hard to obtain the Senate's consent to the 1925 treaty in its next session.

Regarding Madariaga's license proposal, the same plan was included in a 1920 agreement, and the provisions of the 1925 convention superseded the earlier ones. So, the Spanish machinery was unnecessary if ratification could be obtained, but Stimson knew of no overwhelming obstacle to placing copies in a central office. Otherwise, the Spaniard's other recommendations appeared to be impractical.[30]

Wilson was dissatisfied with the Secretary's answer to the constitutional matter. The modified State Department position certainly simplified Wilson's current difficulties, but he brought up the subject again to secure a clarification which was most vital to his future activities. If the problem concerned only the exclusion of manufacturing

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[30]Stimson to Wilson, October 17, 1932, F.R., I, 344-346; by October 21, the Committee on the Manufacture of Arms had adjourned until after the Bureau meeting of November 3. Wilson to Stimson, October 21, 1932, F.R., I, 347.

specific arms categories, Wilson would comply with the instructions of October 17. He pointed specifically to the American reservation concerning supervision and publicity in the 1929 draft agreement. If the United States acknowledged the federal government's right to forbid specific building, then it had to grant the right to oversee that production. He projected the possibility of supervision proceeding to economic areas and perhaps eventually encroaching on state sovereignty. Not surprisingly, he was reluctant to accept the switch in constitutional interpretation without additional investigation, and to gain an elaboration, he urged the solicitation of the Attorney General's ruling. He counseled that American officials early explain the reason for modifying the opinion which the United States had followed for seven years. In his thinking, the officials should "not run any risk of being subsequently put in a position where the action of the courts might cause other nations to feel that we have violated our treaty obligations."[31]

According to Moffat, that communication arrived "like a bombshell." The Department's Legal Adviser and his colleagues had previously worked out a closely reasoned conclusion which caused Washington personnel immediately to reject contacting the Attorney General. Concerning policy, little inclination existed in the State Department to concur with the Minister whom Moffat interpreted as wanting to indicate that the United States could not agree, instead of would not. Of course, it was

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[31]Wilson to Stimson, October 21, 1932, F.R., I, 346-348.

a question of tactics, and the aim in Washington was to arrive at an agreement which would fulfill the Hoover Plan rather than to make it a parody. Naturally, the American public was the final authority, and, if it supported the new action, a legalistic argument could not change the policy.[32]

As Moffat predicted, the State Department retained its stand. It felt that the judiciary would refrain from nullifying a stipulation essential to a disarmament agreement. Besides, Washington would not endanger the possibility of successful arms limitation negotiations by claiming that a provision was contrary to the constitution. It relied on the precedent that no treaty approved by the Senate had been struck down by the courts. Regarding rejection of unacceptable draft articles, Stimson preferred not to employ the constitutional argument if possible since the government could more easily reject a provision on the grounds of expediency. Furthermore, it appeared practical to submit the American concurrence with the prohibition of weapons manufacture as a corollary of Hoover's plan to abolish aggressive arms without relating it to supervision of weapons construction. If a country agreed to exclusion, it was not obligated to consent to international supervision or control over building.

Possibly the convention might not abolish specific kinds of armaments although the contrary had been the basis for the exchange of correspondence. It appeared that the French were becoming less concerned about prohibition and more interested in a graduated decrease in

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[32]Moffat to Wilson, October 22, 1932, Moffat Papers.

material. If that approach was adopted, then the previous instructions were less immediately relevant. Whatever developed, the State Department hoped that he could avoid arms talks until definite progress was evident.[33]

On November 1, in anticipation that the Bureau's first debate would be arms control on November 3, Wilson projected a course of action. He thought that he should speak formally on the topic early and call attention to more important items. With that in mind, he intended to show that the draft convention articles on supervision and control provided for adequate regulation. Accordingly, the United States believed that the effectiveness of the system which the Permanent Disarmament Commission would use depended largely on the implementation of considerable reduction as envisioned by the July 23 resolution. Pending that achievement, Washington would delay its decision on the machinery subject to the final treaty provisions. Despite the preference for handling the more important problem first, the delegation would bow to the Bureau's desire to debate ratification of controls. During that time Wilson desired the governments to remember that American consent to the enlargement of the Permanent Disarmament Commission rested with the treaty's contents on "substantial reduction."[34]

The last sentence gave rise to a further exchange with Stimson. He feared that Wilson was too readily acceding on supervision and control

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[33]Stimson to Wilson, November 1, 1932, F.R., I, 351-353.

[34]Wilson to Stimson, November 1, 1932, F.R., I, 351.

matters without first utilizing the concession for diplomatic trading. Consequently, he preferred that the Minister adopt a waiting attitude in order to maintain a flexibility of response until the treaty was concluded.[35]

Wilson then responded that he was really stressing strategy without an alteration of the Secretary's position. The delegate considered it tactically important to accept the Bureau's preference to discuss control rather than for him to insist fruitlessly on the establishment of figures. Besides, American obstinancy on numbers might endanger the conference's future. The selection of the other approach would allow continued debate and retain the reservation of a deferred decision for repeated use. Wilson was especially adamant for his view because he saw the first signs of results and because the other states would not take the necessary steps without some assurance of a tentative control settlement. The State Department finally acquiesced in his suggestion.[36]

Despite previous discussion of constitutional problems, Wilson still had another question on the subject. He wondered whether the argument was sound that the United States government could not constitutionally oversee or control the internal production of arms, munitions, and war equipment. If that position was incorrect, he would correspond

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[35]Stimson to Wilson, November 1, 1932, F.R., I, 353-354.

[36]Wilson to Stimson, November 2, 1932, F.R., I, 354-355; Carr to Wilson, November 2, 1932, F.R., I, 355.

with Stimson on moves to rectify the stand. The delegation had not made any commitment concerning international control, so the current inquiry concerned only domestic supervision.[37]

Wilbur J. Carr, the Acting Secretary of State, handled the reply. He drafted the answer in terms similar to the State Department's attitude on the constitutional facets involved in federal authority to forbid the manufacture of prohibited weapons. So, in future debate, the Minister should rely exclusively on policy arguments and avoid constitutional points. Regarding whether to support provisions for federal action, the Department preferred to receive the opinions of committee members rather than to state a definite opinion then.[38]

Wilson was not entirely satisfied, however. He expected the committee report merely to reproduce the debates. Consequently, if the summary omitted the American reservation, the effect "would be like Hamlet without the ghost." Accordingly, he could not remove the statement without some comment. Otherwise, he expected some embarrassment in criticizing unacceptable provisions about which the United States had expressed no opinion before because of the reservation. Moreover, he recommended careful attention to the wording of the modification instead of submitting a superficial report in two days. He counseled that Washington allow the exemption to remain unchanged until the Bureau took

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[37]Wilson to Stimson, November 3, 1932, F.R., I, 358-359.

[38]Carr to Wilson, November 5, 1932, F.R., I, 363-364.

up the discussion. Then he could remove the exception with an accompanying explanation.[39]

Still the State Department desired quiet handling of the withdrawal. Little publicity was to be given it lest the problem cause considerable controversy in the United States. Stimson suggested that the alteration be made shortly with a minimum of emphasis. Although he authorized the Minister to decide on the method, he advised the deletion by a short informal expression; Wilson might possibly speak off the record. Wilson dutifully accepted the Secretary's advice and went on with his work.[40]

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[39]Wilson to Stimson, November 7, 1932, F.R., I, 364-365.

[40]Stimson to Wilson, November 10, 1932, F.R., I, 370-371; Wilson to Stimson, November 11, 1932, F.R., I, 371.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISARMAMENT AND THE EFFORTS TO CONCILIATE GERMANY

Disarmament progress depended, of course, to a considerable extent on the German attitude and the response of its neighbors' claims. At times, the French-German dispute occupied so prominent a part that it was difficult, if not impossible, to handle the armaments problems effectively without attention to the difficulties of those two nations. Between mid-September and December, 1932, Wilson took an active interest in the attempt to conciliate Germany and to reconcile German and French differences.

Even before the Bureau meeting in September, diplomats were concerned about the German statement of July that it would not return to the disarmament meetings. Then on September 12, the German consul at Geneva told Thanassis Aghnides, the Chief of the League Disarmament Section, that Berlin would not have a delegate present because it was dissatisfied about the failure to grant equality of rights. Wilson speculated on the possible procedure in the event of continued German boycott of the meetings: he thought that the meetings should be held as planned; the Bureau might express its regret about German non-participation and indicate a hope for a satisfactory settlement; the delegates might show their concern for disarmament by trying to proceed anyway, hoping that the maneuver would rally public opinion which might force the nation to resume armament talks. In any event, Wilson was not, at that time, certain that the Berlin attitude was fully official, and the authorities

might hesitate to finalize it.[1]

On September 20, Stimson informed Wilson of his general attitude toward the German demand for equality. If Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, desired to know his opinion concerning a British note on a démarche, Wilson was to say that the Secretary thought it an able document on the legal aspects of several treaties relating to disarmament work. Really, Washington had no position on the German argument because Europe was supposed to handle all questions pertaining to the Versailles Treaty although part 5 was included by reference in the American Treaty with Germany. Accordingly, desiring that his government take no sides in the matter, he refrained from public comment on the problem, and in diplomatic circles he indicated concern about a general disarmament reduction. Similarly, he had shown his concern that German demands and its leaving the conference might impede the accomplishment of downward revision.[2]

Three days afterwards, Wilson talked with Simon about the situation during tea. Unsure of what the future would produce, the Englishman presented four approaches to the issue of equal rights. First, the inclusion of German responsibilities in the same convention as the other governments should be conceded to Berlin. Second, he favored the establishment of those obligations for the same duration as the other nations

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[1]Wilson to Stimson, September 14, 1932, F.R., I, 327-328.

[2]Stimson to Wilson, September 20, 1932, F.R., I, 439.

although France objected, however, to the provision. Third, the granting of the right to the same kinds of armaments as the others created notable difficulties for France, Britain, and the United States. He wondered if the last country was prepared to approve a proposal which would allow Germany to construct a 35,000-ton battleship. Although he was unsure whether to concede this point, he knew that government would not return to the talks or sign a treaty without it. Fourth, he definitely rejected permitting Berlin the right to decide on the quantity of armaments and the number of men for negotiations.[3]

Both diplomats wondered about the German intentions. Simon believed that the Berlin government was trying to convince its people that part 5 placed no legal or moral responsibility on it. Further, he was persuaded that the country was preparing in that manner to renounce those obligations. Actually, Wilson had wondered since July, when its delegate objected to the resolution summarizing the first phase of the General Disarmament Conference, whether it was maneuvering toward denouncing the Versailles military clauses. If that was true, the British Secretary did not envision the United States, Britain, or France combatting the move. Although the last nation would not act physically against such a repudiation, Paris would use every opportunity to criticize its neighbor so much as to force Germany's withdrawal from the League.[4]

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[3]Wilson to Stimson, September 23, 1932, F.R., I, 444-445; Wilson to Stimson, September 26, 1932, F.R., I, 446-447.

[4]Wilson to Stimson, September 23, 1932, F.R., I, 444-445.

Naturally, Stimson commented to Wilson on Simon's four approaches to the German equality demands. Actually, he preferred to consider the matter in terms of the willingness of other governments to alter or eliminate part 5 of the Versailles Treaty and to fulfill their own legal and moral obligation to reduce armaments. He foresaw acceptance of point one about responsibilities, but such agreement would not decide whether the Versailles Treaty was superseded or suspended. To Stimson, point two constituted mainly a European concern about which they might merely agree and let the future develop on its own. On point three, he could not grant Germany the construction of a large battleship which might upset the naval balance. Furthermore, the United States would also seriously oppose the right to build submarines. In spite of grave obstacles to formulating a fair method for all governments without making the naval situation more complex, he was interested in any practical avenue of approach. He rejected point four outright as contrary to the American concept of reducing armaments. Wilson could convey those thoughts to the British official as personal opinions instead of a formal and final government attitude.[5]

While Stimson and Wilson were exchanging despatches, Simon was establishing personal contact with a German representative on September 23. At his own request, the Britisher called on Baron Konstantin von Neurath, the German Foreign Minister, not knowing whether the latter was seeking a settlement or merely hoping for one. Plainly, the German

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[5]Stimson to Wilson, September 30, 1932, F.R., I, 444-450.

official adopted a waiting attitude, and he was obviously disturbed by the "schoolmaster tone" of a previous British diplomatic note. Yet, he was elated that conversations had begun and the paper exchange had stopped. Simon displayed a willingness to include the German military provisions in the general disarmament treaty. Also, he favored an agreement of five years after which those restrictions would lapse. The German government did not intend to request equality in numbers.[6]

Early in October, Simon brought forward an arrangement for Germany's return to the conference. At a dinner, he related the crucial nature of world problems generally and the German-French dispute particularly to Frederic M. Sackett, the American Ambassador to Germany, and to Norman Davis. The controversy, having become especially critical within the past week, needed to be resolved immediately, and only the good offices of Britain and the United States offered the chance of settlement. If they did not cooperate, the opportunity of having successful Disarmament and Economic Conferences would vanish, so it was imperative to arrange a London meeting with the two disputants present. Realizing the futility of such a meeting without American participation, Simon inquired about an appropriate means for obtaining that involvement. Davis and Sackett preferred that the meeting appear to be an outgrowth of Stimson's talks in April and July, and to be related to

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[6]Wilson to Stimson, September 26, 1932, F.R., I, 447. In the same despatch, Wilson related Baron Pompoe Aloisi of Italy reported little achieved from contact with Neurath. F.R., I, 448. Moffat wrote that "your reports on conversations with Simon, Neurath emissary, etc., have been tremendously helpful." Moffat to Wilson, September 27, 1932, Moffat Papers.

the general disarmament work.

In reporting the conversation to the Secretary of State, Davis expanded on reasons for American cooperation in which Sackett and Wilson both concurred. Informal talks provided the most likely means of obtaining German collaboration and disarmament progress, and logically, the United States had a vital interest in the deliberations. In July, Germany had publicly demonstrated its satisfaction over the Hoover proposals which seemed to be the only general disarmament proposition that France might accept in order to get Germany back to the conference. Consequently, the President's measure could not be accomplished without a settlement of Berlin's arms demands. Also, since German determination to rearm might upset the naval limitation arrangement, reasonable grounds existed for Americans participating in the talks about German claims.[7]

In a personal letter of October 4 to Moffat, who was the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs, Wilson evaluated America's relationship to disarmament affairs. The progress, he said, was as imperceptible as the building up of coral islands. The other delegations were giving only a superficial support of Hoover's plan on effectives, and the German-French relations certainly constituted an overriding negative influence on the work. Personally, he believed that his country possessed an obligation to help resolve the differences of those

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[7]Davis to Stimson, October 3, 1932, F.R., I, 450-451; Davis to Stimson, October 3, 1932, F.R., I, 452.

two governments. As such, the United States would soon discover the inadequacy of its contention that the problem solely involved European governments. Proof of its interest in the crisis would be apparent if the renunciation of part 5 of the Versailles Treaty disrupted the naval balance. Aside from that fact, the controversy so vitally affected the overall disarmament situation that Washington should utilize its influence to bring about a settlement. He would restrict the action to just good offices, and he certainly would not favor an American effort to impose a settlement on anyone.[8]

The reaction to the British suggestion of holding talks in London was mixed. Stimson, preferring the conversations to be near Geneva, delayed his decision for a time, before finally authorizing Davis's full participation in any preliminary meetings to promote disarmament. Germany did not want to go to London without advanced acceptance of its claims which France surely could not give prior to the convocation. The German government did not think any basis existed for successful deliberations, and it questioned the wisdom of accepting the invitation without some previous assurance that its arms equality claims would be considered.[9]

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[8]Wilson to Moffat, October 4, 1932, Moffat Papers. Moffat replied, "I personally entirely concur in every word you said . . . but the dictates of political considerations have more and more been tending to prevent affirmative action on anything of a controversial nature." Moffat to Wilson, October 22, 1932, Moffat Papers.

[9]Stimson to Davis, October 3, 1932, F.R., I, 453-454; Davis to Stimson, October 6, 1932, F.R., I, 456; Andrew W. Mellon to Stimson, October 5, 1932, F.R., I, 455-456.

Initially, France was not enthusiastic, and it would be less favorable if Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Poland did not attend. Evidently, the French favored Geneva for the continuing disarmament conversations. Premier Eduard Herriot believed that the time was inopportune because the prospective elections in Germany and the United States would make those governments less free to negotiate and to attend, respectively. In addition, he thought the chances of failure were high, but he would discuss the matter with his Cabinet in view of the British insistence. Shortly thereafter, he indicated that his government would participate even though he really wanted Geneva as the place rather than London.[10]

When powers could not arrange a meeting for the British capital, they again pressed for conversations in Geneva. As before, Berlin objected to that location for the same reasons that it had presented concerning London, and it maintained that position until November. In that month, Germany's favorable reaction to the French disarmament plan helped to open the way for a German representative in Switzerland. According to Drummond, Berlin genuinely wanted an early understanding with Paris, and Neurath was prepared to be in the Swiss city "on any justifiable pretext" for the initiation of the conversations. Anyway, he would attend the League session of November 21.[11]

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[10]Davis to Stimson, October 4, 1932, F.R., I, 454; Davis to Stimson, October 6, 1932, F.R., I, 456; Davis to Stimson, October 6, 1932, F.R., I, 457.

[11]Davis to Stimson, October 14, 1932, F.R., I, 462; Gordon to Stimson, October 15, 1932, F.R., I, 464; Stimson to Davis, October 20, 1932, F.R., I, 468; Davis to Stimson, November 1, 1932, F.R., I, 472-473; Davis to Stimson, November 22, 1932, F.R., I, 473.

