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GERMAN CASE.

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Isaac Alteras

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THE GERMAN CASE

by

Isaac Alteras

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Feb. 26, 1971
Date

February 26, 1971
Date

Ken Sadron
Chairman of Examining Committee

Harold C. Lynett
Executive Officer

Donald J. Harvey

Lucas L. Snyder

Andrew G. Whitman

William J. Shenah
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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PREFACE

The Geneva Disarmament Conference convened on February 2, 1932 with high hopes that, after a devastating war, a new and better world would evolve helped by a general reduction and limitation of armaments.

This work endeavors to present an account of the German policy at this international gathering -- the most important since the Paris Peace Conference. For Germany more than any other nation awaited its opening with great eagerness, yet Germany more than any other power must carry the blame for the Conference's breakdown. The success or the failure of the Conference depended largely upon whether or not Germany's claims would be accepted by the former Allies.

What did Germany claim? Ever since she became a member of the League of Nations in 1926, her representatives in the Assembly, the Council, and in the Preparatory Commission for Disarmament emphasized that their country had disarmed in accordance with Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, that Germany was militarily helpless having only a 100,000 man voluntary army without reserves, without an airforce, without heavy artillery and with a navy which included a limited number of cruisers, destroyers and torpedo boats. Herself disarmed, she was eager to see other European powers follow suit, particularly France and her allies.

In Germany's view, the basis for such a demand lay in the fact that her unilateral disarmament must not be interpreted by France as a penalty or as a special measure adopted by the former Allies against an aggressor state, but rather as a prelude to general disarmament on the part of the former victors. Pledges to that effect were given to her by them at Versailles and were included in the Preamble of Part V of the Treaty, in the Clemenceau Note of June 16, 1919, and in Article VIII of the Covenant

of the League of Nations. For Germany the raison d'être of the Disarmament Conference was the fulfillment of those promises to disarm, which in her view she was legally and morally entitled to demand.

In a word, Germany demanded Gleichberechtigung (equality of rights) in armaments with other powers. This thesis, was diametrically opposed to the French insistence upon the principle most dear to her -- security. The Disarmament Conference became the battle ground between these two theses. Basically, the problem was political rather than technical. For Germany wanted to be treated as an equal power with equal rights. In essence it meant the disappearance of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles which imposed upon her an inferior status to other powers in regard to military power. The method to achieve technical equality in armaments would be negotiated once Germany's political or juridical equality had been acknowledged by the former Allies.

In what manner could equality in armaments be achieved? Indeed, the manner in which the German Chancellors from Heinrich Bruening to Adolf Hitler have tried to bring this about differed greatly. For Bruening's disarmament policy differed from the one followed by Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher, and, as far as Hitler was concerned, the Disarmament Conference was useful only if it legalized Germany's secret rearmament and future open rearmament.

Thanks to new evidence, the differences in their disarmament policies can be more accurately traced. This work will focus on the differences in the policies of Bruening and Papen, which contemporary observers believed to have been approximately the same. Evidence will be presented disproving the thesis that had the former Allies acceded to Bruening's moderate stand, his government and ultimately the Weimar Republic might have been saved. In

addition, this study will refute the argument that the former Allies had concurred with Bruening's demands too late to save his government.

The German policy at Geneva was greatly influenced and in some cases determined neither by the Chancellor nor by the Foreign Ministry but by the Defense Ministry -- a question to be explored in terms of whose policy prevailed at what stage of the deliberations.

This work will examine in detail Hitler's policy which was aimed at the eventual breakdown of the Conference on October 14, 1933. Hitler's policy deserves special scrutiny because this was his first encounter with the Western powers and his obstructionist tactics were not only designed to transform the disarmament negotiations into an exercise in futility, but also to test the reaction of Britain and France to a policy of intransigence and bluff. The Disarmament Conference had given Hitler the opportunity to test the firmness of the Western powers and their will to take retaliatory action against Hitler's tactics. If successful in 1933 at Geneva, why should not Hitler have adopted the same method in solving other foreign policy problems in the future?

The study of Germany's tactics and strategy at the Disarmament Conference is vital for us in order to understand her foreign policy during the last years of the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, such a study will re-affirm the view that Hitler had planned his foreign policy and took advantage of available opportunities in the process. Such an approach was evident already in the first weeks of February 1933 and throughout the disarmament deliberations.

In the process of focusing on German policies and attitudes at Geneva, the study will analyze the reactions of the former Allies to her demands for rearmament, and especially to Hitler's obstructionist tactics.

CHAPTER I

FROM VERSAILLES TO THE GENEVA DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE (1919-1932)

On January 18, 1919, representatives of the Allied and Associated nations assembled in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles to draft a peace treaty which would be submitted to Germany. By June 1919 its terms, known as the Treaty of Versailles, had been worked out by the Allied Powers and were accepted by their former enemy, Germany.

Part V of the Treaty of Versailles contained the disarmament provisions imposed upon Germany by the Allied Powers. It stipulated restrictions as to size, permissible weapons, and term of service in the future Reichswehr. Accordingly, within three months of the coming into force of the Treaty, the total number of the German army was to be reduced to 200,000 men, and by March 31, 1920 to 100,000 (including a maximum of 4,000 officers).¹ The German army could not comprise more than seven divisions of infantry and three divisions of cavalry grouped under two army corps headquarters. It was to be recruited on voluntary long term service of twelve consecutive² years for regular soldiers and twenty five years for officers.

¹ Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, vol. XIII, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, Article 160. (Hereinafter cited as P.P.C., followed by year, volume and article number). For more details see Table No. 1, pp. 334-336. The Spa Protocol (July 9, 1920), altered the above time table. The new schedule called for a reduction to 150,000 by October 1, 1920, and to 100,000 by Jan. 1, 1921.

² P.P.C., 1919, vol. XIII, 173, 174. British military experts preferred a small, long term professional army rather than a medium sized (200,000) short term conscript one advocated by Marshal Foch. Foch would have allowed membership in the new German army to all classes thus making it more "democratic" and hopefully less efficient. He was overruled by Clemenceau who sided with the British experts, yet acceded to Foch's demand that the German army because of its professional character should not exceed 100,000 men. Hence the origin of the "Hundred Thousand Man Army." See Harold J. Gordon, The Reichswehr and the German Republic 1919-1926 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 149-150.

The civilian personnel performing army administrative services was reduced to one-tenth of the number laid down in the budget of 1913. Nor could employees or officials of the German state, such as custom officers or forest guards, be assembled for military training. Educational institutions such as universities or touring clubs could not take part in any military maneuvers or training. Only members of the regular army were to devote themselves exclusively to the maintenance of internal order and control of the frontiers.³

The German navy, according to the Treaty, was to be reduced to six battle ships of the Deutschland or Lotharingen type, six light cruisers, twelve destroyers, and twelve torpedo boats. The total number of personnel in the German navy was fixed at fifteen thousand officers and men.⁴

As to armaments, munitions, and material, the Treaty defined the amount that Germany could possess. The armaments in excess of the specified amounts had either to be destroyed or surrendered to the Allies. The manufacture of war material was prohibited except in factories approved by the Allies. Importation into Germany of arms, munitions, or war material of any kind was strictly prohibited. No German military, naval, or air mission was allowed to serve in foreign countries or engage in any type of military training. The Germans were also forbidden to possess heavy artillery, armoured cars, or tanks. The importation of aircraft engines or parts was also prohibited in order to deny Germany an air force.⁵

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P.P.C., 1919, vol.XIII, 160-162, 176-177.

4

Ibid., 181-197. Article 190 lists the tonnage. 10,000 for battle-ships, 6,000 tons for the cruisers, 8,000 tons for the destroyers, and 200 tons for the torpedo boats.

5

Ibid., 164, 170, 179, 198-201.

Treaty articles also restricted Germany's right to maintain or construct new fortifications. Accordingly, fortifications were forbidden west of a line drawn fifty kilometers east of the Rhine. Nor could fortresses be built in the area covering the entrance into the Baltic Sea from the North Sea.⁶ Inter-Allied military commissions would supervise and control the execution of these Treaty terms, with the full cooperation of the German government.⁷

These terms, extracted by the Allies, were designed to render Germany militarily helpless and thus to remove a menace to world peace.⁸ Yet all these attempts proved to be illusive. Under the guidance of General Hans von Seeckt, the Commander in Chief (Chef der Heeresleitung) and Otto Gessler, the Defense Minister, Germany succeeded in evading and circumventing various clauses of the Treaty. The aim of Seeckt was to reconstruct and organize the 100,000 man Reichswehr into a well trained force making up in over all efficiency for what it must lose because of its limited size.⁹ Emphasizing quality over quantity, scrupulous care was exercised by Seeckt in recruiting the rank and file of the Reichswehr. The standards for the enlisted men were high both physically and intellectually. Meticulous attention was also given to the selection of the four thousand officers. The major characteristics of the new Reichswehr were high morale,

⁶
Ibid., 180.

⁷
Ibid., 203-209.

⁸
For the German popular reaction to the Treaty, see John W. Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power The German Army in Politics 1918-1945 (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), 47-60. Gordon Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 368-369.

⁹
Ibid., 393.

10

esprit de corps and efficiency. Thus, within the limits of the Treaty, Germany built an army more efficient than any force based upon conscription. It constituted the cadre of a dangerous force.

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While reorganizing the Reichswehr, Seeckt also received help from Soviet Russia in secretly circumventing the Treaty. To this end, Seeckt developed German-Russian military collaboration with the knowledge and approval of the civil authorities before and during the chancellorship of Gustav Stresemann. Airplanes and engines were produced at Fili near Moscow, shells at Petrograd, Tula, Slatust, and poison gas at Trotsk near Samara. German pilots were trained at Russian airfields thus building the nucleus of the future Luftwaffe.

12

The Allies had known about those Treaty violations. At the same time, however, western military observers believed that at this stage the German army was no match even for a second rate power equipped with modern weapons. The Reichswehr, it was assumed, was yet incapable of immediate combat despite its potential capabilities. Consequently, the violations of the military clauses of the Treaty were looked upon as defensive in character. Furthermore, in the name of conciliation, the Allies in the wake of the Locarno Agreements ignored the report of the Control

13

Gordon, 213.

11

In this manner each soldier was actually a potential officer for Hitler's Wehrmacht.

12

Francis Ludwig Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 1935-145; H. W. Gatzke, Stresemann and the Rearmament of Germany (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1954), 8-9; Helm Speidel, "Reichswehr und Rote Armee," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, No. 1 (1953), 43-44.

13

Gordon, 424-426; Gatzke, 108; A. J. Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 82, 121.

14

Commission which pointed out that Germany had never fully disarmed.

In March 1926, however, the German application to the League of Nations was accompanied by a demand that all controls should be abolished on the ground that Germany had complied with the terms of the Treaty. The Allies acquiesced to the German demand. Germany joined the League (September 8, 1926) and the Commission of Control was withdrawn on January 31, 1927. This constituted a great diplomatic victory for Germany and a personal achievement of Stresemann.

15

The withdrawal of the Commission implied more than merely freeing Germany from future controls over its secret rearmament. In the context of disarmament Stresemann laid the foundation of German policy on this question for years to come. He exploited effectively the significance of the Commission's withdrawal since it meant that Germany had complied with the Treaty and disarmed, therefore, the Allies should follow the German example and disarm as well.

In a speech before the Reichstag on June 23, 1927, Stresemann, now the Foreign Minister of Germany, declared that the Allied powers had recognized the fact that Germany had indeed disarmed. For by destroying her eastern fortifications and dissolving all associations connected with

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For a detailed study of the manner in which the Germans circumvented the military clauses of the Treaty, see J. H. Morgan, Brigadier-General, Assize of Arms the Disarmament of Germany and Her Rearmament in 1919-1939 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946) also an article by the same author, "The Disarmament of Germany and After," Quarterly Review, No. 481 (October, 1924), 415-457.

15

In view of Germany's apparent compliance with the disarmament clauses of the Treaty, Stresemann secured the evacuation by the Allies of the first zone of the Rhineland (Cologne Zone) which was carried out at the same time as the signing of the Locarno Agreement on December 5, 1925.

military training, she had offered her neighbors the best guarantee of security.¹⁶ He implied that a disarmed and defenseless Germany was anxious to see the ex-victors to follow suit. Thus Stresemann raised the curtain on Germany's new role as an advocate of disarmament by the Allied powers.

His position was based upon two specific pledges which the Allies had given Germany at Versailles during June, 1919. The first and most important was included in the Preamble of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles:

In order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations, Germany undertakes strictly to observe the military naval and air clauses which follow...

Secondly, the official reply of the Allied and Associated Powers to the observations of the German delegation on the conditions of peace, handed by Georges Clemenceau to Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau on June 16, 1919 stated:

The Allied and Associated Powers wish to make it clear that their requirements in regard to German armaments were not made solely with the object of rendering it impossible for Germany to resume her policy of military aggression. They are also the first steps towards that general reduction and limitation of armaments which they seek to bring about as one of the most fruitful preventives of war, and which it will be one of the first duties of the League of Nations to promote.¹⁷

¹⁶

Gatzke, 104-105.

¹⁷

Italics mine in both quotations. *P.P.C.*, 1919, vol.XIII, 309. J. Curtius, "Die Grundzüge der Deutschen Abrüstungspolitik," *Zeitschrift für Politik*, vol. XXI, (March 1932), 755-757. It is important to note that these pledges applied specifically to Germany and the Central Powers. The principle of universal disarmament as a mutual obligation, applicable to all member states of the League, was first mentioned in the Fourth Point of President Wilson's Fourteen Points. Subsequently it constituted the first paragraph of Article VIII of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which read: "The Members of the League recognize that the maintenance of peace required the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety, and the enforcement by common action of international obligations."

Consequently, after Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926, her representatives in the Assembly, the Council, and the Preparatory Commission argued that her disarmament was designed only to be the prelude to general disarmament among all nations. Since her disarmament was acknowledged, Germany now urged the Allied powers to honor their pledges given to her in the Preamble and in Clemenceau's letter. The German demand could be summarized in one word -- Gleichberechtigung (equality of rights) in armaments, to be achieved by one of three different methods. Either by the disarmament of the former Allies down to the level imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, or, barring that, Germany should be allowed to rearm up to a point to which the former Allies agreed to reduce. The third possible method of achieving equality in armaments was by the rearmament of Germany up to the level of Poland and France. On the surface this seemed to be a technical issue. Basically, however, it was a matter of principle for it involved political and legal questions. Germany was really striving to remove the stigma of inequality by the revision of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

Opposing Germany's position were France, the Little Entente, Belgium and Poland. They based their opposition on the principle of security and on the sanctity of the Treaty of Versailles. France remembered all too well the invasions of 1870 and 1914 when she suffered a million and a half deaths and three million wounded. As a result, the "German menace" seemed real to her at all times. It was not surprising that the preservation of the status quo and the quest for security became something of a "national fixation."¹⁸ For France, the German thesis of equality of rights

in armaments was in direct contradiction to her concept of security.

The Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference had become the battleground between the two seemingly irreconcilable approaches to disarmament. The Commission had met intermittently from 1926 to 1930 to prepare the ground work for a general disarmament conference. In the first session, the chief German representative, Count Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff, had raised the question of the bilateral character of the disarmament obligations. He emphasized the Preamble to Part V of the Treaty and the Note handed by Clemenceau, to the German delegation on June 16, 1919. He reiterated the principle that the disarmament of Germany was to be a prelude to general disarmament. According to Count Bernstorff, Germany was entirely disarmed and "its forces are no longer sufficient to guarantee the national security referred to in Article VIII of the Covenant." He alluded to the formula of security arbitration and only then disarmament so much referred to by Joseph Paul-Boncour the French chief representative, and pointed out that the principle of security and arbitration had been strengthened under the Treaty of Locarno. Consequently, the discussions should be based on the assumption that security had already been achieved and, therefore, a system of practical disarmament must follow.

On the other hand, Paul-Boncour repeatedly brought up the question of priority between disarmament and security, suggesting that before armaments could be reduced it was necessary to establish methods of assisting a state in case of attack. The Polish delegate, enforcing the French

view, submitted proposals dealing with the possibilities of regional assistance and guarantees to states placed in unfavorable geographical situations. This fundamental question of whether security should precede disarmament or vice versa had already marred the discussions at the first two sessions of the Commission.

In the subsequent sessions the Commission considered two draft disarmament conventions submitted by Britain and France. ²⁰ Both drafts were discussed simultaneously and were finally amalgamated into one draft, subject to a second reading and further amendments. This draft was unsatisfactory to the German delegation. When the Commission met in its sixth and final session (April 1929) Count Bernstorff submitted his country's proposals for disarmament based on the method imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. The German draft convention called for the inclusion of trained reserves within the number of troops on active duty, or limiting their number by the simultaneous reduction of the annual contingent and the period of service. Barring this, the best method of disarmament would be that imposed upon Germany by the Allies, i.e. the abolition of compulsory service. Military weapons could be effectively reduced only by fixing a maximum figure for each category of weapons. For each state a maximum number of each weapon should be determined based upon tables giving a numerical list of authorized weapons. According to the German delegation there was a close connection between the direct reduction in the numbers of weapons and the question of trained reserves. A limitation of the former limited the possibility of employing reserves at the

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For a comparison between the two drafts, see John Wheeler-Bennett, Disarmament and Security Since Locarno (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 59-60.

outbreak of hostilities. In regard to chemical warfare, the German proposal called for the abolition of a "chemical arm" rather than the prohibition of "chemical warfare." This meant that the prohibition would apply not only to the dropping of bombs, but also to the dropping of high explosives incendiary bombs or any other chemical weapon dropped from the air. On the problem of supervision, the Germans rejected the principle of supervision on the grounds that it constituted an infringement upon national sovereignty.²¹

The German proposals were supported by the Soviet Union, the Netherlands, and Sweden all of whom declared that adoption of a method which would limit the number of weapons in service as well as in reserve could reduce the possibilities of aggression. Furthermore, they claimed that such a method in disarmament proved to be practical and had been included in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

After a second reading of the draft the Commission adopted the French point of view. In so doing it agreed to abolish chemical warfare, it refused to include trained reserves within the number of troops on active duty allotted to each country, and it agreed to limit material indirectly by giving publicity to budget expenditure on armaments. While this was satisfactory to France and her allies, it further antagonized Germany. For not only were none of her proposals adopted, but a new clause was introduced into the draft, budgetary limitations, the only loophole in Part V of the Treaty. From the German point of view this was a new and unwelcome addition to a Treaty she had tried so hard to revise.

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League of Nations, Documents of the Preparatory Commission, Series II, C.P.D., 138

The rebuff suffered by Germany at Geneva did not pass unnoticed by the Bruening government. On October 16, 1930, the German Chancellor, Heinrich Bruening in a speech before the Reichstag declared:

The promise given to us that the enforced disarmament of Germany would be a prelude of a general voluntary disarmament has so far been brought no nearer to its fulfillment. Many countries in defiance of treaty obligations are increasing their armaments, thus endangering the security and peace of the world. That is an untenable position.

Bruening also pledged "to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded to us by the Treaty to develop our defenses as far as the country's finances permit it and to uphold the military strength of the German people."²²

On October 29, 1930, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Reichstag passed a resolution calling upon the Government "to use the utmost pressure to secure the disarmament of other states in equal measure with Germany."

Bruening's warning provided the background to the second part of the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission, but there was no sign that Germany's demands were even taken into consideration. During the discussions of the final draft Convention her amendments regarding trained reserves and direct limitation of material were rejected. This had political repercussions in Germany. On December 2, 1930, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Reichstag adopted a Nazi sponsored resolution calling for the recall of Count Bernstorff from Geneva. Although this resolution had no

John Wheeler-Bennett, ed., Documents on International Affairs 1930 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 79. In June of 1928 Germany had laid down plans for its first Panzerschiffe, better known as "pocket battle-ships." Within the limit of 10,000 tons, the designers succeeded in increasing the armour and other military devices at the expense of its weight, until its striking power surpassed anything in its own class. This new type of war vessel, the Deutschland, was launched in April, 1931. It was this type of German skill that caused much anxiety to the French.

effective force, nevertheless, it was an indication that French intransigence in the question of disarmament did at least in part help the Nazi cause.²³ Unfortunately, a vicious circle seemed to have developed: Nazi strength created an uncompromising mood to German demands on the part of the French, while the French hard line fed German resentment, bolstering the extremist elements within Germany.

On December 9, 1930, the Preparatory Commission finally adopted a²⁴ draft Disarmament Convention as the basis for discussion in the first General Disarmament Conference. The draft was merely an outline fixing certain principles and leaving blank spaces to be filled later with exact figures indicating limitation of armaments in every military field. Germany rejected the draft on technical and political grounds. The Germans argued that technically the draft ignored the importance of trained reserves and did not provide stipulations for their reduction or limitation. Count Bernstorff pointed out that those trained reserves, after completing their service, continued to be registered and liable for military service. In contrast to Germany other nations could possess unlimited reserves.

The German delegation also objected to the direct limitations in sea and air armaments according to tonnage and categories, while in the case of armies there was to be only indirect limitations through the national budgets without a reduction in weapons, i.e. artillery, tanks and rifles.

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It is difficult to determine to what extent German disillusionment with the disarmament talks aided the Nazi movement. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Nazis capitalized on any German grievances and, from this point of view, their tremendous gains in the elections of September 1930 (from 12 to 107 seats in the Reichstag) could be attributed in some degree to the rejection of the German case at Geneva. Furthermore, the suggestion to recall Count Bernstorff from Geneva was an omen of Hitler's attitude on this question.

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For full text see, League of Nation, Publication, C.440, M. 187, 1931.

Count Bernstorff angrily pointed out that in the draft land armaments were sacrificed for the purpose of reaching unanimity on the question of sea and air armaments. Land armaments, he continued, "are for us the chief part of the whole thing...if there is to be security, there must be parity²⁵ of security for all." Thus, on technical grounds Germany rejected the draft because it did not consider Part V of the Treaty as a model for general disarmament.

What had greater significance for future German policy was the political aspect of the draft, namely Article 53:

The present Convention shall not affect the previous treaties under which certain of the High Contracting Parties have agreed to limit their land, sea or air armaments and have thus fixed in relation to one another their respective rights and obligations in this connection.

Count Bernstorff looked upon this article as intended to perpetuate Germany's obligations as contained in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. With unusual bitterness, he attacked this article stating that "if the majority of the Commission would only realize this deplorable result of its five years' work, they would avoid placing this artificial work in relationship with earlier Treaties.... In my opinion it would be tantamount to renewing the German signature to the disarmament clause of the Treaty of Versailles." Consequently, on December 9, 1930, the German representative declared that his government rejected the draft which, in its opinion, "is full of the most serious fundamental defects and omissions. People will be quick to see that this so complex an instrument lacks that which is essential,²⁶ namely a firm determination to disarm." He again asked that a general

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League of Nations, Documents of the Preparatory Commission, Sixth Session (Second Part) Series X, Official No.C. 4M4 1931, IX, Seventeenth Meeting, November 27, 1930, 264.

²⁶

Ibid., Twenty-Seventh Meeting, December 9, 1930, 409.

Disarmament Conference should be convened as soon as possible.

The Council of the League of Nations, at its sessions in January and May, 1931, adopted the report of the Preparatory Commission and its draft Convention. It also set the date of February 2, 1932, for the opening of the General Disarmament Conference. The German Foreign Minister, Julius Curtius, took the opportunity to reject emphatically the draft as involving no obligation on the part of Germany. The question of disarmament he said, was still an open one. According to the Foreign Minister it would be the task of the Conference to modify and improve that unsatisfactory draft. On March 18, 1931, Curtius told Horace Rumbold, the British Ambassador, that "Germany could not accept the thesis that for purposes of disarmament European states were to be permanently placed in two categories i.e. victors and vanquished."²⁷

Thus, after five years of constant debate not only did Germany's demand for equality of rights in armaments remain unfulfilled, but eleven years after Versailles her inequality of status was once again reiterated. Indeed, the weakness of the draft lay in its failure to propose specific limitations on the armaments of any nation except Germany.²⁸

Although France and her allies succeeded in passing a draft to their liking, at the same time it further antagonized Germany, something that could have hardly add to French security. The German press, regardless of party, told the German people about the obstructionist policies practiced

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Report by Rumbold to Simon, Jan. 1, 1932, British Foreign Office, vol. 15942, 2,21. (Hereinafter cited as B.F.O., followed by volume and document numbers. These unpublished records are deposited in the Public Record Office, London).

28

Anthony Eden, Memoirs: Facing the Dictators (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962), 27.

by France and her allies in trying to evade undertakings implicit in so many treaties. The main feature of the draft, they claimed, was the budgetary limitation of armaments which the Allies forgot to include in Part V of the Treaty. Instead of redeeming their promise and disarming, the further sub-
29
jugation of Germany had taken place.

The German Defense Minister, General Wilhelm Groener, in two speeches before the Budget Committee of the Reichstag declared that the value of an army "is determined not by the length of service but by the intensity of training, the number of trained reserves, the amount and quality of material." Accordingly, in his view, France possessed thousands of tanks, airplanes, and guns which could equip her trained reserves in case of war. He denied the French assertion that German land forces consisted of 100,000 men in the Reichswehr, 150,000 police, and 30,000 armed customs officials. He admitted
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that Germany had a police force of 105,000 but not armed custom officials.

These observations of Groener demonstrated one basic fact acknowledged by many: French armaments alone, without her allies', far outnumbered Germany's despite secret rearmament. What was true when the Inter-Allied Commission of Control was withdrawn in 1927 was still the case on the eve of 1932. In spite of German circumvention of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty, the British War Office on March 2, 1932 concluded:

The General Staff cannot believe that Germany is at present in a position to defend herself successfully against France and Belgium, even if Poland and Czechoslovakia did not intervene. It is the realiza-

29

Rumbold to Simon, Jan. 1, 1932, B.F.O., vol. 15942, 2, 20.

30

Wheeler-Bennett, ed., Documents on International Affairs 1931, 52-53.

tion of her present military weakness which is at the root of the German demand for equality of treatment in the sphere of armaments.³¹

This feeling of military weakness explains the relationship between Germany's disarmament policy and her Eastern Frontier. The Polish danger was very acute to the population of East Prussia. When Bruening visited the eastern provinces in January, 1932, he tried to prevent the German population from abandoning the East and moving westwards in order to avoid the Polish threat. In the Corridor area and Silesia the process of Polani-³² zation spelled danger for Germany. A great number of Germans in private conversations with British officials had expressed their concern with the "Polish menace."³³ Actually, Germany was more concerned about Poland than France. To this must be added the principle of national pride: Germany could not permanently accept a status inferior to that of Poland.

Considering these conditions, and in addition the pledges given by the Allies, Germany had, to say the least, a strong moral case which was recognized by other nations but not by France and her allies. The British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, in a speech delivered in the House of Commons on June 29, 1931, spoke about the pledges given to Germany and said: "If we were trying to get away from these obligations we could not do it."³⁴ They are there written definitely...."

³¹

Memo from the War Office to the Foreign Office on the extent and effects of the military breaches of the Treaty of Versailles, March 2, 1932, in Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939 (Second Series, 9 vols., London, 1960), III, 605. (Hereinafter cited as D.B.F.P., followed by relevant volume number).

³²

Rumbold to Simon, Jan. 1, 1932, B.F.O., vol. 15942, 2, 20.

³³

Minutes by Perowne on Newton's cable to Simon, June 10, 1931, B.F.O., vol. 15221, W8890/47/18.

³⁴

Wheeler-Bennett, ed., Documents on International Affairs, 1931, 57.

Throughout the discussions in the Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference, Germany accordingly claimed that her unilateral disarmament was intended to be a prelude to general disarmament -- an essential means in securing world peace. According to Germany, the moral and legal obligation of all states to disarm was embodied in the pledges given to her in the Preamble to Part V of Clemenceau's Note of June 16, 1919, as well as in Article VIII of the Covenant.

Germany, dismayed by the fruitless negotiations in the Preparatory Commission and by a draft which had actually reiterated her subjugation to Part V of the Treaty, looked upon the fulfillment of the Allies' pledges as the raison d'être of the upcoming Disarmament Conference. In marked contrast to his successors, Bruening would present his country's case in the most moderate and simplest terms, namely, the achievement of German equality in armaments not through the rearmament of Germany to the level of her neighbors but through their disarmament down ^{to} the German level. But apart from the technical aspect of equality in armaments, most important to the Bruening government was its demand for political or juridical equality, meaning that when a Disarmament Convention would be worked out by the Conference, this Convention would constitute the law for Germany and not Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

CHAPTER II

BRUENING AND DISARMAMENT

On February 2, 1932, the long awaited Disarmament Conference finally¹ convened in Geneva. Fifty-nine nations, out of sixty-four which were invited, assembled in the first plenary session. The participants regarded this Conference as the most important international gathering since the Paris Peace Conference. Their purpose in meeting was to find the means by which a reduction and limitation of armaments by each nation could be brought about in accordance with Article VIII of the Covenant and subsequent² League resolutions.

Yet the start of the Conference was dismal. Its opening had to be postponed for an hour while the Council of the League met to consider the Japanese attack against the city of Shanghai. This tragic coincidence was³ underlined by the President of the Conference, Arthur Henderson, in his opening speech. Referring to the events in the Orient, he pointed out that while this Conference had met to consider further steps towards the preservation of peace, it was at the same time "confronted with a situation of such extreme gravity in the Far East." As if to suggest that those events

1. Throughout the discussions in the Preparatory Commission, Germany repeatedly called for an early meeting of the Conference. In January 1931 during a session of the Council of the League of Nations, she requested that the Conference should assemble in the following November. The Council, however, set the date for Feb. 2, 1932.

2. The Assembly of the League, by a resolution adopted in 1928, had declared that the degree of security already achieved was sufficient to enable the governments to proceed to a measure of reduction of armaments.

3. In May of 1931, Arthur Henderson, then British Foreign Secretary, was chosen by the Council of the League as the President of the Conference.

should make disarmament more urgent, he stressed that the maintenance of huge armaments formed a "grimly fertile source of mutual fears and suspicion." The main objective of the Conference, according to its President, was to secure a substantial reduction and limitation of all national armaments, leading eventually to universal disarmament.⁴ Within this wide framework, however, the crucial issue which the Conference had to face was how to reconcile the French demand for security with the German insistence⁵ on equality of rights in armaments.

From the point of view of the Bruening government, the opening of the Conference was long overdue. The failure of the Allies to implement the disarmament pledges given to Germany in the Treaty of Versailles added additional grievances to the already existing state of popular discontent. Although the desperate economic conditions and the widespread unemployment were chiefly responsible for the radicalization of Germany, nevertheless it was obvious that Hitler's repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles appealed to many who were not necessarily affected by the economic circumstances. The Bruening government was accused by the Nationalist Party of lack of energy and passivity in foreign policy, particularly in the question of disarmament. The National Socialists and other Nationalist groups demanded that the government should publicly denounce the Treaty⁶ of Versailles, the League of Nations, and then rearm.

⁴ League of Nations, Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Records of the Conference, Series A, Verbatim Records of the Plenary Meetings, vol. I, Feb. 2 - July 23, 1932, 39-46. (Hereinafter cited as League of Nations, Verbatim Records, followed by volume).

⁵ John Simon, Retrospect: The Memoirs of Hon. Viscount Simon (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1952), 181.