On November 4, Paul-Boncour formally stated the French plan at a special Bureau meeting. Essentially, the proposition's elasticity offered the possibility of conciliating Germany and of complementing Hoover's proposals. While the American President had concentrated on reducing offensive strength through material restrictions, the French approach focused on limiting effectives. The scheme viewed an armament solution as involving two concentric circles which were composed of all nations and European countries, respectively. They should work for including in international law the concept that no country could long enjoy the benefits of belligerency or neutrality and that government authorities should refuse to recognize any acquisitions by means contrary to the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The continental powers whose geographical location possibly subjected them to more dangers should make a mutual assistance agreement which would limit the number of professional troops there and allow the League to utilize them. The forces were designed to resist, not to halt, aggression by assisting the League quickly. The French proposition would decrease European armies in line with the American proposals by shortening the training time, and on qualitative disarmament the plan would abolish chemical and bacteriological warfare and aerial bombing. The differentiation of defensive and aggressive arms which was at the heart of the Hoover approach was utilized concerning heavy war material. Immobile armaments would be permitted on a nation's coasts and borders, and other large weapons would be for League use but forbidden to national forces.[12]

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[12]Wilson to Stimson, November 4, 1932, F.R., I, 360-361.

On November 16, Davis, Wilson, and other delegation members submitted an analysis of the French proposition. Regarding Europe, they assumed that peace on the continent was the best that the general disarmament negotiations could produce. Consequently, it was essential to formulate a design which the Europeans could and would accept, and they considered the avenue of accomplishment secondary. They presumed that the United States would support any scheme which was practical of achievement and not repugnant in itself, but the diplomats foresaw considerable opposition to the adoption of such a plan. Even so, if only the portion concerning the placing of armed forces at the disposal of the League was accepted, that move would be worthwhile although contrary to the American thesis on the organization of peace.

Unfortunately, the French plan stressed complex ideas instead of disarmament. The Americans wanted to express their keen disappointment that the French officials had talked ambiguously about armament regulation, but had clearly indicated their own desires. Nevertheless, the British government would find the plan more distasteful, and the success or failure of the plan would depend on London's attitude. Despite the pessimistic assessment of the general recommendation, Davis and Wilson hoped a solution could be found in its constructive provisions and by inducing their French colleagues to eliminate the impractical features. The American delegates considered making recommendations to Stimson on procedure, but they withheld them pending Simon's speech and private talks.[13]

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[13]Davis and Wilson to Stimson, November 16, 1932, F.R., I, 388-390; Wilson to Stimson, November 16, 1932, F.R., I, 393.

On November 17, Simon spoke to the Bureau meeting. He did not comment on the French proposal then, because he had no exact approach at the time. Instead, he was more concerned about a brief summary to be thoroughly considered before the adoption of a particular proposition. Accordingly, it was necessary to handle the German problem of equality of rights, so the group needed to consider specific facets and ways of removing those impediments.[14]

By November 21, Davis and Wilson despatched their assessment of the disarmament situation. Certainly, eight months of conference work had been devoid of tangible accomplishments, but a more sincere desire to deal with the problem existed now than in February. It would take years to achieve the objectives of the British and French plans, if, indeed, the Paris project could be implemented. Furthermore, they considered some aspects of the French approach basically so impractical that their failure would smash the peace machinery.

Possibly, the continental powers might undertake a concerted effort to maintain peace, and that was their business. It was an entirely different matter when they requested the United States to obligate itself for their security. Anyway, it was faulty French reasoning to expect the territorial and political conditions to remain unchanged. Quick action in which Germany willingly cooperated was necessary to prevent a European crisis from possible renunciation of part 5 of the Versailles Treaty. Clearly, disarmament progress was too slow for the conference objectives to be realized soon.

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[14]Wilson to Stimson, November 17, 1932, F.R., I, 395.

So, Davis and Wilson put forward an approach. They would endeavor to gain approval of a short term convention, to establish the Permanent Disarmament Commission, and to delegate to that agency the responsibility for administering the agreement. Surely, it would be difficult to accomplish that and to conciliate Germany at the same time. Possibly, the nations might persuade Berlin to accept a circumscribed arrangement if it believed that they would undertake a genuine attempt to more nearly fulfill its demands prior to approval of a general convention. Perhaps Germany might be willing to make some concession on disarmament since it had received some financial relief by the practical elimination of reparations.

The two disarmament delegates were quite cognizant of the difficulties, but they considered their approach potentially productive. The public commission and conference discussions had magnified the impediments and inhibited the governments from indicating the full extent to which they would negotiate. Publicity had restricted the possibility of concessions partially because each problem was considered as a separate entity rather than a part of the whole. That awkward situation strengthened their belief that private talks by a select number of powers focusing on limited and immediate goals constituted the only means of formulating a preliminary agreement. Otherwise, endless detailed debates or a failure of the conference appeared to be the alternative with the second being more probable. The former option doubtless would produce a query about American readiness to remain as a participant.

Some means was necessary to determine the feasibility of the Davis-Wilson proposal. They proposed an exploratory meeting among the powers which might meet in Geneva soon. Of course, the gathering was contingent on whether French political difficulties would permit its representatives to attend and whether the new Berlin government would cooperate. Wilson expected Neurath, who was to be in Geneva on November 21, to consent because he would not be pledging himself to conference attendance and because the conversations would receive little publicity. In their opinion, the United States did not have to initiate the preliminary meeting or propose a short term convention because a similar approach would likely result if the private talks began properly.[15]

Davis and Wilson also drafted the contents of a proposed agreement. They formulated the provisions on the basis of considerable optimism, the continuation of good will and the desire for success which had marked the negotiations for two months, and the candor and celerity which were expected in the private sessions. Then, they listed eight points concerning effectives, artillery, tanks, air armaments, chemical warfare, naval weapons, the manufacture of and trade in arms, and the establishment of the Permanent Disarmament Commission. Those provisions represented items which they thought might possibly be adopted within a short time. Even before ratification, the nations should agree on the creation of the Permanent Disarmament Commission which would

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[15]Wilson to Stimson, November 21, 1932, F.R., I, 393-401.

compose a general disarmament treaty by utilizing the draft and any broad plans such as the French, British, and American. Until ratification, the commission would be occupied strictly with treaty preparations.

In addition, the two delegates included their thoughts on the effect of their convention which they expected to be operative for three to five years. Furthermore, it hopefully would keep the disarmament situation from deteriorating and symbolize a desire to conclude a more meaningful disarmament treaty. Presumably, many states would more readily accept the limited time feature especially with the austere world economic conditions. In turn, those circumstances would foster the writing of a general treaty since few governments would be bold enough to announce an arms increase during the brief life of the document. Perhaps the major European states, Japan, and the United States could bring certain provisions into effect without complete approval unless specific items required universal consent.[16]

Davis and Wilson also forwarded their suggestions regarding Germany. Believing that Berlin should be induced to cooperate at Geneva, they presented three main causes of action. First, the limited convention might relax the enlistment restrictions on the German army and make other concessions about part 5 by negotiations. Second, Germany would be promised that the treaty limitations would be applied equally to itself and the other governments. Also, part 5 of the Versailles Treaty would be discontinued when the full disarmament agreement took

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[16]Wilson to Stimson, November 21, 1932, F.R., I, 401-403.

effect. Third, on the counsel of Sackett, Davis and Wilson advised the granting of equal status to Germany within the Washington and London Naval Treaties.[17]

Stimson was enthusiastic about the communication of November 21. Essentially, he and his State Department colleagues analyzed the conference circumstances as had the two delegates. Similarly, he agreed with their assessment of the disadvantages and even the dangers of the French plan. He was more convinced than they that Simon's speech did not substantially promote disarmament movement. Those two approaches retained little of the Hoover recommendations and only weakly supported the land effectives articles. With those divergences in mind, the Secretary fully approved the proposition of quickly concluding a temporary convention pending the conclusion of a more general treaty. If Davis and Wilson could secure agreement on some of the eight points and the signing of a preliminary document in a short time, the accomplishment would genuinely encourage world public opinion which definitely could use a boost then.[18]

Subsequently, the nations scheduled the meetings to begin on December 2, without any previously arranged formula to discuss. That day, representatives of Italy, France, Britain, Germany, and the United States were in the city, but they spent the weekend in informal conversations. In the evening of December 4, Wilson and Allen W. Dulles, the

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[17]Wilson to Stimson, November 21, 1932, F.R., I, 403-404.

[18]Stimson to Wilson, November 22, 1932, F.R., I, 404-405.

Legal Adviser to the delegation, conversed with William Cadogan, a British agent, about his government's views on a preliminary convention. Later that night, the two Americans revised their draft and transmitted it only to the British delegation.

On December 5, formal talks began which Wilson attended. It became clear that France did not want to discuss arms problems with German officials present lest they condition their return on specific reduction provisions. That evening, Davis and Wilson attended a dinner given by British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald for Neurath, who had just reached the city, and the two chief representatives of the other major powers.

Before the workday ended, Wilson and Dulles discussed the American draft convention with Augusto Rosso of Italy, Cadogan, and Rene Massigli of France. As expected, the last delegate objected strenuously to many provisions because the conference had not ruled on many items. The agitated diplomat asked that the United States not give the text to the Germans who would demand a high price for returning to the conference. From a subsequent and candid conversation with him, Wilson and Dulles concluded that presently the copy should be retained and not be distributed. With the concurrence of Davis, they also decided on an attempt to get Germany's promise to attend the conference again and then work on disarmament aspects.

The following day, December 6, Davis, Wilson, and Dulles met with representatives of the other four powers in the plenary meeting.

In line with Davis's motion, MacDonald became the chairman and briefly explained the reason for the convocation. Then, Davis explained the proposed preliminary convention on immediate disarmament steps and the means for concluding a broad agreement which would include equality for Germany. Such action should be taken soon to placate an impatient world opinion and to help alleviate poor international conditions.

Real movement in the discussions resulted from a formula by Herriot. According to it, British, Italian, French, and American delegates concurred that an objective of the Disarmament Conference was the granting to Germany and the other former Central Powers equality of rights in an arrangement which afforded security for all countries. He believed that the proposition was enough recognition to allow Berlin to send its officials back to the conference. At dinner on December 7, Neurath openly expressed his desire to resume conference work and intimated a readiness to accept something similar to that approach with limited additions. After some clarification of definitions, German delegates agreed to have personnel at the next conference meetings.[19]

General satisfaction resulted from the news of Germany's consent. The fifty other delegations which had awaited the results of the five-power talks were dissatisfied about being excluded from an active role. So, they agreed that Henderson would participate in future conversations related to armaments reduction. At that point, the Bureau suspended work until January 23, and the General Commission adjourned

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[19]Davis to Stimson, November 25, 1932, F.R., I, 475; Memorandum of the Five-Power conversations at Geneva Regarding Disarmament and the Return of Germany to the Disarmament Conference, December 2-12, 1932, F.R., I, 488-508.

until January 31, 1933. F. P. Walters, a Deputy Secretary General of the League remarked that "the first year of its (conference) work ended where it should have begun. The fleeting opportunities which might have led to its success had been missed, and they were not destined to return."[20]

On December 14, Wilson conveyed to Stimson his thoughts on disarmament prospects. Although Germany's return inspired considerable encouragement, difficult political and technical problems still existed. He hoped that the conference states would soon recognize the merit of a short term convention in order to more fully study armament problems. Otherwise, he expected the conference to "die of inanition" after an additional period of effort.

Anyway, the United States would be present for some time. That expectation brought him to a consideration of expenditures. In response to the Department's orders to economize during the conference recess, he suggested alternative approaches to the general problem of expenses. The personnel might continue working until the small amount of money was expended and leave Geneva. Perhaps American officials might inform Henderson of America's inability to participate after a specific day. Of course, those moves might mean that American and foreign public opinion might criticize Washington for the failure of the conference.

In lieu of that procedure, he recommended a means "of facing the future adequately and with dignity." Possibly, the Secretary could

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[20]Walters, League, II, 515; Wilson to Stimson, December 13, 1932, F.R., I, 415; Wilson to Stimson, December 14, 1932, F.R., I, 415-416.

immediately explain the situation and the future possibilities to Congress. If Congressmen rejected the assessment, then they would bear the financial and political consequences. In case of a refusal of adequate funds, then the delegation might candidly indicate that circumstance and withdraw from the conference.

The personnel in Geneva, he continued, were obviously overworked. For three months, the members had worked on disarmament and League-related problems, and they were exhausted by the sustained night work. Likely, the committee work in the next stage would be more intense due to the scrutiny of the French plan and the German equality demands. To handle the future demands, Wilson foresaw the need for a larger staff, more office space, adequate per diems, and ample local transportation facilities.[21]

Undoubtedly, Wilson finished the year with the satisfaction that his status had been elevated during the Bureau meetings. Originally, he was designated as an alternate delegate who would act in the absence of a regular officer. Circumstances dictated that he be active in all the sessions, and he performed his assignments "in a highly creditable manner." Under those circumstances, Castle requested President Hoover to name him a full representative. Although the alteration would have no affect on his work per se, Castle believed that the promotion would enhance Wilson's standing among the foreign diplomats and would be personally gratifying to him. Accordingly, the change was

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[21]Wilson to Stimson, December 14, 1932, Moffat Papers.

made, and the Minister expressed his appreciation to Hoover and Stimson.[22]

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[22]Castle to Hoover, November 21, 1932, 500.A15A4Personnel/866; Stimson to American Delegation, Geneva, November 23, 1932, 500.A15A4Personnel/864; Wilson to Stimson, November 24, 1932, 500.A15A4Personnel/865.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAR EASTERN CRISIS, 1931-1933

In mid-September, 1931, world attention focused primarily on domestic problems. The major powers were experiencing the brunt of the deep depression, and in Europe the economic disorder became so acute that President Herbert Hoover of the United States established a debt moratorium. Both England and the United States appeared incapable even of handling domestic crises satisfactorily. Under those circumstances, London and Washington offered little prospect of successful intervention to stop any hostilities which did not vitally involve their national interest.

During September, events which had little direct relationship to the Geneva disarmament talks occurred in Manchuria. The province constituted a basic area of conflict between China and Japan, and Chinese nationalists believed that region their first line of defense. Japan felt that the territory supplied it with necessary grain for the increasing populace and thus viewed the region as important to its economic existence. Japan believed that its economic role in Manchuria entitled it to exceptional rights by reason of patriotism, defense, and broad treaty rights. As the Chinese-Manchurian association became stronger and as Japan's interests also grew, an open clash between Chinese and Japanese forces was probably only a matter of time.

Shortly thereafter, Japanese units began military action. During the night of September 18, 1931, Japanese civilians and military

extremists, desirous of bringing political problems to a head, blew up a section of the South Manchurian Railway tracks. Immediately, Japanese troops entered the city of Mukden to hunt for alleged Chinese culprits, and, as a result of advanced planning, the forces also moved into other nearby locations. In the next three months, Japanese soldiers moved southward toward China proper and also northward. By the New Year, the Japanese Kwantung Army had advanced close to the Chinese border, and during the year the Japanese military conquest of Manchuria was finished.[1]

On September 19, 1931, during the League's discussion of a projected arms truce, the first information from Manchuria reached Geneva. The European delegates were initially ignorant of the Sino-Japanese treaty relationships, and, indeed, most foreigners were then uninformed of specific events. When the personnel became aware of the serious consequences for the League and the international system, they and their Far Eastern advisers, who were quickly summoned to Switzerland, studied the matter in detail.[2]

To redress its grievances, China took its case to the League. On September 19, the representatives of both Japan and China indicated the existence of grave circumstances in the province. The Chinese government urged immediate Council steps to check the extension of hostilities, to restore the lost territory, and to ascertain the kind

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[1]Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 121-123.

[2]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 260-262.

of reparations to which China was entitled. Two days later, it requested a Council meeting to determine the appropriate steps for safeguarding peace under an article of the Covenant. The next day, the Council authorized Secretary General Drummond to ask Nanking and Tokyo to cease activity which might aggravate the problem further. Drummond could also consult with Chinese and Japanese officials about a procedure which would allow the safe withdrawal of troops.[3]

A measure of hope emerged from that contact. China insisted on the despatching of an inquiry commission to Manchuria which would consist of military or civilian observers and possibly both. Japan, preferring direct negotiations between China and itself, firmly opposed such a body and, indeed, any outside interference. Nevertheless, Tokyo assured the League of its peaceful intentions, and Nanking pledged to protect Japanese lives and property. Relieved and reassured by those expressions, the Council passed a resolution on September 30, incorporating the Japanese promise to remove its troops in relation to the degree of safety extended to its nationals. Further, the Council statement urged both disputants to restrict the dispute to its current limits. The Council agreed to meet on October 14, if conditions warranted additional deliberation.[4]

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[3]Gilbert to Stimson, September 21, 1931, F.R., III, 24-25; Gilbert to Stimson, September 22, 1931, F.R., III, 29; Gilbert to Stimson, September 22, 1931, F.R., III, 34; Wilson to Stimson, September 22, 1931, F.R., III, 37.

[4]Walters, League, II, 473-474; Gilbert to Stimson, October 1, 1931, F.R., III, 96-98.

The Manchurian conflict caught the United States by surprise. Secretary Stimson was preoccupied with the French-Italian naval problems and the forthcoming disarmament conference. In Geneva, Wilson was devoting his attention to those matters plus the arms truce proposal, but certainly the Far Eastern crisis, the gravity of which gradually became evident, could not be ignored. Of course, the United States was interested in the developments because of its possessions in the Orient, its maintenance of a large navy, and the indignation of many Americans toward Japan. However, contrary to the views of some elements of American public opinion, Washington was not obligated to act under the Kellogg-Briand Pact or the Nine Power Treaty. Really, the only formal duty involved the consultative portion of the Four Power Treaty, but it was not invoked. Although the United States was not committed, its stance vitally affected the League which could do little effective coercing or persuading without American concurrence or possibly assistance.[5]

In that context, considerable confusion existed in Geneva. Wilson could not really convey to his superiors the amount of strain to which the personnel were subject, and news from Washington, the Geneva developments, and extensive press coverage made working conditions markedly difficult. In addition, League officials and delegates considered the Manchurian incident a test of their organization's effectiveness. The pessimists there were suggesting the passage of a Council

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[5]Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 121-123; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 260-262.

resolution requesting the United States to assume the responsibility because the League was impotent. According to rumors, still other persons wished to invite American participation in the Council work despite Washington's wishes to the contrary, a procedure which supposedly would thrust the burden of action on the American government. Wilson doubted that those ideas would be adopted, but he felt that anything might result from the decided anxiety in the Swiss city.[6]

Under those circumstances, Wilson began dividing his time between arms truce talks and the Manchurian matter. Even though he did not attend the Council sessions, he usually was present in Drummond's office where Council members frequently gathered before or after their sessions. Despite the restricted approach, the American position meant much to the League delegates. Later, Wilson concluded, "Without appearing at the Council table it was obvious that I represented the decisive factor in decisions which might be taken."[7]

Understandably, the Council tried to keep the United States informed of League action and to secure State Department opinions. Drummond early sought and obtained Stimson's views through Wilson. At first, the American Secretary's replies were cautious since he was unsure what was actually happening in Manchuria. However, Stimson did brand the Japanese military moves as aggressive steps toward the strategic objective of controlling the contested province. But since the army

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[6]Wilson to Stimson, September 24, 1931, 793.94/1944½.

[7]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 260-262.

officers and the civilian government were divided on intentions and views, he counselled against foreign action which would rally Japanese nationalist sentiment for the army and against the civil authorities. In the meantime, the State Department officials were observing events in terms of the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.[8]

On September 22, Drummond passed along to Wilson the news of a possible Far Eastern inquiry. A small committee of Council members from Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and China had deliberated about sending to the disputed area an investigative commission which would include possibly military and civilian observers. China approved the proposal, but Japan's delegate objected. Supposedly, the probe would be conducted even if only China concurred. Consequently, Drummond requested Stimson's opinions whether his government would participate in the study group if invited.[9]

Similarly, as the gravity of the Far Eastern reports increased, Council members were insistently suggesting that Americans participate in their discussions. Drummond even intimated a desire to know the extent of Stimson's willingness to cooperate, and along that line the Secretary General proposed two possible moves. First, an American official might function on the Council, which step would be the most

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[8]Wilson to Stimson, September 21, 1931, F.R., III, 22; Stimson to Wilson, September 22, 1931, F.R., III, 37; Gilbert to Stimson, September 22, 1931, F.R., III, 29; Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 130-131, 134-135; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 260-262; Stimson to Wilson, September 21, 1931, F.R., III, 22.

[9]Wilson to Stimson, September 22, 1931, F.R., III, 37.

daring and perhaps the "most effective" because of its possible effect on Japanese public opinion. Although the League would have to act on the proposition, he considered that the proposal would be gladly accepted. Under the circumstances, Tokyo might disagree, but it would refrain from a public objection. If the Secretary of State could act favorably on the recommendation, Europe would be generally relieved and grateful. Second, the Council might establish a committee of French, German, British, Italian, and Spanish representatives and might ask for the appointment of an American. Ample precedent existed for that alternative, in case the United States could not adopt the other measure. In a limited and immediate reply, Wilson remarked that American public opinion would ultimately determine whether the government could act along those lines.[10]

Indications are that Wilson now felt stronger about American participation in the Council deliberations than his previous correspondence indicated. On September 23, Norman Davis, a member of the League Financial Committee who was assisting Wilson during the rush, engaged the Secretary in a telephone conversation. Davis spoke about the explosive nature of the Sino-Japanese situation and exclaimed that "such great opportunity to do something wonderful" existed. In his enthusiasm for action, he proposed that the United States help offset the Japanese military clique by the dramatic move of actually working in the League. He included the Minister among the Geneva personnel who

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[10]Wilson to Stimson, September 23, 1931, F.R., III, 39-40.

believed that this maneuver would actually resolve the difficulties.[11]

While Stimson was expressing his opposition to that approach, Wilson entered the room. He had just finished a speech in the Assembly's Third Committee on disarmament when he was summoned to the telephone. He related to Stimson the developments in the small committee of the major powers. They intended to send an investigative body of observers to Manchuria and to inquire about the possibility of Stimson's appointing a man to the Council committee. The Secretary replied that he was disturbed that the members would adopt a course and then request the United States to assume responsibility for their decisions.

The prospective creation of an investigative group upset Stimson since he considered it offensive to the Oriental disposition for outsiders to conduct an unsolicited inquiry. Such a probe would cause the Japanese nationalistic groups to align with the military against Japanese Foreign Minister Kijuro Shidehara and other peace advocates, thus generating more popular Japanese support for the army in Manchuria. He objected to a judicial approach to the Far Eastern crisis, the procedure in setting up the committee, and the personnel who would be chosen. Furthermore, Stimson doubted his ability to name a person to a commission in which the United States would have little opportunity to express its opinions freely. Stimson disliked the whole idea of an outside investigation and hoped it would be defeated without publicity. He then authorized Wilson to inform the Secretary General confidentially and "very

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[11] Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Stimson and Davis, September 23, 1931, F.R., III, 43.

strongly" of those views hoping that the character of the contemplated committee might be altered.[12]

On September 23, Stimson elaborated on those views and spelled out three stages in an American policy toward the League and the Manchurian matter. First, the United States would oppose the neutral commission idea, but back the Council's urging that Japan and China resolve their differences through bilateral negotiations. Second, if that procedure was unproductive, then Washington would support Sino-Japanese use of means envisioned in the League Covenant. Third, if that line failed, the United States would employ the methods included in the Nine Power Treaty or the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Those steps would give the American government a flexibility of response and allow the Orientals greater opportunity to settle their own problems before outside parties intervened. In any event, the United States would fulfill its obligations if either party acted in clear violation of the two last named international agreements.[13]

At the end of September, it seemed that Wilson could safely leave his duties in Switzerland. It appeared that Japan had adopted a more conciliatory attitude and that the differences would be resolved

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[12]Wilson to Stimson, September 24, 1931, 793.94/1944½; Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Stimson and Wilson, September 23, 1931, F.R., III, 45-47.

[13]Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Stimson and Wilson, September 23, 1931, F.R., III, 49-51; Stimson to Wilson, September 23, 1931, F.R., III, 48-49.

peaceably. On September 30, he received a telegram which instructed him to proceed to the State Department for consultation about the Geneva events and the scheduled disarmament conference. He was glad to receive that message because he was exhausted from the work on the arms truce, the Far Eastern crisis, and other problems. So, on the evening of October 3, Wilson departed for Washington via Brussels and Paris. For approximately four months thereafter, he was only slightly associated with the Far Eastern affairs because of his attention to disarmament matters.[14]

In early October, the Manchurian problem was still in its first stages, but the Japanese army soon made matters worse by its conduct which amounted increasingly to a military occupation. On October 8, as a part of the campaign to destroy the authority of Chinese Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang in Manchuria, the Japanese army planes bombed Chinchow. At the same time, the Tokyo government displayed a self-contradictory attitude in deploring the bombing but conditioning troop withdrawal upon Chinese agreement to some fundamental Japanese stipulations.

In those circumstances on October 13, the Council convened to discuss further handling of the difficulties. On that day, the Chinese and Japanese delegates presented their charges and countercharges.

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[14]Stimson to Wilson, September 20, 1931, 500.A15A4Personnel/113 2/3; Wilson, Diplomat, p. 263; Wilson to Stimson, October 1, 1931, 123.W693/291; Wilson to Stimson, December 14, 1931, 123.W693/314; Wilson to Stimson, December 21, 1931, 793.94/3266.

Then the international body took up the possibility of an American participating in the deliberations since Stimson had indicated on October 5 that the United States would try independently to support League action to regulate China and Japan. The Japanese delegate objected to American involvement, because its presence might encourage the Council to act definitely against Japan. Despite that opposition, Prentiss Gilbert, the American Consul General at Geneva, took a seat at the discussions on October 16, but he spoke only about material relating to the Kellogg Pact.

A resolution was brought forward for Japan to start the withdrawal of its troops and to complete the process within three weeks time. In addition, when removal was accomplished, the two disputants would initiate direct talks to resolve their differences. Japan's lone opposition vote constituted a veto, because the League operated on the premise that effective action against aggression under Article 11 required unanimous approval of all Council members. No major power, including the United States, was willing to employ coercion under the Covenant or otherwise at the risk of military conflict with Japan. Furthermore, the powers continued to hope that Tokyo might fulfill its promises and to feel that extreme steps against Japan would not be in China's best interests. Likewise, the economic depression and internal problems kept European governments and the United States from assuming firm positions.[15]

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[15]Walters, League, II, 475-478.

The Council, which convened in Paris on November 16, faced a no less serious problem. Since its adjournment in October, the Japanese forces had expanded both north and south, and Japan was gripped by war fever. Also, at Paris no American delegate was at the sessions, although Charles G. Dawes, the American Ambassador to London, was present in a nearby hotel which served as his observation point. In addition, the Council was notably lacking in leadership and definite plans, but it could not admit its inability to control the course of events. Nor would it undertake the possibly dangerous step of sanctions against Japan, especially since Stimson had announced that the difficulties could be resolved without force.[16]

The Paris gathering was not altogether on dead center. In a secret session, the Japanese delegate personally suggested that the League create a body to observe conditions in Manchuria and China, a step which the United States heartily approved. After three weeks of deliberations, the Council voted to send a commission of inquiry which would study and report on the general elements aggravating Sino-Japanese relations. Also, on December 10, Washington enhanced the status of the group by announcing publicly its support of that procedure.[17]

Unhappily, the commission was slow in getting into operation. Early in January, 1932, the members were selected entirely from the major powers. They were Lord Lytton of Britain, General Frank McCoy

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[16] Ibid., pp. 478-479.

[17] Ibid., pp. 478-481.

of the United States, General Henri E. Claudel of France, Count Luigi Aldrovandi of Italy, and Dr. Heinrich Schnee of Germany. Lytton was chosen as the chairman, and thereafter the body was commonly referred to as the Lytton Commission. On February 3, following a preliminary session in Geneva, the Europeans departed for the Far East where McCoy joined them. The delays reflected unfavorably on the League Council, but the commission probably could not have checked further Japanese expansion in 1932 anyway. The group arrived in Japan, then went to Shanghai and Nanking, traveled to Manchuria in April, and returned to China to formulate its conclusions.[18]

From early October through January, 1932, Wilson followed the Far Eastern events from afar. While en route to Washington in October, he heard the news of the renewed Sino-Japanese fighting, the reconvening of the Council session on October 14, and the seating of Gilbert. Later in a personal meeting with Stimson, the Secretary expressed a preference for Wilson's presence in Paris since he had originally covered the case in Geneva. Besides, Wilson's attendance would have seemed more appropriate and would have attracted less attention from the press. Because so many significant things had happened in connection with the League and the Far East, Stimson, speaking for his colleagues, confided that it was "a pity we ordered you home." After several rounds of discussions in Washington and a visit to relatives in Chicago, Wilson prepared to go back to Switzerland. During the return, he consulted with foreign diplomats primarily about disarmament

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[18] Ibid., pp. 482-483.

rather than Manchuria. Upon reaching his headquarters, he perused the Paris documents which imprecisely filled him in on American activities in the French capital.[19]

Back in Berne, his interest in the Manchurian problem was a secondary one. Again, he gave priority to disarmament affairs though the Far Eastern crisis kept intruding in his work. He was hesitant about being in Geneva when the next Council session began on January 25, lest he be asked about the American attitude on Manchuria. The State Department authorized him to be at the League then, if he made it plain that he was only concerned about armament matters.[20]

In the light of continued Japanese military operations in Manchuria during December, 1931, Washington's policy toward Tokyo was ineffective. For over three months, the United States had acted independently of other nations but yet concurrently with them. Stimson had given America's moral support to the League hoping to create a world opinion which would strengthen the civilian elements in the Japanese government and help halt the military push in Manchuria. His maneuvers were unsuccessful largely because his basic premise was wrong that United States forebearance would enable the Japanese moderates to maintain power and restrain the militarists. At first, a positive and

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[19]Wilson to Stimson, December 21, 1931, 793.94/3266; Stimson to American Legation, Berne, December 21, 1931, 793.94/3265.

[20]Wilson to Stimson, January 18, 1932, 500.A15A4/731; Stimson to American Legation, Berne, January 18, 1932, 500.A15A4/736.

tangible expression of world opinion might have halted the army, but that opportunity passed early. Furthermore, the American approach was handicapped because President Hoover was unready and unwilling to assume more than a moral stand in support of international agreements.[21]

In early January, 1932, circumstances led to an additional American diplomatic initiative. Since the resolution for creation of the Lytton Commission, the Japanese had continued their military expansion. On January 2, Stimson received word of Japanese troop occupation of Chinchow in South Manchuria, a move which Stimson interpreted as a definite infringement on Chinese sovereignty. Something more than the old futile American policy and League protests was necessary to check the Japanese movement. Stimson hoped that a withholding of recognition would cause Japan to alter its expansive course. So, on January 7, Stimson informed China and Japan that the United States would not recognize as legally valid any situation, treaty, or agreement which curtailed its treaty rights in China or which resulted from a violation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. At the time, Stimson hoped that Britain, France, and the other major powers would issue similar messages. Britain set the tone by publishing a blunt refusal in the London Times, and the other governments remained silent. The Japanese, noting the negative

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[21]Elting E. Morison, Turmoil and Tradition: A Study of the Life and Times of Henry L. Stimson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), pp. 375-376, 378; hereafter cited as Morison, Stimson; Richard N. Current, Secretary Stimson (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 79; hereafter cited as Current, Stimson.

foreign response, reacted even bolder in the future. The nonrecognition approach thus failed, and, fifteen years later, Stimson labeled it a failure himself.[22]

The nonrecognition doctrine obviously did not prevent further Japanese aggression. In late January, 1932, Japanese naval units attacked Shanghai, an outstanding Chinese port city. The assault resulted from the effective Chinese boycott against Japanese goods throughout the land. Its application was especially severe in that city, a fact which brought Japanese merchants there close to economic ruin. In response to the businessmen's requests, the Japanese admiral in charge initiated the Shanghai incident which lasted approximately one month.[23]

Western statesmen were seriously alarmed by the clash of Oriental troops at Shanghai. The nations were far more concerned about that occurrence than the Manchurian difficulties because of their commercial investments in the city. Despite the gravity of the latest happening, Occidental government officials did not move decisively. The world-wide economic depression kept them from acting as they might have at a more opportune time. The European powers did little, and Secretary Stimson felt unsure of a course to follow since he lacked support at home and abroad for punitive action.[24]

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[22]Current, Stimson, pp. 87-89; Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 151-153.

[23]Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 170-175.

[24]Ibid., pp. 171-172; Walters, League, II, 484-485.

Yet, some concerted Western steps were taken. On January 31, Britain and the United States increased their military and naval forces in Shanghai. Stimson, on February 2, suggested that the Western governments jointly ask Japan and China to cease hostilities and begin deliberations with neutral observers present. Thus, the major powers made those representations which indicated a degree of diplomatic unity. Unfortunately for the success of the maneuver, Japan rejected the plan on February 4.[25]

Then Stimson wanted to end further appeals to Tokyo, but reconsideration led him toward invocation of the Nine Power Treaty. He expected Britain and the United States to sponsor an international conference which would give Japan the opportunity to state its complaints against China. If Japan refused to attend, the other nations might consider the possibility of economic sanctions against Japan. In that case, the United States Congress was more likely to participate in an embargo after the treaty was invoked rather than if the League proposed it under Covenant provisions. Stimson's hope was visionary about possible economic restrictions during the depression, but he could work toward negotiations under the Washington Conference agreement.[26]

Accordingly, Stimson contacted Simon about action under the Nine Power Treaty. On February 9, the American official drafted a possible

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[25]Ferrell, American Diplomacy, pp. 178-180.

[26]Ibid., pp. 180-181.

joint declaration, and for approximately one week the two men conferred with each other by trans-Atlantic telephone. Stimson pressed for the treaty procedure, but Simon, who could not secure Cabinet support for that position, withheld his consent. On February 16, the Englishman stated his preference for the Council's Committee of Twelve to adopt the nonrecognition doctrine after which the treaty members might be more willing to approve the American proposal. He contended that the treaty participants would inevitably act if the League moved first. Stimson, who was not so sure that result necessarily followed, temporarily decided to await further deliberations.[27]

In varying degrees, Wilson was keeping up with Manchurian developments in Geneva. When he went to the Disarmament Conference of 1932, the Department ordered him to maintain a working knowledge of the Sino-Japanese situation there. The despatching of telegrams to inform Washington constituted a satisfactory means of communication which was to be continued, and, when necessary, he could obtain Gilbert's help as he had prior to his trip to Washington. Because of the vital necessity for quick attention to developments, the consul general was to handle affairs in case the Minister had to be away. The Secretary presumed that Wilson would indicate when it became appropriate for him to resume personal handling of the Far Eastern contacts.[28]

Actually, the awkward communications arrangement in Geneva made coordination of the United States' efforts on the Far Eastern crisis and

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[27] Ibid., pp. 181-182.