⁶ Note communicated by Curtius, July 27, 1931, D.B.F.P., III, 484-485.

In spite of Nationalist pressure, the German government adopted a different policy concerning the question of disarmament. In a cabinet meeting two weeks prior to the opening of the Conference, it was decided that⁷ the German delegation at Geneva should emphasize that Germany's insistence upon equality of rights in armaments did not mean her rearmament to the level of the former Allies, but rather disarmament on their part. Furthermore, Germany would reiterate her moral right to demand a levelling down of armaments in accordance with Article VIII of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Since the disarmament of Germany was to be followed by general disarmament, Germany, according to the Bruening government, had the right to ask for equality in the method of disarmament, meaning, the application to other states of the methods of limitation applied to her by Part V of the Treaty. Germany would negotiate in good faith, show a conciliatory spirit and not threaten to leave the Conference if her demands were not accepted. Above all, France should be depicted as the stumbling block to any progress towards disarmament. The aim of the German delegation would be to isolate France diplomatically by exposing her to the world as the real opponent of disarmament. In the cabinet meeting Rudolf⁸ Nadolny, the German Chief delegate at Geneva who formulated the guide-

⁷ The German delegation at Geneva consisted of Rudolf Nadolny, head of the delegation, Graf von Wetzeck, Baron Freiherr von Rheinbaben, and Dr. Frohwein. General Werner von Blomberg and vice Admiral Baron von Freyberg-Eisenberg were the military experts. Dr. Schwendemann was the Councillor of the Legation.

⁸ Born in 1873, Nadolny entered the German diplomatic service under Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1902. He served in the 1920's as Ambassador to Sweden and then to Turkey. In 1932 and 1933, he was the Chief Delegate at the Geneva Disarmament Conference. Hitler's good opinion of him was shown by Nadolny's appointment as Germany's Ambassador to Moscow in 1933. He resigned from his post within a year because he refused to support the Nazi policy towards the Soviet Union and died in May 1953.

lines for the delegation pointed out that the German claim to equality in armaments through disarmament on the part of other nations had the support of at least forty delegations from among the fifty-nine participating at the Geneva talks. France, he claimed, found herself diplomatically isolated.⁹

Nadolny's assertion proved to be correct. Germany's thesis of equality in the methods of disarmament gained sympathy and support from many organizations. The Conference of the International Federation of the League of Nations Societies for example, meeting at Budapest in July, 1931, adopted a resolution stating it to be "indispensable that the League of Nations should officially recognize the principle of equality in disarmament between the vanquished and the victorious powers and that the 1932 Conference must¹⁰ begin to affect such equality." The representatives of this organization at the Disarmament Conference, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, submitted proposals to the Disarmament Conference for "qualitative" disarmament, that is, the abolition of ships over 10,000 tons, submarines, large guns, tanks, and military aircraft. In a sermon preached in the Cathedral Church

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Reichskanzlei Akten, Kabinettsprotokolle, Meeting held on Jan. 15, 1932, vol. CVII, D789051-D789055. (Hereinafter cited as Kabinettsprotokolle, followed by volume and frame number. These unpublished records in microfilm are deposited in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.). At the same meeting the Minister of Defense Wilhelm Groener expressed concern over Hitler's stand on this question as weakening Germany's position at Geneva. See below, 27. See also Reichskanzlei Akten, Allgemeine Abrüstung, Abrüstungskonferenz, Richtlinien für die Deutsche Delegation zur Abrüstungskonferenz, vol. IV, D811413-D811416. (Hereinafter cited at Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., followed by volume and frame number. These unpublished records in microfilm are deposited in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

10

As quoted in Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace The Story of the Collapse of Disarmament (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1935), 8.

of St. Pierre at Geneva on Sunday, January 31, 1932, William, archbishop of York, prayed for peace and the success of the Disarmament Conference. At the same time he also called upon the former Allies to honor their pledges given to Germany and disarm. The remainder of the sermon called
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 for Treaty revision. Numerous petitions and manifestos with ten million signatures attached to them were submitted to the President of the Conference, all stressing the theme of general disarmament.

If one of the German objectives was to expose France as antagonistic to disarmament, no one did more to further this aim than the French themselves. On February 5, 1932, André Tardieu, the French Minister of War and leader of the French delegation at Geneva, presented the French Dis-
 12
 armament Plan to the Conference and the press. It called for the internationalizing of civil aviation and giving the League the sole right to have at its disposal heavy bombing machines. According to the Plan, the victim of aggression by aerial bombardment would be able to use all its air force only upon the approval of the League. Batteries of long range artillery, vessels carrying guns of more than 8 in. calibre, or ships over 10,000 tons should also be placed at the disposal of the League. Furthermore, the Plan proposed the creation of an international police force to provide the first contingent of troops to come to the aid of the victim of aggression. This force should be under the League's command. In addition to these measures, there should be an acceptance of compulsory arbitration

 11

Sermon by William archbishop of York, Jan. 31, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. IV, D811438-D811449.

12

Although it was previously agreed that the general debate should begin on Feb. 8, 1932, with the British Foreign Secretary, John Simon opening the discussions, Tardieu circumvented this arrangement by submitting his country's proposals first, thus, securing a tactical advantage. By taking the initiative Tardieu tried to relegate all other proposals to the background.

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and definition of aggressor.

The policy put forward in this Plan underscored French fear of a possible attack or invasion. It also reiterated the aim of French policy since 1919, namely, the establishment of a system of security to precede any reduction in French armaments. Thus, the Plan was a genuine expression of a consistent trend in French foreign policy.

The reactions to the French proposals were negative. Their reception was especially hostile in Germany where they were regarded by the press as a tactical maneuver designed to torpedo the Conference and perpetuate French military predominance in Europe. The Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Nationalist),¹⁴ declared that the French Plan had nothing to do with disarmament and, therefore, was far removed from the subject of the Conference. According to the paper, it constituted a provocation against Germany. The paper accused the French of hypocrisy and cynicism. Germania (organ of the Center, often expressing the views of Bruening) commented that a League force was inconceivable as long as equality of rights in armaments among all nations did not exist. Thus, according to the paper, the French Plan should be treated as irrelevant to the main issue and academic.¹⁵

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For the full text of the French Plan, see League of Nations, Verbatim Records, vol. I, 48-53. The text can also be found in Le Temps, Feb. 7, 1932.

14

Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Feb. 7, 1932.

15

Germania, Feb. 7, 1932. Criticism of the French Plan was not limited to the German press only. The Times (London) of Feb. 8, 1932, called it a "discouraging reception." France wanted to transform the League into a "super state." Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations called the French proposals, "inherently objectionable....I cannot imagine any form of despotism more objectionable than an international police force." Instead of disarmament the French had suggested a League rearmament (The New York Times, Feb. 8, 1932). The representatives of Great Britain, John Simon, the United States, Hugh Gibson, and Italy, Dino Grandi, were lukewarm in regard to the French proposals although willing to study them. So were other representatives, except members of the Little Entente, Poland and Belgium.

On February 9, 1932, the German Chancellor brought his country's case before the Conference. Judging from the attitude expressed by the German press, many of the delegates expected the Chancellor to take an intransigent stand. Bruening, however, admired for his personal character as well as for his moderation,¹⁶ put forward the German case in a spirit of conciliation and in agreeable terms.¹⁷ He emphasized Germany's desire for a general disarmament such as that envisaged by the Covenant of the League of Nations. Disarmament, said Bruening, should apply "in equal manner for all members...according to the same principles which would create an

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According to the French Ambassador to Berlin, Bruening had a way of pleading for Germany, "so full of good faith, simplicity and dignity that he inspired in his listeners compassion and the desire to assist him." See André François-Poncet, Souvenirs d'une Ambassade à Berlin, Septembre 1931-Octobre 1938 (Paris: Flammarion, 1946), 17.

17

John Simon submitted the British disarmament proposals on Feb. 8, 1932. Declaring that the world had put aside the illusion that security lay in armaments, he proposed two methods of limiting armaments known as "quantitative" and "qualitative." The first tried to fix maximum limits beyond which no state should rearm, and the second was designed to abolish heavy weapons normally used in case of attack. He also agreed to consider the Draft Convention prepared by the Preparatory Commission as a basis for discussion. For full text of John Simon's speech see League of Nations, Verbatim Records, Series A, vol. I, 55-59. also in Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. IV, D811532-D811538. On Feb. 9, 1932, preceding Bruening's speech, the representative of the United States, Hugh Gibson, submitted a nine point proposal dealing mainly with "qualitative" disarmament. He emphasized that all nations should pledge themselves to abolish all weapons devoted to aggressive war, and the restriction of land armaments. See League of Nations, Verbatim Records Series A, vol. I, 64-67. Le Temps of Feb. 10, 1932, strongly criticized both the British and American proposals for being too much in harmony with the German position.

equal measure of security for all peoples." The German government and the people, he continued, "ask that the Disarmament of Germany shall be followed by general disarmament. Legally and morally Germany can claim that as an indisputable right." Thus, Bruening had stressed his government's position of seeking equality in armaments through the disarmament of the former Allies.

Referring to the French Plan, the Chancellor called upon the Conference to refrain from attempts "to secure for ourselves, by such or such an interpretation of treaties, the possibility of expanding our own military forces, while depriving others of that possibility. That is not the right way. That way would wreck the Conference and perpetuate the present unhappy situation of an armed peace founded on inequality of rights."

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This was as far as Bruening would go in criticizing the French Plan.

Bernhard von Buelow, the German Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had advised the Chancellor to ignore the French Plan altogether.

19

Linking Germany's incapability of paying reparations with her quest for equality in armaments through disarmament, Bruening blamed the economic distress of the world at that moment "on political payments as well as excessive and unequal armaments." The Chancellor made another reference to reparations when he said that "in the interests of humanity, I am urging our demand for disarmament and for clearing up the question of political payments." Thus Bruening had linked the question of reparations with that of disarmament. The cancellation of the former and the fulfill-

18

League of Nations, Verbatim Records, Feb. 9, 1932, Series A, 65.

19

Buelow to Nadolny and Bruening, Feb. 7, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. IV, D811528.

ment of the latter, were the two major objectives of German foreign
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policy which Bruening had tried to realize.

Reminding the delegates of the pledges given to Germany by the former victors at the Paris Peace Conference, the German Chancellor pointed out that the Allies expressed their "profound conviction that the general reduction and limitation of armaments would be one of the most effective means of preventing war." Bruening did not accept the draft Convention in the form submitted by the Preparatory Commission for in his words the draft "does not meet the needs of the moment it is marred by certain omissions and passes in silence over essential points." Therefore, he asserted, the German delegation would submit new disarmament proposals to the Conference in order to remedy the defects of the draft. Those proposals, concluded Bruening, would indicate the means whereby a general and effective reduction of armaments could be effected by prohibiting and limiting offensive weapons. Yet nowhere in his speech did Bruening demand immediate disarmament to the German level, but rather a beginning on the part of the armed nations towards the realization of general dis-

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armament. While Bruening was presenting the official German policy of equality of rights in armaments through disarmament, an unofficial German

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On Jan. 9, 1932, Bruening declared that the economic crisis in Germany made it impossible for her to continue paying reparations. This declaration was a follow up to President Hoover's plan of June 20, 1931, in which he called for the postponement for one year of all payments whether reparations or inter-governmental debts. The practical end of reparations insisted upon by Bruening was carried out by Franz von Papen at the Conference of Lausanne on July 9, 1932. For a comprehensive study of this question see. John Wheeler-Bennett, The Wreck of Reparations Being the Political Background of the Lausanne Agreement, 1932 (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1933).

21

Speech by Bruening, Feb. 9, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K. vol. IV, D811558-D811568. The Chancellor's speech received more applause from the assembled delegates than any other which had been previously delivered.

delegation comprised of two Nazi "observers" followed the proceedings at Geneva as the representatives of Adolf Hitler. The members were General von Epp and Colonel Friederick Haselmayer who told the press that Bruening had no authority to speak in the name of the German people. Instead of disarmament after the German model, they demanded parity in armaments with other powers.

The reactions of the German press to Bruening's speech varied according to party bias. Consequently, the liberal paper Berliner Tageblatt praised the conciliatory character of the speech as well as Bruening's reference to the necessity of liquidating reparations. The Chancellor's speech, commented the paper, helped in creating an atmosphere of confidence and good will, two necessary conditions for the success of the Disarmament Conference. On the other hand the nationalist paper Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, criticized the Chancellor for not taking the opportunity to counter attack the French Plan.

In an interview granted to the National Broadcasting Company, the German Chancellor reiterated the point that Germany had carried out the military clauses of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. He claimed that the withdrawal of the Inter-Allied Commission of Control in 1927 was an acknowledgement by the ex-victors of that fact. Reports to the contrary,

22

The New York Times, Feb. 4, 1932; Le Temps, Feb. 3, 1932.

23

Berliner Tageblatt, Feb. 10, 1932.

24

Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Feb. 10, 1932. On Feb. 10, 1932, Dino Grandi, the Italian Foreign Minister, submitted his country's proposals in support of the German thesis. They emphasized two essential points: equality of rights between states and a reduction of armaments to the lowest level. Referring to the French Plan, Grandi rejected what he called "sophistry of disarmament" namely, the discussion of the "theoretical question of whether disarmament should precede security or be preceded by it."

said Bruening, emanated from interested parties such as manufacturers of war material who had tried to arouse public opinion against disarmament. The military forces of Germany and France were in proportion of 1 to 50 in Germany's disfavor. Consequently, Germany was incapable of defending herself against one or more of her armed neighbors, a "situation which was bound to cause the German people the deepest anxiety as to their security." The political unrest in Germany, according to Bruening, was "partially due to this condition." He demanded that the one sided disarmament of Germany be also applied to other powerful nations. Bruening once again reiterated Germany's demand for equality of rights in armaments carried out through the disarmament of other powers rather than by German rearmament. Alluding to the French Plan, Bruening pointed out that internationalization of armaments would be possible only after a reduction of offensive weapons especially air forces. As to the internal condition of Germany, the Chancellor contended that the two basic questions concerning German foreign policy were disarmament and reparations. The distress and agitation in Germany, according to Bruening stemmed from the economic crisis and the lack of security.

Since Germany did not accept the draft Convention prepared by the Preparatory Commission, she submitted her own new proposals for general disarmament, which were intended to remedy the defects of the draft. In

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Bruening to N.B.C., Feb. 14, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. IV, D811496-D811503. British Foreign Office officials were impressed with Bruening's presentation of the German case "in a clear and balanced way" as well as by his dismissal of the French Plan. It is important to note that the British Labor Government sympathized with the German position and realized the need in supporting a moderate German Government in order to prevent the consequences of its fall. See Minute by Howard C. Smith, Feb. 22, 1932; B.F.O., Vol. 16446, 116.

essence they were nothing but a repetition of the same objections to the draft convention raised by Count Bernstorff on December 9, 1930. The German proposals, circulated by Nadolny before the Conference on February 18, 1932, included suggestions for both "qualitative" and "quantitative" disarmament based upon the military clauses of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

By "qualitative" method of disarmament, the German delegation proposed that certain weapons for offence be prohibited. In this category were included heavy artillery, such as guns of more than 77mm., howitzers of more than 105 mm., mortars, and trench mortars of every kind of a calibre of more than 150 mm. Every kind of tank, all classes of military aviation as well as fortresses constituting a direct menace to other nations should be prohibited.

The "quantitative" method of disarmament would be applied to all weapons, their number to be reduced by fixing an authorized limit beyond which no state would be allowed to rearm. In regard to personnel, the recruitment of land and naval forces should be carried out through voluntary enlistment. The German proposals also included agreement by Germany to the abolition of capitalships, aircraft carriers, and submarines. According to Germany, any solution adopted by the Conference must be effective and must safeguard the national safety and security of all nations.

The German proposals added nothing new to what was already known of her stand on this question. According to Hugh Gibson, the speech that Nadolny delivered in the Assembly in support of his country's proposals

was "irritating every sore point in the whole disarmament question."²⁷
 British officials on the other hand felt that their execution of these
 clauses could give France the practical and effective security she wanted.²⁸
 With the presentation of the German proposals, the general discussion in
 the Assembly came to an end and the Bureau of the Conference²⁹ decided
 that all drafts (fifty in number) submitted by the various delegations³⁰
 should be studied by the General Commission. John Simon suggested
 that they ought to be discussed within the framework of the draft Disarm-
 ament Convention without precluding the possibility of amending or adding
 to any one of its provision. This was agreed to by most of the delegates
 while Nadolny stipulated that his country's proposals should have equal
 weight with the draft Convention. André Tardieu, on the other hand, pointed
 out that while France would agree to consider modifications and amendments
 to the draft, she would oppose attempts to substitute other principles
 for those forming the basis of the Convention. He was referring to Arti-

27

Gibson to Stimson, Feb. 18, 1932, in Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United States, 1932, I, 42. (Hereinafter cited as F.R. U.S., followed by relevant year and volume number). This comment must not be interpreted as a U. S. disapproval of the German position.

28

Minute by Mounsey, Feb. 26, 1932, B.F.O., vol. 16459, W2110/1466/98.

29

The Bureau or "Steering Committee" of the Conference was set up on Feb. 5, and consisted of fourteen Vice Presidents. The task of the Bureau was to decide upon the procedures to be followed in the discussions of the General Commission.

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The General Commission consisted of one representative of each delegation. Its task was to debate the disarmament proposals submitted by the various delegations. Arthur Henderson was elected as President of the Commission.

cle 53 of the draft Convention which was intended to keep Germany bound to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. Accordingly, the old battle between equality of rights in armaments and security reminiscent of the discussions in the Preparatory Disarmament Commission had begun again.

Tardieu returned to Paris where he assumed the post of Foreign Minister.³¹ He promised the French Chamber of Deputies that France would never consider any reduction in her armaments until the principles of the French Plan were adopted. Accordingly, after his return to Geneva on February 25, he told the press that he favored the establishment of a Political Commission to study all proposals which dealt with the principle of security, organization of peace, and supervision which were basic to the French Plan. The procedure as established by the Conference had been that all questions of principle such as those raised by the French Plan, should be discussed by the General Commission. By suggesting the creation of a new "Political Commission" Tardieu had tried to insure the priority of security over disarmament as well as consideration of the French Plan before the German demand for equality of status. It was exactly for these reasons that Nadolny opposed Tardieu's proposals for a new commission. Nevertheless, as a gesture of good will and after an appeal for unanimity from Simon, the German representative withdrew his objections only to be viciously attacked in the German nationalist press which demanded his recall from Geneva.³²

Although Tardieu obtained his "Political Commission" it remained jobless because political questions were later discussed in the General

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The Cabinet of Pierre Laval fell on Feb. 16, 1932.

32

Rudolf Nadolny, Mein Beitrag (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1953), 117. Simon to Rumbold, March 30, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 514-515.

Commission. This skirmish, however, dramatized anew the gulf separating the positions of France and Germany.

In the public proceedings at Geneva, in explaining the German position both Bruening and Nadolny stressed the technical aspect of equality in armaments, namely its achievement through the disarmament of other powers. In private, however, the German representatives repeatedly emphasized the political aspect of this question. This involved the recognition in principle by the former Allies of Germany's equality of status that is her juridical equality or what the Germans referred to as Gleichbehandlung (equality of treatment), meaning the revision of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and its substitution for a new Disarmament Convention.

In a conversation with the French Ambassador to Berlin, André François-Poncet, the German Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Buelow made it clear that in the new Disarmament Convention Germany demanded equal treatment on the same basis as the other powers. This, Buelow contended, did not mean parity in armaments with France. On the contrary, Germany would agree to maintain a 100,000 man army, but the new Convention must indicate that Germany accepted it "voluntarily" and without compulsion. Furthermore, this Disarmament Convention should be substituted for
33
Part V of the Versailles Treaty.

Two days later, Tardieu gave the French reply to Leopold von Hoesch, the German Ambassador to Paris. Tardieu declared that France would never agree to Treaty revision. As to the question of French disarmament, the Premier pointed out that security must precede disarmament. When Hoesch demanded the adoption of the German method (in disarmament of other powers)

as the best guarantee for security, Tardieu replied that in his view Germany had failed to carry out her undertakings under Part V of the Treaty.³⁴ The same stand was taken by the French Premier in his conversation³⁵ with Nadolny on February 25.

Since the direct diplomatic contacts with the French led to no results, Nadolny sought to meet with Simon in order to gain British support. On February 28, 1932, in an interview with Nadolny, the British Secretary of State was sympathetic to the German case. While agreeing to accept the draft Convention as a basis for discussion, Nadolny referred to its political aspect, particularly Article 53, and pointed out that it was utterly unacceptable to his government for it meant the continuation of Part V of the Treaty. This Article was interpreted by Germany as a reaffirmation of the limitations imposed on her by the Treaty of Versailles. The German representative suggested that a new Disarmament Convention should be substituted for Part V of the Treaty, thus removing Germany's feelings of inferiority of status. Although Simon left this political question open for discussion, he did not reject Nadolny's contention. On the other hand, the British Secretary did not accept Nadolny's assertion that Germany's demand for equality in disarmament could be based on legal grounds. The reason being Simon did not regard the fulfillment by Germany of the disarmament clauses included in Part V to be dependent on the Allies' fulfillment of their pledges given in the Preamble of Part V or in the Clemenceau letter. He did however point out that at

34

Hoesch to Buelow, Feb. 27, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. IV, D811626-D811628.

35

Nadolny to Buelow, Feb. 28, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. IV, D811629.

the Paris Peace Conference the Allies' intention was to bring about a reduction in armaments and to acknowledge Germany's moral rather than her legal case. In fact, said Simon, the weapons which Britain wanted to see abolished or limited in number were the same weapons which Germany was not allowed to possess.³⁶

Britain, said Simon, would play the role of a mediator trying to reconcile between the positions of Germany and France.

Following his conversations with Nadolny, Simon met the French Premier on March 12, 1932, and brought up the question of Article 53. The British Foreign Secretary suggested its exclusion from the draft Convention by substituting for it a scheme which would hold German armaments at the existing level without extensively reducing the armaments of others. This would remove Germany's complaint of inferiority of status. In his view, Germany was more interested in the recognition of the political aspect of equality, that is, in the principle of status and treatment rather than in the technical aspect of numbers of weapons. The French Premier was adamant as ever, in fact repeating the same answer he had given to Hoesch. He would challenge the German thesis not only in law but also in fact. Germany, according to Tardieu, had no legal basis for claiming to be released from Part V of the Treaty, and furthermore, she had greatly exceeded the limits of armament which Part V imposed upon her. Although Simon could not deny that violations had taken place, nevertheless those violations, he told Tardieu, had not been of sufficient importance to warrant action. Germany's claim for general disarmament was morally justifiable and placed a corresponding moral claim on the part

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of the former Allies.

Unable to convince Tardieu to accept his suggestion, Simon decided to raise the question of Germany's claim to equality of status in armaments during a meeting of the British Cabinet on March 21, 1932. With a view of trying to formulate a final British stand concerning the German case, Simon told the cabinet that from his conversations with Nadolny, he had gathered the impression that Germany was more interested in being elevated to the juridical status as other nations than in the actual figures of weapons. According to John Simon, it was a question of German pride that the principle of equality had to be restored rather than the
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actual question of her rearmament.

Accordingly, on April 15, the cabinet decided to meet Germany's claim to improved status by considering the limits of German armaments as laid down in Part V as her maximum in a new Disarmament Convention to replace Part V of the Versailles Treaty. There would be a disparity in figures of weapons between Germany and other nations in the new Convention. Yet Germany ought to agree to it as long as the principle of equality of treatment had been established and with it the revision of
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Part V.

This would have gone a long way in satisfying the Bruening government. Nevertheless, it would not come to pass, for the French government

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Memo by Simon on a conversation with Tardieu, March 12, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 510-512. Minute by Londonderry, March 17, 1932, B.F.O., 16461, 88.

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Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, March 21, 1932, British Foreign Office: vol. 354, Secret D.C.(M) (32), 24. (Hereinafter cited as B.F.O.; CAB, followed by volume and document numbers. These unpublished records are deposited in the Public Record Office, London).

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B.F.O., CAB, April 15, 1932, vol. 354, Secret D.C. (M) (32), 29 Annex A.

still adhered to the sanctity of the Treaty and its plan of February 5, 1932.

In the meantime, at Geneva the General Commissions had referred questions concerning the kind of weapons that could be abolished to its technical committees.⁴⁰ The Conference adjourned for the Easter recess from March 9 to April 11, leaving the technical committees and subcommittees to discuss ways of reducing armaments as well as to define the "aggressive" weapons that should be abolished. Now once again the same subjects discussed by the Preparatory Disarmament Commission a few years ago were debated with equal lack of progress. When the President of the Conference, Arthur Henderson, was asked by reporters when he thought the Conference was likely to end, he replied, "what I would like to know is when it was going to begin."⁴¹

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The technical committees were deadlocked in their discussions without being able to distinguish between a question of principle to be decided by the General Commission and a technical question to be decided by the respective technical committee. For example, the Air Committee which was instructed by the General Commission to consider ways for the abolition of military aviation, with or without the internationalization of civil aviation, returned this request back to the General Commission claiming that this was a question of principle and therefore ought to be decided by the latter, which sent it back again saying that the opinion of the experts was needed to see whether it was technically possible to abolish such weapons and not whether it was necessary to do so. The Land and Naval Committees were unable to agree as to the meaning of the "effectives." A easy way out of the dilemma was to appoint more subcommittees to define what it meant by the various governments. All this slowed down progress towards disarmament.

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Four technical Committees were set up by the General Commission. These were the Land, Naval, Air and National Defense Expenditure Committees.

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The New York Times, March 10, 1932.

So far Germany's demands had remained unfulfilled. Bruening and Nadolny, in presenting the German demand for equality of rights in armaments, had emphasized the "leveling down" of her neighbors' armaments and Treaty revision --a claim regarded favorably by Britain and rejected by France which questioned whether Germany had really disarmed. Tardieu's unwillingness to take any step towards disarmament and his obstructionist tactics in the future discussions would block all progress for a successful outcome of the Conference. And while the German statesmen had refrained so far from formulating a claim to a "levelling up" of German armaments as an alternative to "levelling down" on the part of France and her allies, the trend of German opinion on the matter was that the Disarmament Conference would have to choose sooner or later between those two alternatives.

More important was the great significance Bruening attached to the acceptance of the German case at Geneva. For he believed that the survival of his government and indeed, the survival of the Weimar Republic depended upon achievements in foreign affairs, particularly in the area of reparations and disarmament.⁴³ And while the German Chancellor was hopeful of such an outcome at Geneva, his optimism was premature because of French obstructionism. Yet even a positive reply to Germany's claim on the question of disarmament would not have saved the Bruening government.

43

John Wheeler-Bennett, Wooden Titan: Hindenburg in Twenty Years of German History, 1914-1934 (New York: W. Morrow & Co., 1936), 350. Andreas Dorpalen, Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 326.

CHAPTER III

BESSINGE

The lack of progress at Geneva made the political position of the Bruening government increasingly precarious. With the opening of the Disarmament Conference, the German Chancellor had hoped that the former allies would finally make good on their pledges and grant Germany the long awaited demand for equality of rights in armaments. Such an achievement, Bruening believed, would help stem the rising tide of Nazism. In this context it is important to examine the repercussions of disarmament upon Germany's internal politics.

The question of Germany's one sided disarmament did contribute to the growth of Nazism especially within the ranks of the Officer Corps. These young officers had lost hope in the Weimar Republic which in their view hindered rearmament, promotion, and the enlargement of the German army. Hitler's propaganda, calling for an expanded military establishment and freeing Germany from the chains of Versailles, offered glory, freedom,¹ hope, and new opportunities to young unemployed Germans.

This was demonstrated by the Leipzig trial in September, 1930, when three officers were accused of treason for attempting to create Nazi cells within the Reichswehr. The trial aroused much excitement in Germany when Adolf Hitler appeared as a witness on behalf of the accused. He used the opportunity to express his high esteem for the army, and he hinted that upon coming to power, he would place the highest priority on rearmament

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Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, 214. Craig, 434. Friedrich Meinecke, Die Deutsche Katastrophe Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen (Wiesbaden: E. Brockhaus, 1949), 71-73.

for the Reichswehr. Above all, Hitler attacked the Treaty of Versailles and those who adhered to it. Germany, according to him, was "bound hand and foot by the Peace Treaties. The whole German legislation to day is nothing else but an attempt to anchor the Peace Treaties in the German people. The National Socialists do not regard these treaties as law but as something imposed upon Germany by constraint."²

Hitler's dramatic appearance at the trial had a profound effect upon many in Germany, especially junior officers and the German youth to whom Hitler's nationalistic fervor was appealing. Blinded by Nazi propaganda, they joined the Nationalist Socialist movement which promised the German youth, "the creation of a great army much larger than you imagine to day." Many German senior officers were amazed and even frightened by the Nazi successes in the September 1930 elections. In their view it was a "youth movement" and it "can't be stopped."³

Various appeals were made to the Chancellor to take a tougher stand in the disarmament question. The N.D.O. (Nationalverband Deutsche Offizierre), appealed to Bruening asking that unless the Allies disarmed to the German level, Germany should begin to rearm and disregard Part V of the Treaty.⁴ A similar appeal was made to the German Chancellor by the President of the German Fleet Association (Deutsche Flotten Vereins).⁵ Perhaps Hermann Goering best expressed the wishes of many Germans disenchanted with the unilateral disarmament of Germany when he said that

² As quoted in Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, 219. See also Rumbold to Henderson, Sept. 26, 1930, D.B.F.P., I, 516.

³ Ibid., Sept. 25, 1930, 512, footnote 2.

⁴ Commander of N.D.O. to Bruening, Nov. 28, 1930, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. II, D 810933.

⁵ President of D.F.V. to Bruening, Feb. 8, 1932, Reichskanzlei, Akten, A.K., Vol. IV, D 811 578 - D 811579.

the National Socialists wanted the complete abolition of the Treaty of Versailles, a document which in his view poisoned the international atmosphere. He called for the immediate introduction of compulsory military service and the establishment of an army consisting of one million⁶ fully armed soldiers.

The majority of Germans, however, were as yet unwilling to go as far as Goering suggested for they hoped that the Disarmament Conference would eventually bring about the disarmament of the former Allies. Many Germans believed that France's demand for security as the sole prerequisite to disarmament was carried too far. To accept such an argument would mean that Poland too could not disarm for fear of a Russian invasion. If security is all important, then why not grant equal security to Germany? After all, many Germans claimed, because their country was surrounded by hostile armies, it was entitled to the same degree of security. Poland, they argued, a nation lower than Germany in the level of civilization, was given freedom to arm while Germany "was cribbed and confined by the military clauses of Versailles." Should a Polish attack on East Prussia take place, a disarmed German army, deprived of tanks and airplanes, would be incapable of defending herself. Such a situation could be avoided only if the Poles knew that they would face a German army of equal strength. Poland, according to many Germans, must either disarm to the German level, or, barring that, Germany should be allowed

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Georges Castellan, Le Réarmement Clandestin du Reich 1930-1935. Vu par le 2^e Bureau de L'Etat-Major Français (Paris: Plon, 1954), 26-27.

to rearm. Poland, at this point was considered more dangerous to Germany than France.⁷

According to the British Ambassador in Berlin, many Germans believed that France's fear of a German invasion was baseless. Germany had disarmed, signed the Locarno and Kellogg Pacts, and joined the League of Nations. The military preponderance of France and her allies, they argued, was enormous and exceeded by far the needs of security.⁸ The same view was held by Norman Davis, Chairman of the American delegation at Geneva, who told Tardieu that France could make a substantial reduction in her armaments without endangering her security. Furthermore, by so doing, she would increase her security by reducing fear and resentment on the part of Germany. For Norman Davis it was academic whether security should precede or follow disarmament.⁹

Wilhelm Groener, the German Defense Minister and a close associate of Chancellor Bruening, believed that the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty had violated German sovereignty by limiting her capacity to defend herself against aggression. A state in that condition, he asserted, lost its respect in the eyes of its citizens. Consequently,

⁷ Rumbold to Henderson, Feb. 26, 1931, D.B.F.P., I, 567-568. German fears of a possible Polish invasion of East Prussia and Silesia, had driven Kurt von Schleicher to seek better relations with Hitler, thus weakening the Bruening government. See Dorpalen, 240. Further, in 1932 Poland had a land army of 265,871 men, and an air force of 700 airplanes as against a German army of 100,000 men without an airforce. See League of Nations, Armaments Year Book, May, 1933.

⁸ France alone in 1932 had a land army of 593,040 men for home and overseas defense, and an air force totaling 1,847 airplanes of every type. The French army was also equipped with all weapons of offense including a powerful navy. See League of Nations, Armaments Year Book, 1933.

⁹ Memo by Davis, Feb. 18, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 34-38; also in Davis Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. and cited in H. White-man, "Norman Davis and His Search for International Peace and Security" (Unpublished Dissertation, Yale University, 1958), 504.

the masses would turn away from a state which could not protect them. In his view, Part V of the Treaty provided the ingredients for German unrest and undermined the confidence in her at home and abroad. According to Groener there was a relationship between the military clauses of the Treaty and the resurgence of Wehrgeist through the so called Wehrverbände (semi-military associations). Since the power of the state through the Reichswehr was limited in strength, the political parties created their own private organizations for defense purposes or as vehicles through which they could attain power and overthrow the government. While these organizations were of no danger to Germany's neighbors, they hindered the authority of the state and they accentuated the domestic struggles which might have led to civil war. The disarmament of those semi-military groups could be possible only when the unilateral disarmament of Germany was ended and equality of rights in armaments was granted.
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ed.

While Bruening's policy of fulfillment became increasingly unpopular because it achieved no tangible results, the National Socialist party grew in strength. Its private army, the Sturm Abteilungen (Storm Detachments), resorted to violence in order to discredit the Bruening government and the Reichswehr. This Nazi growth, in Bruening's view, could impair the last chance for success at Geneva. France would certainly refuse to disarm in face of a rising tide of German nationalism. Since the S.A. threatened the state by challenging its authority, as well as

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Wilhelm Groener, "Die Abrüstungsbestimmungen von Versailles und die Deutsche Innere Politik," Zeitschrift für Politik, XXI (March 19, 1932), 767-768. Groener was referring to Hitler's armed S.A., to the Reichsbanner the democratic and unarmed organization designed to defend republican ideals from the extreme right, and the Stahlhelm, the armed nationalist organization.

weakening the German case at the Geneva Disarmament Conference, Groener was determined that Hitler's shadow army should be dissolved. Therefore, it appeared that both Bruening and Groener constituted the bulwark against
 11
 Nazism.

Bruening, believing that internal political stability and a Nazi setback were essential for the survival of the Weimar Republic, had tried to induce Paul von Hindenburg to seek once again the Presidency, whose seven year period of office was to expire in April, 1932. For should Hindenburg refuse to seek the Presidency, Bruening believed that the election of a Nazi, most probably Hitler, was a forgone conclusion. Furthermore, the Chancellor had tried to avoid an election campaign which would constitute a physical strain on the eighty-five year old President as well as cause internal political turmoil. His reelection could be accomplished constitutionally without going through the strains of a campaign by a vote of two thirds majority in the Reichstag.

Consequently, on January 7, 1932, Bruening began negotiations with Hitler and Alfred Hugenberg in order to secure a two thirds majority in the Reichstag to prolong the President's term of office. Both refused, arguing that such an attempt would mean the continuation of Bruening in office. They would support Hindenburg's candidacy on the condition that this would lead to the end of Bruening's government and the "system."
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 The President, however, refused to "entertain such a bargain." As a result, on February 25, 1932, Bruening delivered an impassioned speech

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Rumbold to Simon, April 20, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 121.

12

Rumbold to Simon, Feb. 17, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 100. See also footnote 1, on the same page.

in the Reichstag frequently interrupted by Nazi deputies. He defended his foreign policy in the speech and accused the radical Right of trying to overthrow the Weimar Republic by refusing to prolong Hindenburg's term of office by act of the Reichstag.

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The Presidential election, set for March 13, 1932, was regarded by Bruening as a struggle between the "system" represented by Hindenburg and himself and the "experiment" represented by Hitler. It was a struggle of Hindenburg against the potential forces of destruction in Germany. Bruening, campaigning on behalf of the President, told Berliners that "Hindenburg must win so that Germany may live." But, the electoral campaign had developed into a fight between Bruening and Hitler. Its results could have serious repercussions on the French parliamentary elections that would take place in May, 1932. Should Hitler, the apostle of revenge win, France would turn further to the Right.

Just before the Disarmament Conference had adjourned, it was learned that Hindenburg had failed to win a majority on the first ballot and that a second ballot was necessary. On April 10, 1932, Hindenburg was re-elected. Hitler, however, received 13 million votes, more than double the voting strength of the Nazi Party at the Reichstag elections

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General Hammerstein, the Commander of the Reichsheer, told the British ambassador in Berlin that he witnessed the unmannerly interruptions and the contemptuous behavior of the Nazis and wondered about the future of Germany should she be ruled by such people. Goebbels, led a group of Nazis to the rostrum from which Bruening was speaking and shook their fists at him. Rumbold to Simon, March 1, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 101.

14

The final official figures were Hindenburg 18,654,244 votes, Hitler, 11,341,119 votes, Thaelmann 4,982,870 votes and Duesterburg 2,558,813 votes.

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of September 1930.

Hitler's strong showing in the elections renewed Groener's determination to dissolve the S.A. by an emergency decree. On April 13, 1932, the full cabinet approved a decree to be promulgated throughout the ¹⁶ Reich banning Hitler's military organizations. Hitler told American journalists that the dissolution of his storm detachments was ordered by Bruening at the request of the French government. Although the Tardieu government denied Hitler's assertion, nevertheless, it should have been clear to the French that the German Chancellor had done all he could to stem the Nazi tide. A more flexible stand on their part could have made Bruening's task easier.

Since Groener's action dissolving the S. A. was criticized by the Nationalist groups, the Defense Minister believed that he must offer a quid pro quo in order to disarm his critics. An alternative to the S.A. should be found in order to fulfill the aspirations of the hundreds of thousands unemployed young Germans. Accordingly, Groener presented Bruening with a plan to be submitted to the former Allies at Geneva. His plan called for an increase in German armaments, as well as enlargement of the present Reichswehr by a militia of the Swiss type, of about two

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Hindenburg increased his poll by 700,000 votes and obtained 53% of the votes cast. No one worked harder for Hindenburg's victory than Bruening. For the Chancellor believed that a large vote for the President would enhance Germany's changes in the impending foreign negotiations, as a demonstration that the country stood behind the policies of its government.

16

According to the British military attaché in Berlin, several senior and junior officers had expressed their disapproval of Groener's action in suppressing the S.A. and S.S. units. In their view the German Defense Minister was a "traitor" since the Nazi movement was the best way of disciplining the youth who could not join the army because of the restrictions imposed upon Germany by Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. They regarded the Nazi S.A. and S. S. as patriotic movements intended to keep the German youth out of Communist ranks. See Thorne to Rumbold, April 19, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 118.

hundred thousand men, with a half year's training. This expansion of the Reichswehr would make it possible for the former members of the S.A. as well as the Stahlhelm to join the ranks of the army. Such a reorganization of the Reichswehr, coupled with some measure of rearmament,¹⁷ Groener believed would weaken Hitler's case against the "system."

With this plan in mind the German Chancellor's attention shifted again to Geneva. For a success at the Conference, he hoped, might save his government and the Weimar Republic.

At Geneva, the General Commission re-assembled on April 11, 1932. Discussions began on the principles involved in Article 1 of the draft Convention according to which the parties were to agree to limit their armaments by reducing them to the lowest possible level. Realizing that the debate was making no headway, Hugh Gibson, the Acting Chairman of the American delegation, decided to take the initiative and put forward for the first time specific proposals for qualitative disarmament. He bluntly told the representatives in the Commission that if they were unwilling to acquiesce in any reduction save on the part of their neighbors, "we might as well acknowledge that a Conference of this sort is a farce." Then, the American representative submitted proposals for the abolition of weapons of a peculiarly aggressive value against land defenses such as tanks and heavy mobile guns exceeding 155 millimeters in calibre. Furthermore, every nation should commit itself not to use these weapons in case of war.¹⁸

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Meinecke, 72-73. Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, 229.

18

Address delivered by Gibson before the General Commission of the Conference, April 11, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 80-82.

Gibson's proposals were welcomed by most of the representatives including Great Britain and Germany. From the German point of view, the American proposals went a long way towards satisfying their demand for equality in armaments through disarmament. Nadolny, while stressing the importance of the American proposals as being in accord with the spirit of the proposals his government had submitted, also asked for the abolition of military aviation since it constituted a serious danger to the civil population and as such should be regarded as an aggressive weapon. Only total abolition of aggressive weapons, he claimed, would finally achieve security. The armed nations, according to Nadolny, must follow¹⁹ the German example and disarm.

The expected opposition to Gibson's proposals was not late in coming. For the French Premier the plan calling for qualitative disarmament, as submitted by Gibson and supported by Simon, was nothing but an Anglo-Saxon attack on France aided by Nadony, a "ci-devant Nazi."²⁰ Tardieu, in a speech in the General Commission, lost his temper and charged that²¹ the American proposals were pas sérieux and hastily improvised. For no treaty dealing with qualitative disarmament, he argued, was secure from infraction in the present international morality, since technicians and engineers would invent pocket cannons to replace big guns, pocket airplanes to replace bombers, and turn farm tractors into tanks. The only

¹⁹

League of Nations, Records for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Series B, Minutes of the General Commission, vol. I, April 11, 1932, 43-44. (Hereinafter cited as League of Nations, Minutes of the General Commission, followed by volume and page numbers).

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André Tardieu, L'Heure de la Décision (Paris: Flammarion, 1934), 73-75.

²¹

Gibson to Stimson, April 12, 1932, F.R. U.S., 1932, I, 86.

way to achieve security and some measure of disarmament was to adopt the French Plan, namely, to place at the disposal of the League of Nations all heavy guns, big ships, airplanes, and submarines. Then, Tardieu asked, how could one distinguish between "aggressive" and "defensive" weapons? Dino Grandi, the Italian Foreign Minister, took the opportunity to remind the French Premier that the military clauses of Versailles drafted by France clearly distinguished between "offensive" and "defensive" weapons. Furthermore, said Grandi, "should we hesitate to conclude agreements because of the possibility of bad faith, we might as well abandon any attempt to reach agreement." Yet Tardieu remained undeterred. He opposed a separate discussion of the American proposals, suggesting that they should be discussed simultaneously with the French Plan. And, in a further show of obstructionism he added that treaties for abolition of weapons were nothing but scraps of paper because no one would observe them.²² One can hardly avoid the conclusion that Tardieu's attitude towards disarmament was as damaging to the success of the Conference as was Hitler's one year later. The difference between the two, however, lay in the fact that while Tardieu did not want France to disarm, Hitler wanted Germany to rearm. Obstructionism in both cases had reduced the prospects for success to a minimum.

After a week of speeches at Geneva, the practical proposals submitted by Gibson and supported by Germany and most of the delegates were

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For full text of Tardieu's speech, see League of Nations, Minutes of the General Commission, April 12, 1932, I, 50-55. The French press vigorously criticized the American proposals. According to Le Temps (April 12, 1932), they seek to disarm those powers like France for whom land forces constitute the main guarantee of security.

all but forgotten because of the objections of France and her allies. The argument reverted once again to a discussion over which should come first: disarmament or security. Henry Stimson, the American Secretary of State, who happened to be in Geneva at the time, sat in on one of the debates of the General Commission. In his view the whole discussion seemed like a "meeting in the air without grappling with the realities of the situation."²³

Finally, thanks to the efforts of John Simon and High Gibson, the General Commission on April 22, 1932, unanimously agreed upon a resolution:

Approval of the principle of qualitative disarmament i.e. the selection of certain classes or descriptions of weapons, the possession or use of which should be absolutely prohibited to all states, or internationalized by means of a general convention.²⁴

It took the Conference almost three months of discussions in order to adopt the principle of qualitative method in disarmament. Now it remained to select the weapons to which this method could be applied. For differences of opinion existed among the various delegations over what weapons could be classified respectively as "offensive" or "aggressive" and "defensive." The task of dividing weapons into these two categories was delegated to the technical committees. The General Commission adjourned sine die to wait until the technical committees would submit their reports on qualitative reduction of armaments. It was a perfect example

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Henry L. Stimson, Diary, April 19, 1932. (This diary, in manuscript form, is on deposit at the Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.).

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League of Nations, Minutes of the General Commission, I, April 22, 1932, 110-116.

of "running away from difficulty," so often practiced since the beginning
 25. of the Conference. If France and her allies were really interested in
 disarming, they could use Part V of the Treaty of Versailles as a model in
 disarmament. For both "aggressive" and "defensive" weapons had been
 easily defined by the framers of the military clauses of the Versailles
 Treaty, imposed upon Germany.

While the General Commission, before its adjournment, preferred to lis-
 ten to Tardieu's rhetoric rather than discuss specific American proposals
 for qualitative disarmament, Chancellor Bruening decided to go to Geneva
 and to submit definite proposals to the Great Powers on the matter of
 German demand for equality in armaments. The timing of the trip was
 favorable. The Chancellor's prestige had been enhanced thanks to the re-
 election of President von Hindenburg and the Government's proscription
 of Hitler's storm detachments. Furthermore, the American Secretary of
 State, Henry Stimson, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald and
 the Italian Foreign Minister, Dino Grandi were already at Geneva. Bruening
 hoped that private conversations with these statesmen would produce the
 results that the formal plenary utterances had failed to achieve.

The American Secretary of State came to Geneva because he realized
 26 that the Conference was "on the rocks," and, since Norman Davis had told
 him that Tardieu was interested in some solution of the disarmament prob-
 lem before the French parliamentary elections, he left his sick bed and
 departed for Geneva. To his surprise while still on his way to Geneva,

25

Arnold J. Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs, 1932 (London:
 Oxford University Press, 1933), 220-221, footnote 2.

26

Stimson's Correspondence, April 11, 1932, Yale University, Library,
 Box 304.

he had learned about Tardieu's ill tempered attack on the American proposals for qualitative disarmament. Later in a conversation with the French Premier, Stimson expressed his deep disappointment over the fact the Tardieu and Gibson "were pulling at each other's hair."²⁷ And, on April 16, 1932, Simon added his complaint to the French attitude, when he told Stimson that their disarmament plan was "impossible" and that Britain would make no promises of military assistance to France. He further pointed out that when Locarno was signed France never insisted upon further guarantees.²⁸ The French, on the hand, still considered further security guarantees by the Anglo-Saxon powers as a basic prerequisite to disarmament. Yet neither the United States nor Britain would commit themselves to giving armed assistance in case of an attack against France. This stalemate let Stimson to the belief that his whole trip was premature and, that no progress was in sight before the pending French elections were over.²⁹

This pessimistic view was conveyed by Stimson to Bruening and Under Secretary of State Buelow, in their meeting on April 19, 1932. The American Secretary of State pointed out that before coming to Geneva, he hoped that Tardieu might be willing to reach a disarmament agreement before the French elections, but from the conversations with him, he re-

27

Stimson, Diary, April 15, and 19, 1932. Also in State Department, File No. 500A15A4988, April 19, 1932. (Hereinafter cited as S.D., with file number. These unpublished State Department Documents are deposited in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

28

Record of a meeting held at Geneva between the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States, April 23, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 516. It is important to note that from the American and British points of view the French 'blocked all progress towards disarmament. Stimson in his diary (May 22, 1932), points out that before he left for Geneva, President Hoover had told him to treat the French with a "big stick," but Stimson had instead given in to Tardieu's tactics of procrastination.

29

Stimson, Diary, April 23, 1932.

alized that just because of the upcoming elections the French Premier found it difficult to compromise. A disappointed Bruening told Stimson that the internal conditions in Germany were worsening and that something must be done promptly in the question of disarmament and reparations.³⁰ The validity of Bruening's remarks was substantiated by the results of the elections held on April 24, 1932, for the Diets of Prussia, Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, Anhalt and Hamburg. For the Nazis had made enormous gains in all states, especially in Prussia where they increased the number of their seats from 9 to 162. The chief losers were the Social Democrats and the splinter parties of the Right who supported Bruening's policy. All of the political parties had concentrated their efforts on Prussia on the theory that whoever controlled Prussia controlled the Reich. The continuous Nazi success in Germany made the political position of Bruening more precarious. Now it was more urgent than ever to reach an agreement on Germany's demand for equality in armaments.

On April 26, 1932, conversations took place at Stimson's villa at Bessinge between American, British, and German statesmen.³¹ Tardieu left for Paris to take part in the electoral campaign, but it was understood by the participants that should agreement be reached he would return to Geneva. The conversations at Bessinge were the final and most important attempt made by Bruening to reach agreement for solving both the technical and political aspects of equality of rights in armaments.

30

S.D., Memo of meeting between Bruening, Buelow and Stimson, April 20, 1932, 500A15A4/1015½.

31

The participants from the American side were Stimson, Davis and Gibson. Britain was represented by its Prime Minister while Chancellor Bruening and Buelow represented Germany.

32

According to the British historian Wheeler-Bennett and others, at Bessinge the German Chancellor proposed that Germany should be allowed to reduce the twelve year period of service in the Reichswehr to five years. In return, Germany would not increase her armaments for five years or until the second Disarmament Conference. Furthermore, Germany should be allowed to organize a militia of 100,000 men, and have the right to purchase war material restricted by the Treaty. Bruening also demanded the right of Germany to possess weapons of offense such as tanks and airplanes. But he pointed out that Germany was willing to renounce such demands on the condition that other powers followed suit and disarmed. Otherwise, Germany asked for "samples" of these weapons. Bruening also demanded that the new Disarmament Convention should replace Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

An analysis of this account clearly reveals that the German Chancellor had stressed German rearmament. This approach at Bessinge corresponded with Wilhelm Groener's plan rather than that with the policy formulated by the German government before the opening of the Disarmament Conference. Both MacDonald and Stimson subsequently denied that Bruening put forward

32

Wheeler-Bennett, Pipe Dream of Peace, 32-33. In a conversation with the writer, Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, stood by his account stating that his information was derived from his acquaintances with Chancellor Bruening. The following gives the same account on the Bessinge talks citing Wheeler-Bennett as their source: Carl Loosli-Usteri, Geschichte der Konferenz für die Herabsetzung und die Begrenzung der Rüstungen, 1932-1934 (Zurich: Polygraphischer Verlag, 1940), 100. See also A. C. Temperley, The Whispering Gallery of Europe (London: Collins Publishers, 1938), 203-204.

33

See above, 45-46.

34

Ibid., 20-21.

such proposals at Bessinge for they meant rearmament and that neither Britain nor the United States acquiesced in such demands.

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New evidence³⁵ however, provides a different account of the Bessinge talks and supports the version given by Wilhelm Deist.³⁶

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According to Stimson,³⁷ at Bessinge, the German Chancellor reiterated the long standing policy of his government that there should be a reduction in the armaments of Germany's neighbors, so vastly superior to hers. Nor did Bruening expect France to reduce at once to the German level, but a beginning had to be made, for Germany's inferiority caused the German people great anxiety. Then it was suggested (no indication by whom) that Part V of the Treaty should be replaced by a new Disarmament Convention which would include the limitations placed upon Germany's military forces by the Treaty, and that this Convention would last for a period of ten years. Chancellor Bruening and Buelow agreed to this suggestion and were willing to limit the German forces in the new Arms Convention to their present strength. However, they suggested that a stipulation should be added stating that Germany had voluntarily agreed³⁸ to this limitation, and that the forces inserted in the Arms Convention were disproportionately small for Germany. This, according to Buelow, was necessary because when the Convention came up for revision at the end of ten years, it would be possible to bring France to further disarmament. Should

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Stimson's Diary and the German records.

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Wilhelm Deist, "Bruening, Herriot und die Abrüstungsgesprache von Bessinge 1932," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, I (1953), 268-269. His account is based upon F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 108-112.

37

Stimson, Diary, Memo of Conversation at Bessinge, April 26, 1932.

such a stipulation not be inserted, France could claim later that these figures were recognized as equitable and unchangeable.

Bruening asked for the alleviation of some "irksome conditions" resulting from Part V of the Treaty, without increasing Germany's army strength. For example, to allow Germany to manufacture munitions in one factory, and allow her to reduce the period of service only for a portion of the present Reichswehr from twelve to six or eight year periods. This, he said, was necessary because of the demoralization among the soldiers causing a high rate of suicide in the Reichswehr (average of one hundred a year) chiefly in the later part of the period of service. Then the question of German Green Police was raised by MacDonald pointing to the fact that according to the French, the Germans had more than doubled their military forces. Bruening replied that Germany had a 150,000 men police force out of which only 97,000 or 98,000 were trained in the use of arms. This police force, said Bruening, was indispensable for the protection of internal order.

The German statesman did not try to dictate the size of the reduction in the armed forces of France. He did, however, insist on the abolition of particularly aggressive weapons. If France would be willing to create an international air force under the League and abolish military aviation, in that case, declared Buelow, Germany would be willing to internationalize civil aviation so as to avoid its being developed for
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military purposes.

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This account is similar to the one given in the German documents, Memo by Buelow Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., April 26, 1932, vol. V, D811914-D811917. Here, the demand for militia of the Swiss type was mentioned but its number was never defined. No account of the Bessinge talks in D.B.F. P.

This account is valid, not only because it is based upon the documents now available, but also because it was in line with Bruening's policy in this question, namely, the recognition of equality of status in principle, that is, the revision of Part V of the Treaty and, equality in armaments through disarmament.

Of further significance was the fact that Bruening had not presented the Groener plan which called for considerable rearmament, thus overriding the demands of the Defense Ministry. This was important because when Franz von Papen was chancellor the Defense Ministry under Kurt von Schleicher actually formulated German policy in the question of disarmament and the Foreign Ministry concurred. The extremely moderate terms put forward by Bruening at Bessinge and favored, as we shall see by MacDonald and Stimson, would in the future be misinterpreted by Papen when he would demand German rearmament claiming that such were Bruening's proposals at Bessinge and were accepted, a claim to be vehemently denied by both Stimson and MacDonald.

Moreover, observers at the disarmament talks³⁹ even expressed the view that if a disarmament settlement on the lines proposed by Bruening at Bessinge would have been negotiated, "such a settlement would of course have raised Bruening's position to one of triumph" possibly saving his government and the Weimar Republic. And, according to Meinecke, there was "the possibility that Bruening and Groener might have succeeded in taking the wind out of the sails of Hitler's movement by making a valuable

gain of national importance."⁴⁰ ^{He} In view of the chief military adviser to the British delegation at Geneva, Major General Arthur Temperley, "an agreement between Germany and France, might have meant peace in the West for a generation....Bruening would have returned to his countrymen with the laurels of having got rid of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty. Crowned with these he would have been certain of remaining in power in Germany for years to come and the Nazi Party and all subsequent upheavals in Europe might never have occurred."⁴¹ So impressed was Stimson with Bruening's conciliatory stand that he later added a comment in his Diary (presumably in May 1947) saying, "this is the important Conference (Bessinge) where Bruening made an offer which, if accepted might well have avoided World War II."⁴²

Whether the Bruening proposals if adopted would have saved his government, the Weimar Republic, and the world from a devastating war, is to say the least, debatable. At the time Bruening departed for Geneva in the middle of April, in Berlin Lieutenant General Kurt von Schleicher the "political General," Otto Meissner the President's Secretary of State, and Oskar von Hindenburg were already planning Bruening's removal from power. On the eve of the Bessinge talks, Schleicher told the French Ambassador that the French government should not negotiate with Bruening whose fall was a certainty. All in all, Bruening's days as Chancellor were numbered, especially after the Nazi successes in the April 26, 1932

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Meinecke, 72.

41

Temperley, 204.

42

Stimson, Diary, April 26, 1932. On Sept. 7, 1932, when the American Secretary of State had to face Papen's attitude in the disarmament question, Stimson wrote that Bruening took a "very magnanimous and generous position and did not ask for any of the things which the von Papen government was now demanding."

43

elections.

Yet more unfortunate, were the reasons why Bruening's proposals were not accepted. MacDonald, sympathetic to the German point of view, called upon Tardieu to return to Geneva on April 29, 1932, for a four Power Conference to settle the disarmament question. Again French intransigence played a decisive role. Although Tardieu's refusal to come to Geneva was due to an attack of laryngitis,⁴⁴ nevertheless, this malady happened at a very convenient moment. For France, in Tardieu's view, had only to lose as far as her interests in regard to disarmament were concerned. The French Plan and the concept of security were compromised at Bessinge. Le Temps, Tardieu's mouthpiece, had actually given France's answer to Bruening's proposals when it pointed out that France's demand for security was non negotiable.⁴⁵ Furthermore, on April 22, 1932, when the French Premier had met the Chancellor, he informed^{him} that the French position had not changed. France still regarded her plan of February 5, 1932, as the best way to bring about security and disarmament.⁴⁶ But even earlier than that, on April 20, 1902, Frederick Sackett the United States Ambassador in Berlin learned from François-Poncet that Tardieu had no plans to participate at the Bessinge talks for he believed that the stage was being set for his isolation.⁴⁷

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François-Poncet, 41.

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A correspondent of The New York Times, reported that the French Premier had cancelled all his speeches because he was unable to speak. The New York Times, April 28, 1932.

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Le Temps, April 28, 1932.

46

Memo by Buelow, April 22, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol V, D811910-D811913.

47

S. D. Sackett to Stimson, April 20, 1932, 500A15A4/989.

Accordingly, Tardieu's illness, more "diplomatic" than genuine, had in Stimson's words, left "everything up in the air." Yet before leaving Geneva on April 30, 1932, Stimson told reporters that the conversations he had with the statesmen of various nations gave him confidence in the ultimate success of the Conference. This confidence was probably based upon the view expressed by Eduard Benes, the rapporteur of the General Commission, that a compromise was possible between France and Germany on the basis of Bruening's proposals. MacDonald, on the other hand, believed that the Conference was at a standstill and, the only way to reach a solution was to get Germany out of her embarrassment by reaching an armaments agreement and then annulling Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

At Bessinge, Bruening submitted definite proposals to the American and British statesmen concerning the German demand for equality of rights in armaments. He set forth his country's case in moderate and conciliatory terms asking for equality in armaments through the disarmament of other powers, and, the replacement of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles with a new disarmament convention. Because of Tardieu's "diplomatic illness," which accounted for his absence at Bessinge, Bruening's proposals were not acted upon immediately although both MacDonald and Stimson acknowledged the soundness in the Chancellor's policy. And while Bruening hoped that his proposals would be acceptable to the Western powers and thereby would prevent his dismissal from office, it would be seen that such a development had failed to materialize. Moreover, even a successful outcome at Geneva would not have prevented the fall of the Bruening government.

CHAPTER IV

THE FALL OF BRUENING

Britain's failure to compel Tardieu's acceptance of Bruening's proposals submitted at Bessinge was contrary to the established British policy regarding the Bruening government. Since 1930-1931 it had been the British view that revision of the Treaty was necessary in order to⁴⁹ keep the moderate government of Bruening in power.

Whether such a policy would have saved Bruening at this late stage was dubious. Even so, what was needed now were not words, but some effective action, and leadership most of all. If indeed Bruening's proposals at Bessinge were generous why did Britain not take the lead by making them public and at the same time putting pressure on the Tardieu government to take some measures, if not in the direction of Treaty revision, at least towards disarmament? For it was high time to give Bruening something to take home instead of forcing him to return to Berlin empty handed. There he would face criticism from the Nationalist circles that the disarmament talks were a farce and that there was no hope for Germany to achieve equality in armaments through disarmament. Instead, British pressure upon France would come much later when it was clear that Germany was rearming far beyond the limits of the Treaty and when her intention was no longer to seek equality in armaments through the disarmament of France and Poland but through her own rearmament. For by the end

Rumbold to Henderson, Feb. 19, 1932, D.B.F.P., I, 531. See also Henderson to Rumbold, April 2, 1931, D.B.F.P., II, 58-59: Note by Vansittart on 69, "It was the best government we could hope for and had great difficulty in maintaining its equilibrium."

of the year Britain, France, and the United States were to succumb to the blackmail of Kurt von Schleicher by granting him what they have denied to Bruening.

Back in Berlin, Bruening, in a speech before the Reichstag on May 11, 1932, linked disarmament with reparations, asking for immediate disarmament on the part of Germany's neighbors as well as cancellation of reparations. Believing that a disarmament agreement along the lines of the proposals he made at Bessinge would be realized, Bruening told the Reichstag that Germany was only "one hundred yards off the finish" on the way of achieving these goals.

What was the basis for this optimism? On May 11, Frederick Prittwitz, the German Ambassador in Washington told William Castle, the American Under Secretary of State, that Bruening had received Stimson's message and hoped for further fruitful cooperation at Geneva. We do not know the details included in this message, yet it is fair to assume that its content was revealed in a conversation between Prittwitz and Stimson held on May 19, 1932. Then the Secretary of State declared that after the Bessinge talks he was very optimistic about the chances for the conclusion of a disarmament agreement and in fact Tardieu and MacDonald had promised to meet again on May 13, 1932, but that meeting had been postponed to some-
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 times in June because of the French elections and MacDonald's second
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 operation. Thus, Bruening's optimism as expressed in the Reichstag was premature.

But even if that meeting of May 13, would have taken place as Stimson and Bruening hoped, Bruening's chances for survival as Chancellor were

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S.D., Prittwitz to Castle, May 11, 1932, 500A15A 4/1043.

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S.D., Memo of conversation between Stimson and Prittwitz, May 19, 1932, 500 A15A 4/1045.

diminishing day by day. His optimistic forecast did not help quiet the Nazis or change the mind of Kurt von Schleicher who had already decided that Bruening must go. When Groener, in a speech before the Reichstag on May 12, 1932, had defended the dissolution of the S.A., Schleicher and Chief of Staff of the Army, Kurt von Hammerstein, had suggested that Groener resign as Minister of Defense. Although the official reason for his resignation was his poor medical condition, nevertheless, it seemed that neither Schleicher nor Hammerstein was happy about Groener's measures against Hitler's Storm Troops. Furthermore, both generals were moving towards the formation of a government which would be more acceptable to the National Socialists. Groener's resignation was a prelude to Bruening's fall.