[28] Stimson to Wilson, February 1, 1932, F.R., III, 170.

on disarmament very difficult. Hugh Gibson, Senator Claude Swanson of Virginia, Norman Davis, and Wilson, all members of the Disarmament Conference delegation, assessed that procedure in the light of conditions in the city. They noted the effort of Simon to present both British and American views in the Council and in private conversations. Increasingly, various governments assumed that London and Washington had taken to themselves the responsibility for resolving the crisis and that Council steps would be superfluous. To support that contention, foreign representatives indicated the lack of communication by Wilson and Gilbert with Drummond since the fall of 1931. In the minds of the foreign delegates, the United States was no longer cooperating with them. According to the American delegation, others might possibly reason that the American initiatives provided an excuse for the League Council's shirking responsibility for securing a settlement with Japan. To counter such thinking and to gain Council support for contemplated Anglo-American action, Gibson counseled that Wilson resume direct contact with Drummond or the Council members.[29]

Stimson concurred with the conclusion of his Geneva personnel. He instructed his Minister to inform appropriate officials discreetly of the world-wide responsibility for collective action. He also explained that urgency and practicality had governed his previous sharing of views with Simon rather than through his diplomats as usual. Accordingly, Wilson resumed conferring with Council officials about the

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[29]Gibson to Stimson, February 10, 1932, F.R., III, 273-274.

Sino-Japanese situation.[30]

While Stimson and Simon were deliberating about possible action under the Nine Power Pact, the League Council considered adoption of a nonrecognition note. On February 11, Wilson noted the increasing signs of a desire for the Council to express full endorsement of the Stimson message of January 7. The Minister felt that American influence, discreetly utilized, could cause the Council members to make definite moves rather than to continue in their bewilderment and inaction. Stimson liked the procedure and instructed him to assure them of his continued interest in resolving the Far Eastern mess. Finally, on February 16, the twelve neutral Council members urgently appealed to Japan to utilize Covenant methods for a peaceful settlement. Further, they pointed out that League members ought not to recognize as valid territorial or political changes which resulted from external aggression. So, those powers cautiously adopted the approach which the American Secretary had chosen on January 7.[31]

On February 23, Stimson, believing that action inadequate to stop Japan, issued another unilateral statement which bore some similarity to the January message. The following day, the famous letter to

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[30]Stimson to Wilson, February 11, 1932, F.R., III, 290-291.

[31]Wilson to Stimson, February 11, 1932, F.R., III, 286; Stimson to Wilson, February 12, 1932, F.R., III, 324; Wilson to Stimson, February 16, 1932, F.R., III, 351-352, 362, 363-364. By directing their comments to Japan, the Council showed that it held that country largely responsible for a settlement. Walters, League, II, 487.

Senator William E. Borah of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reached Wilson. It reiterated American adherence to the Open Door agreements and the Washington treaties of 1922 on commercial equality and territorial integrity. The missive recalled to Japan and Britain their commitments to comply with the agreements and asked governments to withhold official recognition from territorial changes resulting from treaty violations. Furthermore, the correspondence cautioned that alterations of the treaty system would allow the United States to construct capital ships on a larger scale and to build up Pacific island fortifications. The document was forwarded to inform and instruct the American delegation. Wilson was authorized to show the letter to Drummond as written proof of readiness to cooperate with and inform the Council. The message was well-received in the League, and in March the Assembly adopted its contents.[32]

During the early Assembly sessions, Wilson and Stimson discussed the prospect of its adopting the nonrecognition policy. The Minister reported no objection to the ideas, and, indeed, the delegates regarded the measure as the minimum that agency could do. Stimson believed that immediate steps in line with the Borah letter would exert a salutary

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[32]Armin Rappaport, Henry L. Stimson and Japan, 1931-1933 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 141; hereafter cited as Rappaport, Stimson and Japan; Wilson to Stimson, February 24, 1932, F.R., III, 424; Stimson to Wilson, February 24, 1932, F.R., III, 429; Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Stimson and Wilson, February 27, 1932, F.R., III, 462; Walters, League, II, 488.

influence on the League's Shanghai conference and possibly preclude any foreign government's securing permanent concessions at China's expense. Accordingly, Americans in Geneva should discreetly promote ideas which corresponded to those of Washington and discourage contrary ones. So, at every opportunity, they impressed on other diplomats the importance of the nonrecognition principle. Subsequently, the Assembly unanimously endorsed the nonrecognition policy on March 11.[33]

After the March 11 resolution, a special body handled the Far Eastern problem in Switzerland. The Assembly established the Committee of Nineteen to assist in bringing about an immediate and final agreement at Shanghai, to help find a settlement for the Sino-Japanese crisis, and to assume the League's work concerning the general dispute. It consisted of twelve Council members, excluding China and Japan, the Assembly President, and six other persons. The committee decided quite early that, since Shanghai was the current focal point of interest, it would primarily support the steps there and apply appropriate pressure on the disputants. On May 5, through joint collaboration, the Assembly committee in Geneva and a great power committee at Shanghai arranged an armistice for the city. The League committee then waited for the

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[33]Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Stimson and Wilson, March 3, 1932, F.R., III, 501; Wilson to Stimson, March 4, 1932, F.R., III, 508-509; Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Stimson and Wilson, March 4, 1932, F.R., III, 511; Stimson to Wilson, March 7, 1932, F.R., III, 525-526; Wilson to Stimson, March 8, 1932, F.R., III, 533; Wilson to Stimson, March 10, 1932, 793.94/4687; Rappaport, Stimson and Japan, pp. 152-153; Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Stimson and Wilson, March 11, 1932, F.R., III, 569.

completion of the Lytton Commission report which constituted the foundation for a general solution.[34]

During the summer months, the possibility of Japanese recognition of Manchukuo, the new state which Japan had established in Manchuria, generated considerable apprehension. In an address on August 8, Stimson sought to clarify the American position in case of a possible war between the League and Japan. He censured Tokyo for failure to consult with other signatories of the Kellogg Pact before acting in the Far East. Furthermore, he more nearly aligned the United States with the League's enforcement means through the Pact of Paris. Most of the world seemed impressed by that speech and other efforts to keep the Japanese nation from aggravating the Far Eastern situation until the Lytton report was delivered. Japan constituted the important exception, and on September 15, its Foreign Office formally recognized the Manchukuo government, thereby insulting the League and breaking its earlier pledge to accept the Lytton investigation.[35]

Those developments led to an increasing desire for American leadership in Geneva which, according to press accounts, the League expected. In response to such reports, Stimson reiterated the approach

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[34]Walters, League, II, 489-490; Wilson to Stimson, March 16, 1932, F.R., III, 589.

[35]Wilson to Stimson, June 16, 1932, F.R., IV, 79; Stimson to Wilson, June 18, 1932, F.R., IV, 83-84; Wilson to Stimson, June 19, 1932, F.R., IV, 92; Wilson to Stimson, June 24, 1932, F.R., III, 107-108; Wilson to Stimson, June 30, 1932, F.R., IV, 122-123; Wilson to Stimson, July 23, 1932, F.R., IV, 181; Rappaport, Stimson and Japan, pp. 168-174, 176.

which Wilson was to maintain informally. He should discourage that expectation of United States involvement among the League leaders since the international body was responsible for initiating action. Washington was willing to cooperate and receive suggestions, but it preferred to act along similar but independent lines. In advancing American views quietly, the Minister was to adhere strictly to the nonrecognition policy. Probably, if the organization adopted positive measures, Washington would undertake corresponding ones. Wilson assessed those instructions as "very wisely reasoned."[36]

On September 4, 1932, after months of investigation and weeks of deliberations, the Lytton Commission completed its work. The personnel unanimously concluded that Japan was at fault in that Japanese accounts and arguments did not justify its conduct in Manchuria. The commission placed a considerable part of the responsibility on China although Japan was censured more. The body refused to consider aggressive conquest valid, but it did not suggest a return to pre-conflict conditions in Manchuria. As a means of settling differences between the overpopulated country and the chaotic nation, the commission proposed direct Sino-Japanese negotiations on the management of the disputed region. Those findings were sent to Geneva, and the document was released to League members and the United States on October 2.

The world-wide response to the report boded ill for the proposals. The commission had mistakenly believed that Japan would accept

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[36]Stimson to Wilson, July 22, 1932, F.R., IV, 180-181; Stimson to Wilson, September 23, 1932, F.R., IV, 271-272; Wilson to Stimson, September 24, 1932, 793.94Commission/377.

the conclusions, but the Tokyo Cabinet had decided in the summer not to abide by any such proposition. Actually, it had officially recognized the independence of Manchukuo in order to establish a fact which would be hard for other nations to reverse. At the same time, the major western powers refused to accept the recommendations. Britain, declining to accept the leadership role, promised to back up whatever action Stimson took, but Stimson preferred Britain to take the lead and to support Simon instead. Understandably, Stimson chose to refrain from positive action since he did not have the physical means or the popular support necessary. The Secretary, his advisers, Departmental personnel, and diplomats elected to follow the League rather than precede it with moves, because of the potential danger and hopelessness of a unilateral approach. Stimson recognized that the United States had incurred more than its share of Japanese hostility, and a further American demonstration might bring war.[37]

In November, Stimson reiterated his policy to Davis, Gibson, Wilson, and Gilbert. The government would not participate in any League discussion which concerned duties under the Covenant or constitutional responsibilities, and he wanted any such League tendency discouraged. Instead, the international body should adopt a plan and request American concurrence, retaining the full responsibility for action on the Lytton report with the League. The Secretary also deprecated the League's attempts to transfer the problem to the Nine Power Treaty

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[37]Rappaport, Stimson and Japan, pp. 179-188.

members. In the final analysis, Washington was operating on the basis of principles and practices and not malice toward Japan.[38]

On November 19, two days before the Council convened to consider the Lytton Commission report, Davis and Wilson learned firsthand the Japanese attitude regarding future League action. Matsuoka Yosuke, Tokyo's delegate to Geneva, spoke of his country's firm determination to pursue its own policy concerning Manchuria. His government planned to reject any approach which did not allow for the existence of Manchukuo and recognition of it. Accordingly, if the powers cooperated in any undertaking which undermined Japanese dignity, Japan would be forced to withdraw from the League. While he held profound doubts about the possibility of a satisfactory settlement, Davis and Wilson emphasized to him the need for good will in order to achieve a constructive adjustment. Despite Matsuoka's stubbornness, the two Americans incorrectly anticipated that he would change his position favorably.[39]

A division between the large and small powers of the League blocked the immediate adoption of a firm nonrecognition statement which Stimson wanted. The Council, thus divided, was unwilling and unable to solve the Sino-Japanese differences, so the general problem was sent to

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[38]Stimson to Wilson, November 19, 1932, F.R., IV, 347-349; Stimson to Gibson, November 14, 1932, F.R., IV, 342-343; Stimson to Wilson, October 17, 1932, F.R., IV, 303; Wilson to Stimson, November 15, 1932, F.R., IV, 346.

[39]Davis and Wilson to Stimson, November 19, 1932, F.R., IV, 349-352; Rappaport, Stimson and Japan, pp. 190-191.

the Assembly. The small countries called for approval of the Lytton report, chastisement of Japan, and nonrecognition of Manchukuo. Simon, representing the great powers, urged a moderate course of sending the matter to the Committee of Nineteen. Otherwise, strong Assembly action could mean Japan's withdrawal from the League and possibly war. Thereafter, the committee and its subcommittee deliberated the problem until mid-February when it recommended the adoption of the Lytton findings as a foundation for a solution and for the nonrecognition of Manchukuo. Subsequently, on February 24, forty-two nations approved the committee's verdict, but Japan rejected the majority decision. Following Matsuoka's protest, his delegation abruptly left the meeting which was the first step in Japanese withdrawal from the League.[40]

Personnel at Geneva as well as throughout the world were both shocked and surprised by Japan's action. Wilson himself had second thoughts about the appropriateness of League and American positions toward Japan. While he listened to Matsuoka's speech, the Minister experienced his first serious misgivings about the wisdom of the Assembly and American actions. Deeply disturbed by the day's events, he doubted the practicality of the nonrecognition policy since ultimately one party or another would have to accept what it had previously opposed.

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[40]Rappaport, Stimson and Japan, pp. 191-192; Wilson to Stimson, December 12, 1932, F.R., IV, 441-451; Wilson to Stimson, December 15, 1932, F.R., IV, 432-433; Stimson to Wilson, December 5, 1932, F.R., IV, 388; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 278-279; Walters, League, II, 494-495.

He did not see nonrecognition as a deterrent against the use of force, and events bore out that conviction. Regarding condemnation, he thought that nations which were indignant enough to censure a country should be willing to employ forceful measures to adjust an unacceptable condition. Otherwise, their action would only make matters worse. In Wilson's opinion, the outcome showed that no side emerged from the Far Eastern crisis with its dignity wholly intact.[41]

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[41]Wilson to Stimson, February 9, 1933, F.R., III, 160; Wilson to Stimson, February 21, 1933, F.R., III, 191; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 278-283.

CHAPTER X.

DISARMAMENT AND ETHIOPIA

The Disarmament Conference fared no better during the second year than the first. In December, 1932, Germany was induced to return to the Assembly, but its stay lasted only until October, 1933. In March, 1933, Japan, which had been threatening omniously to sever its ties with the League, started the process, and during the period Italy began developing military plans according to its alleged abilities. The British and American governments attempted to salvage the meeting, but their efforts were inadequate for the more difficult atmosphere of 1933. After October, 1933, the conference markedly declined and the hopes of world disarmament fell correspondingly.[1]

Since the French plan of November 4, 1932, was scheduled as one of the first items on the agenda when the General Commission met February 2, 1933, the United States considered its strategy. Gibson and Wilson worked out a tentative text for early presentation which concentrated on disarmament problems but not on political issues. After some correspondence with the two diplomats, Stimson first opted against a statement on the proposition and for an informal explanation to Paris about American silence.[2]

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[1]Walters, League, II, 541.

[2]Wilson to Stimson, January 25, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/146; Wilson to Stimson, January 16, 1933, F.R., I, 4; Wilson to Stimson, January 24, 1933, F.R., I, 5-6; Wilson to Stimson, January 27, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/148; Stimson to Wilson, January 25, 1933, F.R., I, 6-7; Stimson to Wilson, January 28, 1933, F.R., I, 7-8.

Events altered that decision, however. Conversations in Geneva convinced the delegation that some pronouncement was necessary. Since the French proposal primarily pertained to European security, Gibson wanted to indicate that the United States would remain silent until discussion concerned non-European and non-League governments. Stimson approved Gibson's remarks, if he and the delegation could maintain the general American position without creating or adding to controversy. Stimson preferred a period of calm in armament deliberations in order not to complicate further the already tense situation concerning international debts, the Far East, and Latin American conditions.[3]

Although the American delegation was largely silent, the other representatives were not. The French proposal came under strong criticism from Italy and Germany as lacking means for effective armament reduction. Even the French refused to accept the December agreement, and six weeks of wrangling almost resulted in a deadlock.[4]

On March 16, the British brought forward a draft convention in order to prevent a stalemate. It designated maximum figures for armaments reductions which were based on previously expressed opinions and the particular interests of the London government. The document was

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[3]Gibson to Stimson, February 2, 1933, F.R., I, 8-9; Stimson to Gibson, February 2, 1933, F.R., I, 9; Moffat to Wilson, January 31, 1933, Moffat Papers; Wilson to Moffat, February 18, 1933, Moffat Papers; Davis to Wilson, March 2, 1933, Wilson Papers.

[4]Walters, League, II, 541-542.

innovative in that it constituted the first statement of numbers on effectives and airplanes. It provided for the transforming of European land armies into militias, the decrease in the number and size of naval and air units, and the abolition of chemical and biological warfare agents. The British maneuver tried to meet German claims by replacing the Versailles Treaty disarmament prohibitions with equality of treatment which meant that Germany would achieve parity in armaments after five years. A Permanent Disarmament Commission would handle supervision and investigation to assure compliance with the general agreement. The approach held out some assurance of assistance against aggression by employing Stimson's idea that the United States as a member of the Kellogg-Briand Pact was obliged to confer with other members in case of violations. In essence, the plan included the most acceptable parts of the Berlin, Paris, and Washington plans, and the governments might have approved its provisions a year earlier if it had been presented then.[5]

From March 24 to March 27, the General Commission discussed the proposal. Although only Italy fully accepted it, the body agreed to use the draft text as the basis of deliberations after the Easter vacation when it reconvened on April 25. In the meantime, technical committees would operate in accordance with the decision of their chairman.[6]

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[5]Ibid., pp. 542-543.

[6]Gibson to Hull, March 27, 1933, F.R., I, 76-77; Walters, League, II, 542-544; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 155-156; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 288-289.