On May 29, 1932, Bruening had an interview with the President who told him, "I must turn to the right at last" for this, according to Hindenburg, was the demand of the German nation. The President proposed the formation of a new cabinet in which Bruening would serve as Foreign Minister, an offer which the Chancellor rejected. Then, Hindenburg asked the Chancellor to bring in the resignation of his cabinet the next day.

In the morning of May 30, 1932, Bruening received the long awaited news of a possible breakthrough in the disarmament impasse by June. The American Ambassador, Frederick Sackett, brought the Chancellor a letter from Hugh Gibson, in which, according to Bruening, Edouard Herriot the eventual successor of Tardieu had agreed to accept in principle the German proposals

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Carsten, 349.

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Dorpalen, 321. See also Treviranus, G. R. "Bruening Geht," Deutsche Rundschau, 88 (July-December, 1962), 818-819.

made at Bessing^e. Furthermore, Gibson urged Bruening to proceed immediately⁵⁴ to Geneva. The Chancellor, however, had submitted the resignation of his government twenty-four^{hours} earlier. "Here is," says Wheeler-Bennett, one of the great "ifs" of history. Had Gibson's letter arrived twenty-four hours earlier, "the destiny of Europe and of Germany might well have changed."⁵⁵ From the available evidence we can conclude that such a possibility was dubious at best, and, as we have seen, Bruening's authority had been diminishing regardless of the outcome at Geneva. For the Bruening government fell because of an internal crisis and intrigues rather than failures⁵⁶ in foreign policy.

What is important is to see what were the possible contents of that letter that Sackett handed in to Bruening on the morning of May 30, 1932. Here the American documents are of great assistance.

On May 22, 1932, Norman Davis and Edouard Herriot⁵⁷ met at Lyons. At this time Herriot was not yet French Premier but he was negotiating with the Socialists for the purposes of forming a new government. In discussing reparations and disarmament with Norman Davis, Herriot pointed out that he did not consider the status quo as fixed and unchangeable. He could foresee a change in many treaties, including the Treaty of Ver-

⁵⁴ Heinrich Bruening, "Ein Brief," Deutsche Rundschau, 70 (July-December, 1947), 10-11.

⁵⁵ Wheeler-Bennett, Wooden Titan, Hindenburg, 393.

⁵⁶ See Conze Werner, "Zum Sturz Bruening," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, I (1953), 261-288. Also, Eschenburg Theodor, "Die Rolle der Persönlichkeit in der Krise der Weimarer Republik: Hindenburg, Bruening, Groener, Schleicher," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 9 (Jan., 1961), 1-29.

⁵⁷ Despite his intransigence in the disarmament question, Tardieu had been defeated in the elections of May 8. Herriot, leader of the Radical Socialist Party became the new French Premier on June 7.

sailles, as long as it came about by peaceful and legitimate means. Furthermore, he expressed his desire to work together with the United States and England and, that any accord with Germany would have to be worked out with Anglo-Saxon help. There was absolutely no mention on the part of Herriot of accepting the Bruening proposals as submitted at Bessinge. It was merely a general discussion on questions of foreign policy without any commitment on the part of the future French Premier. ⁵⁸ What was evident, however, was the fact that Herriot sounded more flexible than his predecessor. ^{it was} Unfortunately, too late, if at all possible, to affect the fate of his counterpart in Germany.

Gibson sent a despatch to Stimson informing him of Herriot's attitude and telling him about a possibility of having both Herriot and MacDonald in Geneva before the opening of the Lausanne Conference (June 16, 1932). Gibson had asked the American Secretary of State to suggest a way in which it would be possible for Bruening to make it for Geneva. ⁵⁹ Stimson replied that he was encouraged by Herriot's views and felt that a meeting between MacDonald, Herriot and Bruening should prove helpful. He left it to Gibson regarding the manner in which to inform Bruening adding that "a conversation between Sackett and Bruening ⁶⁰ would be sufficient." Accordingly, Gibson sent a letter to Sackett asking him to hand it to the German Chancellor. Presumably this letter contained the views advanced by Herriot in his conversation with Norman Davis, as well as an invitation

⁵⁸
Memo by Davis of a Conversation with Herriot, May 22, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 132-139.

⁵⁹
Gibson to Stimson, May 23, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 139.

⁶⁰
Stimson to Gibson, May 24, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 142.

for Bruening to proceed to Geneva.

It seems that the letter contained nothing in the nature of a commitment on the part of Herriot to accept the Bessinge formula. It did however contain "astonishing instances indicating hopeful possibilities,"⁶¹ but alas, it was too late for Bruening. Such a letter would not have changed the course of Germany if it had come forty-eight hours earlier, for Bruening's fall resulted from domestic opposition which success in foreign policy could not surmount, especially at this stage of internal developments. The President had told Bruening that because Germany was moving to the Right, a new cabinet was needed with Bruening serving in it as Foreign Minister. This in itself seems to imply that diplomatic failures were not the reason which drove Bruening out of office. Furthermore, Bruening's successors Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher would reap the harvest sown by Bruening in both the question of reparations as well as disarmament, yet they would face the same fate as their predecessor.

More important was the failure of the French to realize that Bruening's demands were moderate and that he did not pursue a policy of threats as his opponents had wanted. But in the future, his opponents by using threats would reach the goals that Bruening failed to attain. For Germany's demand for equality of rights in armaments by the disarmament of the former Allies, was not only morally right. It was based upon also the Preamble of Part V and the Clemenceau letter, which from the German point of view, were as binding upon the former Allies as the military clauses of the Treaty were binding upon Germany, especially in view of the fact

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Memo by the Secretary of State, May 25, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 183.

that her disarmament was acknowledged by them with the withdrawal of the Inter-Allied Commission of Control in January of 1927.

France was the foremost military power on the Continent. Despite her obsession with security, no matter how justifiable, a gesture of good will on her part towards disarmament would not have appreciably reduced her strength. Although Germany had circumvented the military clauses of the Treaty, she did not constitute a threat to French security. Tardieu's tactics of avoiding French disarmament were an exercise in obstructionism. He certainly was responsible for the failure of the Conference in its first stage.

On the other hand, although Bruening was a revisionist at heart, he believed that revision must take place through legitimate and peaceful means rather than by tearing the Treaty apart as his opponents had advocated. The crux of the matter was the demand on the part of Germany for the recognition of equality of rights in principle which was a political rather than a technical question for it meant revising Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and substituting a new Disarmament Convention. While not increasing Germany's present level of armaments, it should have included some reduction in offensive armaments on the part of her neighbors.

Franz von Papen, who succeeded Bruening as Chancellor, would be manipulated by his Defense Minister, Kurt von Schleicher, who demanded Treaty revision and equality of rights through German rearmament but not through disarmament. Unlike the situation under Bruening, during the Papen Chancellorship, the Defense Ministry instead of the Foreign Ministry would now formulate German policy regarding disarmament which was after all a question of foreign policy.

While French intransigence, so characteristic of the Tardieu govern-

ment, would give way to a government of the Left, headed by Herriot who would be willing to make concessions towards disarmament, only to face this time a German rebuff as demonstrated by her temporary withdrawal from the Conference on July 23, 1932. The irony of fate was that a moderate Bruening had to face an intransigent Tardieu, while a moderate Herriot had to deal with Papen and his cabinet of Junkers.

CHAPTER IV

NEW ADMINISTRATION, NEW POLICIES

On June 1, 1932, Franz von Papen succeeded Bruening as Chancellor of Germany. He belonged to the right wing of the Center Party and enjoyed friendly relations with General Kurt von Schleicher who had urged the President to appoint him as Chancellor.¹ The Nationalists, and especially Hitler, had welcomed the appointment of Papen as a sign that Germany was turning the Nazi way. On the other hand, Papen's appointment was viewed with scorn and ridicule by those worried about the future of Germany. According to the French Ambassador, Papen possessed "the peculiarity of being taken seriously by neither his friends nor his enemies....He had a reputation of being superficial, blundering, ambitious, vain, crafty and an intriguer."² When Stimson learned about the character of the new German cabinet, he exclaimed, "I can't understand it....Old President von Hindenburg has thrown himself into the laps of the most reactionary elements in Germany."³ A dashing cavalryman, Papen was known to the world as the German military attaché who was ejected from the United States during the first World War charged with sabotage and violation of neutrality.

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Under Groener von Schleicher was the head of the Ministeramt, - a division within the Defense Ministry whose task was to deal with all matters in which both the Army and the Navy were concerned. He also acted as a liaison between the Reichswehr on the one hand and the other Reich ministries and political parties on the other. In this capacity he participated in cabinet meetings and had direct access to the President. Due to his political intelligence, Schleicher exercised influence on the elder Hindenburg to such a degree that he actually dominated the inner political life of Germany by removing and proposing candidates to the Chancellorship.

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François-Poncet, 42-43.

3

Stimson, Diary, June 1, 1932.

The new government depended on the good will of the Nationalists and especially the Nazis. In return for a promise by Hitler to support the government, he had been assured by Papen that new elections for the Reichstag would be held and that the ban on the S.A. would be lifted.⁴

The government's shift to the right caused great anxiety in Geneva over the course Germany would follow in the question of disarmament. Furthermore, because the Papen government was considered to be a transitory one, in the words of Nadolny, some kind of Kerenskiregierung,⁵ it also raised doubts as to the validity of its commitments in foreign affairs. For these reasons the former Allies should have maintained a united front and a rigid attitude concerning Germany's demands in the disarmament question. Furthermore, as long as Bruening was in power, the British believed that concessions to Germany were necessary in order to strengthen his moderate government. With Bruening gone, this consideration needed no longer to be taken into account. The United States, Britain, and France could speak with one voice in opposing German demands for equality of status in armaments which would now mean Treaty revision and rearmament.⁶

The strong man in the new cabinet was Kurt von Schleicher who became the Defense Minister and as such had a great influence in formulating German policy concerning disarmament. In his view, the German representative at the disarmament talks should reiterate Germany's right to military

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The Reichstag was dissolved on June 4, 1932, with general elections to be held on July 31. The decree abolishing the S.A. was rescinded on June 15. Hitler concentrated all his efforts on the electoral campaign, in order to increase Nazi representation in the Reichstag while at the same time he loosened his liberated storm troopers against his opponents, particularly the Communists and members of the Social Democratic Reichsbanner. A wave of violence swept through Germany reaching its climax with the Altona riots of June 17, when fifteen persons were killed and fifty injured.

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Nadolny, 121.

6

Gibson to Stimson, June 5, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 152.

parity with France, meaning rearmament.

On June 14, 1932, he drew up a memorandum for the German Foreign Office, "The German Goal at the Disarmament Conference," containing the "minimum demands" Germany should put forward in case a five-year international disarmament convention would be agreed upon. According to von Schleicher, such a convention must provide for the elimination of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and the inclusion of new armament figures to which Germany was "legally entitled." In regard to land armaments, Germany should claim parity either with France or with Poland and Czechoslovakia. As far as naval armaments were concerned, Germany should claim parity with France or Italy. Furthermore, Germany should be allowed to possess all weapons not expressly forbidden by such a convention, namely, heavy artillery, tanks, and airplanes. The period of service in the Reichswehr should range from three to twelve years and Germany should be allowed to set up a militia with a three month period of service. The convention should not impose any limitations on the military budget. Should those demands not be accepted, wrote the German Defense Minister, Germany should withdraw from the Conference and rearm in accordance with her needs as outlined above.⁷

The reason for Schleicher's tough line was his desire to appease the Nationalist elements within Germany, a fact that would become clearer and more explicit in his future public pronouncements. Furthermore, his memorandum was significant since it marked a radical change from the attitude adopted by his predecessor in the Defense Ministry, and would have an impact on German policy in this question because of Schleicher's

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Memo by Schleicher, June 14, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. V, D811821-D811824.

prestige and position in the new cabinet. The memorandum was, in fact, a concrete plan for the Umbau (reorganization) and rearmament of the Reichswehr, regardless of the outcome at Geneva. The seven infantry divisions would accordingly be increased with new recruits, and after April 1, 1933, every infantry company would be supplemented by twenty men. Two hundred additional officers would be appointed by the end of 1932, and three hundred more by the spring of 1933. In addition these units would be armed with heavy artillery and anti aircraft guns.⁸

Such a stand was in clear contrast with the policy advocated by the Foreign Ministry and the Chancellor. They contended that at this stage Germany should demand only a French acknowledgment of the principle of equality of status in armaments before advancing any demands for rearmament since Germany was financially incapable of embarking upon a large scale rearmament program as set forth by Schleicher. In Buelow's view, the German delegation at Geneva should demand a five-year convention during which time Germany would refrain from rearming and other powers would disarm to the German level. Although this in itself represented a departure from Bruening's policy as stated at Bessinge where he demanded a ten-year convention, nevertheless it was still a far cry from the demands put forward by the Defense Minister. Although within a few months the Foreign Ministry would move towards the Schleicher position in the upcoming negotiations Germany pursued the policy advocated by Buelow.⁹

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Castellan, 82-83: Carsten, 357.

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Memo by Buelow, June 4, 1932; Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K. vol. V, D811886-D811889, also in "Richtlinien für die Abrüstungsfrage in Lausanne," June 4, 1932, vol. V, D811849-811853.

This became clear with the opening of the Reparations Conference in Lausanne on June 16, 1932. This Conference had in fact overshadowed the disarmament talks at Geneva. The presence in Lausanne of MacDonald, Herriot, and Papen, made possible an exchange of views at the highest level on disarmament and especially on Germany's demand for equality of rights in armaments. The German delegation at Lausanne insisted that a settlement of the question of reparations as well as disarmament should be concluded at the Conference. Thus, Buelow in a conversation on June 18, 1932, with the French Under Secretary of State, André de Laboulaye, brought up Germany's desire for a disarmament convention to supersede Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. What Germany demanded was equality of treatment (Gleichbehandlung), namely acknowledgment in principle of her equality of status in armaments with other states. Furthermore, he pointed out that Germany was not asking for military parity with France either in men or in armaments.¹⁰

A day later, Papen was more specific in his demands than Buelow. From MacDonald he demanded a five-year disarmament convention in which Germany's equality of status would be recognized in principle. Germany, according to Papen, would refrain from rearming and at the same time limit her expenditures on armaments to its present level. She would, however, adopt "her armaments within these limits to her special requirements and conditions."¹¹

Papen and the Foreign Ministry seemed at odds with Schleicher's position as expressed in his June 14, 1932 memorandum. Nevertheless, for

¹⁰ Herriot to François Poncet, July 20, 1932, in Documents Diplomatiques Français, 1932-1939 (1st Series, 4 vols., Paris, 1964), I, 72-73. (Hereinafter cited as D.D.F., followed by relevant volume number).

¹¹ Papen to MacDonald, June 21, 1932; D.B.F.P., III, 251-252.

the first time Germany asked for a disarmament convention which would remove the restrictions imposed upon her armaments by the Treaty of Versailles without demanding disarmament on the part of other powers. This new stand, coupled with Buelow's contention that Germany for financial reasons could not rearm in the near future, raised the question of whether Germany was negotiating in good faith. By avoiding the demand so often raised by Bruening that other powers should disarm, it seemed quite probable that once the principle of equality was acknowledged, Germany would begin a process of rearmament to the level of other powers. This development made it imperative that the former Allies reach a disarmament agreement which would leave Germany without any excuse for rearming.¹²

At Lausanne, the message of the Papen government was quite clear: certain parts of the Treaty of Versailles should be wiped out. These were Part VIII of the Treaty, relating to reparations, and Part V dealing with disarmament.¹³ In essence it meant the complete cancellation of reparations and the settlement of the disarmament question on the basis of equality of rights in armaments among nations. As for French security, the German Chancellor was willing to offer France a Consultative Pact.

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There were other grounds for questioning the honesty of the Papen government. On June 24, Papen promised the French Premier political and economic compensation if France would abandon her claim for German reparations. In addition, Papen also spoke about a military alliance between the two countries. Herriot, interested in Franco-German reconciliation felt that such an agreement was better than a mere money payment. One day later, after returning from Berlin, Papen changed his mind, claiming that Germany could not pay anymore reparations and, as far as compensations were concerned, they applied only to a loan to Austria and some minor economic advantages for Rumanian and Hungarian wheat. See D.B.F.P., III, June 27, 1932, 271-272.

13

Britain and Germany, "Notes of a Conversation," June 27, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 274-275.

This Pact would contain provisions that no question of interest to Germany, such as the Corridor and Upper Silesia, could be settled without consultations with France.¹⁴

The French Premier, however, noticed the internal situation in Germany where France was still hated, and decided not to discuss the question of disarmament at Lausanne. There also, in an apparent change of attitude towards Germany, the British supported the French contention arguing that the question of disarmament should be settled at Geneva. In regard to the question of reparations, also, there was a change in the British stand. They had abandoned the policy of a "clean slate," which meant complete cancellation of all reparations, in exchange for the French proposal of a "final payment." This came as a result of German tactics of declaring that they could pay nothing but then later stating that they could pay something in the nature of a "contribution" only if the¹⁵ "war-guilt" clause of the Treaty of Versailles were removed, and Germany's equality of status in armaments was recognized. The "contribution" amounted to a figure of about 2.6 billion Reichmarks.

This position taken by Germany drew a sharp negative reply from the French Premier who declared that he would accept no political conditions. "Disarmament was one thing, responsibility for the war another and reparations was a third matter." Political questions, said Herriot, should not

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Kabinettsprotokolle, June 25, 1932, vol. CIX, D790270-71.

¹⁵

This refers to Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, which is the first article of Part VIII dealing with reparations. The article reads: "The Allied and Associated Governments affirm, and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her Allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

be mixed up with reparations, and, furthermore he would not sell the rights of his country for a payment of 2.6 billion marks. Although France wanted a reconciliation with Germany, she could not, according to her Premier, accept the German conditions which "reeked of bad faith," and meant a "humiliation for France."¹⁶ The French Premier told MacDonald that France was willing to accept a formula which would indicate a satisfactory disarmament settlement. In fact, he had already instructed the French delegation at Geneva to begin talks on qualitative disarmament and to withdraw the original French proposal for an international force. All that Herriot wanted to settle at Lausanne was only the reparations question and not political questions such as the principle of equality of status in armaments and war responsibility.¹⁷

Finally, the British Prime Minister negotiated the Lausanne Convention, which practically cancelled all German reparations. Germany of her own will undertook to make an eventual contribution to France of three billion Reichsmarks after the termination of a three year moratorium. This agreement with Germany was preceded by a general declaration stating that the Lausanne Convention would help "create a new order permitting the establishment and development of confidence between nations in a mutual spirit of reconciliation, collaboration and justice." In regard to disarmament, both Britain and France promised to find a solution at Geneva which will be beneficial and "equitable" for all powers concerned. Accord-

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Britain and France, "Notes of a Conversation," July 5, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 385.

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Perhaps nothing more demonstrated Herriot's mistrust and dislike of Papan than the remark he whispered in the ear of John Simon when both faced Papan across the Conference table, "the more that I study the face of a German cavalry officer," said Herriot, "the more I admire his horse." This was Simon's happiest memory of the Lausanne Conference. See John Simon, Retro-spect, 188.

ding to the French the word "equitable" did not mean a recognition by Britain of the German demand for equality of status in armaments between France and Germany. According to the British interpretation of the word, it meant "fair play" and in no way did it recognize any political claim.

The German nationalist press expected the Lausanne Conference to result in the complete emancipation of Germany from the provisions of Part VIII and Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. In a deliberate attempt to counter their hostility towards the Lausanne Agreement, Papen gave the German press his interpretation of the agreement. He explained that the cancellation of reparations constituted a formal abrogation of Part VIII of the Treaty together with the "war-guilt" clause, a view unconfirmed by either London or by Paris. In regard to disarmament, Papen claimed that the participating powers at Lausanne recognized that negotiations over this question would follow at Geneva along the lines of equality of rights in the armament question.¹⁸

Papen's interpretation of the word "equitable" was in complete contrast with what the British and French had in mind. While the Chancellor's statements might have proved beneficial for the time being, from the point of view of domestic politics, they had raised suspicions and doubts among the former Allies as to German credibility in foreign affairs. This attitude would manifest itself during the upcoming disarmament negotiations.

Meanwhile at Geneva, the Bureau met on June 14, 1932, and had before it the reports of the technical committees. These reports demonstrated the divergence of views among the technical experts who are incapable of deciding which weapons could be defined as "offensive" or "defensive."

The Land Naval and Air committees labored for six weeks without being able to draw the line of division between offensive and defensive weapons. For example, in the Naval committee each delegation tended to consider defensive the categories of vessels suited to its country's needs and aggressive the categories it saw no need to retain for itself. While both the United States and Britain maintained that the battleship was a purely defensive weapon and the submarine was the only vessel that could be classified as aggressive, Japan claimed that both the battleship and the submarine were defensive in nature and only the aircraft carriers should be considered as aggressive. The German representative, Baron Werner von Rheinbaben, claimed that all vessels forbidden to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles were offensive, while the vessels she was allowed to retain, particularly the "pocket battleship" of 10,000 tons, could be considered as defensive. The German delegate, however, was willing to renounce the "pocket battleship" if other powers would agree to reduce the size of capital ships.

The same divergence of views plagued the Land committee. While one group of nations (Germany, Russia, Italy and Hungary) considered all tanks aggressive, a second group (France and Britain) maintained that only tanks exceeding a certain tonnage could be considered as such. For the British, aggressive tanks were all over twenty-five tons, and for the French all tanks above seventy tons. The Air committee reached the conclusion that all air armaments could be used for offensive purposes. While the German representative asked for the abolition of all military aircraft, the French representative demanded the internationalization of civil aviation. This divergence of views among the technical experts, demonstrating the complete deadlock in the disarmament negotiations, was summarized in a

remark made by the Italian Foreign Minister Dino Grandi on June 3, 1932, before the Senate in Rome when he said that the "Naval Powers wanted land disarmament, the Land Powers wanted naval disarmament and the delegates¹⁹ at Geneva wanted a new mentality."

The inability of the technical experts to agree on what could be considered "offensive" or "defensive" weapons, had led British, French, and American statesmen to believe that the method hitherto adopted by the Conference of setting up committees and subcommittees of experts was useless and that a new way must be found in order to make progress towards disarmament.

In a meeting held on June 14, 1932, the delegations of the United States, Britain, and France reached the conclusion that only private consultations among themselves could save the Conference from complete failure. John Simon suggested that the time had come for the Great Powers to succeed in what the technical experts had failed, namely, agreement on a list of weapons which should be classified as offensive and accordingly be abolished. Only in such a way, he argued, would the Conference finally be able to reach a decision in favor of qualitative disarmament. Simon's suggestion was taken up by the participants for not only was it a practical one, but it was also high time for the Disarmament Conference to come forward with some results. Unfortunately, however, those private consultations proved that the statesmen were as divided in their views as the technical experts. In fact, the French reverted to their previous stand asking that the draft Convention be taken as a basis for discussion. Herriot even raised the long forgotten Tardieu Plan and the question of

security. This prompted an outburst from Norman Davis that the Conference had been in session for five months and could show no achievements. In his view the time had come to "decide whether we were resolved to reduce and limit armaments, or could we agree to do nothing?"²⁰

Herriot's attitude was a departure from his previous conciliatory stand in the disarmament question as indicated in his conversation with Davis in Lyons at the end of May, 1932. The reason for the change lay in the fact that in May Herriot was perhaps more inclined to compromise with the moderate Bruening, whereas now, having experienced Papen's behavior at Lausanne, his promises and their violation and especially his interpretation[†] of the Lausanne Agreement and the word "equitable," the French Premier had adopted at least for the moment the hard line of his predecessor. He even demanded the exclusion of Germany from participation in the private consultations to deal with the question of qualitative disarmament. In his view such participation would amount to a recognition of the German claim to equality of treatment and that, according to Herriot, was a political question, implying a modification of the Treaty, something the French delegation would not accept. In spite of MacDonald's arguments that Germany's participation in earlier private talks, meaning Bessinge, did not amount to such a recognition, Herriot had his way. This was another indication of the decline in prestige and support of the Papen government.²¹

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Record of a Meeting held at Geneva between the delegations of the United Kingdom, the United States and France, June 19, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 532-535.

21

Record of a Meeting held at Geneva between the delegations of the United Kingdom and of France, June 14, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 518-523.

Since those consultations had only accentuated the impasse towards a disarmament agreement, the next move came from Washington. The President of the United States, Herbert Hoover, in a phone call to Gibson on June 19, 1932, pointed out that strong leadership was necessary at Geneva and therefore he would submit new proposals for effective reduction in armaments. Immediately afterwards Gibson requested the President of the Conference, Arthur Henderson, to convene the General Commission. On June 22, 1932, Gibson placed the Hoover proposals for disarmament before the General Commission. On the same day the President's message was also made public in Washington.

Hoover prefaced his proposals by a statement declaring that by signing the Kellogg Briand Pact all nations had agreed to use their arms solely for defense. Reduction in armaments would result in economic relief by reducing land, sea, and air armaments. In essence, the President proposed a reduction of one-third in the strength of all land armies, the reduction of all world armaments by a third through the abolition of tanks, chemical warfare, and large mobile guns. Furthermore, his proposals called for the abolition of military aviation, except for observation planes, and the prohibition of all bombardment from the air. As regards naval armaments, Hoover called for a reduction of one-third in the number and the tonnage, by a fourth of all aircraft carriers and destroyers, as well as a reduction of submarines by one-third. Hoover proposed to take the figure to which Germany had been limited by Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, namely, one hundred thousand troops for a population of about sixty-five million people, as the ratio for a "police component" required for the maintenance of internal order. A reduction of one-third should be

made in the strength of all land armies over and above the "police component."²²

Hoover's proposals were intended to break the deadlock in the disarmament talks. The United States, which had considered disarmament first and foremost a European problem to be settled by European nations among themselves, had actually taken the leadership towards achieving this goal by disclosing its willingness to accept drastic reductions in her own naval strength, tanks, guns, and aircraft. The President's proposals also served notice to the European powers that such drastic reductions in armaments were necessary if disarmament was to be the means towards the establishment of peace in Europe and the world. But while such an initiative was most welcome, if only to revive the seemingly hopeless negotiations, nevertheless, the United States would have to contribute more than that in order to achieve a successful outcome of the Conference. For disarmament was not merely a technical problem, namely, the destruction of a number of tanks, guns, military airplanes, and submarines. The problem was political, that is, the necessity of establishing certain political conditions in Europe so as to make disarmament possible. In the case of France, the granting of security guarantees by the United States and Britain against a possible German sudden attack was an inducement for the reduction of her armaments. This the United States in its isolationist mood was unwilling to provide.

In the discussion which followed in the General Commission, Nadolny welcomed the American initiative as a serious attempt in bringing about

general disarmament. According to the German chief delegate, Hoover, ~~by~~ ~~making~~ references to the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles as a criteria for armaments reduction, had recognized the fact that Germany was indeed defenseless, and, that disarmament along the lines of the Versailles Treaty was the right path to follow. Nevertheless, the German representative thought that in substance the proposals seemed quite moderate and expressed his hope that more vigorous steps would be taken in bringing about a reduction in armaments.

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France reacted to the American proposals with guarded disapproval. For in regard to land forces, France had claimed that Germany's land army consisted not only of the one hundred thousand troops allowed by the Treaty but also of the Schutz Politzei and other semi-military associations which together brought the total number of trained men up to three hundred thousand. France again demanded security guarantees. This irritated Norman Davis who said that if they secured further European treaties they would consider them as inadequate as the Locarno Treaty. If Germany was France's real enemy, said Davis, the greatest security lay in a general disarmament treaty to which Germany would be a party, otherwise, if the Conference ended without an agreement, Germany would denounce the military clauses of the Treaty and rearm. Davis then cautioned France to collaborate with the United States on the Hoover proposals, which provided a greater measure than the piling up of treaties of mutual assistance.

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Minutes of the General Commission, June 22, 1932, I, 129. Britain accepted the Hoover proposals in principle, with some reservations in regard to the naval clauses. Britain wanted submarines to be abolished entirely as well as a reduction in the size of capital ships. The proposals were rejected by Japan, while Italy accepted them as a whole without conditions of any kind.

24

Gibson to Stimson, June 25, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 234-235.

Davis' remarks had their effect. By July 1, 1932, the French position seemed to have changed. They had accepted the Hoover proposals in principle and, were willing to discuss them thoroughly and sympathetically. This change in France's stand could also be attributed to the extremely precarious political position of Herriot in France and to American pressure. The United States served notice on Britain and especially on France that they could not expect any cancellation of war debts as long as the debtor states failed to reduce their expenditures on armaments.

With the French position modified, the next three weeks were used for a continuation of the private consultations begun in the middle of June between the United States, Britain, and France to which Italy was later admitted but Germany excluded. The purpose of the discussions was to find an acceptable formula for a resolution based on the Hoover proposals with which to conclude the first phase of the Conference and adjourn for the summer.

Yet despite their absence from those private talks, the German delegation made their position very clear as to what such a formula should contain in order to make it acceptable to Germany. Baron Werner von Rheinbaben served notice on Herbert Samuel, a member of the British delegation, that Germany expected a new resolution now being drafted to include a recognition of the principle of equality of rights of armaments. He also made clear German demands in terms of rearmament. As regards naval armaments, if a twenty-two thousand ton limit was applied to capital ships in possession of other countries, Germany would accept a figure between

ten thousand and twenty-two thousand tons since for financial reasons she could not build ships of a higher tonnage. With regard to cruisers, under the Treaty Germany was allowed to have cruisers of six thousand tons, but if the limit of seven thousands was not accepted, Germany should be able to build up to ten thousand tons. As for light cruisers and destroyers, Germany wished to have the same types as other nations did. The same principle also applied to submarines, namely, equality in tonnage with other nations. Concerning naval personnel, which under the Treaty amounted to fifteen thousand, it was obvious that with naval rearmament personnel would have to be increased as well. Rheinbaben suggested a total of about thirty thousand men. In regard to aircraft, if military aviation were not abolished altogether, Germany would ask for a "modest contingent." 26

In all fairness to Baron Rheinbaben and to the German case, it must be pointed out that he suggested German rearmament only if the Conference failed to achieve general disarmament. Yet in view of Schleicher's June 14, 1932 memorandum and his plan for the reorganization of the Reichswehr it was quite probable that Germany was seeking a pretext to justify her own rearmament, for the government knew that it was out of the question for complete and general disarmament to be carried out at once. Even the Hoover proposals which Germany welcomed, still did not seem to go far enough in the direction of disarmament from the German point of view. This was yet another indication that the Papen government was not bargaining in good faith. Bruening not only had never raised the question of German rearmament, but he always insisted upon a gradual pro-

cess of disarmament on the part of the former Allies.