The United States favored the British initiative, but the State Department viewed the idea generally acceptable only as a first stage. While the delegation maintained that the plan adequately included everything except London's interests, the amendments were to be only minor ones which would not aggravate objections or undermine American support of the undertaking. The British had intentionally based their recommendation on a "principle of balance of sacrifice" in order to gain German and French adherence, and the success or the failure of the plan rested on that tenet. Subsequently, Wilson and his colleagues worked with that in mind as they attempted to fulfill the Department's instructions.[7]

After the Easter recess, the General Commission became involved in a fundamental French-German controversy which was disguised behind procedural points. Basically, the problem was the continuing one of French security vis-à-vis German equality of arms. The procedural aspect arose over whether to reread a section on effectives or hold a first reading of a section on material. Gradually, the forces divided with the French and the British wanting to move forward and the Germans insisting on discussion regarding troops. So, the personnel of the major powers tried to work out a solution among themselves. Since Massigli, Eden, Wilson, and the Italian delegate opposed German rearmament, the General Commission broke the impasse by reserving all armaments aspects

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[7]Hull to Davis, May 2, 1933, F.R., I, 122-123; Wilson to Hull, May 3, 1933, F.R., I, 123-124; Wilson to Hull, April 29, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/317; Wilson to Hull, May 11, 1933, F.R., I, 137.

for the second perusal of the draft convention.[8]

The United States made even more evident effort to assure the French and to promote the British plan. On May 16, President Franklin D. Roosevelt implored all governments to bring about success in the Disarmament and World Economic Conferences. He urged the acceptance of the disarmament approach, pledges to foster weapons reduction until nations fully abolished offensive arms, and an inclusive nonaggression pact. Subsequently, Davis, Wilson, and Fred Mayer, the Counselor of Legation at Berne, formulated a means which would put the British at ease regarding the United States attitude on collective security without obligating Washington to support sanctions actively. On May 22, Davis declared to the General Commission that his country would support the Anglo proposition for consultation if any nation violated the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Also, Washington would not impede international action against an aggressor if deliberations upheld the League's decision.[9]

The announcement attracted more favorable comment than actual support, although most European governments were happy about the statement. League members previously had hesitantly considered the application

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[8]Hull to Davis, May 6, 1933, F.R., I, 128; Wilson to Hull, May 8, 1933, F.R., I, 129-132; Wilson to Hull, May 9, 1933, F.R., I, 133; Wilson to Hull, May 11, 1933, F.R., I, 138; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 162.

[9]Walters, League, II, 546; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 284-286; Wilson to Hull, May 14, 1933, 500.A15A4Personnel/1307; Wilson to Hull, May 14, 1933, 500.A15A4Personnel/1038; Hull to Davis, May 18, 1933, F.R., I, 150. Wilson felt that only in recent weeks had the United States been acting properly concerning disarmament although he had been closely associated with the subject for approximately six years. Wilson to Hull, May 18, 1933, Cordell Hull Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; hereafter cited as Hull Papers.

of sanctions lest Washington object concerning freedom of the seas. The declaration did not win Simon away from his movement toward isolationism or his aversion to sanctions. Equally significant, Germany, which really desired definite numbers for men and weapons, was not impressed by a security formula. The American delegation's promotion of it was not effective because the United States did not fully participate in the permanent and temporary undertakings of the League. The declaration represented the furthest extent of American cooperation with the European governments to erect a collective security system. Thereafter, the United States reverted to its unilateral and consultative role.[10]

Other factors made progress markedly slow. Japan brought up new questions on naval limitation, and Britain alone wanted air bombardment for police uses only. France worked for more exact stipulations on inspection, and Russia pushed for a regional security arrangement. Confused and discouraged, world public opinion insisted less aggressively on action by the reluctant disarmament representatives. So, with no genuine movement in early June, the delegates adjourned on June 8 in order to attend the World Economic Conference four days later. Before dismissal, the General Commission decided that the British draft convention could continue as the basis of a future treaty and that the body would convene in October. The postponement of debate was practically tantamount to an admission that the British project was a failure.[11]

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[10]Walters, League, II, 546-547; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 286-288.

[11]Walters, League, II, 548; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 167.

Before the autumn convocation of the Bureau and the General Commission, representatives met in Paris to work out an approach which all conference delegations might accept. Present were Joseph Paul-Boncour, Massigli, Simon, Eden, Davis, now the chairman of the American personnel, and Wilson. Technically, the men considered that they were moving forward, but notable differences existed in the spirit of the proposals. The basic idea under consideration consisted of two disarmament stages of four years each. In the first, amounts would not increase, and, in the second, reduction of armaments would start. France viewed the initial portion as a trial period in order to determine if Germany would honor the agreement. If Berlin did not, then Paris would refuse to enter the next period. The British and the Americans wanted automatic initiation of the second stage since no government would voluntarily accept probation. While Simon, Eden, Davis, and Paul-Boncour were seemingly convinced that they were in substantial agreement, Massigli, Wilson, and Alexander Cadogan of Britain, who drafted the text of the proposal, were largely aware of the profound divergence of views.[12]

On October 14, the differences became abundantly clear. In a public Bureau meeting, Simon ably presented the proposition without arousing antagonism, Davis followed in the same vein, but Paul-Boncour

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[12]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 288-290; Memorandum of Conversation at Quai d'Orsay, September 22, 1933, F.R., I, 227-232; Memorandum by Davis, September 19, 1933, F.R., I, 218-224; Walters, League, II, 548-549. The Paris embassy despatched a complete list of all the personnel at the meeting. Marriner to Hull, September 25, 1933, F.R., I, 226-227.

angered the Germans by repeatedly stressing the probationary facet. The German delegate reminded the others that his government had always insisted on substantial arms reductions by the military powers and the speedy extension of equal status. Despite that statement, the Bureau approved a motion to send the proposal to the General Commission, and less than two hours after Bureau adjournment, Berlin notified Henderson of its withdrawal from the conference.[13]

Germany's actions had the profoundest repercussions on the Disarmament Conference. The meetings continued, although no large measure of reality existed without German participation. After the German departure, Washington displayed less interest in disarmament matters as isolationism increased in the country, and Italy, seeing little or no meaning in the meetings, considered its delegates as observers. At this point, a new armaments race began, and the military budgets increased rapidly.[14]

The disruption necessitated the consideration of future procedure. On October 16, the General Commission suspended its sessions for ten days to allow for consultation with the home offices while, in the meantime, delegates conversed with each other about prospective action.

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[13]Davis to Hull, October 11, 1933, F.R., I, 252; Davis to Hull, October 14, 1933, F.R., I, 264-265; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 293-294; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 170; Walters, League, II, 549-550. Also, on October 14, Adolf Hitler, the German Chancellor, announced the departure of his personnel from the League. Walters, League, II, 550.

[14]Walters, League, II, 550-551.

Italy favored immediate adjournment of the conference, but Britain and the United States supported temporary postponement to allow German reconsideration of its decision. France, the primary proponent of continued deliberations, advocated the completion of a convention which would be submitted to Berlin for its signature, but, if Germany refused, it would prove that it basically wanted to rearm. Subsequently, on October 26, the General Commission voted unanimously to pursue disarmament objectives in accordance with the British draft, and it instructed the Bureau to prepare a modified text.[15]

The method of consultation received considerable attention. Henderson and the Bureau officers met with representatives of Britain, France, Italy, and the United States about the course to follow. The major European parties involved realized the need for deliberations but disagreed among themselves fundamentally on how that should be accomplished. Wilson reported that the procedural point of whether to act only within the League or to utilize other machinery temporarily eclipsed the Disarmament Conference itself. Germany wanted to work outside the League and the assembly, whereas France would converse only if the meetings fostered an agreement at Geneva. Also, Boncour opposed any method which might satisfy Germany that Berlin had blocked the conference. Simon proposed parallel efforts which would consist of discussions in London, Rome, and Paris to supplement the conference's committee and

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[15]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 171-172; Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation between Roosevelt and Hull and Davis, October 16, 1933, F.R., I, 273-276.

rapporteur system. Wilson spoke for that procedure although the United States would not participate in any such meetings which mainly concerned current European political problems. Although the Bureau did not decide about parallel activities at that time, such means were later utilized.[16]

Diplomatic correspondence proved unable to make significant headway in the first five months of 1934, when Germany, France, and Britain conducted unsuccessful negotiations from a distance. While the first country's demands were becoming stronger, the second's government was not disposed to compromise. The London Foreign Office, increasingly more amenable to German demands, began to clash with French views with greater frequency. Italy favored the British move toward conciliation, but it went no further than general assent.[17]

Consequently, fundamental disagreement characterized the sessions of the General Commission which convened on May 29. France wanted the conference continued even without Germany which meant that Paris desired more specific machinery for security. On the contrary, Britain considered an assembly meaningless unless the rearmed Third Reich participated,

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[16]Wilson to Hull, November 17, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/659; Wilson to Moffat, November 17, 1933, F.R., I, 307-308; Wilson to Under Secretary, November 16, 1933, F.R., I, 306-307; Wilson to Hull, November 19, 1933, F.R., I, 310-313; Wilson to Hull, November 20, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/664; Wilson to Hull, November 21, 1933, F.R., I, 318-319; Phillips to American delegate, Geneva, November 21, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/668; Wilson to Hull, November 23, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/670; Phillips to American delegate, Geneva, November 24, 1933, 500.A15A4General Committee/675.

[17]Walters, League, II, 551; Wilson to Hull, February 17, 1934, F.R., I, 21-22; Hull to Wilson, February 20, 1934, F.R., I, 23-24; Wilson to Hull, April 12, 1934, F.R., I, 47-48; Wilson to Hull, May 2, 1934, F.R., I, 60; Wilson to Hull, May 16, 1934, F.R., I, 65; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 172-174.

but, in addition, London would not obligate itself further on security. Also, Rome refused to be involved until German delegates returned to the sessions.[18]

During the last General Commission session, Davis restated the American position which remained basically unchanged. He generally agreed with the British approach, and he proposed a return to the draft convention of June 8, 1933, which was acceptable to Germany. His government would participate for obtaining a general disarmament treaty and the promotion of peace. Washington was ready to endorse an international nonaggression pact and even consult other signatories if armed conflict threatened, but it would not join in any European political negotiations or contemplate an obligation to employ force for the settlement of disputes. Although Davis could not win approval of that suggestion, he was instrumental in reconciling some differences which led to the decision regarding the use of committees. At that point, Davis left Geneva, and Wilson headed the American disarmament effort in effect.[19]

In the end, the conference delegated matters to small groups for study. On June 11, the General Commission established the Security Committee and the Committee on Guarantees of Execution, both new bodies, and ordered the Air Committee and the Arms Committee to continue their deliberations. The same day, the General Commission adjourned sine die

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[18]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 175.

[19]Ibid., pp. 175, 180-181; Walters, League, II, 552-553; Wilson to Moffat, June 11, 1934, Moffat Papers.

and those moves circumvented the conference's admission of failure and the fundamental issue of disarmament.[20]

Two of the select bodies met and concluded their work before the end of June. The Security Committee submitted a report which established the principles for the conclusion of regional security pacts and which stipulated that the agreements would conform to the League Covenant and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The body recommended the use of the Model Treaty of Mutual Assistance of 1928 as a pattern. The Committee of Guarantees of Execution merely discussed various means of violating a disarmament convention and proper courses of action, and then it drafted a note on some specific methods which the nations would have to modify in future discussions.[21]

The Arms Committee devoted more time to its task, beginning deliberations on June 15 on proposals which Wilson advanced and which the committee chairman drafted. Under those articles, since each country was responsible for controlling the production and the trade of state and private producers within its jurisdiction, individual governments would work for the passage of domestic legislation along those lines. The Permanent Disarmament Commission would exercise protracted and

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[20]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 181-183; Walters, League, II, 553-555; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 299-300.

[21]Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 183-185; Wilson to Hull, June 15, 1934, 500.A15A4General Committee (Security)/3; Wilson to Hull, June 28, 1934, 500.A15A4General Committee (Security)/4; Wilson to Hull, June 27, 1934, F.R., I, 124-125; Wilson to Davis, June 30, 1934, Norman H. Davis Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; hereafter cited as Davis Papers.

automatic supervision over the signatories through a general licensing method. On July 2, the committee approved the text which was recommended to be a part of a disarmament convention, and it adjourned until autumn.[22]

Consideration of the draft continued, but no consensus was reached. At the Bureau meeting of November 20, Henderson led off with the suggestion of protocols concerning arms manufacture and trade, budgetary publicity, and the setting up of the Permanent Disarmament Commission. The Bureau approved Henderson's plan and provided for the American draft, which Wilson presented about arms production in line with the text adopted on July 2, to be sent to capitals for their study and response. Between February 14 and April 13, 1935, conference organs debated the United States proposals. Agreement floundered on the French push for maximum publicity which would permit Paris to know the extent of German rearmament and on the British reluctance to disclose armament figures lest publication affect its growing armaments program. Instead, a modified copy was accepted and sent to the governments for future consideration. The assembly bodies never acted on the report, and no further formal meetings were conducted. So, in the fall of 1935, Wilson closed the Geneva office of the American delegation, and, subsequently,

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[22]Wilson to Davis, June 30, 1934, Davis Papers; Wilson to Davis, June 15, 1934, 500.A15A4General Committee (Arms)/3; Wilson to Hull, June 28, 1934, 500.A15A4General Committee (Arms)/5; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 184; Wilson to Hull, July 2, 1934, F.R., I, 127; Wilson to Hull, July 3, 1934, F.R., I, 128; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," p. 184.

operated out of the consulate or the Berne facilities.

Essentially, the disarmament efforts initiated in 1932 had failed. European political developments caused the breakdown of the conference, and the unchecked armaments race assured that it would not be summoned again. Also, those developments ended the last European attempt to secure a general weapons agreement.[23]

While the Disarmament Conference was going through its last stages, another test of the western democracies and the League was developing between Italy and Ethiopia. Although European nations were most concerned about the speedy pace of German rearmament, the world gradually learned of President Benito Mussolini's military preparations for an attack on its African neighbor which had fertile land and unknown mineral wealth. The first clash occurred on December 5, 1934, and the offended party appealed to the League for help. In the spring, the international organization concentrated more upon censuring Germany for violation of the Versailles Treaty military clauses than about considering an Italian violation of the Covenant. In April and May, the latter

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[23]Wilson to Hull, November 20, 1934, F.R., I, 187-188; Wilson to Hull, November 18, 1934, F.R., I, 183; Hull to Wilson, October 15, 1934, F.R., I, 143; Mahaney, "Soviet Union," pp. 188-190; Walters, League, II, 555; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 301, 305-307; Wilson to Hull, April 15, 1935, F.R., I, 62; Hull to Wilson, September 3, 1935, F.R., I, 63; Wilson to Hull, October 30, 1935, 500.A15A4Personnel/1488; Wilson to Hull, February 14, 1935, F.R., I, 12-15; Wilson to Hull, March 8, 1935, F.R., I, 32-33. A brief and inconclusive Bureau meeting was held in 1937, but it adjourned because political and economic conditions were not conducive to successful resumption of conference work. Wilson to Hull, May 31, 1937, F.R., I, 18-19.

problem was finally placed on the agenda despite strong resistance from Rome. The Council did not seriously take up the crisis, however, until the fall and winter of 1935.[24]

During the summer, public opinion and governmental positions plainly conflicted. A considerable portion of the world hoped for peace through League action, and the British people particularly urged vigorous measures. Yet, the British Cabinet was hesitant to follow the sentiment of its public. Thus, from June onward, the struggle became one of Italy versus the League, and isolationism and reaction bolstered Mussolini's position.[25]

In the crisis, British influence became dominant on the continent, whereas, previously, France had held sway. Certainly British leadership increased inside and outside the League, although it was not always clear and firm. London wanted to resolve Italian-Ethiopian difficulties apart from the League, if possible, and then present the settlement to the international body for its approval. Definitely, Britain did not want to disrupt Italian-French-British unity which would encourage Berlin to undertake bolder projects. Also, London planned to avoid placing Rome in a position which would necessitate its aligning with Germany. When it became impossible to settle the problem outside of

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[24]Walters, League, II, 623-625, 633, 638; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 308-309; Wilson to Hull, May 29, 1935, Wilson Papers.

[25]Walters, League, II, 635-636; Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 310-311.

Geneva, Britain and France adopted the contradictory double policy of trying to uphold the Covenant by collective action and attempting to preserve cordial relations with Mussolini's government.[26]

In September, the Council took up the African problem. Early the League's Arbitration Committee absolved Italy and Ethiopia of responsibility for beginning the hostilities. Still facing the problem of Italy's violation of the Covenant, the Council established a Committee of Five to study the issue and look for a pacific solution. The major body took that circuitous action because it hoped to stop Rome without offending it. Yet, League supporters were encouraged by the promises of Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Foreign Secretary, and French Premier Pierre Laval to fulfill their covenant obligations.[27]

Further changes in the Ethiopian situation demanded additional League attention. On October 3, Italy distinctly escalated the scale of conflict without a declaration of war, so, now the Council had to decide whether a war existed and whether its initiation violated the Covenant. On the first point, it found that war was occurring, as President Roosevelt had decided on October 5 in applying the arms embargo section of the American Neutrality Act. Further, it answered the second question affirmatively, and the promptness of the decision definitely surprised Italy.[28]

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[26]Wilson to Hull, May 29, 1935, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Hull, June 17, 1935, F.R., I, 294; Walters, League, II, 640, 645-646, 648.

[27]Walters, League, II, 642, 644-646, 648-650, 652-653.

[28]Ibid., pp. 652, 655.

That action led to the matter of sanctions. The League first established an embargo to prevent weapons from entering Italy, and it provided for restrictions forbidding loans and credits to Rome and for the stoppage of imports from Italy, effective November 18. The sanctionists chose to apply limitations on a gradual basis, because such nonmember states as Germany, Japan, Brazil, and the United States might undermine the effectiveness of the restrictions by trading with the European country anyway. Furthermore, limited sanctions would be effective in a long war which was anticipated and would not unduly antagonize Rome. In addition, unknown to most delegates then, Hoare and Laval, who had agreed that there was not to be a war, desired measures short of spurring Mussolini into retaliatory steps.[29]

The League added no other sanctions thereafter, although the matter was under consideration for more than six months. Canada made a proposal, which was shortly repudiated by a new government, for the application of restrictions regarding essential war materials which included oil, iron, steel, coal, and coke. Mussolini, suffering from the economic strictures and poor military results in November, pressed Laval to delay debate on those items and ultimately to prevent their application. In turn, the French Premier persuaded Hoare to relax pressure on Rome in order not to provoke an attack on the British Empire in Africa.[30]

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[29] Ibid., pp. 658-664.