On July 6, 1932, Schleicher ordered General Werner von Blomberg, chief military expert at the Disarmament Conference, to reject any Resolution which did not include a recognition of Germany's equality of rights in armaments.²⁷ This letter was sent to Blomberg and not to Nadolny, the head of the German delegation at Geneva, because Blomberg was more in tune with Schleicher's thinking on this question, and he was also quite sympathetic to the ideas of the Nazis.²⁸ Schleicher's letter indicated the pressure on the German government from the military to withdraw from the Conference unless the German demand for equality of rights in armaments was recognized.²⁹

Despite Germany's warnings, after prolonged discussions during July, a text Resolution which did not include her demands was finally produced by the delegations from Britain, France, and the United States. The Resolution was submitted to the General Commission on July 20, 1932, for approval. The preamble of the Resolution stressed the fact that the Conference was guided by the general principles underlined in President Hoover's proposals, namely, that a substantial reduction in world armaments should apply equally to land, naval and air armaments and, that the primary objective would be to reduce the means of attack. The preamble also emphasized the fact that the Resolution was to be a summary of achievements in the field of disarmament concluded in the first phase of the

²⁷ Schleicher to Blomberg, July 6, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. V, D811819.

²⁸ Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, 297.

²⁹ François-Poncet to Herriot, July 13, 1932, D.D.F., I, 28-29.

Conference and that further reductions in armaments would be discussed by the Bureau after the adjournment of the General Commission. The purpose of the Bureau would be to prepare the ground work for the "Second Phase of the Conference."

According to the Resolution, air attacks against civilian population would be absolutely prohibited and all heavy land artillery would be limited in number. The maximum tonnage of tanks should be limited. Chemical, bacteriological, and incendiary warfare should be prohibited. As to the question of supervision, a permanent Disarmament Commission would be established. The Bureau of the Conference would meet on September 19, 1932 for further discussions. Although the Resolution did not go all the way towards the plan proposed by the President of the United States, it did however recognize that the plan constituted a goal for eventual achievement. It must also be pointed out that for the first time it was decided what to do in order to attain concrete measures of reduction, whereas hitherto all debates on this subject had been confined to methods.

As soon as the Resolution was submitted to the General Commission for debate, Nadolny informed members of the British delegation that he would vote against it. He explained that the Resolution did not address itself to the German thesis of equality of rights in armaments. Nadolny also informed Gibson that not only did he intend to vote against the Resolution but "would announce that Germany would decline to collaborate further with the Conference." In Berlin, Neurath told the British

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For complete text of the Resolution, see D.B.F.P., III, Appendix VII, 613-617.

31

Rumbold to Simon, July 21, 1932, D.B.F.P., III, 588.

Ambassador that the German government had decided to reject the Resolution. Despite Rumbold's urging that the German government modify its attitude by abstaining rather than rejecting it, the German Foreign Minister was "quite immoveable and even stiff."³²

But the American delegation pressured the German government to change its stand. Davis warned Nadolny that the German rejection of the Resolution, after insisting upon general disarmament ever since the war, would leave the impression that Germany intended to torpedo the Hoover proposals. France had shown a reasonable attitude by withdrawing any demand that her plan for security and an international force be considered as a condition to disarmament. Why then should not Germany withhold her claim for equality of rights in principle, asked Davis.³³ In Washington, Stimson called in the German Ambassador and told him that Nadolny's stand at Geneva was a "reversal of the attitude which Bruening had taken in Geneva last April." Such action by Germany said Stimson, "would tend to break up the Conference, would disturb international confidence in Germany and unsettle the world."³⁴

In a speech delivered in the General Commission on July 21, 1932, John Simon pleaded with Nadolny to change his stand. He asked for reasonableness on the part of the Germans, stressing the point that the question of equality of treatment had no part in a Resolution "which was destined to indicate the points on which agreement had been reached." He

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Ibid., 587-588.

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Gibson to Stimson, July 21, 1932; F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 309.

³⁴

Castle to Gibson, July 23, 1932; F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 315.

pointed out that Germany's demand for equality of status in armaments³⁵ would be taken up when the Conference reassembled.

All these pressures were of no avail. On July 22, 1932, in a speech before the Commission, Nadolny put forward his government's position regarding the Resolution. In his view the Resolution did not go far enough towards general disarmament, as imposed upon Germany by Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. Furthermore, he insisted upon "prompt and clean cut" recognition of the principle of equality of rights in armaments, which was equivalent to the wiping out of Part V of the Treaty. These according to Nadolny were the two major failures of the Resolution. Therefore, he continued,

the German Government must point out at once that it cannot undertake to continue its collaboration if a satisfactory solution on this point, which for Germany is a decisive one, is not reached by the time the Conference resumes its work.³⁶

Despite Nadolny's attitude the Resolution was adopted by 41 votes to 2 with 8 abstentions. Russia and Germany voted against it.

This change in the German position was the outcome of pressure from the military establishment upon the Foreign Ministry and can be traced back to Schleicher's memorandum of June 14, 1932, when he put forward the "minimum" German demands for rearmament rather than disarmament on the part of other powers. This course of action taken by Germany, under the pressure of the Defense Ministry, was communicated by the French and British Ambassadors in Berlin to the respective countries some time prior to Germany's rejection of the Resolution and her threat to withdraw from

³⁵ Minutes of the General Commission, July 21, 1932, I, 180-182.

³⁶ Ibid., July 22, 1932, I, 186-188.

the Conference.

Simon in a letter to his Ambassador in Berlin commented that the "shortcoming in German political strategy is not that it is wicked, but that it is stupid, and I am afraid there is no cure, this side of the grave for stupidity."³⁷ In retrospect, however, one finds it much harder to accuse the Germans of stupidity than the British of naiveté.

Parallel to German intransigence, France took a more conciliatory stand thus enabling her to isolate Germany diplomatically by forming a united front with Britain and the United States against Germany's demand for recognition of equality of rights in principle. France had made great concessions both at Lausanne, in the question of reparations, and at Geneva in the question of disarmament. After renouncing reparations, France could not agree to the idea of scrapping Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. In turn she had decided to give up Tardieu's unrealistic Plan with its thesis of security, and instead agreed to proceed along the path of disarmament. By doing so, France had actually taken the first step in fulfilling the pledge contained in the Preamble of Part V that Germany's disarmament was intended to be a prelude to general disarmament. Furthermore, nowhere in the July 23, 1932 Resolution was the political question of security, so important in French policy since 1919, ever men-

37

John Simon, Private Letters, Extract from letter of the Secretary of State to Rumbold, July 21, 1932; British Foreign Office, 800/287. In the letter Simon entertained his ambassador with the contents of a conversation that Nadolny had with Herriot in which the French Premier told Nadolny, "I am greatly concerned Herr Nadolny lest your country may be heading for a revolution," to which Nadolny replied, "Oh no, that is impossible, in Germany no regulations exist providing for a revolution," (Hereinafter cited as Simon, Private Letters, B.F.O., followed by volume number. These unpublished letters are deposited in the Public Record Office, London).

tioned. Even Nadolny commended Herriot's speech in the General Commission when accepting the Resolution the French Premier did not look for any special security for his country but the same security for all nations. 38

The change of administration in Germany from Bruening to Papen marked a shift in Germany's position on the question of disarmament. Instead of disarmament, the emphasis now was on rearmament as indicated in Schleicher's memorandum of June 14, 1932 and in his directives to Blomberg. Buelow's stand at Lausanne was replaced by a more intransigent policy, as seen by Germany's rejection of the July 23, 1932 Resolution, and her threat of non collaboration with the Conference unless her terms were met. The military had gained the upper hand in directing German disarmament policy. Unfortunately the tough German line appeared just as the French position began to soften, as seen at Laussane and in Herriot's acceptance of the July 23 Resolution. While the French position would become more conciliatory, Germany, owing to Schleicher's influence, would for the first time set forth in specific terms her demands for equality in armaments in principle as well as rearmament,-- the price for her return to the Conference table. During August and September of 1932, Germany would attempt to gain through private negotiations with France what she failed to achieve in Geneva.

CHAPTER VI

ATTEMPTS OF PRIVATE NEGOTIATIONS

Nadolny's declaration of July 22, 1932, was in the nature of a warning namely, that Germany would not resume its collaboration with the Disarmament Conference when it re-assembled in late September unless her demand for equality of rights in armaments was recognized. Thus, when the delegates of the Western powers adjourned for the summer, it became clear to them that the problem of German equality must be dealt with seriously during the next few weeks if the Disarmament Conference were to succeed.

But provocative public pronouncements made by Schleicher and by the German Chancellor made concessions to the German claims more difficult. For the German Defense Minister had proclaimed in public what he had expressed in private for a long time. On July 26, 1932, over nationwide radio, Schleicher characterized the Disarmament Conference as a "disastrous failure" and promised to reorganize the German Reichswehr so as to insure a greater degree of security for Germany. While the threat to German security might have come from Poland, Schleicher nonetheless alluded to France when he said that "no other European land possesses in so small degree the security for which paradoxical though it sounds the strongest military Power in the world incessantly clamours."¹ Stresemann,

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This was in reply to a statement made by Lamoureux, the Rapporteur-Général of the French Budget who, in the course of a debate on the budget in the Chamber of Deputies on July 24, said that France's chain of fortifications along the eastern frontier were impregnable, thus giving France the security against an invasion similar to that of 1914.

Schleicher continued, "has in the Reichstag described this attitude of our Western neighbor as hypocrisy and I think there are few Germans who could disagree with him." Germany, he said, could obtain security in two ways, either other nations disarm to the German level, which in view of the results of the Disarmament Conference few people would believe possible, or, Germany could organize her armed forces by reorganization not extension (umbauen nicht ausbauen). He left no doubt that Germany would choose the latter if full security and equality of rights in armaments were denied her in the future.² As if to elaborate upon his radio address, Schleicher told a correspondent of The New York Times that Germany would not return to the Disarmament Conference unless she was granted the same rights that any other nation possessed. Accordingly, if submarines, bombing planes, heavy artillery, and tanks were designated as means of defense, said Schleicher, how could they be denied to Germany?³

The remarks of the Defense Minister were compatible with Hitler's campaign slogans calling for complete rearmament in defiance of Treaty stipulations. They were also an attempt by Schleicher to satisfy senior officers in the Reichswehr who were critical of the way Nadolny had presented the German case at Geneva.⁴ The French Ambassador learned from the German Foreign Minister that Schleicher had expressed the views of the entire German cabinet. By August, 1932, the Defense Ministry and the Foreign Ministry saw eye to eye in the question of disarmament.

² Wheeler-Bennett, ed., Documents on International Affairs, 1932, 184-185.

³ The New York Times, August 8, 1932.

⁴ François-Poncet to Herriot, July 28, 1932, D.D.F., I, 124-125.

Furthermore, on July 27, 1932, the German Chancellor reiterated Schleicher's position when he told a representative of the United Press in Berlin that Germany insisted both upon equality in principle as well as upon the right to possess "samples" of weapons prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles, meaning rearmament. Two days later, on July 29, in an attempt to influence American public opinion, Papen, in a broadcast address beamed to the United States, claimed that the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles were the root cause of Germany's despair and discontent.⁵ Then in an interview with Reuter's representative in Berlin on August 18, 1932, he declared that if "Germany were much longer refused equality in respect to armaments, the German Government would adopt the necessary measures in the sense outlined by General von Schleicher,"⁶

These public utterances were the prelude to a German diplomatic offensive designed to settle the question of equality of rights in armaments through secret informal negotiations with France outside the framework of the Conference.

On August 24, 1932, Buelow told the French Ambassador that the German Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath, would soon request the opening of immediate negotiations with the French government concerning the question of equality of status in matter of armaments. Buelow also pointed out that a final Disarmament Convention concluded for a fixed period should replace Part V of the Treaty. In addition, and this was the first time that Buelow had raised such a demand, Germany should have the right to possess sam-

⁵.....
The New York Times, July 30, 1932.

⁶.....
D.B.F.P., IV footnote I, 102.

ples of weapons forbidden by the Treaty. Furthermore, she intended to provide military training for three months at a time to 40,000 men for the formation of a militia. Buelow also declared that Germany addressed herself to France only because other powers had not raised objections to the German proposals, a fact denied by the British Foreign Secretary.⁷

When the French Premier learned about Buelow's communication, he issued provisional instructions to his Ambassador in Berlin as to the line he should take if the German government raised the subject again. According to Herriot, Germany's claim for equality of rights in armaments must be solved within the framework of the Geneva Disarmament Conference in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant. The French government, said the Premier, did not wish to evade its obligations included in the Preamble of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles or in the Clemenceau letter of June 19, 1919. Nonetheless, France could not accept German rearmament through an increase in weapons or effectives. The creation of a militia by training 40,000 men every three months meant 160,000 soldiers per year, which in five years would constitute a national army of 800,000 men behind the already existing professional army. Nor could the French government consent to any violation of the demilitarized zone, which was guaranteed by article 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles, as well as by article 1 of the Locarno Treaty.⁸ Finally, the Premier asked François-Poncet to inquire whether the German claim to equality applied to naval as well as to land

⁷ Simon to Campbell, August 27, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 105-107; François-Poncet to Herriot, August 25, 1932, D. D.F., I, 221-224.

⁸ The French Embassy in Berlin had learned from an unspecified source that the Germans intended to use the Reichswehr in the demilitarized zone under the pretext of maintaining order in the region. See Simon to Rumbold, August 25, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 103-104.

armaments.⁹ The German Foreign Minister replied in the affirmative.¹⁰

As a follow up to the conversation between von Buelow and the French Ambassador, on August 29, 1932, the German Foreign Minister met with François-Poncet with Schleicher also present. The topic of discussion was Germany's demand for equality of status in the matter of armaments. The Germans put forward a number of demands including the recognition of the principle of equality of rights in armaments through the substitution of Part V of the Treaty with a new Disarmament Convention equally applicable to all nations. This recognition must be obtained by September 20, 1932, if Germany were to continue participating in the Disarmament Conference. As for the manner in which they wished to reorganize the army, the German government demanded the reduction of the period of service for the Reichswehr from twelve to perhaps six years, the creation of a militia by three months training of 40,000 men and, the right to possess prototypes of weapons forbidden by the Treaty such as tanks, heavy artillery, and airplanes. Germany also demanded the right of naval rearmament.

Then, Neurath handed the French Ambassador a memorandum to be delivered to his government. According to the memorandum, Germany was willing to embark upon confidential discussions with the French concerning equality of rights in armaments since the Disarmament Conference had failed to produce any results favorable to Germany.

The question of equality, according to the Papen government, consisted

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Herriot to French representatives in Rome, London, Prague, Berlin, August 25, 1932, D.D.F., I, 211-212.

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François-Poncet to Herriot, August 29, 1932, D.D.F., I, footnote 2, 234.

of three aspects, the legal or political aspect, the question of the duration of the Disarmament Convention, and finally the technical or material contents of such a Convention which called for considerable rearmament.

Whereas the first two aspects must be immediately realized through the elimination of Part V by replacing it with a treaty equally applicable to all nations, the third aspect could be negotiated in such a way as to give Germany the right to "an armament position corresponding to her national security" as explained in Part VII of the memorandum.

In the sphere of qualitative disarmament the German Government are prepared to accept the prohibition of any weapon which is uniformly applicable to all States. On the other hand those categories of weapons which are not generally prohibited by the Convention must on principle be permitted to Germany also. As regards the defense system, the German Government must claim for themselves the right which is enjoyed by all other States to shape it within the limits of the provisions generally applicable, in conformity with the needs as well as social peculiarities of the country. Changes in the organization are thereby involved, such for example as the reduction of the term of active service of long service men and liberty in the systematic arrangement of the defense force, another instance is the short period training of a compulsory service militia for the purpose of the maintenance of internal order as well as frontier and coastal protection.¹¹

The German memorandum had hardly reached the French government when Schleicher in an attempt to add "teeth" to the German demands embarked upon an intensive propaganda campaign which could only be characterized as inflammatory to the French public and their government. In an interview

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Italics mine. Memo by Neurath, August 29, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. V, D811724-D811729; Völkербund, No. 29, Sept. 23, 1932, 4-5; François-Poncet to Herriot, August 29, 1932, D.D.F., I, 234-236.

with a representative of the Italian fascist paper Resto del Carlino, published on August 31, 1932, the German Defense Minister declared that by equality of rights in armaments in practice he meant the right of Germany to possess airplanes, tanks, heavy artillery anti-aircraft guns, submarines, aircraft carriers, as well as her right of organization and distribution of armed forces, armaments, fortifications, and arms factories. What would Germany do if her demands were rejected, he was asked. Schleicher replied that in such a case, the "Reich would no longer participate in the work of the Disarmament Conference, what this abstention would mean from the point of view of the League's existence need not be stated since it is obvious." Furthermore, Germany would then be free to procure all the "defensive arms" required for security.¹² On the way to the autumn military maneuvers in East Prussia, Schleicher informed reporters that Germany would do that what she considered indispensable to her national defense. She would no longer allow herself to be treated as a second rate power.¹³

The German memorandum and Schleicher's provocative statements produced a disquieting situation in France. Le Temps called upon the French government not to negotiate privately with the Germans since the question of disarmament was under discussion at Geneva. Furthermore, the German memorandum dealt with rearmament rather than disarmament.¹⁴

12

Murray to Simon, Sept. 6, 1932, B.F.O., vol. 371/15940, C7687/211/18. The Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Sept. 1, 1932), which now expressed the views of the von Papen Government, declared that Germany could wait patiently for further developments for it was in her power to wreck the Conference if equality was not granted.

13

François-Poncet to Herriot, Sept. 7, 1932, D.D.F., I, 279-280.

14

Le Temps, Sept. 1, 1932.

Herriot interpreted Schleicher's campaign to mean that the German government intended to proceed with a policy of rearmament. He said: "It was obvious that an increase of the standing army, the creation of a highly-trained militia and possession of samples of tanks and submarines amounted to a large measure of rearmament." The position of the present French government, however, differed greatly from the stand of the previous one. The Herriot government was willing to grant equality in armaments to Germany through French disarmament, at Geneva by means of qualitative disarmament and at home through a reduction in the military budget. But in no way could France consent to German rearmament. What the French found very disturbing was not so much the German demand for equality in principle, that is political equality, but rather the aggressive manner pursued in trying to achieve it. For according to the Acting Secretary-General of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Alexis Léger, Germany already regarded her claim for equality of rights in armaments in principle as already achieved and was now demanding the right to rearm. Should this be granted to Germany, similar demands would be raised by other defeated powers such as Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria with the net result of throwing all Central Europe into a state of ferment.

Furthermore, the demand for Treaty revision and rearmament came from a German government that was not only undemocratic but militaristic. The German state of mind as a whole and the Nazi gains in the latest election

Campbell to Simon, Sept. 1, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 118-121. According to French secret information, Germany intended to train 100,000 men every three months bringing up the number to 400,000 annually.

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caused great alarm in France. There was too much similarity in caste and character between the present rulers of Germany and those who were in power in the pre-war period. A Germany ruled by the Hindenburg- Schleicher- Papen triumvirate was no more democratic than the Germany of Wilhelm II.

This point could be best illustrated by the September 4, 1932, parade of the Stahlhelm in Berlin when 120,000 war veterans paraded in uniforms in full military review. Papen, Schleicher, the German Foreign Minister, and many German officers stood in the first row of spectators which included Field Marshal von Mackensen of the old imperial army and members of the Hohenzollern family. It is important to note that the demonstration took place a few days after the presentation of the German memorandum to France suggesting a "reorganization" of the Reichswehr. When the British Ambassador drew the attention of Neurath to the timing of the August 29, 1932 démarche and the Stahlhelm rally, the Foreign Minister replied that in his view, the "Stahlhelm did not differ from the British Legion except for the fact that the one was attired in the old field gray uniforms and the other wear civilian dress." The Ambassador, however, commented that this comparison, "obviously omitted to take into account the different traditions inspiring the two bodies." 17 According to the French Premier, any nation that could produce a demonstration of 120,000 disciplined Stahlhelm needed only the arms to make them a menace to Europe. 18

This German show of force did not help soften France's refusal to

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Elections for the Reichstag were held on July 31, resulting in an increase in Nazi representation from 110 seats to 230 thus constituting the largest party in Germany.

17

Rumbold to Simon, Sept. 6, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 132-133.

18

Edge to Stimson, Sept. 10, 1932, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 429-431.

negotiate directly with the Germans, Furthermore, France's refusal also stemmed from the fact that Germany's explanation for embarking upon conversations à deux with France was based upon the assumption that other powers (meaning Britain, the United States, and Italy) ¹⁹ had not raised objections to the German claim for equality. This however was without foundation in the case of Britain and the United States. For when the French Ambassador in London, Joseph de Fleuriau, asked Simon whether he had received any specific German representation on the subject, the Foreign Secretary answered in the negative. Furthermore, Simon assured the French Ambassador that the British position did not differ from the French, namely, that the German claim must be satisfied in such a way as ²⁰ to promote disarmament and not rearmament. And, on September 2, 1932, Orme Sargent, a senior official in the Foreign Office, told Count Albrecht Bernstorff, the German Chargé d'Affaires in London, that the German government was not entitled to claim that they had already received the approval ²¹ of Britain in the matter of equality of rights.

Washington reacted with anger to Germany's démarche. Stimson lost his temper when the British Chargé d'Affaires, Francis Osborne, informed him of the contents of the German démarche that the Germans intended to free themselves from Part V of the Treaty to rearm and "do a lot of

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General Balbo, (Grandi's successor as the Italian representative at Geneva) and Mussolini published a series of articles in Popolo d'Italia condemning the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. While Balbo hinted that Italy might leave the Disarmament Conference, Mussolini supported the German claim for equality in armaments. See Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs, 1932 (London: Humphrey Milford, 1933), 260.

20

Note by French Ambassador in London, August 26, 1932, D.D.F., I, 225.

21

Rumbold to Simon, Sept. 3, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 129-130.

things." The Chargé also told Stimson that the Germans claimed their position to be only a logical development of the attitude adopted by Bruening at Bessinge. Stimson denied the German claim. Then, he brought out his diary, which according to him gave a full account of the Bessinge conversation. Bruening at that interview, Stimson said, "took a very magnanimous and generous position and did not ask of any of the things which his successor government were now asking for, ...the Germans are getting heady,...the old Prussian spirit is coming up, and now we have a dangerous sore spot in the world."²²

The next day, September 8, 1932, Stimson saw the Ambassadors of Germany, France, and Italy. The subject of discussion was the German démarche to France. He "gave the devil"²³ to the German Ambassador Friederick von Prittwitz telling him that any increase of armaments was offensive to American public opinion and contrary to the policy of the United States as put forward in the Hoover proposals. Furthermore, the German demands as expressed in the August 29 démarche went far beyond anything discussed at Bessinge. The fact that France had already granted concessions at Lausanne made the German demand even more ill timed. Finally, the United States, said Stimson, objected to any adjustment in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. To the French Ambassador, Jules Henry, the Secretary repeated his views which he had put forward to the German Ambassador and reassured the French of United States and British sympathy.²⁴ Stimson

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Stimson, Diary, Sept. 7, 1932.

²³

Ibid., Sept. 8, 1932.

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Jules Henry to Herriot, Sept. 8, 1932, D.D.F., I, 282. See also Osborne to Simon, Sept. 13, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 162-163.

was also disturbed over Mussolini's support of the German stand and told the Italian Ambassador that the United States might accept Treaty modifications only if they came about by agreement.

The French government was heartened by the support from the United States and Britain in its stand against German rearmament. Alexis Léger informed the British Chargé d'Affaires of ~~the~~^{his} government's opinion. France would prefer to see Germany violate the Treaty of Versailles openly rather than accept a situation which would facilitate further German demands and violations of other parts of the Treaty. Any agreed solution should come through the machinery of the Disarmament Conference provided it did not lead to rearmament. If the Germans insisted upon rearmament, France would refer the matter to the Council of the League of Nations in accordance with Article 164 of the Treaty of Versailles.²⁵ Furthermore, he pointed out that it was high time for the British and French governments to unite in telling the Germans "thus far and no further."²⁶ Given the fact that France had already made concessions at Lausanne and, on the other hand, considering the internal conditions in Germany the position taken by France was conciliatory enough.

On September 11, 1932, François-Poncet handed the German Foreign Minister a note in reply to the German memorandum of August 29, 1932. The French government contested the German claim that a Disarmament Convention should replace Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. For there was

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By article 164, Germany had agreed that after she became a member of the League, her fixed armaments would remain in force until they were modified by the Council of the League.

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Campbell to Simon, Sept. 7, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV 135-136.

no clause either in Part V or in the Covenant to the effect that a general limitation of armaments involved the termination of Treaty stipulations. Nonetheless, France was willing to discuss the question of Germany's status but only within the framework of the Disarmament Conference. France, according to the note, could subscribe only to disarmament. Already a cut of 1,500,000,000 francs had been made in military expenditures for 1932. The desire of the present government, was to take further steps towards disarmament. Furthermore, the French government regarded the German claim for equality as in fact a claim for rearmament. Should this be granted, similar demands would be raised by other states in Central and South European Europe which were subject to the same restrictions as Germany. Finally, the French government could not embark upon private conversations with the German government since this might infringe upon the rights of the United States. The Peace Treaty signed by the United States with Germany in August 25, 1921, assured to the United States the benefits and dispositions stipulated in Part V of the Treaty.²⁷ The French government while seeking to avoid closing the door to eventual modifications of Germany's status had at the same time refused to enter upon direct negotiations à deux with Germany.

On September 12, 1932, in a radio broadcast, the German Chancellor rejected the French note. He told the German people that a decision on the question of equality must be taken immediately otherwise Germany would not participate any further in the work of the Conference.²⁸ Letters to that

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François-Poncet to Neurath, Sept. 11, 1932, D.D.F., I, 305-310. Also in Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., Sept. 11, 1932, vol. V, D811759.

28.

François-Poncet to Herriot, Sept. 14, 1932, D.D.F., I, 314; Völkerbund No. 29, 9.

effect were sent out to the German Ambassadors in London, Rome, Moscow, and Washington to inform the respective governments about the German decision.²⁹ In London, the German Chargé described the French reply as a "diffuse document" which neither accepted nor rejected the German claim for equality of rights in armaments.³⁰

On September 14, 1932, in a letter to Arthur Henderson the President of the Disarmament Conference, the German Foreign Minister pointed out that Germany's efforts to solve the question of equality through bilateral negotiations with France had failed. "Under these circumstances," said the Foreign Minister, "I find myself compelled to my regret to inform you that the German government is unable to avail itself of the invitation to the session of the Bureau of the Conference which is to begin on September 21, 1932."³¹ Germany had officially withdrawn from the Disarmament Conference.

On the same day, the President of the Reich, Paul von Hindenburg, issued a decree setting up the Reich's Federal Institute (Reichskuratorium) for the promotion of fitness among the German youth. This Institute would promote sport activities for young men in the "open country" such as map reading, scouting, self defense, in other words military training.³² According to the decree, twenty camps would be formed in which up to two hundred and fifty men will be taken into each camp for a

²⁹ Neurath to the German Ambassadors, Sept. 12, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol V, D811662-811668.

³⁰ Simon to Rumbold, Sept. 13, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 161-162.

³¹ Völkerbund, No. 29, 10. See also D.B.F.P., IV, 163-164.

³² Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Sept. 15, 1932.

period of three weeks training. In the view of the British military attaché in Berlin, Colonel Andrew Thorne, 60,000 men would be trained in the first six months, all capable of bearing arms (Wehrhafte Männer). The executive head of the Institute was General Edwin von Stuelpnagel, the Chief of Staff of the Prussian Guard and a close friend of Schleicher. The camps under his command could provide trained men for immediate mobilization in the event of war. Furthermore, they could be expended in order to train all available manpower in Germany. Coming at that time, the decree was probably intended as a reply to the French note. The decree also violated Article 177 of the Treaty of Versailles which prohibited the establishment of any educational institutions for purposes of military training. In addition, the Commander of the German Navy, Admiral Eric Raeder, announced the laying down on October 1, 1932, of a new cruiser classified as Panzerschiff C which was also a violation.

The Social Democratic members of the Reichstag opposed this policy of open rearmament. In a resolution issued on September 15, 1932, they condemned the militaristic policy of the Papen government. The rearmament of Germany, they claimed, would provide a pretext for other nations to begin unlimited competition in armaments endangering the security of Germany and leading to international disaster as well. The latest declarations by Papen and Schleicher would result in Germany's political isolation and perpetuate the Treaty of Versailles. Alluding to the policy of

33.

D.B.F.P., IV, 166-167.

34.

Minutes by Hankey, Sept. 16, 1932, B.F.O., 371/15940, C7800.

35.

Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Sept. 17, 1932.

the former Chancellor, the Social Democrats demanded the recognition of Germany's equality of status in armaments based upon general disarmament.³⁶ Ironically, while Germany was marching towards rearmament, the French Premier told one of the committees of the French Parliament that he was willing to accept the Hoover proposals of one-third reduction in armaments.³⁷ Although the Social Democrats were powerless to change the course of events in Germany, let alone its policies, nonetheless this resolution proved that not all of the nation was behind the disarmament policy of the Papen government as the latter had claimed.

After a period of apparent indecision, the British government took a stand squarely against the rearmament of Germany which Papen and Schleicher had been demanding. In a sharply worded official memorandum handed to Germany on September 18, 1932, the British government supported the stand taken by France in rejecting the legality of Germany's claim on equal status and denouncing her threat to rearm. While the Preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles stated that Germany's disarmament was to be a prelude to general arms limitations, nonetheless, according to the British Government, "to state what the object or aim of a stipulation is, is a very different thing from making the successful fulfillment of that object the condition of the stipulation." In other words, neither a potential disarmament agreement nor the failure to reach such agreement gave Germany a legal claim for the renunciation of her disarmament obligations under Part V of the Treaty. Furthermore, general disarmament was not foreseen as the condition of German disarmament but as its result.

36

Rumbold to Simon, Sept. 20, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 184-185.

37

Stimson, Diary, Sept. 17, 1932.

Moreover, from a legal interpretation of the Treaty, it was impossible to deduce that the general limitation of armaments was to be carried out in the same manner in which Germany's armaments have been limited by Part V of the Treaty.

At the same time, however, the British government admitted Germany's moral right to end the status of inferiority imposed upon her. In the British view, the only way Germany could attain her equality was by "friendly negotiations and agreed adjustments not involving either disregard of Treaty obligations or the increase in the sum total of armed forces." Germany's demands, the note went on, could not be obtained by "peremptory challenge or by withdrawal from deliberations which are about to be resumed," but only through patient discussion within the framework
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of the Disarmament Conference.

The British statement got a hostile reception in Germany. In Berlin, Buelow told the British Ambassador that Germany had not received such notes since the time of Poincaré and the invasion of the Ruhr.
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Germany's withdrawal from the Conference and her demand for equality of rights in armaments through rearmament rather than disarmament constituted the major differences between the Papen government and the preceding one. The British note was a reflection of Britain's disenchantment with this change in German policy -- a policy which drove Britain temporarily closer to France.

Nonetheless, German intransigence would achieve its objective. In

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.....Statement of views of His Majesty's Government, Sept. 15, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 172-175.

39

.....Conversation between Buelow and Rumbold, Sept. 21, 1932, Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., vol. V, D811370.

the coming months France and Britain would differ even more over Germany's demands. A basic difference between the two already existed. The British note went considerably further in recognizing Germany's moral right to equality of status than the French Government would have liked. This difference was accentuated when British pressure had forced France to recognize Germany's equality of rights in armaments. This recognition was interpreted by Germany as meaning an end to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and as such constituted a political victory for Germany achieved outside the framework of the Disarmament Conference. Schleicher's threats had worked where Bruening's moderation had failed.

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE OVER GERMANY'S RETURN

In Geneva, the Disarmament Conference resumed with the meeting of the Bureau on September 21, 1932, without German representation. Arthur Henderson conveyed to the participants the correspondence which had taken place between himself and the German Foreign Minister. He pointed out that no reply had been received to his letter of September 18, 1932,¹ urging Germany to reconsider its position by returning to the Conference. This lack of German response underscored her policy of non participation in the meetings of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies, unless her demand for equality of rights in armaments was recognized by the former Allies.

An indirect exchange of views between the French Premier and the German Chancellor at the end of September did not improve the prospects for an early solution of the German claim for equality.

On September 25, 1932, in a speech delivered at Gramat, Herriot pointed out that France could disarm only if her security were guaranteed, preferably by the creation of an international force controlled and operated by the League of Nations. The statements made by Schleicher,

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On September 18, 1932, in reply to the German letter, Arthur Henderson defended the July 23 Resolution as being only a first step towards a substantial reduction of world land, naval, and air armaments, pointing out that "more and far reaching agreements" would follow in the forthcoming sessions of the Conference. The President ended his letter in an appeal to the German Government "to reconsider its decision and resume its participation at the earliest possible moment in the work of the Bureau, particularly as the prolonged absence of Germany from our deliberations may seriously affect the cause of general disarmament." In Berlin, Buelow told the British Ambassador that Germany would not answer Henderson's letter. They would rather "stand pat" and await the results of the Disarmament Conference. See Rumbold to Simon, September 23, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 195.

the German demand for a militia, and the decree of September 14, 1932, providing for quasi-military training for the German youth made it abundantly clear that rearmament was at stake. On the other hand, said the Premier, France had already taken the first step towards disarmament. She had reduced the period of military training from three years to one, cut military expenses by 10%, and her effectives had been reduced by 43,000 men and 527 officers. Germany, said Herriot, was seeking sufficient military strength so as to be able to repeat past Prussian policies.² Herriot's speech seemed to imply that so long as Germany's claim for equality meant rearmament, France could not accept any modification in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

The German reply to Herriot's statement was not late in coming. On September 27, 1932, in an interview given to the Wolff Agency, the German Chancellor declared that the Gramat speech confused the issues and rendered further discussions between the two countries more difficult. Significantly, the general tone of Papen's remarks ^{was} ~~were~~ more conciliatory than his previous pronouncements and in marked contrast with the blunt utterances of Schleicher. Denying that Germany was trying to rearm, Papen emphasized that the question was not one of German rearmament, but rather of Germany's right to equal status and her treatment on an equal basis at the Disarmament Conference. Germany's demands were only wrongly interpreted to mean rearmament. They meant nothing more than the right "to adjust our armaments to our social and national needs as is possessed by

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Wheeler-Bennett, Documents on International Affairs, 1932, 201-205.

every other country...we have offered to negotiate in regard to the manner and extent of this adjustment."

Alluding to the arguments raised in the French and British notes that Germany had no legal basis for her claim to equality, Papen pointed out that Germany based her claim upon Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Its provisions should apply in equal measure to all countries. He considered it "absolutely impossible that within the Commonwealth of the League the rights of nations should be divided into two different categories."³

The charges and counter-charges had once again underlined the gap between the positions of France and Germany. For France, German talk of any sort of rearmament raised anew old memories of German militarism and conquest while making her hostile towards any concessions. Papen's reply was significant for its conciliatory tone. It was probably intended for foreign consumption in order to regain British favor while inside Germany the reorganization of the Reichswehr proceeded along the lines laid down by Schleicher in his public utterances. Papen realized that belligerent public pronouncements would not further the German case but rather alienate Britain who was previously sympathetic to Germany. By changing the tone but not the substance of Germany's demands, he hoped to bring Britain back at least to a position of neutrality between France and Germany. Britain for her part did all she could to appear again in the role of a mediator.

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Ibid., 205-207; also in K. Schwendemann. Abrüstung und Sicherheit, Handbuch der Sicherheitsfrage und der Abrüstungskonferenz, (Leipzig: Historische-Politische Verlag, 1934), Band I, 441-446.

When the Council of the League had begun its sixty-eighth session in Geneva on September 23, 1932, with the participation of Neurath, the British Foreign Secretary used the opportunity for an informal discussion with his German counterpart, aiming at finding a formula which might bring Germany back to the Disarmament Conference. This was in fact the beginning of a British diplomatic offensive which would result in a reversal of the stand Britain had taken in her note of September 18, 1932.

Accordingly, in a meeting with Neurath on September 23, Simon tried his best to convince the German Foreign Minister that the British note was completely misunderstood in Germany, and, that Britain was actually willing to grant Germany equality of status in armaments by the removal of Article 53 from the draft Disarmament Convention which provided for the continuation of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. Germany's armaments limitations, said Simon, would be included in a new Convention replacing Part V and ending her inferior status. While this would have been accepted by Bruening, it no longer satisfied Neurath. Here the discrepancy between Papen's conciliatory remarks and Germany's real stand became apparent. With equality of status in principle virtually assured, Neurath went one step further and raised the question as to the kinds of weapons Germany might possess. "To Germany," he pointed out, "the conception of equality of status involved the right to possess in however limited a degree every kind of weapon which was permitted to others."⁴ Simon reminded Neurath that Britain could not sanction German rearmament,

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Memo by Simon of a Conversation with Neurath, September 23, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 196-198.

but she was nonetheless anxious to see Germany return to the Conference by granting her equality in principle. Simon suggested a Four Power meeting of Germany, France, Britain, and Italy with the aim of drafting a general declaration conceding to Germany equality of status in principle and enabling Germany, to join the Conference. Neurath remained noncommittal. In his view Germany's return depended on the content and terms of such a declaration.

On October 3, 1932, the British government issued invitations to the German, French, and Italian governments for a Four Power Conference in London on October 11, 1932, to discuss ways of bringing Germany back to the Conference. Such a meeting, the British emphasized, was especially appropriate in view of the Consultative Pact of July 13, 1932, to which these governments were parties.⁵

France reacted unfavorably to Simon's invitation. Herriot described it as "most imprudent," tantamount to a victory for Germany and a humiliation for France. He informed Simon that France would go ahead in promoting disarmament even if Germany boycotted the Conference. Germany, he claimed, aimed at rearmament with the ultimate objective of freeing herself from other parts of the Peace Treaty. It was particularly disturbing to the French that Britain did not categorically reject Neurath's contention that equality of status to Germany also meant the inclusion of heavy

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According to the Final Act of the Lausanne Agreement, Britain and France declared their intentions to take the lead in bringing about future cooperation among European States in both political and economic spheres. They also reiterated their desire to work together with other delegations at Geneva in order to find a solution to the disarmament question which would be beneficial and equitable to all states concerned. Seventeen European states adhered to this proposal henceforth referred to as a Declaration of Mutual Consultation or the Confidence Pact of July 13, 1932.

weapons prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles.⁶ It was true that the German Foreign Minister in his conversation with Simon asked merely for "samples" of heavy weapons but, once they have the samples "such clever commercial gentlemen as they are would speedily use them to stock their big stores adequately to meet the demands of their insatiable militarists."⁷

In a letter to MacDonald, Herriot lamented the desire of Germany to rearm and tried to persuade the British to give up their proposal for a Four Power meeting in London.⁸ For France even the recognition of equality in principle in those circumstances appeared to be a dangerous trap. If Germany was assured of equal treatment, British public opinion might believe that Germany would have the right to complete equality in practice with France. In that case, what future would France and Europe face if the "insatiable German militarists" would be allowed to rearm legally?

"My own feeling," MacDonald replied, "is that Germany wants to rearm, but it has put its request in such a way as to delude many people on both sides of the Atlantic." An attitude on the part of France and Britain of "we will not listen," wrote the British Prime Minister, "has swung a great many people into sympathy with Germany." The only way to find out what Germany had in mind was "to ask it to come and talk matters over,...if they are bad, they will be exposed, if they are good they will be appreciated."⁹ This was actually the crux of the matter, for what France

⁶ Massigli to Herriot, Sept. 23, 1932, D.D.F., I, 375.

⁷ Minute by Leeper, Oct. 3, 1932, B.F.O., 371/16432, W10837.

⁸ Herriot to MacDonald, Oct. 6, 1932, D.D.F., I, 415-416.

⁹ MacDonald to Herriot, Oct. 10, 1932, D.D.F., I, 423-425.

considered "bad" was not necessarily so in the British view.¹⁰

Unsuccessful in his attempt to have the British renounce the idea of a Four Power meeting altogether, Herriot suggested that such a meeting should at least be held in Geneva within the context of the Disarmament Conference. The alternative to a meeting at Geneva would be one in London where the Polish, Czechoslovak, and Belgian representatives would be included. Britain, however, considered it impractic^al to widen the list of participants since Germany and Italy would not agree to it, nor would Germany be willing to attend a meeting at Geneva.¹¹

Failing to move the British from their position, the French Premier asked the Foreign Office if it was possible for him to come to London for a preliminary exchange of views before the proposed Four Power meeting. The Foreign Office acceded to Herriot's request. Consequently, conversations between MacDonald and Herriot were held in London from the 13th to 15th of October, 1932.

MacDonald pointed out the stalemate in the disarmament talks and the need to bring Germany back to the Conference. The British Prime Minister shared the French misgivings about German demands for rearmament,

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For example, the decree for the training of German youth or the creation of a militia were described by The Times (London) as nothing else but the setting up of defense forces. The demand for samples of heavy weapons which could be manufactured in far greater numbers was either completely ignored or in the best case it was dismissed by saying that "Germany must not be allowed to rearm." The paper also criticized Herriot's speech at Gramat saying that the French exaggerated in the meaning of Papen and Schleicher's public speeches. Needless to say the Papen government was encouraged by the paper's stand interpreting it that British public opinion was on Germany's side. See François-Poncet to Herriot, Oct. 4, 1932; D.D.F., I, 406

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Massigli to Herriot, Oct. 5, 1932; D.D.F., I, 413-414.

yet he was very much alarmed by the sympathy the German case was receiving in the British press thus placing her in a strong psychological position. Herriot, on the other hand, reiterated the familiar argument that the present German government intended to rearm by having two armies, one, a highly trained for offense and another a militia for home defense purposes. Germany, he argued, was interested in freeing herself from treaty obligations, previously from the Rhineland occupation and reparations, now from Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. Repeatedly Herriot asked what Germany meant by equality of rights in armaments. If it meant a desire to be equal with other European states, France could go along with that. But, on the other hand, one must make certain where this theoretical equality of rights would lead to. The French Premier agreed with MacDonald's contention that Germany, by presenting her case in a vague way, had managed to impress public opinion of her righteousness. Therefore, he claimed, it was indispensable to compel Germany to explain specifically in writing what she meant by equality of rights. Simon intervened, saying that Germany would repeat in a written statement the same arguments she raised in her memorandum of August 29, 1932, and in private conversations. This was exactly what Herriot objected to, and considered it German ambiguity. Why, he asked, should Papen say one thing and Neurath another?¹²

Furthermore, the German memorandum of August 29, according to Herriot, contained a kind of omnibus clause in its most important

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Herriot was referring to Papen's interview of September 27, and Neurath's conversation with Simon on September 23.

paragraph (7) reading to the effect that "those categories of weapons which are not generally prohibited by the convention must in principle be permitted to Germany also." A binding definition of German intentions was needed for otherwise the Reichswehr might act at its own discretion in implementing the principles contained in that paragraph. Germany should be asked to produce a specific, binding statement as to the practical use of equality if it were granted. The British, on the other hand, felt it unwise to commit the Germans to a written statement for this would result in increased demands. This indeed was Herriot's justification in having Germany commit herself to a binding written statement in order to expose her real intentions to British public opinion to whose views as expressed in the press, the British statesmen were so sensitive. Herriot had failed to convince MacDonald on this point.¹³

Herriot's mission could be considered as a failure. For Britain's refusal to bind Germany to specific demands meant that Britain had decided to do all she could in order to bring Germany back to the Conference table, and looked upon Herriot's suggestion as a "road block" in the path of British policy. Further, Herriot had no chance to carry his argument for another reason. The British knew very well that the question was no longer one of theoretical equality for Germany, but rather one of practical equality. Therefore, as early as September 30, 1932, the British government had decided in principle to prepare a list of weapons prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles as an offer to Germany in order to

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For full description of the London conversation, see D.B.F.P., IV, 229-244.

meet the German demand for practical equality.¹⁴ But the British, unwilling to allow Herriot to go back to Paris empty handed, agreed to hold the planned Four Power meeting in Geneva within the framework of the League of Nations.

It is difficult to understand British policy in the face of increasing German intransigence. Concessions to Germany on the matter of armaments, Simon learned in a secret letter from Walford Selby, could not be granted without considering its effect on the problem of the Peace settlement as a whole and the ultimate peace of Europe. According to the letter, the tendency in Germany was to minimize and show contempt for every concession, "in order to force the pace as regards realization of the next aim of the German program." This attitude coupled with the internal political agitation in Germany contributed to the present difficulties at Geneva.¹⁵ Yet this warning was dismissed by Simon. Furthermore, the British military attaché in Berlin, Colonel Andrew Thorne, informed his government that in the opinion of United States military attachés in Berlin, Germany intended to proceed with the formation of a militia, the production of specimen tanks, heavy artillery, and the reduction of the period of service in the Reichswehr. From conversations with senior officers in the Defense Ministry, the attachés had gathered the impression that Germany would not join any Four Power Conference until she would be able to present a fait accompli in her demands for practical equality.¹⁶

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B.F.O., Sept. 30, 1932, vol. 371/16432, W10837.

¹⁵

John Simon, Private Papers, Letter from Selby, Oct. 10, 1932, B.F.O., 800/287. This analysis would be especially appropriate in describing Germany's attitude at the Conference during 1933. For the complete text of the letter, see Appendix B, 260-262.

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Memo by the Military Attaché, Berlin, in respect to equality of rights, Oct. 18, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 254.

Nonetheless, Britain pressed on towards a Four Power meeting. On October 14, 1932, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, Basil Newton, asked Neurath to consider Geneva as a meeting place for a Four Power Conference. The Foreign Minister rejected Geneva and instead offered the Hague. He pointed out that the atmosphere of Geneva and the internal situation in Germany prevented him from going there. The real reason, however, was the fact that Germany looked upon a meeting in Geneva as an attempt by France to bring her back to the Disarmament Conference by the back door before the question of equal rights had been decided upon.¹⁷ Knowing that the proposal for such a meeting was designed to give her the long awaited equality in principle, Germany refused Geneva on a mere question of prestige. Further, Buelow informed François-Poncet, that Germany would not renew the Armaments Truce until her claim for equality was recognized by the former Allied powers.¹⁸ Once again, Germany's stand on these relatively small matters should have raised doubts in the minds of British statesmen as to Germany's real intentions in adopting so "uncivil an attitude" towards disarmament.¹⁹ Yet in a speech to the

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Newton to Simon, Oct. 14, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 245, 248.

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François-Poncet to Herriot, Oct. 31, 1932, D.D.F., I, 641-642. The Armaments Truce was approved by the League Assembly in Sept. 1931. Under its terms the European states undertook not to increase their armaments for a year from Nov. 1, 1931. On July 23, 1932, the Disarmament Conference unanimously passed a resolution in favor of renewing the Truce for four months. The Truce expired in Nov. 1932, and twenty six states had agreed to extend it for another four months. Germany rejected the proposal.

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Minute by Howard Smith, Nov. 3, 1932, B.F.O., vol. 371/16466, 839.

National Labor Party on October 17, 1932, MacDonald declared that Germany knew perfectly well that Great Britain did not oppose her claim to be regarded as an equal at the Disarmament Conference. The worst MacDonald could say about the German attitude was that "Germany refuses to go to Geneva for reasons the substance is difficult to detect. I hope that Germany's latest word is not the last word."²⁰

While Germany was raising new obstacles towards agreement with seemingly British indifference, Herriot and his Minister of War, Joseph Paul-Boncour, were preparing a new Disarmament plan. The objective of the plan was to reconcile French desire for security with the German demand for equality by favoring disarmament towards the German level and the regulation of Germany's status in armaments by a Disarmament Convention.

The new French plan and disarmament in general were discussed in the Chamber of Deputies on October 28, 1932. According to Herriot, France faced two alternatives. Either rearm in view of German rearmament or disarm. World opinion, however, would not sanction the former, nor could France rely indefinitely upon force. Germany, said Herriot, had a big population and a heavy industry. Should the Disarmament Conference fail, France would be left face to face with Germany in a new arms race. The alternative, therefore, was disarmament. "The Chamber must remember" said Herriot, "that what had helped France in 1914 had been her manifest innocence and the consequent sympathy of world opinion." The only solution then was to draft a disarmament plan which would provide security as well as progressive disarmament.

In regard to the organization of security, the plan contemplated the division of the world into three concentric circles with each circle representing one group of powers. The outer ring included states which had accepted the Kellogg Pact and were participating in the Disarmament Conference. In case of a breach of the Pact, the signatory powers would prohibit direct or indirect economic or financial relations with the aggressor country. This was an attempt to involve the United States as a party in guaranteeing French security--an illusory prospect. The second group was comprised of all states which were members of the League and were obliged to honor their various commitments under the Locarno Treaties and especially Article 16 of the Covenant which called for the breaking off all financial, economic, and commercial relations with the aggressor state. The third and innermost group included the continental powers for whom a special organization was proposed involving political and military arrangements, such as mutual assistance which constituted the back-bone of the plan. By a majority vote the Council of the League could decide that assistance should be given on a simple assertion that an attack or invasion had occurred.

The military arrangements of the plan were designed to grant Germany equality in armaments through disarmament by reducing the offensive character of the national forces in accordance with the principles laid down in the Hoover proposals of June 22, 1932. Accordingly, all powerful mobile weapons designed especially for attack purposes such as heavy artillery and tanks should be prohibited. The land forces, assigned for the defense of home frontiers of the states of continental Europe, would be reduced to a uniform general type, namely, of a short service army with limited effectives. All professional military formation such as the

Reichswehr must be dissolved. This in effect conceded the principle of equality to Germany as far as the Reichswehr was concerned, and therefore constituted a revision of Part V of the Treaty. On November 4, 1932, the French Minister of War outlined the new French plan before the Bureau of the Disarmament Conference.²¹

The French plan was significant for it marked a radical departure from the one submitted by France on February 5, 1932. While security was still France's major preoccupation, she had at the same time laid down specific proposals for disarmament, especially the abolition of the Reichswehr and wiping out main articles of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, thereby satisfying a German demand for a militia type army based upon conscription. While the chief motive behind France's move was a desire to reach a disarmament agreement with Germany, there were other reasons which caused concern to the French government resulting in a re-appraisal of French policy on this question. France was perturbed about the fact that in 1933 she would enter upon a five year period during which she would feel the full effects of the war of 1914-1918 upon the birth rate. As a result of "war time sterility" there would be a decrease in population during the period of 1933-38 meaning an annual shortage of about 100,000-120,000 young men for military service. This situation was in marked contrast to Germany's large reserve of potential man power belonging to militaristic associations such as the Nazi storm troops or the Stahlhelm. A uniform general type of short term service of limited

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For full details of the French Plan, see D.D.F., I, 710-718, also in Edouard Herriot, Jadis. (Paris: Flammarion, 1952), vol. II, 352-354.

size for every state in continental Europe would take care of the French drop in the birth rate. In addition, the French government believed that the German menace to French security was more serious in late 1932 than it had been at any time since World War I because of the chauvinistic tendencies in Germany and the possibility of Hitler coming to power. The new plan was designed to prevent such a possibility.²²

Despite these considerations the French plan faced military and civil opposition in France. General Maxime Weygand, inspector of the French Army, and Marshal Pétain thought that such a plan if carried out would endanger the security of France.²³ According to many French nationalists, and particularly André Tardieu, the plan prejudiced the general principle of French military planning which had always emphasized the military inequality between Germany and France in favor of the latter. Tardieu contended that since May 1932 a critical change in French policy had occurred when Herriot became the French Premier and abandoned all the policies to which his predecessor had clung.²⁴

Nonetheless, the French plan received a hostile reception in the German press. According to the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, which

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Pierre Renouvin, Les Crises du XX^e Siècle (Paris: Hachette, 1957-58), 72-73.

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Memo of conversation between Herriot and Norman Davis at the Quai d'Orsay, Nov. 26, 1932; F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 476-477. Douglas MacArthur then Chief of Staff of the United States Army told Maurice Gamelin, the Chief of the French General Staff, "in your place, I would not reduce by one man or one officer, on the contrary I would augment." See Maurice Gamelin, Servir, vol. II Le Prologue du Drame, 79.

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Tardieu, Sur la Pente (Paris: Flammarion, 1935), preface, VIII-IX.

expressed the views of the German government, the only worthwhile proposal in the French plan called for the standardization of European mainland armies, implying the renunciation of a major part of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty. Even so, according to the paper, equality of rights in armaments was not explicitly granted but a scheme was designed to perpetuate French military predominance on the Continent.²⁵

Germania called the French plan a new edition of the Geneva Protocol of 1924. The approval of sanctions against an aggressor by a simple majority of the League's Council would, according to the paper, mean the preponderance of France and her "vassals," the Little Entente and Poland since they would always be able to obtain a majority in the Council.²⁶

The German press criticism of the French plan underlined German reluctance to accept anything less than German rearmament. Germany was amenable to the proposal, beneficial to the Reich, which revised articles of the Treaty of Versailles dealing with the Reichswehr yet rejected everything which made disarmament dependent upon security. Nor were the British enthusiastic about the French proposals. Although the idea of a continental protocol of mutual assistance was welcomed by the British as meaning no commitments on their part, nonetheless the French proposals appeared to some British officials as "utopian" while others felt that the proposals should be improved by a British Disarmament plan.²⁷

²⁵ Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Nov. 15, 1932.

²⁶ Germania, Nov. 15, 1932.

²⁷ Minutes by Leeper, Howard Smith, Nov. 4, 1932; B.F.O., vol.371/16466, W12359.

On November 10, 1932, Simon, in a speech in the House of Commons, pushed the French plan into the background by putting forward new British proposals for disarmament which went a long way towards meeting the German claim for equality. The British Foreign Minister treated the problem of equality separately from that of security, making the British plan incompatible with the French proposals. The British government accepted the German claim for equality of status by recognizing Germany's legal equality as well as the principle that "the kind of arms permitted to other countries ought not to be prohibited to herself." This concession did not mean immediate practical equality which had to be arrived at gradually and the details worked out at the Geneva Disarmament Conference. Nonetheless, Simon implied that the British government granted Germany not only equality in principle but also the right to "possess certain weapons and to reorganize her man power in certain ways."

Germany, said Simon, must be treated on the same footing as other powers. He argued that Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, limiting German weapons and armed forces, should be superseded by a new Convention. Finally, Simon made the recognition of Germany's equality of status dependent upon one important undertaking on the part of Germany, namely, that under no circumstances would Germany settle any disputes by force.²⁸

Thus British policy had undergone a great change since September 18, 1932, Then Britain had disputed Germany's claim for equality of status on juridical grounds, but now she had moved into Germany's

²⁸ Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, vol. 270, 543-548. Also in D.B.F.P., IV, Nov. 10, 1932, 263-265.

corner by emphasizing the urgency in meeting the German claim. The reason for the change was in great part due to public pressure as expressed in Parliament and in the editorial pages of The Times of London. Yet the same pressure was exerted upon the British government also during the Bruening Chancellorship, but then Britain had not acted in the same manner as she did now. This policy of delayed reaction, naiveté, and vacillation was a constant and an unfortunate aspect of British policy throughout the disarmament talks.

Germany welcomed Britain's concession. In London, the German Ambassador, Leopold von Hoesch told Simon that his government was very much impressed by the efforts Britain was making in trying to reach an agreement on the question of German equality. While Hoesch expressed satisfaction over the recognition of equality in principle, he nevertheless took up the question of weapons and inquired as to practical equality. Since Britain acknowledged the principle that the kinds of arms permitted to other states ought not to be prohibited to Germany, the Ambassador demanded a small number of "specimens" of heavy guns for each of the Reichswehr's seven divisions. Simon did not reject this suggestion but merely expressed hope that Germany would be willing to accept some form of supervision. No wonder then that the Ambassador pointed out that if the only foreign government with which Germany had to deal was Britain, Germany would return to the Conference table "tomorrow." The British Foreign Secretary reminded Hoesch that Britain's new policy depended upon German willingness to promise that force would never be used in settling disputes. This promise was aimed at committing

Germany not to undertake any revision by force of her eastern frontiers.

Hoesch promised to take up this matter with his government.

In a letter to Robert Vansittart, Simon urged the Permanent Under-Secretary of State to impress upon Hoesch the need for the German government to say publicly and at once that it was willing to repudiate the use of force in trying to revise the frontiers. Such a declaration was very important if Britain was ever going to convince France to accept Germany's claim for equality. "I feel it in my bones," said Simon, "that a further statement by me at Geneva is not otherwise going to improve things but will risk controversy."³⁰ Accordingly, Vansittart once again reminded Hoesch that it was very important that such a declaration should come very soon since any further delay would only raise doubts about Germany's intentions and diminish the value of such a declaration.³¹

In reply to Simon's proposal, Neurath informed Rumbold, that Germany was unwilling to make such a declaration "now" and referred Rumbold to a similar statement of Papen on November 8, 1932. Then he had said that Germany wished to revise certain clauses of the Treaty of Versailles by voluntary and peaceful means. Rumbold complained that the statement was made before Simon's speech in the House of Commons on November 10, 1932. All that Britain was asking, continued the Ambassador, was a new public declaration reiterating Papen's statement. Neurath remained unmoved. This, according to Rumbold was another example "of a German habit of welcoming a friendly gesture whilst reluctant to meet any request in

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Simon to Vansittart, Nov. 4, 1932, B.F.O., 371/16467.

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Vansittart to Patteson, Nov. 14, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 272.

return."³² Buelow told the Ambassador that Germany was unwilling to issue such a declaration for it implied acquiescence on her part with the status quo in the Eastern frontier.

More disappointment awaited the British. On November 11, 1932, when Buelow went one step further in demanding German rearmament. If the French were allowed to have thousands of tanks then Germany should also have the right to possess a certain number of tanks. Furthermore, Buelow no longer demanded only "specimen" types of armaments but rather that the Reichswehr should be equipped in the same way as other armies, not only in armaments but in technical services such as telegraphy.³³

Buelow's demands came on the heels of an article published in Die Woche by the Commander of the German Navy, Admiral Erich Raeder, declaring that Germany could no longer remain a second rate power. Although for some time to come, financial considerations limited an increase in armaments, nevertheless said Raeder, the Reichsmarine would reorganize itself in a way necessary for the defense of the country.³⁴

For every British concession the Germans not only were unwilling to concede something in return but kept on raising new demands. It would be difficult to disagree with Herriot's suggestion that the Germans should have been asked to put down on paper specifically what they meant by equality of status.

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Rumbold to Simon, Nov. 14, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 273.

33

Notes by Newton on his conversation with Buelow on Nov. 11, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 282-284.

34

Erich Raeder, "Gegenwartsfragen der Reichsmarine," Die Woche, Berlin, Oct. 29, 1932, 1326-28.

But during a visit to Berlin in October, Wheeler-Bennett talked with Papen, Neurath, and Buelow. He asked them to put "all the cards on the table" and indicate what Germany was demanding in the matter of rearmament. As a result of these conversations a formula containing the German demands was drawn up and made public by Wheeler-Bennett in a letter to The Times of London.³⁵ Accordingly, the German claim for equality could be met by granting the following concessions:

1. The new Convention to be drawn up by the Disarmament Conference by general agreement, to supersede Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.
2. The period of service in the Reichswehr to be partially reduced.
3. Germany to be able to create a volunteer militia not to exceed in numbers more than half the total number of the Reichswehr (i.e. according to present status, not to exceed 50,000 men).
4. Germany to be accorded the means of maintaining and supplying the Reichswehr in a more economic scale than that provided under the Treaty of Versailles and under the same terms as other Powers.
5. Germany of her own free will to agree not to increase her fighting forces beyond the Treaty limit for the period of the interval between the first and second Disarmament Conferences.
6. Germany to renounce immediately those aggressive weapons which the other nations agree to give up within a limited period of years.
7. Germany to have the right of "token" equality in all categories of arms unlimited by the new Disarmament Convention.
8. Germany to undertake not to increase her normal average military budget despite the reorganization outlined above.

These points were nothing but a repetition of German demands raised by her representatives in the discussions with the British and French statesmen since August when the Foreign Ministry had moved towards the Schleicher position. As such they meant the disappearance of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and the "levelling up" of German armaments to those of France and her allies thereby justifying Herriot's contention that equality of status in armaments now meant rearmament. Significantly, Wheeler-Bennett had not brought back any hint of what the Papen government was willing to do in return for such concessions. Not even a declaration against the use of force in settling disputes. Despite the fact that such a declaration would be meaningless in the future, nonetheless, the German government was unwilling to go even that far in satisfying Britain. There was no need for that because German threats produced results-- Britain was giving in and France, fearing the prospect of diplomatic isolation, would follow Britain's lead.

Yet according to Wheeler-Bennett these demands constituted the most constructive offer made by Germany since the beginning of the Disarmament Conference. In his view, "the proposed concessions to Germany went no further than those put forward by Dr. Bruening in April of which the German aide-mémoire of August was merely a repetition." The reference here is to the Bessinge talks which had amounted to two demands put forward by the German Chancellor and involved no rearmament. Although Wheeler-Bennett admitted that Papen added "some" demands to those proposed by Bruening, nonetheless, he seemed to suggest that there was actually no difference between Bruening and Papen as to their policies in the question of disarmament. That was not the case. Bruening had not demanded any German rearmament; Papen did. But even these eight demands did not con-

stitute Germany's final word. Approximately a month after Wheeler-Bennett saw the German statesmen, on November 11, 1932, Buelow changed his mind and had told Newton that Germany was no longer interested in "specimen" of weapons or "token" equality but demanded that the Reichswehr should be equipped in the same way as other armies. Indeed, according to the British Chargé d'Affaires, the "German mouth has already been opened wider than it was when they opened the question with their memorandum to the French and if the Germans were not pinned down soon their claims will get bigger and bigger."³⁶

Despite German refusal to issue a declaration renouncing the use of force in settling disputes and, despite Newton's report of the ever increasing German demands for rearmament, on November 17, 1932, John Simon submitted specific proposals to the Bureau of the Disarmament Conference recognizing once and for all Germany's right to equality of status in armaments.

Simon pointed out that while Germany continued to be restricted by the Treaty of Versailles, other nations possessed weapons of war prohibited to Germany who had become a full member of the League and as such was entitled to equality. The British government decided to recognize Germany's right to equal status, to be arrived at in the following manner:

1. All European States should join in a solemn affirmation that they will not in any circumstances attempt to resolve any present or future differences between them by force...the acknowledgement of the moral right to parity of treatment entails upon Germany along with others, the acceptance of this corresponding obligation.

2. The limitation on Germany's armaments should be contained in the same Disarmament Convention as that which will define the limitations on the armaments of others.
3. The newly expressed limitations in the case of Germany would last for the same period and be subject to the same methods of revision as of all other countries.