[30] Ibid., pp. 665-667.

The French leader's maneuver resulted in the Hoare-Laval plan. It included the Ethiopian cession of a large amount of territory to its antagonist and the placing of another sizeable area under Italian administration. The mere news of the scheme had the immediate effect of postponing sanction extension and the eventual death of the idea. The Hoare-Laval proposition, Italian military successes, and the founding of the Fascist Empire in Ethiopia caused the League members to remove the other imposed sanctions in the summer of 1936. Thereafter, Italy displayed contempt for the League and the sanctionist powers.[31]

Throughout the dispute, the United States pursued an independent policy. In those years, the country was experiencing resurgent isolationism which profoundly influenced its policy and action. Since the Ethiopian problem related to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia asked Washington to prevent possible violation of that convention. In a bland reply, Secretary of State Cordell Hull expressed both his gratification that the League was studying the situation and the expectation that the two belligerents would abide by their international commitments. The imminence of a clash in Africa did contribute to the passage of the Neutrality Act of 1935 which provided for a mandatory embargo on American arms and munitions to belligerents and the transportation of those items to belligerent ports. On October 5, President Roosevelt applied those provisions after Italy accelerated the

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[31] Ibid., pp. 668-673, 676-678, 681, 688.

fighting, but the United States refused to cooperate in the sanctions effort.[32]

The entire episode was marked by less American cooperation and consultation with the League than in the Far Eastern Crisis, a fact which is supported by the activities of Wilson in 1935 and 1936. During the League sessions, he conversed with the delegates of the major powers, but American opinions were not as readily sought as in 1931-1933.[33] Indeed, no one seriously asked for American ideas in early September, although more representatives conversed with Wilson after that month.[34]

During the episode, the Minister was more truly an observer than in the earlier crisis. As he watched, he was happy that Britain was asserting itself at Geneva and had displaced France as the dominant influence. He also noticed that the League members seemed to have Germany in mind when they were attempting to deal with Italy. In their thinking, Germany constituted the really disturbing element on the continent, and they might check Hitler by stopping Mussolini. To some extent, their action was a "dress rehearsal" for the type action that they expected to take if Berlin tried to implement some of its announcements.

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[32]Allan Nevins, The New Deal and World Affairs: A Chronicle of International Affairs, 1933-1945 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 62, 66, 92-95; hereafter cited as Nevins, New Deal.

[33]An exception was Wilson's relations with the Italian representative who charged the American as holding a "pro-League attitude" regarding Italy. Wilson explained that the Italian had not come to talk with him personally and, as a result, that Wilson was receiving information from non-Italian sources. Thereafter, Rome had a man to see him several times a week. Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 316-317.

[34]Wilson to Hull, September 14, 1935, F.R., I, 648-649.

Nonetheless, in the first week of October, 1935, Wilson was both surprised and elated over the speed and the firmness with which the League acted.[35]

Upon the passage of the Italian-Ethiopian difficulties and the disarmament efforts, Wilson's work on major issues passed. After years of residence in Switzerland, Wilson naturally reflected on the United States relationship with the League. Unable to answer definitely whether refusal to become a member was wise, he personally thought that both Europe and his government fared better without the latter's being a part of the organization. So many issues were local or regional in nature that the delegation would have been voting on matters which did not concern it. Also, the American public demonstrated only a temporary interest in diplomatic and foreign affairs and not a lasting and sustained concern. With the people possessing such a disposition, the nation really could not exert much influence in an international organization. Along that line, he opined that the United States probably would have ended its affiliation with the League in any case when Germany instituted rearmament and Europe aligned for war.[36]

With a lighter work load, Wilson found the post in Switzerland less gratifying. He made fewer trips to Geneva on official business because the League's stature had diminished to an all-time low. Consequently, his usefulness was declining, and he had an excessive amount

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[35]Wilson, Diplomat, pp. 310-314.

[36]Ibid., pp. 332-335.

of leisure time. To fill his hours, he took up skiing, and he began his first book, The Education of a Diplomat, which recounted his early experiences in the diplomatic service.

Because of his inactivity in Switzerland, Wilson investigated the possibility of a new assignment. Before his career ended, he wanted a major post such as Tokyo or Berlin, but neither of those places was open at the time. In the spring of 1937, Hull notified the Minister of President Roosevelt's wish for him to become an Assistant Secretary of State. Wilson really preferred a field assignment where he thought that his contribution would be more personally satisfying, but Davis persuaded him that his chances of an important position would be greater after a time in Washington. That fact, and the recognition of a need for a change after ten years in one place, convinced him to accept the offer. In July, 1937, he left Berne for the policy post.[37]

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[37] Ibid., pp. 337-338; Wilson to Massigli, June 30, 1937, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Grew, April 16, 1937, Wilson Papers; Grew to Wilson, March 22, 1937, Wilson Papers; Welles to Wilson, June 2, 1937, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Phillips, June 28, 1937, Wilson Papers; Phillips to Wilson, June 25, 1937, Wilson Papers; Davis to Wilson, June 10, 1937, Wilson Papers; Wilson to James C. Dunn, the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs, April 21, 1937, 123.W693/469; Hull to Wilson, May 11, 1937, Hull Papers; Wilson to Dunn, June 28, 1937, Wilson Papers.

CHAPTER XI.

BERLIN AND WASHINGTON

In Washington on August 25, 1937, Wilson took his oath of office as an Assistant Secretary of State. He found the State Department in a state of flux because of a reorganization project, the significant number of personnel who were arriving and departing, and the difficulties in the Far East and Europe. His own work involved attention to both Far Eastern and European affairs, particularly as a principal adviser to Secretary Hull on Europe. He was a welcome addition to the staff since the Department had only a limited number of individuals personally and intimately knowledgeable about recent European conditions.[1]

Naturally, Wilson saw Secretary Hull frequently, and he revealed his view of the Secretary's qualities. He especially admired Hull's integrity and sincerity, but he sometimes disliked the top official's simple approach to events. Occasionally, the Secretary assumed a position and then accepted evidence which would support an opposite conclusion.

Before long, Wilson became a participant in the Secretary's symposiums which consisted of gathering the highest echelon personnel into a room for considering major problems of foreign policy. Then

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[1]Wilson to Bullitt, August 25, 1937, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Massigli, June 30, 1937, Wilson Papers; Welles to Wilson, July 20, 1937, Wilson Papers; Phillips to Wilson, June 25, 1937, Wilson Papers; Hull to Wilson, May 11, 1937, Hull Papers; Davis to Wilson, June 10, 1937, Wilson Papers.

Hull proceeded around the room asking each person to give his opinion, and, after that, everyone discussed the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches. Wilson experienced difficulty adjusting to the system, because he could not personally conduct affairs in that manner and because the procedure consumed an excessive amount of time. However, Wilson's colleagues generally considered the results good, so he accommodated himself to the practice which he came to appreciate more in the future sessions.[2]

The most pressing international problem confronting the Department in the summer and fall of 1937 was the China Incident. Since 1932, Japan had tried to increase its political standing on the Asian continent without open warfare. But the Chinese nation increasingly insisted on Nanking's resistance to Japan instead of appeasement, while, at the same time, military leaders gained more influence in the Tokyo government. The ultimate result was the beginning of Sino-Japanese hostilities which presaged World War II in the Pacific.

On the night of July 7, 1937, near the Marco Polo Bridge a short distance from Peiping, a contingent of Japanese troops were engaged in maneuvers outside a specified area in violation of the Boxer Protocol. Japanese and Chinese soldiers came into contact and fired on each other,

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[2]Hugh R. Wilson[Jr.], Disarmament and the Cold War in the Thirties (New York: Vantage Press, 1963), pp. 59, 75-76; hereafter cited as Wilson, Disarmament; Wilson to Grew, August 28, 1937, Wilson Papers.

and at that moment Japan renewed its open military attempt to secure parts of China. The Chinese, demonstrating marked determination, resolved to prevent the seizure of the heartland of their possessions. But local efforts to end the hostilities failed; Peiping and Tientsin fell to the enemy on July 29, and fighting was occurring as far south as Shanghai by mid-August.[3]

The United States assumed a more cautious and independent attitude during this crisis than it had six years before. Secretary Hull preferred to make statements about the promotion of peace without obligating his country to act. Indeed, the avoidance of alliances or entangling commitments was essential to Hull's approach. Accordingly, the United States sought to lessen the danger of its possible involvement in military or political controversy but to protect the rights and property of its citizens. The key features of the indefinite and gradually developing Roosevelt policy included neutrality and patient observation.[4]

Dictating American policy in part was the Neutrality Act of 1937. That legislation stipulated a compulsory and impartial embargo on the exports of munitions and loans to belligerents in case of war.

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[3]Edwin O. Reischauer, The United States and Japan (Rev. ed.; New York: The Viking Press, 1957), pp. 26-27; Richard W. Leopold, The Growth of American Foreign Policy: A History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 527; hereafter cited as Leopold, Growth.

[4]A. Whitney Griswold, The Far Eastern Policy of the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 454-456; hereafter cited as Griswold, Far Eastern Policy.

But the President could decide for himself whether war or a state of war existed; under that provision he might use the law or decline to employ it at his discretion.[5]

Because of the Far Eastern hostilities, Secretary Hull called several sessions of the top State Department officials to consider the applicability of the Neutrality Act. At first, a general feeling existed that the law should not be invoked then, but that its application could not be postponed indefinitely. Generally, the personnel wanted to utilize the legislation which offered a statutory basis for action. Also, the procedure supposedly would not arouse public desire for full invocation of the law. In contrast, Secretary Hull preferred only a presidential statement to discourage arms trade with belligerents.

At first, Wilson stated an alternate approach from the one which the President later officially adopted. On September 4, he expressed his ideas, as did other Departmental personnel, in response to the Secretary's direct request for opinions. He suggested the immediate application of Section I, but he did not want Section II invoked. He chose that position for the Far East because, generally, no danger existed to American trade there, as it might potentially concerning Europe. Consequently, Wilson saw no need to restrict, actually penalize, American shippers who conducted trade with Japan. Instead, he proposed a statement similar to that of Roosevelt's declaration of 1935 during the Italian-Ethiopian crisis. The scheme included a warning that Americans in their contact

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[5]Leopold, Growth, p. 508.

with belligerents assumed the risk for commercial intercourse. Wilson foresaw the possibility of citizens being killed in China or in the seas off Asia, and the probability of public criticism for failure to protect them. He would preclude that possibility by forewarning American nationals.[6]

The President adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward use of the statute. In line with the thinking of Secretary Hull, Roosevelt declared that arms trade with and shipment to belligerents were contrary to American policy. By September 14, he decided to review daily the pertinence of the Neutrality Acts to events, thus to permit the United States to apply the law when necessary, but to allow China to receive weapons in the meantime. The President formally defined the hostilities as an incident rather than a war, since the latter classification would have automatically made the statute effective.[7]

After the September 14 announcement, President Roosevelt developed a quarantine concept. Originally, Secretary Hull and Norman Davis recommended a Presidential statement on international cooperation, and Roosevelt asked other State Department officials, including Wilson, for their written ideas on the subject. In turn, the President adopted most of the suggestions, but the quarantine idea, which he stated in a Chicago address on October 5, was his alone. He referred to war as a disease which might infect nations and peoples far removed from the origin of

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[6]Wilson, Disarmament, pp. 60, 62, 64, 68-69.

[7]Griswold, Far Eastern Policy, p. 456.

hostilities. Although alluding to the usual practice of isolating patients during an epidemic, he made no specific recommendations for implementing such a procedure. He thought that the peaceful nations should make a mutual effort to guarantee basic international principles and pledges in treaty promises. While cautioning that isolation or neutrality were not means of meeting world problems, he was determined to prevent American involvement in war.[8]

Actually, Roosevelt was attempting to gauge sentiment on American foreign policy. Staunch isolationists sharply criticized the alleged attempt to entangle the United States in war, instead of drawing back from it. Optimistic internationalists applauded the address and urged aid to Chinese Nationalists and the Loyalist faction in Spain.[9]

Hull and Wilson reached conflicting interpretations of the message. Both were surprised by the inclusion of the quarantine portion, since no one in the Department had suggested it. Hull felt that the move constituted a definite setback to his effort of the past six months to shift public opinion toward concerted international action. Unlike the Secretary, Wilson thought that the President was proposing the taking of positive steps to curb aggression abroad. He disliked the proposition because the United States had only limited interests in the Far East and because it probably precluded the unilaterial application of the Neutrality Act.[10]

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[8]Leopold, Growth, p. 533.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), I, 545; James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), pp. 318-319; Wilson, Disarmament, pp. 68-69.

During September and October, 1937, some feeling developed for definite action toward Japan, which was continuing its military expansion in north and south China. The Department personnel seemed divided into two schools of thought, perhaps more on desire than actual policy. The first group looked for a method of coercing Japan to halt its aggression. Proponents of that view included Judge R. Walton Moore, the Counselor of the State Department, Assistant Secretary George Messersmith, and Stanley Hornbeck, the Chief of Far Eastern Affairs. The second group wanted to express dissatisfaction with Japan's conduct in China and possibly to state that Tokyo had not kept its international agreements. That alignment consisted of Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, J. Pierrepont Moffat, James C. Dunn, all of the Western European Division, Joseph Green, the Chief of Arms and Munitions Control, and Wilson. The vital point of their procedure was that no actual pressure should be applied because it might lead the United States into war.[11]

Several factors accounted for the conclusions of the second school. First, American economic interests in the Far East were much more limited than in Europe. Second, Britain could not assist in combat or coercion in East Asia because of London's greater attention to European conditions. Third, in that situation, only the United States Navy could offer protection of Washington's interests. Fourth, any American

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[11]Wilson, Disarmament, p. 66.

show of force would mean that the Philippines were exposed to possible Japanese attack.[12]

Wilson had considerable misgivings about American involvement in the Far East. In his frustration, he wished that President George Washington had cautioned the United States against political entanglements in the Pacific. Wilson could not understand why the United States so readily assumed a Far Eastern role when its interests were greatly restricted. In contrast, the American government reluctantly accepted political obligations in Europe where its cultural and material interests were a hundredfold larger. Furthermore, he contended that anger at Japan over the violations of treaties and aggression were abstractions which should not be fought for since no abstraction was worth the price of war. He believed that only the defense of territory and vital interests justified risking a government's security and land. Therefore, he adhered to a very narrow concept of action in the Far East.[13]

Throughout the autumn of 1937, the Roosevelt administration continued to grope for a policy. Clearly, the United States did not contemplate the sending of naval or military forces to the Far East, nor did it plan to abandon its isolationist approach. Britain and the United States conferred about the appropriateness of extending their good

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[12]Wilson to Grew, October 18, 1937, Wilson Papers; Wilson, Disarmament, pp. 67-68.

[13]Wilson, Disarmament, pp. 69, 72-73.

offices to China and Japan for ending hostilities, but neither London nor Washington was willing to implement that procedure. Instead, the United States elected to act in accordance with the Nine Power Treaty. Even here, its response was extremely limited. Indeed, it had no proposal to make to the Brussels Conference, which consisted of the nine powers except Japan, or a plan of procedure about Sino-Japanese difficulties which the United States would support. The powers at Brussels restated the treaty principles as essential to peace and declared that a cessation of hostilities would best serve the two combatant nations and all governments. Unfortunately, those weak, ineffective measures tended to stiffen Japanese resentment toward intervention from Washington and other capitals.[14]

Similarly, American relations with Germany were strained because of economic and political differences and aggravated by unsatisfactory American diplomatic representation in Berlin, the latter condition helping to open the way for Wilson's return to a field assignment. Since 1933, William E. Dodd, a historian and loyal Democrat, had been the Ambassador to Germany, but he did not get along with the German government, other foreign officials, or his own staff. Dodd, a firm believer in American democracy, expressed his disapproval of the Nazi regime in

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[14]Leopold, Growth, p. 531; Wilson, Memorandum, November 28, 1937, F.R., III, 727-728; Wilson, Memorandum of a Conversation with Walravens, Second Secretary of the Belgian Embassy, October 20, 1937, F.R., IV, 94-95; Griswold, Far Eastern Policy, pp. 458-460; Wilson to Grew, November 16, 1937, Wilson Papers.

undiplomatic private conversations and public speeches. In September, 1937, the State Department, increasingly displeased with his performance as were Reich personnel, and the President agreed to replace him at the end of the year. It considered several diplomatic figures who might restore American diplomatic contacts, including William Bullit, Joseph Davies, and Hugh Gibson, who declined the office, before it finally chose Wilson. On December 29, 1937, Dodd left Berlin, and on January 18, 1938, Wilson took the oath of office. Although the ambassador-designate arrived in Berlin in mid-February, 1938, he did not assume his official duties until March 3, due to the absence of the Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler from the city.[15]

For the third time in his Foreign Service career, Wilson held a diplomatic post in Germany. On none of those occasions did he like living in the country, although he was fully occupied during each stay. The work was absorbing, but conditions there did not appeal to him, probably because the German life-style differed from his preferences. His personal desire for an assignment where the customs and people were more to his

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[15]Hugh R. Wilson, Jr., A Career Diplomat, The Third Chapter: The Third Reich (New York, 1960), p. 76; hereafter cited as Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat; Dodd to Wilson, December 9, 1937, 123.W693/504; Welles, Memorandum of Conversation with German Ambassador Dieckhoff, December 15, 1937, 123.W693/504½; Hull to Roosevelt, December 7, 1937, 123.W693/506; Dodd to Hull, December 4, 1937, 123.W693/515; Wilson to Nathaniel T. Davis, Chief of the Division of Foreign Administration, January 18, 1938, 123.W693/518; Hull to Wilson, January 17, 1938, 123.W693/519; Gilbert to Hull, February 16, 1938, 123.W693/523; Wilson to Hull, March 3, 1938, 123.W693/527; Robert Dallek, Democrat and Diplomat: The Life of William E. Dodd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 310-315.

tastes clashed with his professional wish to remain in Berlin where he could observe and handle interesting problems daily. In 1938, he possessed feelings of revulsion at some phases of the Nazi regime, particularly the treatment of the Jews. Yet, he also had a profound desire to observe the means which Germany was using to restore itself politically and economically. "The spectacle of that powerful and ingenious race dealing with its problems was genuinely engrossing," he later said in a speech in the United States during 1940 or 1941.

In Germany, Wilson scrutinized "the most baffling of all peoples, the most difficult to understand." During his three German assignments, he was impressed by the outstanding ability of Germans to cope with unusual conditions, especially in the industrial and financial realms. In his opinion, however, that ingenuity did not extend to government, an area in which he considered the Germans "baffled and troubled." In addition, the populace comprised a volatile, dynamic, and restless people who were seldom completely satisfied with their accomplishments. The German "character" was so compelling to Wilson, that he regarded the Germans as the most changeable of all western peoples; yet, the Germans loved order and method which they liked to be imposed by higher authorities. Those two traits were particularly evident to the Ambassador in the Jewish persecution. Planned cruelty, or calculated barbarity by the state might be upheld if the program benefited all the nation, but Germans could not forgive a man acting alone for revenge or punishment in violation of the law, or venting uncontrolled anger. When Wilson spoke

of the barbarous treatment of the Jews, Germans were astonished and countered with the crimes of Al Capone in Chicago, the lynching of Negroes, and the labor riots in the United States. To Wilson's remark that public opinion in his country condemned such violence, the typical German reply was, "All the worse. Where passion prevails, there is barbarity." Only gradually did Wilson come to grasp the profound difference between Americans and Germans.

By 1938, Germany enjoyed a prosperity which showed itself in the busy mining and manufacturing activities, and which had been gained at a great human price. The Nazi regime had eliminated unemployment and the disorders of the 1920's, and, in fact, some industries experienced a labor shortage which helped to elevate the workman's status. But Wilson soon discovered how the government achieved the apparent order and unity. The Gestapo and the Black Shirts, both secret police organizations, acted ruthlessly and effectively to squelch actual or potential disorders; children betrayed their parents in the name of Nazism; terror gripped the hearts of thousands of Germans.

Despite its cruelty, the Nazi regime won a marked degree of sympathy and support among the workmen with its labor program. Nazi government and party agencies formulated and ably conducted significant social and welfare activities which gained for the workers security in job tenure, old age benefits, paid vacations, and adequate working and living conditions. Thus, the lot of workers was drastically improved without a corresponding pay increase. Hitler himself took a genuine interest in the welfare of the workingmen, although he had little regard

for the intellectual or the white collar classes. Critics and opponents of Hitler and Nazism might complain about the undemocratic way of administering the program, but the plan was a definite contribution to the life of industrial personnel.[16]

When Wilson first arrived in Berlin, he doubted the durability of the Nazi regime, a view which American travelers in Germany and some publications in the United States frequently held. Wilson quickly saw the error of those assessments, and he told Hull that the avowed Nazis constituted a large minority whose power far exceeded its numbers. The opposition which constituted those persons fundamentally against the regime included a much smaller group of less political influence due to government restrictions on general political activities. Wilson felt that most citizens, whom he considered the most influential group within the nation, did not support or oppose the Nazi government on principle. Generally, they distrusted most Nazi party officials except Hitler, but they backed the regime because of patriotism and the lack of any alternative to their current administration.

Wilson also contended that Germany's economic future appeared secure. While the nation certainly did not have gold reserves comparable to those of France, the United States, and Switzerland, the international demand for German products kept the value of the mark stable. Likewise, the trade balance was good and, according to German observers, would

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[16]Wilson, "Under Three Reichs," Wilson Papers; Wilson to Hull, May 24, 1938, Wilson Papers.

continue to be so. In case of a planned modification in trade arrangements, the alternation would have to be done slowly in order not to disrupt the exchange by creating a dangerous imbalance. Even Jewish bankers and businessmen, who might understandably be expected to be critical of Nazi programs, were gradually becoming convinced that the economic system was viable. Those circumstances persuaded Wilson that for the immediate future prophets of an early collapse of the Nazi Reich were thinking wishfully.[17]

Within a short time, Wilson revealed his observations about Hitler. He described the Nazi Fuehrer as a man of simple and direct communication, and his chief impression from their first meeting was "the lack of drama in this exceedingly dramatic figure." The American Ambassador was more personally impressed with the evident charm of Mussolini than with that of Hitler, but the first session with Hitler was strictly formal, so the two officials did not communicate freely. Wilson said that he was happy to meet the Reich leader who had brought prosperity and pride to the previously defeated and demoralized Germany. Hitler, who, in a rare response, seemed unwilling to accept the sole credit for his country's attainments, spoke of the restored confidence and the nation's accomplishments under the National Socialist Party. Either Hitler was being unusually modest on this occasion or Wilson failed to

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[17]Wilson to Hull, May 24, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Moffat, March 7, 1938, Wilson Papers.

perceive the megalomania of his host.[18]

By the time of the second conversation, Wilson had formed a more precise opinion. By then, he had picked up the characterization of Hitler as an artist, an approach which Germans frequently used. Wilson felt the term appropriate if it referred to a person who reached his decisions and acted more through instinct than a reasoned train of thought. Naturally, the Reich Chancellor garnered information from many sources, for he could not conduct governmental affairs otherwise; his thought processes, while using that information, were directed toward the emotional idea of a greater Germany. To Wilson, the artist concept encompassed Hitler's outstanding talent of weighing chances, of judging the hesitancy of other states to block German action, and to act at the moment when other governments were most impotent--all factors which were operative in the annexation of Austria.[19]

While Wilson was still adjusting to the new post, the Austrian crisis developed. Several months before, Hitler had informed his primary advisers of the need to incorporate all Germans into the Third Reich. Thus, he would annex Austria, the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia, and Danzig under the guise of self-determination. He created a critical situation in the first country and pressured its president to resign, and his successor, a prominent Austrian Nazi, promptly requested German troops to keep order. By March 12, Reich soldiers occupied Vienna, and

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[18]Wilson to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 3, 1938, in Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, pp. 18-21.

[19]Wilson to Roosevelt, March 12, 1938, ibid., pp. 21-22.

a month later elections in Germany and Austria confirmed the union which the Versailles Treaty prohibited. Throughout the episode, Berlin received a minimum of outside protest, because France was undergoing another of its frequent Cabinet crises and because Britain considered the German move inevitable on ethnic grounds.[20]

In the main, the United States remained quiet except for the problem of guarding the lives and property of its citizens. When the American chargé in Vienna had difficulty contacting authorities about protection-of-interest cases, he informed Wilson of the situation. The latter took up the matter with the German Foreign Office officials who claimed that he could present the problem to them because the two countries were united. He refused to accept that procedure since the United States had not yet taken an official position about the change of authority in Austria. Consequently, at that moment, he could only contact the German officers to obtain information about nationals. Once Washington accepted the altered Austrian status, several protests to the German government brought the situation under control.[21]

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[20]Robert A. Divine, The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry Into World War II (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 51; hereafter cited as Divine, Reluctant Belligerent; Wilson to Hull, March 12, 1938, F.R., I, 426-427; Wilson to Hull, March 13, 1938, F.R., I, 434-437.

[21]Wilson, Memorandum of a Conversation With Hans G. von Mackensen, State Secretary of the German Foreign Office, March 18, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Hull, March 18, 1938, F.R., II, 506-507; Divine, Reluctant Belligerent, p. 51; Wilson to Hull, April 27, 1938, F.R., II, 510; Welles to Wilson, April 27, 1938, F.R., II, 512; Wilson to Hull, April 29, 1938, F.R., II, 512-513; Wilson to Hull, May 7, 1938, F.R., II, 514; Wilson to Moffat, April 2, 1938, Wilson Papers.

The United States was less successful in its attempts to collect Austrian debts. In 1930, Vienna and Washington had signed a debt agreement, and two years later they agreed on a moratorium. When that nation's independence ended, the United States considered that Germany would assume responsibility for discharging the public and private obligations. Accordingly, Wilson so informed Berlin, which refused to accept a legal liability to pay the amount or to participate in international deliberations about it. Ultimately, Wilson made no more progress toward collection than any of his foreign colleagues.[22]

While Americans in the United States bitterly denounced the brutal blow to Austria, and the Germans celebrated their coup, Wilson assessed the meaning of the Anschluss. Clearly, Hitler's government enjoyed economic superiority in the area, and the acquisition gave him a valuable means of expansion into southeast Europe. In addition, the Fuehrer was fulfilling the goals of uniting all Germans, gaining equality of rights for his people, and ending the limitations of the Versailles Treaty. Once the Third Reich consolidated its Austrian gains and solved the Czechoslovakian minority problems, then Wilson expected the Chancellor to turn toward Russia for expansion and settlement.[23]

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[22]Hull to Wilson, April 5, 1938, F.R., II, 483-484; Hull to Wilson, May 28, 1938, F.R., II, 487; Wilson to Hull, May 31, 1938, F.R., II, 488-489; Wilson to Hull, July 15, 1938, F.R., II, 493; Moffat to Wilson, August 29, 1938, Wilson Papers; Hull to Wilson, October 18, 1938, F.R., II, 494-495; Wilson to Hull, September 8, 1938, Moffat Papers.

[23]Moffat to Wilson, March 21, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Moffat, April 2, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Hull, March 24, 1938, in Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, pp. 22-23.

Indeed, Czechoslovakia was the next area of Hitler's attention. In the spring of 1938, the spokesman for the Sudeten Germans demanded full independence for his people who lived in that part of Czechoslovakia adjacent to Germany. Prague refused and asked France and Britain for assistance, which was not readily given. Consequently, Germany and Czechoslovakia were making military preparations in the spring and summer while the Sudeten representative and Prague officials conferred about possible solutions in the summer.[24]

Tensions increased, rather than declined. Early in September, the Sudeten-Czech deliberations were stalled until Prague decided to give the minority its independence. Unfortunately for the prospects of immediate settlement, Hitler now demanded the cession of the Sudetenland to his government. In turn, President Eduard Benes requested France to help his country, and Paris looked to London for action. The deliberations of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French Premier Eduoard Daladier about the extreme German demand convinced them that Czechoslovakia should yield to Berlin's wishes. So, on September 21, a reluctant Benes underwent the humiliation of releasing the Sudeten Germans, the strategic works, and 800,000 Czechs in that disputed area.

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[24]Divine, Reluctant Belligerent, pp. 52-53; Nevins, New Deal, pp. 150-151. On March 15, Wilson wrote, "Austria is an integral part of the Reich. Bismarck's work is to continue. I would rather be a citizen of Missouri than of Czechoslovakia with three million Germans in my territory and on the flank of Bismarck's children." Wilson, "Diary," 1938, p. 9, Wilson Papers.

Hitler wanted more, however. The next day, he issued the ultimatum that the Sudetenland be transferred by October 1 or the Reich army would enter the region. Naturally, France, Britain, and Czechoslovakia were taken aback, but, at the Munich Conference, British and French delegates conceded the central point. In return, the German Chancellor promised not to secure further European territory, a pledge which he broke within six months. On September 30, Czechoslovakia became the sacrifice to fulfill the widespread demand for peace at any price. As a result, the Munich settlement cost the western democracies much, although they gained a year to prepare for World War II.[25]

During the crisis Wilson's role was largely limited to observation. The value of his reports varied because he had difficulty verifying or disproving accounts which he heard. His sources of information were both limited and imprecise, since the Chancellor was away from Berlin for long periods and so were other foreign personnel. Besides, he was even unsure of the reliability of his Nazi party informants, because their relationship to the Fuehrer fluctuated so much that it was better to await developments rather than to speculate. While Wilson personally did not think that Germany contemplated a military assault on Czechoslovakia, he was confident that immediate results were dependent on Czech internal stability, the degree of conciliation which Benes

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[25]Divine, Reluctant Belligerent, pp. 53-54; Nevins, New Deal, pp. 151-158.

displayed, and Hitler's disposition.[26]

Not until September did Wilson become apprehensive about the prospects for a deliberated settlement. Prior to that month, he reasoned that the Sudetenland was not important enough for the Chancellor to risk a general war. Since Hitler had always left room to maneuver out of dangerous situations, the Ambassador tended to discount some of the grave reports brought to him by officials who had conversed with the Fuehrer. When the German leader failed to reserve a means of escape after mid-September, Wilson became firmly convinced that general war would come in the immediate future if Czechoslovakia did not answer the Reich ultimatum satisfactorily.[27]

Evidently profoundly impressed by such news and the overall urgency of the problem, President Roosevelt belatedly worked for a settlement through consultation. Although American national interest was not immediately jeopardized, he urged the renewal of the negotiations, only to have Germany reject the offer. Then he and Chamberlain appealed to

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[26]Wilson to Hull, April 28, 1938, F.R., I, 491; Carr to Wilson, June 27, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Hull, August 13, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Hull, September 8, 1938, in Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, pp. 48-49. During a tense period of May, Wilson suggested the possibility of informing the German and the Czech Foreign Minister of the American interest in a peaceful solution to preserve European peace. Secretary Hull decided that such an approach was inadvisable. Wilson to Hull, May 21, 1938, F.R., I, 506-507; Hull to Wilson, May 23, 1938, F.R., I, 515.

[27]Wilson to Hull, September 25, 1938, F.R., I, 656; Wilson to Hull, September 27, 1938, F.R., I, 683-684; Wilson to Hull, September 1, 1938, F.R., I, 566-567.

Mussolini for the use of his good offices, a move which shortly brought results when Hitler agreed to confer with the involved powers at Munich.[28]

The United States played only a slight role in the Czech crisis. Because American national interests were not directly touched, the British and French governments decided independently of the United States not to defend the Czech position, a circumstance which encouraged Hitler to stand firm. Certainly, Washington officials were relieved by the pacific settlement, but before long, however, even the American public questioned the wisdom of conceding so much to Germany, a fact which contributed to the decline of isolationism in the United States.[29]

While aggressive expansion was adding to tensions in Europe, German-American relations were also strained. Throughout Wilson's tenure in Berlin, hostility existed because of different views on the Jewish question, the Berlin-Tokyo axis, the discrimination in bond payments, trade problems, and the divergent concepts about individual liberty and government control. Nor was the situation improved by the marked German sensitivity to foreign opinions of the Third Reich and the extreme American press criticism of the Nazi regime. When Berlin officials complained about that bias, the Ambassador countered that Americans were convinced

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[28]Nevins, New Deal, pp. 154-156; Roosevelt to Hitler, September 27, 1938, F.R., I, 684-685.

[29]Divine, Reluctant Belligerent, pp. 54-55; Nevins, New Deal, pp. 159-160.

of the sound basis for their comments. Moreover, the German press frequently published errors about the United States.[30]

Wilson actually deplored the bitterness of the journalistic accounts which he believed definitely aggravated tension. The complaints accentuated the irritation of the Germans and made diplomatic and commercial intercourse more difficult. Much more could be accomplished by trying to cooperate with the German nation instead of maligning it; the prospect for improved relations would be better if United States citizens would only halt their adverse criticism.[31]

Trade relations constituted another major area of difficulty. A specific problem resulted from the refusal of Washington to allow the sale of helium to Germany as fuel for their airships. Earlier in 1938, the United States had agreed to supply the German Zeppelin Company with a specific amount of the gas. Later, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes refused to approve the shipment unless Germany guaranteed that the helium would not be used for war purposes and unless Germany granted American officers supervision of the element within the Third Reich.

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[30]Wilson, "Diary," 1938, p. 12, Wilson papers; Wilson, Memorandum of a Conversation with German Minister for Foreign Affairs Ernst von Weizsacker, undated, F.R., 1938, II, 438-441; Wilson, Memorandum of a Conversation with Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, undated, F.R., 1938, II, 434-438; Wilson to Hoover, May 11, 1938, in Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 28.

[31]Wilson to Hoover, May 11, 1938, in Wilson,Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 28; Wilson, Memorandum of a Conversation with Reich Propaganda Minister, Dr. Goebbels, undated, F.R., 1938, II, 438.

Since neither country would alter its position on those points, the United States finally repudiated the contract. Understandably, Berlin charged Washington with bad faith, and its people were "deeply resentful" over "a pretty shabby trick." Wilson, who deplored what he considered a wrong decision by his government, realized that the helium regulations made his work more difficult and contributed to the unfriendly attitude toward the United States.[32]

Nor were general trade relations good, and at least four factors accounted for the lack of better conditions. First, Americans were convinced that German debt regulations were discriminatory toward them. Second, they felt that Germany was dumping goods on the world market. Third, they opposed the German pursuit of bilateral trade rather than the more open system of Hull's reciprocal trade agreements. Fourth, they objected to the German weltanschauung.[33]

In 1938, essentially no progress was made in removing those obstacles. Although the United States wanted the normalization of commercial relations, the State Department was unwilling to alter its position

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[32]Wilson to Hull, April 13, 1938, F.R., II, 457-458; Welles to Wilson, April 20, 1938, F.R., II, 458; Wilson, "Diary," 1938, pp. 25, 27, Wilson Papers; Green to Wilson, April 19, 1938, Wilson Papers; Green to Wilson, May 17, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Welles, May 12, 1938, in Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, pp. 31-32; Wilson to Green, May 19, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Green, June 6, 1938, Wilson Papers; Green to Wilson, June 29, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Welles, July 14, 1938, Wilson Papers; Welles to Wilson, July 27, 1938, Wilson Papers.