Once equality of status was conceded, Simon stated, the principle of qualitative equality in armaments must be recognized and embodied in the new Convention. The object of the Disarmament Conference, he continued, was not to authorize an increase in arms under the pretext of equality. The full realization in practice of the principle of equality could not be accomplished at once but rather by gradual stages, each stage being justified by the use made of the preceding one.³⁷ The British proposals had met the German claim for equality of rights in armaments. Britain broke away from France and joined Italy who had supported Germany's demands since 1931.

On November 21, 1932, Neurath arrived in Geneva to attend the meetings of the Council and Special Assembly of the League which were still debating the Sino-Japanese dispute. The occasion was used for unofficial conversations between Simon and Neurath in which Norman Davis also took part. Neurath informed Simon that the German government considered the latest British proposals so satisfactory that they could form the basis for Germany's return to the Conference if other states, especially France, agreed to the British formula.³⁸ To Norman Davis, Neurath declared that

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For full details of the British proposals, see D.B.F.P., Speech by John Simon at the Bureau of the Disarmament Conference on Nov. 17, 1932, vol. IV, 287-295.

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Patteson to Vansittart, Nov. 21, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 297.

President Hindenburg had authorized him to discuss with the former Allies the whole question of disarmament and to negotiate terms for Germany's return to the Conference as long as the principle of equality was recognized and the right to possess "certain specific arms" was granted. Davis found the German claim "fairly reasonable."

The problem was now to convince France to join the Geneva talks for the purpose of meeting the German claim for equality of rights in armaments. The difficulty of bringing France to agree to the British proposals arose over security guarantees without which France would not accede to German equality of status. Simon and Davis knew that they could not grant France the guarantees she wanted. But Germany had to be brought back to the Conference. In the words of Simon, "the best course is to face Herriot with the necessity for making a decision." They asked the French Premier to come to Geneva for a Five Power meeting which Herriot had previously advocated in London and which the Germans had hitherto refused to attend.

From November 26 to November 30, 1932, Davis talked with Herriot at the Quai d'Orsay in an effort to convince him to join a Five Power meeting at Geneva. These talks are worth describing in detail for they reveal the agony and despair of the French Premier who feared an Anglo-Saxon "sellout." They also indicate a deep understanding by the French Premier of the dangers France and Europe would face, should German demands be granted. "I am afraid," Herriot told Davis. For Germany and Britain were leading France into a trap and that terrified him. What

did Germany mean by equality of rights in armaments? To Herriot it meant the right to possess heavy arms, a militia, and a professional army. Yet to Davis, Neurath sounded "fairly reasonable." While the Germans sometimes talked reasonably, their actions, according to Herriot, did not match their words. In 1924, the French Premier pointed out he had made peace with Germany and had evacuated the Ruhr. Later, France had been a party to the early evacuation of the Rhineland and in July 1932, settled German reparations at Lausanne. Yet in the memoirs of Stresemann, Herriot was called a "jelly fish." At Lausanne Papen promised Herriot an alliance directed against England and every fifteen days he had a change of policy. Germany, according to the French Premier, could not be trusted.

Herriot was disturbed over the prospects of facing General Kurt von Schleicher who had become the new German Chancellor on December 3, 1932. He tried to prove to Davis that Germany was in fact deceiving the former Allies. For example:

The Germans had been demanding that France and other Powers go to them with their plans for disarmament, while Germany assumed no part in the disarmament work; every time a plan was presented they said it was not enough and doubled their previous demands. Last April (referring to Bruening) all that Germany asked for was that Section V of the Versailles Treaty be included in the disarmament treaty. Now, (referring to Papen) they were asking for a substantial amount of rearmament. Tomorrow it will be the Polish Corridor. After that the Saar and then the colonies. He could not understand why the British seemed so blind to all this. Winston Churchill had understood the true purpose of events and realized that the French army was a bulwark in Europe and that if that army were done away with one hope for peace in Europe would be gone.⁴⁰ Meanwhile however Sir

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On Nov. 23, 1932, Winston Churchill in a speech in the House of Commons pointed out that France was bent on preserving the status quo, whereas Germany which followed every concession by fresh demands was now demanding the right to rearm. See also Winston Churchill, While England Slept: A Survey of World Affairs, 1932-1938 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1938), 25-28.

John Simon was promising the Germans equality and sample types of all arms without realizing the terrible danger it involved. In six hours Germany could be in Paris, unfortunately there was no ocean between Germany and France.

Herriot trembled at the responsibility for the lives of millions of Frenchmen which rested on his shoulders. He feared the conversations about to take place at Geneva because France would have to adhere to a vague principle of equality whose application meant the loss of French security. He stressed the positive aspects of the French disarmament proposals which were designed to reconcile equality with security. Important French military men claimed that such a plan compromised French safety. Herriot could never forget the evening when he found on his desk a letter from Marshal Pétain who said that "parts of the plan would be taken up and put into effect and the rest would be lost and France would be in danger."

Norman Davis suggested that Herriot was "unduly preoccupied." Yet the American had done nothing to alleviate the Premier's fear. On the contrary, he told Herriot that the section of the French plan (Chapter I) relating to the assurances to be given by the United States went further than his government wanted to go. The principles established in the Kellogg-Briand Pact, said Davis, could not be included in a disarmament treaty. The suggestion of an international force, intended to make a super state out of the League, in Davis' words was "foreign to our conception of what was practical." Herriot agreed that the French plan was not perfect. It had been prepared he said under British pressure. He warned Davis that France would not accept provisions relating to equality of rights for Germany and delete the provisions relating to French security. For the questions of equality and security must be dealt with together as

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"objectives to be reached at the end of the road."

Reluctantly Herriot proceeded to Geneva. There in his conversations with MacDonald, he raised the same arguments he put forward previously to Davis. Germany must define in a clear and unequivocal manner the meaning of equality of rights. Her silence had led Herriot to suspect that Germany was not bargaining in good faith. A clear definition in writing by Germany of what she meant by equality of rights was the only way to show the world that it meant rearmament. MacDonald, on the other hand, preferred to approach Germany by means of conversations since "he did not want to get into the position of starting a paper controversy with Germany."

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On Tuesday, December 6, 1932, the first full meeting of the Five Powers (Germany, France, Britain, United States and Italy) opened in Geneva.

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At the suggestion of Davis it was unanimously agreed that MacDonald should act as Chairman. The German Foreign Minister circulated a memorandum setting forth a German formula for solving the problem of equality. It contained the following three points:

1. The limitations on the armaments of Germany and the disarmed states shall be contained in the same general Convention as the limitations on the armaments of the other states so that Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and the corresponding provisions of the other peace treaties would be replaced by the general Convention as far as the disarmed countries are concerned.

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Memos of Conversations at the Quai d'Orsay, Nov. 26-29, 1932, between Herriot and Davis, F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 476-484.

42
Record of a meeting between MacDonald, Simon, Herriot, and Paul-Boncour, Dec. 3, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 314-317.

43
The Five Powers were represented by the following: For Germany, Konstantin von Neurath, Ernst Weizsaecker, Frohwein and Hans Voelckers, for France, Edouard Herriot, Joseph Paul-Boncour and Rene Massigli, for Britain, Ramsay MacDonald, John Simon, Alexander Cadogan and Ralph Wigram for the United States, Norman Davis, Hugh Wilson and Allen Dulles, for Italy, Pompeo Aloisi and Augusto Rosso.

2. The newly expressed limitations in the case of Germany and other disarmed states would be subject to the same methods of revision as those of all other countries. The Convention shall contain an undertaking on the part of the signatory states to enter upon negotiations in due course before the expiry of this Convention with a view to concluding a new disarmament Convention for the purpose of further adjustment of armaments.
3. The provisions of the Convention shall give practical effect to the principle of equality of status in the qualitative respect both as to war material including its replacement and to the military organization. The details should be fixed contractually so as to put an end to any discrimination such as it is contained in the peace treaties. As far as quantitative disarmament is concerned the Convention is to make the greatest possible step towards the establishment of the same military security for all countries and to prepare further steps in this direction to be agreed upon by a further Conference.

Germany had finally put on paper what she really meant by equality of rights: rearmament. According to MacDonald such a formula would have a disastrous effect on public opinion. Neurath replied that his formula⁴⁴ was largely based upon the British White Paper of November 17, 1932.

By contrast, the French Premier produced his own formula for settling the equality issue. It was designed to tie together equality with security.

The delegates of the United States, of Great Britain, of Italy and of France, having met the delegates of Germany for informal conversations at Geneva on December 6th, are agreed that one of the aims of the Conference on Disarmament is to accord Germany and to the other disarmed Powers, equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations.⁴⁵

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Italics mine. F.R.U.S., 1932, I, 495. See also Annex, 521.

45

Italics mine.

According to the French formula, the aim or the final goal of the Disarmament Conference would be to grant Germany equality within a system of security, thus implying the postponement of a decision on this question until the end of the Conference. The Germans, on the other hand, demanded recognition of equality of status as a starting point - a preliminary condition for their participation in the second phase of the Conference. Although Neurath promised to communicate the French formula to his government for consideration as to whether Germany was prepared on that basis to return to the Conference, it was quite obvious that the German government would reject that formula.

This became clear when, on December 8, 1932, Neurath delivered the answer of his government by asking two questions regarding the Herriot formula.

1. Is equality of status to receive practical effect in the future Convention in every respect and is it to be in consequence the starting point for the future discussions at the Conference as far as the disarmed States are concerned?⁴⁶
2. Does the term "system which would provide security for all nations" include the element of security which lies in general disarmament as was recognized by the Assembly?

Would Germany return to the Conference if the answer to those questions was in the affirmative asked Simon. Neurath's reply was positive. Paul-Boncour, however, intervened to ask the German Foreign Minister what he meant by equality of rights "in every respect?" The Germans at French insistence, circulated another memorandum as an answer to Paul-Boncour's

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Italics mine.

inquiry to the annoyance of both Davis and Simon who objected to any written statements about the meaning of equality of rights. According to the Germans, equality of rights in practice must include:

1. Form of obligations

The limitations on armaments of Germany and the other disarmed States should be included in the same disarmament Convention in which the limitations on the other armaments of the other Powers are defined, so that Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and the corresponding clauses of the other Peace Treaties would be replaced by the new Convention as far as the disarmed States are concerned.

2. Duration of obligations

The newly established limitations on the armaments of Germany and the other disarmed countries should have the same duration as those of other countries.

3. Revision

The duration of the Convention should be limited to a comparatively short period. After the expiry of this period, the States should enter into negotiations on the subject of the conclusion of a new Convention.

4. Prohibited Arms

The provisions of the Convention relating to the prohibition or admission of certain arms shall be the same for all countries.

5. Manufacture of and trade of arms

In the same way the same rules shall apply to all countries as regards the manufacture of and trade in arms.

6. Effectives

The Convention shall either give to all countries the same freedom to fix their own military statute and the organization of their military forces, or bring the military forces to a uniform general type.⁴⁷

Paul-Boncour refused to enter into a discussion of the details of the application of "equality of rights." Once the principle was recognized, he argued, it was up to the Conference to decide its application. The meeting reached an impasse. The afternoon session of December 9, 1932, was spent in an intensive effort by Davis and Simon to reconcile the formulae presented by the French and German delegates. Late in the evening Neurath submitted a resolution summarizing his two previous formulae.

The French Premier made the following statement: France agrees that one of the aims of the Conference of Disarmament is to accord to Germany and to the other disarmed Powers equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations.

In light of this statement, the German resolution stated that Germany would return to the Conference only if the following points would guide the future work of the Conference:

1. Equality of status is to receive practical effect in the future Convention in every respect and is to be in consequence the basis for the future work of the Conference as far as the disarmed States are concerned subject to the reservation that the level of the respective figures, relating to armaments should remain open for discussion.
2. The term "system which would provide security for all nations" includes the element of security which lies in general disarmament as was recognized by the Assembly. The representatives participating in these conversations agree that these points would henceforth determine the attitude which their respective representatives will adopt at the Conference. 48

On the morning of December 10, 1932, Joseph Paul-Boncour rejected the German resolution. The French refused to go beyond the Herriot formula. The meeting reached once again a complete impasse. At this point Davis, who was very anxious that an agreement should be reached before⁴⁹ Christmas, adjourned the meeting for a tea break. During the intermission, private discussions between the various delegates continued and it became quite clear that the Germans were unwilling to break off the talks since they were certain to achieve their principle of equality in armaments through Anglo-American support by slightly revising the Herriot formula. The French, on the other hand, realized that they were isolated diplomatically and therefore a compromise was inescapable. Both sides accepted a vague formula which said very little and contained no provision for its practical application.

Agreement on the final formula was reached on December 11, 1932, and it was signed by MacDonald, Davis, Simon, Paul-Boncour, Neurath and Pompeo Aloisi.

1. The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Italy have declared that one of the principles that should guide the Conference on Disarmament should be the grant to Germany, and to the other Powers disarmed by treaty, of equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations, and that this principle should find itself embodied in a convention containing the conclusions of the Disarmament Conference.

49

On Dec. 6, Davis proposed the closing of the Disarmament Conference altogether by drafting a preliminary disarmament convention to register the "progress" already made reaffirming the July 23, 1932 Resolution and granting equality of status to Germany. This preliminary convention according to Davis would last until 1936. This plan was turned down by both France and Germany. For full details of the American proposals, see F.R.U.S., 1932, I, Annex "A," 508-511.

2. This declaration implies that the respective limitations of the armaments of all States should be included in the proposed Disarmament Convention. It is clearly understood that the methods of application of such equality of rights will be discussed by the Conference. On the basis of this declaration, Germany has signified its willingness to resume its place at the Disarmament Conference.
3. The Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy are ready to join in a solemn reaffirmation to be made by all European States that they will not in any circumstances attempt to resolve any present or future differences between the signatories by resort to force. This shall be done without prejudice to fuller discussions on the question of security.
4. The five Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy declare that they are resolved to cooperate in the Conference with the other States there represented in seeking without delay to work out a convention which shall effect a substantial reduction and limitation of armaments with provision for future revision with a view to further reduction.⁵⁰

How would such an agreement be implemented? Working out this formula was going to require great energy and diplomacy. It depended on how governments interpreted a "system which would provide security for all nations,"⁵¹ since many nations had different ideas as to what security really meant.

Despite its vagueness, the agreement constituted a substantial gain for Germany. The German claim for equality had been explicitly acknowledged and any future disarmament convention would have to embody this acknowledgment in practice. Furthermore, this agreement as interpreted by Germany had dealt a final blow to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles in the same way

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D.B.F.P., IV, 377-378.

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Memo by Leeper, Dec. 13, 1932, B.F.O., vol. 371/16471, W13788.

that the Lausanne Agreement had ended the payment of reparations by Germany.

For equality was accepted as a principle, namely, as a starting point and not as a goal to be arrived at through further negotiations, commented Germania. Should the Conference fail, Germany would be free to act as she wished for Part V of the Treaty was dead and could not be revived. ⁵²

And Diplomatic Correspondence, commented that Germany according to the December 11, 1932, agreement "was not trammelled by any injunctions against rearming, nor is she tied down by her own memorandum of August 29...her equality is guaranteed." ⁵³

These comments by the German press, expressing official German opinion, were disquieting reading for the British officials who believed that Germany's adherence to Point 3 of the agreement meant that she was bargaining in good faith. The absence from the December 11, 1932, agreement of any veto on rearmament encouraged many Germans to hope for a failure of the Conference to entitle them to rearm. ⁵⁴ Although it could be claimed that Part V of the Treaty had been circumvented and violated by Germany prior to the agreement, nonetheless, the difference was now that according to the interpretation of the agreement by Germany she was no longer bound by any Treaty and therefore could not be accused of any violation.

52

Germania, Dec. 13, 1932.

53

As quoted in Rumbold to Simon, Dec. 14, 1932, D.B.F.P., IV, 382. Paris interpreted the Agreement differently. Le Temps (Dec. 12, 1932), viewed the formula as a compromise which safeguarded the essential principle of the French thesis - security. Germany, according to the paper received a promise of conditional equality within a system providing security for all nations the terms to be reserved for future discussions. The Conference would formulate a disarmament agreement to contain substantial reduction in armaments rather than rearmament for Germany.

54

Minute by Leeper, Dec. 14, 1932, B.F.O., vol 371/16439, W13791.

The former Allies conceded to Schleicher what they refused to grant Stresemann and Bruening. This was the first instance in Britain's appeasement of Germany during the disarmament talks, rewarding intransigence and will to rearm. For Germany's demand for equality of rights in armaments was by no means legally sustainable in the sense that no Article or phrase in the Treaty of Versailles promised equality of armaments to Germany. Germany's case, however, was strongest on moral grounds since Article 164 of the Treaty and the Clemenceau letter clearly contemplated that some sort of deviation from the clauses laid down in the Peace Treaty might be possible after the entry of Germany into the League of Nations. On this basis one could have justified the granting of equality of rights in armaments to Bruening through disarmament. But now, even on moral grounds, Germany's case was no longer tenable because of the militaristic spirit of the Papen-Schleicher regime, Germany's absence from the Disarmament Conference, and her intention to rearm. In such a case the Western powers should have continued their work in the Disarmament Conference, agreed upon a Disarmament Convention without Germany's participation and thus isolated her diplomatically as suggested by Benes and Herriot. For as it proved to be, the return of Germany to the Conference did not mean a European disarmament agreement as Britain hoped, but rather further concessions to Germany with nothing in return except the wreck of the Conference by Hitler.

On the other hand, the Herriot government was called upon to produce a disarmament plan which reconciled disarmament with security only to be dismissed by the Anglo-Saxon powers as impractical. Yet since February 1932, Britain and the United States had tolerated Tardieu's obstructionism culminating in his "diplomatic illness" and absence from the Bessinge talks. In the same way as French intransigence had worked in the case of

Tardieu, so did German intransigence pay its dividends under Schleicher.

Moderation was dealt a blow with ominous results for the future.

CHAPTER VIII

HITLER REARMS

The Five-Power Declaration of December 11, 1932, conceded to Germany equality of rights in "a system which would provide security for all nations." The recognition in principle of the German claim to equality in armaments enabled her to return to the Disarmament Conference with an excellent strategic advantage. For under the agreement of December 11, 1932, she could demand equality in armaments within the agreed Convention or failing that, she could claim the right to achieve it without such a treaty, namely by rearming. This new situation underlined the need to conclude a disarmament agreement if only to avoid giving Germany a pretext for embarking upon full scale rearmament.

Yet the political developments within Germany made a disarmament Convention all but impossible. Adolf Hitler, a "man compounded of mystic and megalomaniac, orator and self-hypnotist, faithless and merciless in pursuit of his aims,"¹ was appointed the new Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, thus fulfilling France's worst forebodings. For fourteen years prior to his advent to power, the "apostle of revenge" had not concealed his hatred of France, the symbol of the Versailles Treaty, a treaty which in Hitler's view had enslaved the German nation. The stigma of Versailles could be removed, so he believed, only by force through the rebuilding of a national army, expanded and rearmed. With Hitler at the helm of Germany, his past convictions had now become policies to be carried out gradually and meticulously.

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Eden, 30.

On February 3, 1933, within days after his appointment as Chancellor, Hitler dined in the company of senior German officers at the house of Hammerstein, the Commander in Chief of the Reichswehr. He assured his listeners that the German Army and Navy would thenceforth be free to develop, expand and rearm without hindrance. The Aufbau (rebuilding) of the armed forces said Hitler, "is the most important prerequisite for attaining the goal; reconquest of political power. Universal military service must come back." Once political power was attained, the Fuehrer continued, the "conquest of new living space in the east and ruthless Germanization of the latter" would be possible and even preferable. Alluding to possible preventive intervention of the Western powers, Hitler pointed out that "the most dangerous period is that of the rebuilding of the armed forces. Then we shall see whether France has statesmen; if so she will not leave us but will fall upon us (presumably with eastern satellites)."

After January 30, 1933, top priority was assigned to rearmament. In fact a great part of the German economy was geared towards military preparedness. For example, when the Reich Minister of Transport in a cabinet meeting held on February 8 had suggested an appropriation of 2½ million reichmarks for the construction of a reservoir on the Malapane river in

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Whereas Kurt von Schleicher spoke previously about the need for re-organization rather than extension of the Reichswehr (umbauen nicht ausbauen) Hitler stressed the need for Aufbau (rebuilding) implying a major increase in effectiveness as well as in armaments.

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Thilo Vogelsang, "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr, 1930-1933," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 2 (1954), 435. See also Gerhard Meinck, Hitler und die Deutsche Aufrüstung (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1959), 17. Hitler's remarks were accepted wholeheartedly by the generals and one of them commented, "at any rate no Chancellor has ever expressed himself so warmly in favor of defense." See Herbert Rosinski, The German Army (New York: Harcourt Bruce & Co, 1940), 215.

Upper Silesia, he was told by the Chancellor that for the next four to five years, "the main principle must be everything for the armed forces,"⁴ The Western powers, Hitler declared, had recognized Germany's equality of rights in principle. This theoretical recognition must be "followed by practical equality of rights, i.e. German rearmament." The world, and especially France, said the Fuehrer, were "entirely prepared for German rearmament and regarded it as a matter of course." Any economic development in Hitler's view could be undertaken only if it proved necessary with respect "to rendering the German people capable of bearing arms for military purposes."⁵

In his first week in office, Hitler had already decided the fate of the Disarmament Conference, which had reconvened at the beginning of February 1933. By putting major emphasis upon rearmament he had actually transformed the disarmament negotiations into an exercise in futility. For how could France be expected to disarm in face of full scale German

⁴ It was hardly conceivable that the whole German economy or "everything" could have been designated to military purposes as Hitler expressed himself. If this were the case all production of consumer goods would have to be curtailed. Yet Hitler was obsessed with the need for rearmament, sincerely believing that every financial source must be channeled to the military. When Papen came back from Lausanne and boasted before Hitler that he had scored a victory at the Conference by reducing the total of reparations to a sum of five thousand eight hundred million marks, Hitler commented, "if we succeeded in getting together such a sum, we ought to devote it to German rearmament." Immediately after seizing power Hitler allotted three milliard (billion) marks to the Reichswehr for the year 1933-1934. This was certainly a considerable sum in view of the fact that before World War I Germany's defense budget amounted only to about one billion marks. See Hitler: Secret Conversations, 1941-1944 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953), 53-54, 513.

⁵ Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series C, The Third Reich, First Phase vol. I, Jan. - Oct. 1933, 35-37. (Hereinafter cited as D.G.F.P.). As to the relationship between rearmament and the reduction of unemployment, see Herman Rauschnig, The Revolution of Nihilism (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1939), 1932-135.

rearmament regardless of the outcome at Geneva? In fact the Disarmament Conference played into Hitler's hands because it concealed Germany's real intentions by creating the illusion that Germany was still interested in disarmament. While the discussions at Geneva dragged on without tangible results because of German obstructionism, Hitler was in the process of creating a fait accompli (a rearmed Germany) with which the Western powers could either quarrel or be content. Since they did neither, except for verbal protests during 1933 over German rearmament, Germany proceeded with her plans, the first objective being to build an army strong enough to defend German territorial integrity and then make it so superior as being capable of achieving victory over any opposing force in Europe.⁶

Germany was now more than ever bargaining in bad faith at Geneva despite frequent official denials. While pressing for French disarmament at Geneva, at home, however, Germany was systematically violating the Treaty of Versailles and aiming at the reintroduction of universal compulsory service, considered a prerequisite for the efficient utilization of German manpower.

The first step in this direction was taken on February 22, 1933, when Hermann Goering, Reich Commissioner for the Interior of Prussia, issued a decree authorizing the enrollment of Nazi Storm troops and Stahlhelmers as auxiliary members of the regular police force. Ostensibly the role of the Nazi detachments was to use their weapons against subversive organizations such as Communists and Marxists. In reality, their incorporation

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According to Rauschning, the German political leaders were more concerned about a possible preventive intervention by the Western powers than of any disarmament agreement which might hinder German rearmament.

into the regular police force meant an increase in the armed forces of Germany by tens of thousands of men. For according to the British War Office, the Hilfspolizei (auxiliary police) were to undergo military training under the guise of police training. The training consisted⁷ mainly of use of machine guns. In French opinion this constituted a flagrant violation not only of Article 162 of the Treaty of Versailles but also of the agreement concluded at Boulogne in 1920 allowing Germany to increase the number of her police for purposes of internal order on condition that they were not incorporated into the regular army.

The February 22 decree was accompanied by provocative demonstrations at the Rhine frontier bridges and the occupation by new auxiliary police of military barracks at Kehl in the demilitarized Rhineland. This action⁸ was a clear violation of Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles as well as Article 4 of the Locarno Treaty. Another incident at Huningue was much more serious. According to General Maxime Weygand, two Nazi battalions in formation came to the banks of the Rhine where they practiced an exercise for the crossing of the river. In his view both incidents were just "feelers-pin pricks" designed to test Franco-British reaction. He considered it pure madness for France to disarm any further, especially⁹ when Germany was "showing her teeth." While the French Ambassador to Berlin protested to Neurath over those violations, the British Ambassa-

⁷
Major Whitefoord to Huxley, May 2, 1932, B.F.O., vol. 16706, C4048/245/18.

⁸
Article 43 forbade the maintenance and assembly of armed forces in the Rhineland demilitarized zone.

⁹
Weygand to Heywood (British Military Attaché in Paris) March 18, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 16706, C2627/245/18.

dor found such protest "untimely and regrettable on psychological grounds," an attitude which did not pass unnoticed by the Berlin press. The German Foreign Minister rejected Francois-Poncet's complaints as "unfounded" commenting that even the British did not share the French view.

The drive towards compulsory military service and the consequent enlargement of the armed forces continued throughout 1933. For this purpose all semi-military associations, such as the S.S. (Schutzstaffel) the S.A., the Stahlhelm, the Jugendertuchigung (National Physical Training Organization), the Grenzschutz (an illegal frontier protection force) and the Labor Army, went through a process of large scale reorganization and military training and providing depots of manpower for the expansion of the Reichswehr. According to the British military attaché in Berlin, these semi-military associations could already be considered as part and parcel of the German defense forces. They were, in his view, more efficient and better trained than the British territorial army. Their leaders, according to Colonel Thorne, possessed the determination and facilities "to¹⁰ make them fit for their role." At Geneva, Nadolny repeatedly denied that those associations had any military character and rejected the idea of including them in the number of effectives allotted to Germany.

The military reorganization of the S.A. units was carried out during July 1933, when they were divided into eight regional groups (Obergruppen),

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The British Military Attaché estimated the number of S.A., the Stahlhelm and S. S. at over 1,500,000 men. The figure for the voluntary Labor Army was estimated as being over 250,000 and by March of 1934, nearly 40,000 potential young instructors would have received military training. Newton to Simon, Sept. 6, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 16708, C8037/245.

seven of which coincided with army corps areas (Wehrkreis) of the Reichswehr, and the eighth was stated to embrace the "free state of Austria." The S. A. hitherto predominantly a terrorist force, had now become a military force as well.¹¹ After August 1933, the S.A. and other semi-military associations provided a steady supply of recruits eventually to be absorbed into the Reichswehr. Furthermore, on January 1934, the introduction of compulsory labor service for all male Germans over eighteen years of age prepared the way for conscription. While a formidable German army was in process of formation, the German delegate at Geneva spoke of a "defenseless Germany," when in fact the number of Germany's effectives¹² had long surpassed those of France. France, however, had a certain superiority in respect to military material.

According to Hitler's military planning French superiority even in this sphere would only be temporary. A cabinet decision of April 4, 1933, created the Reich's Defense Council to be concerned with questions of equipment provision, the coordination of military industries as well as the planning of full civilian mobilization.¹³ In April, twelve German firms which previously were not allowed to produce armaments have now¹⁴ received test orders for war material.

Furthermore, great efforts had been made by the new German government in air armaments. At the end of January 1933, the existing Air

¹¹
Report by Colonel Thorne, July 25, 1933, B.F.O., vol 16708, C6650/245/18.

¹²
Daladier to MacDonald, March 10, 1933, D.D.F., II, 780.

¹³
Robert J. O'Neill, The German Army and the Nazi Party, 1933-1939 (London: Cassel & Company, 1966), 34-35; Meinck, 86.

¹⁴
Rumbold to Central Department, May 2, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 16706, C4183/245/18. See also Castellan, 267.

departments of the Reich Ministry of Transport were transformed into an independent Reich Commissioner's Office for Aviation. The new office was only a cover for the German Air Ministry soon to be headed by Hermann Goering a veteran pilot of World War I.

In a speech delivered on February 2, 1933, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Aero Club, Goering declared that "one of the most important tasks was the promotion of sporting flying and thereby the return of all experienced pilots to practical aviation." Furthermore, at the opening of an aircraft exhibition at Essen on March 11, 1933, the new Minister of Air accused the Western powers of trying to destroy German aviation. It was a holy duty in Goering's view "for Germans to fulfill the mission for which Germans had sacrificed their lives during the Great War." A week later the semi-official Deutsche Wehr claimed that the "air forces are given the place due to them besides army and marine....The Reichswehr Ministry as Center of the rearmament by land and by water will in the future be able to co-operate with the second Central Department for rearmament in the Air." Yet at the same time in Geneva, the German delegate had demanded the immediate and complete abolition of all aircraft. In his view, Germany had in one year destroyed 15,700 airplanes, 27,000 engines and 547 hangars.

Well known veteran pilots such as Captain Kurt Christiansen, the former Commander of the German Giant Plane Do.X., Wolfgang von Gronan, and the retired Cavalry Captain, Carl Bolle, both former heads of the German Civil Pilot's training schools, were asked to supervise departments

in the new Air Ministry. While ostensibly the Air Ministry was charged with the organization of German Civil Aviation so as to make the "German air service the best and safest in the world," nonetheless it had another task as well: the revival of the "German flying spirit which had been held down by the chains of the Treaty of Versailles." Above all it was to remind the negotiators at Geneva that Germany had the right to demand full equality and security in the air.

16

Goering was proceeding with the formation of an air force by putting a number of air personnel into uniform and by ordering the construction of thirty-six twin engined night bombers, the costs of the orders to be "disguised under funds for employment of the unemployed." According to the British air attaché in Berlin, 125 machines were either in existence or in the process of production. Other sixty fighting machines were believed to be stationed at Lipetsk in Russia.

17

By June of 1933, the German air authorities removed the veil of secrecy over German air rearmament. Whereas previously German officials had always denied any accusation of German rearmament, now, in their conversations with British officials, the Germans made no endeavor to conceal the fact that military aircraft had been in production. On June 10, 1933, Carl Bolle, Assistant Secretary of State at the German Air Ministry, told the British air attaché that the German firm of Arado had always built high powered military types of single-seaters, not two-seater medium-weight training airplanes as foreign observers believed. Further--

16

Herman Goering, Germany Reborn (London: Elkin Mathews, 1934), 141-142.

17

Cadogan to Leeper, May 10, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 215.

more, the Secretary pointed out, German air rearmament could no longer be kept in secret; it was inevitable that a rearmament program such as
 18
 the one in progress would have to become known.

That German rearmament was no longer a secret became known especially after a German mission comprising four members of the Reichswehr Ministry, arrived in Britain on May 21, 1933, the aim being to purchase twenty-five
 19
 to fifty aircraft for police purposes.