[33]Wilson to Hull, August 16, 1938, F.R., II, 422-424.

while the Third Reich exercised exclusive trade control in its area. So, Wilson was limited merely to explaining Hull's philosophy of trade and the advantages of the approach without making any offer to the Foreign Office personnel. Consequently, American business and export interest had to make their own plans independently.[34]

The major item of contention between the United States and Germany was the Jewish persecution. Early in his regime, Hitler struck upon the idea of his people as a superior Aryan race in order to promote a definite national pride in the nation. A part of his plan was to purge the Third Reich of "inferior" races, and particularly the Jews. So, he instituted a program of confiscating Jewish property, eliminating Jews from business and the professions, and destroying their culture. In 1938, the persecution increased markedly, especially after the Austrian and Czech crises. German Jews began emigrating from the Reich, and the United States and other governments made feeble, reluctant, and largely unsuccessful efforts to take them in. When a German Jew killed a Reich diplomatic official in Paris during November, the Hitler government accelerated the already vicious persecutions. President Roosevelt, like

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[34]Wilson, Memorandum of a Conversation with Ribbentrop and Mackensen, February 17, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson, "Diary," 1938, p. 17, Wilson Papers; Sayre to Wilson, April 28, 1938, F.R., II, 418-419; Messersmith to Wilson, February 24, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Messersmith, March 16, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Sayre, November 10, 1938, F.R., II, 427-428; Sayre to Brinkmann, December 16, 1938, F.R., II, 431; Wilson to Hull, April 4, 1938, 123.W693/532. Nor was Washington willing to associate debt discussions concerning American holders of German bonds with trade problems, a point Wilson made clear to the Economics Ministry. Hull to Wilson, June 29, 1938, F.R., II, 420; Wilson to Hull, June 30, 1938, F.R., II, 420; Wilson to Hull, June 30, 1938, F.R., II, 421; Hull to Wilson, July 2, 1938, F.R., II, 421-422.

leaders of both political parties, publicly indicated horror and shock, and, further, the United States demonstrated its displeasure by calling Wilson home for consultation. The action was little short of severing diplomatic relations, but certainly less drastic in its implications.[35]

In the United States, the degree of hatred toward the Nazi regime greatly surprised Wilson. He received considerable anonymous mail from persons who requested him to resign and speak freely about conditions in Germany and from individuals who wanted diplomatic relations improved lest the Jewish question draw the United States into a war with Germany. He recognized that no improvement in German-American relations would come about unless his countrymen could think coolly about the Jewish question, and the continued persecutions in Germany exacerbated tensions. Under those circumstances, the State Department decided in March, 1939, to retain him on a consultative status indefinitely.

Ultimately, German action led to Wilson's resignation as the Ambassador to Berlin. First, Hitler indicated his interest in securing all of Czechoslovakia, and then, in March, 1939, Reich forces occupied Czechoslovakia in clear violation of the Munich pledge. The same month, Hitler's government proposed to Poland the German annexation of Danzig

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[35]Nevins, New Deal, pp. 161-165; Divine, Reluctant Belligerent, p. 55; Wilson to Hull, April 22, 1938, Hull Papers; Wilson to Hull, April 5, 1938, F.R., II, 360-361; Hull to Wilson, May 7, 1938, F.R., II, 369-370; Wilson to Roosevelt, June 2, 1938, F.R., II, 374-375; Wilson to Hull, June 22, 1938, F.R., II, 380-382; Wilson, Political Report of the Ambassador in Germany, undated, F.R., 1938, II, 386-387; Wilson to Hull, October 26, 1938, F.R., II, 395-396; Wilson to Hull, November 12, 1938, F.R., II, 396; Messersmith to Hull, November 14, 1938, F.R., II, 396-398; Hull to Wilson, November 14, 1938, F.R., II, 398-399; Wilson to Myron C. Taylor, Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, July 27, 1938, Wilson Papers.

and a strip of land across the Polish corridor, naturally Warsaw refused, and a diplomatic deadlock developed over the Danzig question. The world fully expected and prepared for a German attack on Poland, and in May, Hitler told a secret meeting of Reich officials that he would invade the area at the first good opportunity. On September 1, when Reich troops entered Poland, Germany touched off World War II in Europe. Immediately, Wilson resigned as a protest against the ruthless conduct of Germany.[36]

Wilson spent the last fifteen months of his Foreign Service career working with minor State Department agencies in Washington. From September, 1939, to January, 1940, he worked temporarily with a bureau which handled refugee problems. In January, since no interesting field jobs were available, he was made a Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and assigned to the newly formed Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations. The body, chaired by Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, surveyed the problems which would probably arise once Europe reached a peace settlement. Wilson, the vice chairman, served as the liaison man for the three main subdivisions. The Political Committee

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[36]Messersmith to Wilson, November 25, 1938, 123.W693/580; Wilson to Gilbert, December 1, 1938, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Kirk, May 8, 1939, Wilson Papers; Messersmith, Memorandum to Davis, March 18, 1939, 123.W-693/602; Wilson to Kirk, September 2, 1939, Wilson Papers. As late as March, 1940, Wilson indicated a willingness to go back to Germany if the Roosevelt administration really contemplated the exchange of ambassadors as reported by the press. Since the general American-German relations remained unimproved, the President had given no thought to the appointment of an ambassador. Wilson to Hull, March 7, 1940, Hull Papers; Hull to Roosevelt, March 15, 1940, Hull Papers. Nevins, New Deal, pp. 178-180, 187, 193.

under Welles directed its attention to European and world problems both before and after the war while the Disarmament Committee, led by Counselor R. Walton Moore, concerned itself with weapons control. The Economic Committee, directed by Leo Pasvolsky who was an economist and a Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, studied international economic relations.[37]

A general feeling of skepticism among many involved personnel handicapped the project from the beginning. A number of individuals, especially those from Economic Affairs whose role was vital to the study, believed that the investigation was really academic and, therefore, that it was of little practical value. Wilson agreed that much work was academic, but that the idea was worthwhile, even if only a tenth of the material could be used after the war. The lack of enthusiasm was reinforced by the German push beyond Poland into Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Consequently, the effective period of the committee ended in May, 1940, although officials conducted fruitless meetings thereafter.[38]

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[37]Wilson to Kirk, September 2, 1939, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Mrs. Kate Wilson, September 1, 1939, 123.W693/626; Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 94; Hull to Wilson, January 31, 1940, Wilson Papers; Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 93; Wilson, "Diary," January 12, 1940, Wilson Papers.

[38]Wilson, "Diary," January 12, 16, 18, 1940, May 20, February 28, March 1, 9, 19, 1940, Wilson Papers; Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, pp. 100-101; Wilson, Memorandum, Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations, May 31, 1940, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Grew, March 9, 1940, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Henderson, February 7, 1940, Wilson Papers.

When Wilson's association with the committee's work ended in May, Wilson began thinking about his future. He had accepted the vice chairmanship of the Advisory Committee with much satisfaction that henceforth he could remain at home. At his age, field appointments were less attractive than in his earlier days, especially since no interesting overseas assignments were open to him. Increasingly, he wanted to play golf, write at least enough to avoid becoming bored, and care for Mrs. Wilson who was seriously ill. The combination of circumstances convinced him to retire, and on November 18, 1940, he left the State Department after almost thirty years of association with it.[39]

He held no government position for approximately one year. In the spring semester of 1941, he was the Lamont Lecturer in Government at Yale University. During the year, he published Diplomat Between Wars which covered his diplomatic career between 1917 and 1937, and Diplomacy As a Career which consisted of his lectures at the Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts. After the Pearl Harbor attack, he served in the organization which developed into the Office of Strategic Services where he worked with many former and active Foreign Service Officers dealing with espionage, counterintelligence, and morale operations. In 1944, he participated in the preparations for the Dumbarton Oaks conversations on

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[39]Moffat to Wilson, July 18, 1940, Moffat Papers; Wilson to Moffat, July 25, 1940, Moffat Papers; Wilson, "Diary," October 24, 1940, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Grew, September 1, 1940, Wilson Papers; Wilson to Hull, November 26, 1940, Hull Papers.

international organization, and the next year, he was an observer at the San Francisco conference which established the United Nations. On October 1, 1945, he resigned from the OSS to return to private life.[40]

During 1945 and 1946, he was active in the Republican Party apparatus. On April 11, 1945, Herbert Brownell, Jr., the GOP National Chairman, appointed Wilson the Chief of the Foreign Affairs Section of the National Committee to assist Congressional members in Washington, D. C. During the spring, Wilson was urging a policy of close American cooperation with the Soviet Union to prevent a division of the world into two hostile camps and to preserve world peace. In December, 1945, he became an adviser to a newly appointed Republican committee on the development of national policy, in which capacity he continued until the following summer when he went to his summer home at Bennington, Vermont. On August 19, 1946, he was admitted to Putnam Memorial Hospital in Bennington, with a serious cardiac condition from which he never recovered, and he succumbed to a second heart attack on December 29, 1946.[41]

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[40] Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 108; New York Times, May 29, 1945, p. 9; U. S. Department of State, Postwar Foreign Policy Preparations, 1939-1945, Department of State Publication 3580, General Foreign Policy Series 15 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1949, pp. 316, 323, 381.

[41] New York Times, April 12, 1945, p. 24; ibid., December 15, 1945, p. 13; ibid., August 28, 1946, p. 29; ibid., December 30, 1946, p. 19; Wilson, Jr., Career Diplomat, p. 108.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSIONS

Between 1919 and 1940, the United States gave a varied amount of attention to foreign affairs. The nation enthusiastically entered World War I, and the peace negotiations that followed with the idealism that the world could be safe from future global conflict. Yet, almost immediately, Washington rejected membership in the League of Nations and moved steadily toward isolationism in the 1920's. Simultaneously, the country devoted more and more attention to domestic materialism, little thinking that prosperity would end abruptly at the end of the decade.

In the 1930's, the United States shifted its concern in the main to internal matters. The economic depression, which increasingly included more countries, constituted the overriding influence in the formulation of both domestic and foreign policy. Indeed, the United States and the other governments became noticeably preoccupied with domestic concerns. Consequently, the Hoover and Roosevelt administration gave first priority to alleviating economic distress.

But the United States did participate in international matters when it could do so without assuming any special responsibility for preserving world peace and when the people would permit. In the 1920's, the government established a cautious contact with the League of Nations and increased its cooperation on different occasions. The degree of involvement depended on the general importance of the subject, the previous American position, and the machinery for handling problems.

Thus, the United States participated actively in minor conferences and such major meetings as the Geneva Naval Conference and the General Disarmament Conference. During the Manchurian crisis, the American participation in League deliberations was most hesitant and in the Italian-Ethiopian dispute nil except for minimal informal conversations.

At first, then, the United States had nothing to do with the League, but in a short while it sent unofficial observers. Yet, the State Department ordered the American Ministers and Consuls in Switzerland to be most circumspect about contacts and appearances, and after 1927, as the United States was involved in more League-sponsored activities, Washington's instructions closely regulated its representatives. When American officials attended the sessions, they made it plain that they could not bind their government; when the American Minister talked to the Secretary General of the League, the contact often was confidential and informal.

As one of the major world powers, on more than one occasion the United States represented a potential key to League action, but the commitment to nonmembership and isolationism generally blocked American involvement. Sometimes other nations accused Washington of obstructionism for keeping the League from moving forward. On several occasions, in particular during the Manchurian crisis, the attempt to place the responsibility on the United States was really a pretext for shifting the blame for failure onto an innocent party. Still, the American arrangements were awkward, cumbersome, and confusing, dictated as they were by

the American people who were hypersensitive about association with the League and who demanded that the State Department follow a policy of aloofness.

Both inside and outside of the League, a manifestation of the interwar stresses consisted of naval and arms production. The Washington Conference set the precedent of limiting naval construction by categories and ratios. The League did its part by sponsoring the Geneva Naval Conference which failed because France and Italy would not attend and because Britain, Japan, and the United States had different needs to fulfill. Likewise, the differences in land armaments and interests kept the nations on the League's Preparatory Commission from reaching fundamental agreement even after more than five years of debates. In 1930, the London Naval Conference removed some obstacles, although France and Italy continued to disagree on naval ratios.

Despite numerous delays, the General Disarmament Conference finally managed to convene and hold its sessions. The prospects for success were never bright with the existence of the international depression, the Manchurian crisis, the divergence of armament requirements, the growing dislocations in European governments, the unresolved French-Italian naval dispute, the French demand for security, and the German demand for equality of treatment by abrogating the Versailles Treaty restrictions. The German-French tension proved the major stumbling block, especially with the United States and Britain being unable and unwilling to guarantee French territory against German resurgence. Consequently, political impediments remained unmoved, and, indeed, the disarmament effort failed

long before the sessions ended.

The United States took an active interest throughout the period of the League's attention to disarmament. From the beginning, it was less vitally concerned about arms production, mainly because of its geographic remoteness from Europe and, though the United States was affected, in the main the American government regarded armament problems as primarily those of Europe. Washington did not materially hinder the efforts, but it did make numerous reservations along the way. When it tried to get talks and sessions moving, the steps were generally inadequate and too late. Likewise, though the United States acted whenever its interests might be jeopardized, it often held off stating its position in the hope that the other governments would settle their differences.

Given the need for caution in American-League relations, the State Department could hardly have made a better choice for the Ministerial assignment in Switzerland than Hugh Wilson. He possessed some ideal qualities for the post: he was a quiet, efficient, hardworking, and intelligent man, who handled diplomatic matters in an unobtrusive manner. In line with his concept of the good diplomat, he confined himself to observing, conversing, reflecting, and reporting; if he could not affect policy, he could at least share his advice, counsel, and insights. Not surprisingly, he disliked diplomats who angrily criticized their foreign colleagues or the policy of other nations. And the venting of anger was an exercise which Wilson felt was better left undone, since such expression tended to aggravate relations instead of improving

them; denunciation only made it more difficult to communicate and to solve problems. Similarly, a nation should exercise extreme care in making a moral interpretation of policy and events because its standards of morality and conscience were not always shared by the other involved parties. If one government intended to censure another, it should be willing to utilize force or to forego the attempt, since such unsupported attempts also exacerbated tensions.

Wilson's pre-ministerial experiences contributed to his qualifications for the job in Switzerland. In Latin American, Japan, and Europe, Wilson learned the diplomatic ranks as a secretary and counsellor, occasionally working as a chargé, and for the period 1923-1927 he utilized his journalistic training as the Chief of the Division of Current Information, which work helped him specifically in two disarmament conferences and generally in his press contacts in Switzerland. The State Department early recognized those administrative qualities and his ability to handle situations skillfully and considered those factors in giving him the position. While a bit young and inexperienced in terms of the usual requirements for the Geneva and Berne post, he performed the assignment well, considering the ambiguity of the American-League relationship. His reserved nature and disdain of pomp and ceremony made it possible for him to converse with League officials in a confidential and informal way without attracting undue attention; undoubtedly, a less adept person would have inspired more newspaper stories about alleged associations with the League.

This is not to say that Wilson never asserted himself while in Switzerland. He often played situations by ear, as he did during the Conference on the Abolition of Export and Import Prohibition, because he was unable to contact the State Department on rushed occasions and because Washington could not foresee all developments and the means of handling them. Likewise, during 1931, he especially exerted efforts to prevent foreign nations from delaying preparations for the General Disarmament Conference and from placing preparatory responsibility upon the United States. Sometimes, he also disagreed with Washington's approach and stated so. On other occasions, he expressed a line of attack to Washington, and the Secretary of State overruled him. In such instances, his Geneva perspective was too restricted, because of his limited environment and in view of Washington's overall policy orientation.

Particularly on arms control and disarmament, Wilson constituted an element of assistance and continuity in Switzerland. Between 1927 and 1934, he was the one American official most often present, either as an adviser or a full delegate, the latter rank not coming until 1932. He received increased responsibility slowly because of his inexperience in armament matters and the presence of men with more personal knowledge and experience. Prior to Wilson's arrival in Switzerland, Hugh Gibson had established himself as America's leading disarmament expert during the Coolidge administration, a distinction which Gibson also retained throughout the Hoover term. When Roosevelt became President, he designated Norman Davis, who had been associated with arms restriction talks in the Hoover administration, to head the American delegation. At the

same time, Washington's need for internationally known politicians and personalities to handle affairs precluded Wilson's being designated a delegate. In the early years, Wilson was given full status only if the meeting was less important than a plenary session. Not until late 1932, when the disarmament delegations had dispersed from the General Disarmament Conference and the prospect of a protracted and unsuccessful conference existed, did the State Department grant him full rank.

When the State Department began looking for a successor to William E. Dodd in Berlin, Wilson appeared as a logical choice; his performance in Switzerland and his quiet, professional approach to diplomacy qualified him for an ambassadorship, and the United States needed a man in Berlin who could communicate with German officials and provide it with accurate information, capabilities that Dodd had lost. He was not able to improve American-German relations, but no diplomat could have; the best one can say is that he did not make them worse, and many men could have done that. When the Jewish persecutions resulted in Washington's decision to withdraw him, Wilson's service in that major field position ended. Though he returned to Washington, he had to retain his title or face the prospect of embarrassing his government; the only alternative was to resign, since no high places, especially in the field, were open. In November, 1940, he ended his association with the Foreign Service.

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