Rearming the German air force was not only an infraction of Article 198 of the Treaty of Versailles prohibiting the construction of any military or naval air force, but it also constituted a violation of a subsequent agreement, the Paris Air Agreement of 1926 entered into voluntarily by the German Government. Section 1 of the Agreement stated that "any aircraft armoured or protected in any way whatsoever or equipped to receive any engine of war such as guns, bombs,..." should be prohibited.

The German Air Ministry did its utmost to justify the construction of fighter planes by creating an atmosphere favorable for such action. Goering looked for a pretext in order to raise the question of air rearmament publicly. On the morning of June 24, 1933, the German press published a communiqué issued by the Reich Air Ministry to the effect that foreign planes of a type unknown in Germany appeared over Berlin one day earlier and had dropped leaflets containing insults to the Reich government. The papers followed up this communiqué with outcries against the state of affairs which made it possible for the foreign machines to escape

 18

Rumbold to Simon, June 27, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 378-379.

19

Minutes By Wigram, May 30, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 16733, C4847.

not only unharmed by even unidentified. The German public, the papers went on, was entitled to protection and the papers asked the Air Ministry to do something about it. Such an incident, they claimed, must affect German air policy for whereas "today" foreign planes could penetrate German air space unhindered and drop leaflets, "tomorrow" it could be gas or incendiary bombs causing death and destruction. According to the Vossische Zeitung, "even a bird is allowed to defend itself when its nest is attacked."

In the evening of June 24, 1933, the Secretary of State in the Air Ministry issued a statement charging that Germany had no means of defense against these "attacks from the air." If Germany would have possessed police airplanes the unknown intruders could have been forced to land in German territory. Germany, he continued, could no longer accept any postponement in the question of equality of rights in the land and in the
20
air.

The whole affair was a fabrication of Goering. For none of Berlin's four million inhabitants nor any other independent source had seen any of the alleged leaflets. That all this was probably a clumsy pretext to justify air rearmament could be deduced from the German arguments in the Air Commission at Geneva and from the comments made by Goering and other German military officials immediately after the "event." On June 26, 1933, in an interview granted to the Völkischer Beobachter, Goering said that Germany must build police planes for the protection of German skies and bring an end to her military impotency. In support of Goering, Major Max

Lehmann, the air expert of the Deutsche Wehr, wrote on July 5, that the "impudent violations of German territory by foreign planes were incompatible with the honor of our people." According to Lehmann, the German people must draw the right conclusions implying Germany's duty to rearm.²¹

By the end of 1933, the Luftwaffe was being formed by transferring thousands of men from the army to the air force. After April 1934, the army was called upon to fill the quotas of N.C.O.'s and rank and file effectives to be incorporated into the Luftwaffe. Those losses to the army were to be replaced by an inflow of new recruits.²²

While the German delegation was supposedly engaged in negotiating a disarmament agreement at Geneva, at home the Hitler government was building airplanes and drilling millions of citizens. In so doing Germany was no longer aiming at parity in armaments with other powers but had actually laid the basis for future military superiority.

The reconvening of the Disarmament Conference gave Germany the opportunity to urge constantly complete and genuine disarmament before an international forum. These tactics obscured her own rearmament, and they paid dividends. For on one hand they deluded Britain into thinking that Hitler was still interested in a disarmament convention. On the other hand they made France appear to be the only obstacle in the way of achieving the goal cherished by everyone --disarmament.

Yet full-scale German rearmament made it impossible for France to disarm without effective security guarantees. Guarantees satisfactory to

21

Woodman, 108 .

22

O'Neill, 186.

the French view were included in the plan of November 4, 1932, calling for the standardization of all Continental armies according to a uniform short term of military service and for a pact of mutual assistance. The rejection of this plan by Germany, encouraged by Britain's lukewarm attitude towards the French plan, brought the discussions to a complete deadlock. The Conference faced a problem similar to that which hampered its work during the preceding year.

Although Germany's equality of rights was acknowledged in principle, the difficulty facing the Conference lay in reconciling the German demand for practical equality in armaments with the French insistence on "security first." This impasse might have led to an adjournment of the Conference and its failure were it not for a new British initiative which was nothing but a further step in the direction of granting more concessions to Germany thereby giving the Disarmament Conference a new lease on life.

CHAPTER IX

GERMAN OBSTRUCTIONISM AND ITS PROFITS

The General Commission reconvened on February 2, 1933, opening the second phase of the Disarmament Conference. A period of stalemate that had begun five months earlier came to an end when Germany resumed her participation in the disarmament talks after a Five Power agreement had recognized her equality of rights in armaments in principle. At the beginning of the meeting, the President of the Conference referred to the fact that it was the first anniversary of the opening of the Disarmament Conference. He did not propose to follow the English custom of wishing it "many happy returns" for as far as real disarmament was concerned 1932¹ had been "profoundly disappointing." Henderson hoped that 1933 would finally produce a Disarmament Convention.

The first item on the Commission's agenda was the French plan, submitted to the Conference by Paul-Boncour on November 4, 1932, and designed to combine disarmament with security. René Massigli, the French delegate, pointed out that the plan was an attempt to synthesize the main principles which had emerged during the previous deliberations of the Conference. Those principles, in his view, acknowledged that an indissoluble link existed between disarmament and security, that reduction of armaments must be adopted to the special conditions of each state according to the terms of Article 8 of the Covenant, that the means of defense should be

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Minutes of the General Commission, Feb. 2, 1933 Series B, vol. II, 215. As in February 1932, so now a year later, events in the Far East were casting their shadows over the disarmament deliberations. In defiance of the demands of the Council and Assembly, Japanese armies were advancing towards the city of Jehol and the Japanese delegate served notice of his country's intention of withdrawing from the disarmament talks and from the League as well.

strengthened by a reduction in the forces of aggression which consisted of both material and effectives and, that reduction of armaments should come about by stages. Such reduction was incompatible with rearmament. In addition, the French delegate stressed the importance of control and supervision of armaments in general, as well as other measures involving control of international air transport and the limitation of expenditures on armaments. Clearly, Massigli reiterated once again his country's concern with security, the main topic before the Commission, especially in view of the internal developments in Germany and the fear of German re-
²
 armament.

By contrast, Nadolny pointed out his government's desire that disarmament should be carried out as quickly as possible and, that the "realization of this right which it has been awaiting for over ten years should not be any longer deferred." He criticized the military-technical aspects of the French plan as well as the legal and political ones. From the technical point of view according to Nadolny, the plan lacked concrete proposals for genuine qualitative disarmament as well as suggestions for effective reduction of offensive weapons.

As for the political aspects of the plan, the German government did not believe that disarmament was possible only if it was accompanied by a progressive organization of peace. In Nadolny's view, disarmament would lead to security. Further, the Locarno Agreement, the Pact of Paris, the No Force declaration of December 11, 1932, had provided, according to the German delegate, a sense of security which should now enable the European
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 states to proceed with disarmament. Interestingly enough, in his speech

²
Ibid., 217.

³
Ibid., 220.

Nadolny repeated some of the arguments that Bruening had made a year earlier. The difference, however, lay in the fact that now, under Hitler, Germany was more than ever bargaining in bad faith because her demand for complete and genuine disarmament was no longer a goal to be arrived at but rather a tactic for diverting world attention from her own rearmament. The possibility of constantly urging disarmament before the forum of the Conference, Nadolny wrote to Neurath, "gives us an important trump which we⁴ ought not to give up."

The German delegate had no doubt drawn encouragement from the Italian and British stands regarding the French security proposals. The Italian delegate, Baron Aloisi, derided the French idea of a "continental" pact of mutual assistance for it seemed to him that the political, economic, and military situations in Europe, past and present, should be a warning against the idea outlined in the French plan that Britain should not share in the European system. Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Under Secretary, told the French delegate that in pursuit of new security "let us not forget the old security arrangements, such as the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Treaty of Locarno and the Pact of Paris." In effect practically agreeing with Nadolny's argument that existing guarantees of security were sufficient to justify immediate reduction in armaments, Eden pointed out that Britain had abandoned the ambitious ideal of a universal effort towards mutual assistance. According to Eden, the United Kingdom had gone as far as it could and should in assuming definite commitments in Europe.⁵ Eden's declaration only reinforced German and

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Nadolny to Neurath, March 13, 1933, D.G.F.P., 154.

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Minutes of the General Commission, Feb. 3, 1933, Series B, vol. II, 223.

Italian opposition to the French security proposals. Such a declaration was unnecessary, in the first place, because the French plan specifically excluded British participation from the proposed regional pacts of mutual assistance. Furthermore, it brought the American delegate Hugh Gibson to declare that he could not take part in the discussions of the plan since it dealt first with the problem of reaching agreement between the Continental States of Europe. The European aspects must be disposed of before he could discuss those aspects of the plan concerning non European states or non members of the League.

The Anglo-Saxon powers expected France to disarm without doing anything on their part to strengthen French security against possible German aggression. This policy of no "further commitments" on the part of Britain, and especially of the United States, contributed greatly to the stalemate at the disarmament talks. It should have been obvious to all those who were interested in a successful conclusion of the Conference, and above all to Britain, that France had more reasons not to disarm now than she did a year earlier. If Tardieu was unwilling even to talk about French disarmament when Germany was ruled by the moderate Bruening, how could anyone expect her to disarm in face of a Germany ruled by Hitler, without adequate security pledges? In light of the Anglo-Saxon attitude, the security chapter in the French plan was shelved and a majority of the Commission had decided that it could not form the basis for a disarmament Convention.

Next the General Commission took up the French proposal for the standardization of Continental military forces on a short term basis. On February 17, 1933, Pierre Cot, the French Minister of Air, told the Commission that two main system of armies existed in Europe --the professional army and the short term service army with troops on active duty. In

examining in detail the characteristics of both types of armies, the French Minister tried to show that a highly trained professional army, such as the Reichswehr, was more suitable for offensive operations since it could be rapidly mobilized and secretly transported to the front for purposes of conquest. On the other hand a short term army was designed for defensive operations since it was a popular army, slow to mobilize because it required the calling up of reservists and their fusion with the regular effectives, a process that could take weeks. In his view only such an army was suitable for defense purposes. Alluding to the present situation in Germany, Cot declared that the worst possible system would be one in which standing armies and militias could exist side by side, where "paramilitary" associations would have developed a militarist spirit. The French Minister believed that by proposing to Germany a reversal to what had been done to her at Versailles, he was "inaugurating a system that would be common to all, facilitating the movement towards equality, not only in rights but also of status."

The French Air Minister pointed out that in the system contemplated by his government, the period of service would be eight to nine months, and that the necessary adaptation of existing systems should take place in three or four years. In conclusion, Cot presented a resolution calling for the General Commission to adopt the principle "that in Continental Europe an army with a short term service and limited effectives, is the type of military organization which represents the most defensive character." Furthermore, that such an organization "will render the effectives (troops on active duty) comparable, will permit the application of methods of calculation like those which have been proposed by the United States delegation" namely, the Hoover proposals. Once these two decisions of

principle were taken, all questions of application and adjustment would
 be referred to the Committee of Effectives.⁶

The proposal of the French government, if accepted by Germany, would have gone a long way in granting her the equality in armaments she always wanted. For one of the major difficulties of arriving at equality had been the fact that the German army was constituted on a voluntary, long service professional basis, while the system in almost all other Continental countries was that of conscription. The standardization of the types of armies as proposed by France would also bring about a measure of qualitative disarmament. If professional armies were modified to a type of militia, this modification would inevitably have led to the disappearance of offensive weapons, since the new armies have a defensive character. Even The Times of London which seldom found any positive aspects in any French proposals, called Cot's speech, "constructive...any government who rejects such an offer, or raise unnecessary difficulties can't escape the charge of seriously blocking the progress of the Conference."

No one understood this better than Nadolny. For the Germany insistence on complete disarmament was about to be revealed as a fraud. On February 18, 1933, in reply to Cot's speech, he asked the General Commission for additional time to consider the French proposal with his government. Nevertheless, Nadolny pointed out that Germany had resumed her collaboration with the Conference in order to obtain reduction in armaments instead she was asked to transform her army. The implication was clear: Germany was interested in retaining her professional army, that is, the Reichswehr, side by side with her "para-military" associations which by virtue of their

military training had actually formed a second army with a shorter term of service. The Reichswehr would thus play the role of a cadre army providing the leadership for the eventual mass army. Consequently, he insisted that the Commission should first discuss the question of "land war material" and that the whole question of effectives be "delivered" to the Committee of Effectives for further study, hopefully being "buried" there and thus avoiding the issue. But the French maneuvered Germany into a position of showing her hand on the crucial matter of effectives at an earlier stage than she had desired.

On February 18, Nadolny and General Kurt Schoenheinz (chief military expert of the German delegation) left for Berlin to ask for instructions on how to deal with the French trap. One day later, Werner von Blomberg, the Defense Minister, sent a memorandum to Buelow giving his view on the stand Germany should take regarding the question of the standardization of army systems. According to Blomberg, Germany should hedge the issue with reservations and make the final attitude "dependent on decisions regarding other questions." In other words, Germany could not disclose her position on the principle of standardization until certain questions such as the abolition of heavy weapons of offense and of military aviation or the final status of the armaments of specific countries, meaning France, had been decided upon. As regards to effectives, questions should be raised as to whether forces stationed overseas would also be included in the system of standardization. Would this system apply only to Continental states or to all of Europe?⁷ Blomberg's directives amounted to an engagement in an exercise of obstructionism on the part of the German delegation on this crucial issue, so as to conceal activities in Germany. Such tactics

were to characterize Germany's actions at Geneva from this point until the breakdown of the Conference.

On February 20, 1933, Nadolny and General Schoenheinz held a Conference with Neurath, Buelow, and Lieutenant Colonel Obstfelder of the Reichswehr Ministry. The delegates at Geneva explained that the German reply to the French proposals would be of critical importance to the fate of the Conference. Neurath, agreeing with Blomberg's directives, urged Nadolny to act accordingly. This was just one more indication that the military rather than the Foreign Office conducted German policy at the Disarmament Conference, a practice followed since the day Kurt von Schleicher became Defense Minister.

Following Neurath's urging, on February 22, 1933, Nadolny in a speech before the General Commission all but rejected the French proposals. He demanded a large reduction in the armaments and troops of powerfully armed countries so as to bring them on an "equal footing" with those of Germany. In case of a reduction and limitation of effectives, overseas forces must also be taken into consideration. Further, according to Nadolny, the defensive or offensive character of an army was determined not by its organization and period of service, as the French spokesman contended, but rather by the arms and war material at its disposal. Hence, if the purpose of the Conference was to achieve "genuine disarmament while ensuring general security," the main task according to Nadolny, should be the total abolition of offensive weapons as the only effective way of giving armies a defensive character. In conclusion, Nadolny submitted the following proposals to the General Commission:

- a. that only armies of specifically defensive character are compatible with a system of security.

- b. that in order to give armies a defensive character it is necessary in the first place to deprive them of the means of aggression by abolishing arms of a specifically offensive character, mobile heavy guns, tanks, air forces, prohibition of air bombardment and to fix the quantity of war material authorized for each army.
- c. that in order to establish a system of security, it is further necessary to carry out a substantial reduction in the effectives of all states. It is understood that in this respect overseas forces in overseas territories near the home country and overseas forces stationed in home country itself should be regarded as part of the home forces.

Moreover, and this too in line with Blomberg's directives, Nadolny asked the Commission that prior to pronouncing on the principle of standardization of continental armies it should decide:

- 1. To settle without delay the question of abolition of specifically offensive weapons and the limitation of authorized war material.
- 2. To instruct the Committee on Effectives to frame rules for the reduction and equalization of effectives on the basis of the principles of the Hoover proposals and to submit a recommendation to the General Commission within days.⁸

The German case stressed the abolition of war material and "offensive" armaments before the nature of the armies had been decided upon. The reason for such an approach lay in the fact that Germany was unwilling to give up the Reichswehr for a new type of organization such as a militia with limited numbers of troops which she had already in the form of "para-military" associations comprising hundreds of thousands of men. The French plan on the other hand, was designed to destroy Germany's military organization, contending that the nature and size of armies must be decided upon before the nature of the armaments. Both the British and American delegates agreed with this point of view. The French resolution was carried by a vote of twenty-one to five, whereas only the German delegation voted in favor of

its own resolution, thus finding itself isolated, a fact which did not pass unnoticed by Nadolny who would later urge his government to change its policy.⁹

After the General Commission had decided in principle in favor of the standardization of continental armies, it took up the proposed new system in greater detail. A number of questions concerning effectives were taken up by the Commission. These included whether or not the system of standardization should also apply to overseas forces and, should pre-military training to be included in the period of trained conscripts. Nadolny argued that French colonial troops served on a long term basis and since they were part of the French army, standardization should certainly apply to these forces. Pierre Cot, while admitting that the colonial forces might be limited, insisted, however, that a short service system for them was impossible since it could take as much as four weeks to get them to their destination. The majority of the Commission concurred with the French view. On the other hand, the French delegate having in mind the various German "para-military" associations demanded that these as well as police of a military character should be included in computing the German effectives, meaning that once a certain number of effectives were allotted to Germany she would have to disband the semi-military associations. Otherwise, Cot claimed, one might face a situation which existed in Germany, namely, the co-existence side by side of a professional army and a short

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In May, Nadolny returned to Berlin to report to Hitler about the Geneva deliberations and Germany's diplomatic isolation there. He tried to convince the Fuehrer that Germany should disarm instead of rearming, as an example of good faith to be followed with the disarmament of other powers in a few years time. When rebuffed by Hitler, Nadolny saw Hindenburg and presented the same suggestion. The President rejected Nadolny's arguments and retorted: "You are pro-Moscow! Very well you'd better get out of here." See Hitler: Secret Conversations, 406. For other attempts made by Nadolny to change Germany's course at Geneva, see below, p. 199, footnote 26 and p. 243.

term service army. Nadolny had given a negative reply to Cot's suggestion, wishing to refer the question of pre-military training to the Effectives Committee in order to delay action, but his proposal was rejected by a great majority of the Commission's members.

At this point, outnumbered and isolated, Nadolny reverted to a tactic he knew best --blaming others for the lack of progress in disarmament. The Conference, said Nadolny, in its quest to increase security agreements, "was devoting itself with extreme zeal to general consideration on defensive and offensive army systems, on the danger of civil aviation and on many other points," but was incapable after more than a year's discussion of bringing about any measure of disarmament. He made this comment after rejecting the French proposal for standardization of armies which could have constituted the first step towards equality in armaments through disarmament. This tactic of constantly urging disarmament yet at the same time blocking progress towards that goal was nothing but a German ploy to obscure its own rearmament.

Such an approach to the problem was especially evident when the General Commission had to consider a further extension of the arms truce due to expire on February 28, 1933. Instructions from the Reichswehr Ministry were that Nadolny should oppose, as best he could, its extension by using the "familiar reason that pressure must be used to bring about the early conclusion of the Convention." While the actual policy at Geneva was formulated by the Reichswehr Ministry, the role of the Foreign Ministry was to amend it in such a way so as to make it diplomatically more acceptable thereby to avoid giving the impression of rearmament at home and if possible to prevent German diplomatic isolation abroad. Consequently, the Foreign Minister cabled Nadolny that if no other state would join Germany in its refusal, "we must not be the only ones to do so, since our

intentions to rearm would thereby be manifested too soon," and should
 10
 therefore agree to a "brief extension only."

The same obstructive line was followed by Germany in the discussions which took place in the Air Commission where her intentions to rearm were clearly evident. At the first meeting of the Commission, on February 20, 1933, the British delegate, Lord Londonderry, proposed that a system of controlling civil aviation must be devised before the abolition of military and naval air forces could be carried out for civil aircraft could easily be transformed into military aircraft. The French delegate, Pierre Cot, submitted a proposal calling for the internationalization of civil aviation by means of the establishment of an international company under the observation of the League of Nations before military aircraft were completely abolished. The German delegate, Brandenburg on the other hand, refused to discuss any measure of control over civil aviation or its internationalization until complete abolition of military aircraft was carried out. In a telephone conversation Goering instructed Brandenburg to demand in the next meeting of the Commission immediate equality in air armaments, and if not granted "to leave the hall and slam the door" of the Conference. When Brandenburg was just about to carry out his instructions, the Chair-
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 man of the Commission deliberately adjourned the meeting. The Commission never convened again, thus saving the Conference at least for the time being.

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Memo by Neurath, Feb. 8, 1933, D.G.F.P., 37-38. Italics mine.

11

Paul Schmidt, Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne, 1923-1945 (Bonn: Athenäum Verlag, 1949), 260.

These tactics indicated German hedging on the issue of effective international control of civil aviation. Brandenburg's attempt to wreck the deliberations altogether was in the words of a senior official in the British Foreign Office "additional justification for our worst suspicions about their intentions of arming in the air."¹² Since France could not and would not abolish her air force before a guarantee was given that civil aircraft would not be transformed into military aircraft, Germany would accuse France of being unwilling to disarm^{and} thereby feel free to embark upon her own air rearmament. All indications were that Germany was following this path. The appointment of Goering on February 2, 1933, as Commissioner for air traffic with special attention to aviation and his message to Brandenburg justified that conclusion about Germany's intentions.

By the end of the first week of March 1933, it was evident to the representatives of the Big Powers, and especially to Britain, that a deadlock had been reached at Geneva. Germany blocked progress by taking the position that she could not discuss the question of effectives until the question of war material had been discussed. While France, fearful of German rearmament, adopted the attitude that the transformation of the continental armies into defensive types would eventually lead to a reduction in offensive weapons. In the French view, no answer could be given about war material until the question of effectives had been settled.

The next move came from Britain. Anthony Eden, the able and hard working British representative at Geneva, had realized as early as the end

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Minute by Leeper, Feb. 1, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 17349, W1145.

of January 1933, that the Conference was doomed unless the United Kingdom took action by proposing a convention which would specify the armaments allotted to each country. For it was useless to continue any longer discussing principles and referring technical problems from one committee to another when it should have been apparent that political rather than technical difficulties were obstructing progress. For German intentions to rearm led to French fears of security.

Fully aware of this roadblock to disarmament, on February 22, 1933, Eden wrote to Stanley Baldwin and later to Simon that progress in disarmament could be achieved only if Britain were to produce a convention, complete in all its details, lay it on the table and ask that the Conference should adopt it. "I am much tempted to try and work out such a convention," said Eden, "for even if the Conference then failed we should at least have made the greatest effort in our power to achieve success." On his own initiative, with the help of Alexander Cadogan the chief adviser to the British delegation at Geneva and General Arthur Temperley the military adviser, Eden produced a draft disarmament convention, which in Eden's view "might bind Germany" and thus prevent her rearmament.

On March 2, 1933, Eden and Cadogan left for London to present the draft convention to the British cabinet which met on March 5. The Prime Minister agreed to Eden's draft and expressed his willingness to go to Geneva with Simon and personally present the convention to the Conference in hopes of saving it from complete breakdown. Following the Prime Minister's decision, an official statement was issued by the British Foreign Office pointing out that because of the stalemate at the Conference the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State would leave for Geneva.

13

Eden, 35-39.

14

B.F.O., C.A.B., March 5, 1933, vol. 379, D.C. (M)(32).

Before their departure, Simon asked the German government whether it would be possible for Neurath or another important member of the government to come to Geneva in order to discuss possible ways of solving the disarmament problem in the forum of a Conference of ministers. The Germans rejected the idea on the grounds that the peculiarities of the political situation in Berlin made it impossible for any cabinet member to leave.

In London, however, the German Ambassador informed Simon that from the German point of view, any meeting of ministers was useless because the Conference was bogged down in discussing effectives, while the question of particular interest to Germany --war material (tanks submarines, guns) -- was not even touched upon. Germany agreed neither to an early adjournment of the Conference nor to the adoption of an interim solution of the sort proposed by Norman Davis¹⁵ since such a solution would not produce equality of rights in armaments. The German rebuff caused great disappointment to¹⁶ the British Foreign Minister.

Through this negative reply Germany was attempting to shift the responsibility for the lack of progress at Geneva on to other powers and especially France. It actually amounted to saying that Germany was the "creditor" in disarmament and that it was the business of the "debtor" powers to decide among themselves whether and how they were going to contribute their share in disarmament. This attitude was emphasized in an article by Nadolny in the Völkerbund calling the British suggestion for a discussion between ministers of the Great Powers a very pessimistic approach. He argued against the adjournment of the Conference and the

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See above, 142, footnote 49.

16

D.G.F.P., 103-104.

adoption of a preparatory convention to include the "existing meagre re-
 17 sults." Such a response had been decided upon as early as the middle of
 February 1933, when Neurath had instructed Nadolny to oppose any inter-
 mediate formulas, but instead to demand immediate and complete disarmament
 18 on the part of France.

The British Ministers left London on March 9, 1933, stopping in Paris
 on their way to Geneva. There they discussed the disarmament deadlock
 with members of the French government, including Premier Edouard Daladier and
 Foreign Minister Joseph Paul-Boncour. The British Prime Minister told the
 French that the situation in Geneva was most disturbing and asked them
 whether they had a solution to save the Conference from complete failure.
 From his remarks, it seemed that MacDonald had become skeptical of Eden's
 draft convention, pointing out that the Conference should be brought to an
 end either by adjournment or by other means such as a limited convention.
 His purpose at Geneva, MacDonald explained, would be to exchange views with
 important representatives such as Nadolny and Aloisi. MacDonald asked
 Paul-Boncour to join him in the discussions, and expressed his regrets
 over the fact that Germany did not send Neurath to Geneva. The French
 Ministers on their part agreed with MacDonald's assessment of the state of
 the Conference. In their view the situation was further aggravated by the
 enrollment of Nazi storm detachments and Stahlhelm as auxiliary police,
 the occupation by a Nazi detachment of the military barracks at Kehl in
 the demilitarized zone, and the organization of a military air force.

 17

Völkербund, March 10, 1933, 49, 1-2.

18

Nadolny to Neurath, Feb. 15, 1933, Auswärtiges Amt, Büro des Reichsministers Akten, vol. XIII, D668507. (Hereinafter cited as Büro des Reichsministers Akten, followed by volume and frame number. These unpublished records in microfilm are deposited in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

These developments, according to Daladier, constituted breaches of treaty obligations opening the road to full scale German rearmament. Under these circumstances France could not be expected to disarm without security¹⁹ guarantees.

The British Ministers and Paul-Boncour proceeded to Geneva where during the next few days a series of interviews were held in which the disarmament question was explored. In a conversation with the British Ministers, Nadolny pointed out that France's demands for a pact of mutual assistance and the standardization of continental armies constituted the only stumbling blocks towards progress in disarmament. In fact, according to Nadolny, such an attitude on the part of France was tantamount to sabotaging disarmament. If Britain were interested in breaking the deadlock all she had to do was to dissuade France from her intransigent attitude through strong pressure compelling her to disarm. Germany, said Nadolny, could not agree to a mutual assistance pact, nor would she transform the Reichswehr into a conscript army, for in so doing they would have to introduce into it undesirable elements, and thus lessen the Reichswehr's effectiveness as an instrument for the preservation of internal security. Nadolny would not agree to meet any French demands for the purpose of obtaining agreement. Furthermore, the German delegate once again rejected the idea of an interim solution saying that this would be considered by his government as a failure of the Conference. Instead, he called the attention of the British Ministers "to the necessity of equality of security²⁰ and equality of military forces."

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Record of a meeting between British and French Minister, March 10, 1933, D.B.F.P., IV, 502-507.

²⁰

Nadolny to Neurath, March 12, 1933, D.G.F.P., 149-151.

While Nadolny had placed the onus of lack of progress on France, it was evident to MacDonald that Germany was obstructing progress because the Nazi regime was unwilling to take steps to satisfy any of the French security demands, especially in view of German rearmament. He told Gibson "that responsible people in Germany were indulging in irresponsible talk of an alarming nature." The British Prime Minister pointed to Goering's speech ridiculing the Treaty of Versailles, the Disarmament Conference, and de-²¹claring that Germany would build an air force.

The German tactic of playing the role of a martyr while in fact proceeding with full scale rearmament had profoundly changed the British attitude towards Germany. The British had fully realized that Germany was bargaining in bad faith. When Benes told MacDonald that Germany was re-arming in "so obvious a manner" especially in the air and that Prague was only about 40 miles from the frontier, MacDonald replied that London was in much the same position "with an advantage of perhaps ten minutes." Therefore, it was questionable whether the Disarmament Conference could²² continue talking about reductions in face of Goering's speech.

The British Prime Minister seemed greatly perplexed as to the course to follow. Instead of adjourning the Conference and placing the onus for its breakdown on Germany, MacDonald reverted to the original reason for his coming to Geneva: the presentation of the draft prepared by Eden.

On March 16, 1933, in a speech delivered in the General Commission he presented the Eden draft convention known to the world from then onwards as the MacDonald Plan.

21

Gibson to Hull, March 13, 1933, F.R.U.S., 1933, I, 34-37.

22

Record of a Conversation at Geneva between MacDonald, Simon and Benes, March 13, 1933, D.B.F.P., IV. 520-522.

In his speech, the British Prime Minister voiced the hope that his plan would help the Conference enter upon a new and final phase of its deliberations. Alluding to Germany, MacDonald tried to deny her role at the Conference as the "creditor" in disarmament. Germany, "as a pure receiver" he said, "was putting itself in a false position,...the representatives of the disarmed states could of course by holding up business by threats and so on, get a certain amount of the superficial appearance of a victory. But there was no use deceiving themselves and there was no use deceiving other people." The armed nations on the other hand must contribute to disarmament.

The British Draft Convention, according to MacDonald, was an attempt to give practical application to the Agreement by the Five Power Conference of December 11, 1932, a Conference chaired by the Prime Minister. MacDonald's interpretation of the Agreement was interesting for it revealed disillusionment with the German tactics and uneasiness over the internal developments in Germany. The Five Power Agreement, according to MacDonald, "had not only declared for equality" but also reiterated that no nation in Europe "would by granting the principle of equality and security find its safety immediately endangered." In his view, the effect of the declaration was "first security, no resort to force on account of the superior potential position given by a declaration of equality and secondly, the reaching of equality by stages." In other words, any substantial advance towards equality in armaments through disarmament could be measured only by the amount "of confidence and trustfulness that existed."

According to MacDonald, the plan had a number of characteristics. It was not indefinite but rather for a transitional period of five years; it emphasized reduction in armaments rather than rearmament; it provided for international control in order to insure strict adherence to the Convention;

it set up bodies similar to the Permanent Disarmament Commission to study further disarmament; and it provided the opportunity for political work by restoring confidence in order to make disarmament possible. ²³

Then the Convention was distributed among members of the Commission. Despite MacDonald's words and judging from the contents of the Draft Convention, Germany was once again profited as she had in the Five Power Agreement. The security proposals, comprising the first five articles of the Convention, dealt with the organization of peace. In case of a threat of war it should be possible for any five signatories of the Pact of Paris including one Great Power to call a Conference of all signatories. The Conference would be empowered to decide who was the violator of the Treaty and what steps should be taken to deal with the aggressor. Decisions would have to be taken by unanimity of the Great Powers and majority of the others.

As regards disarmament, the question of effectives was dealt with first. The land forces of Continental Europe, excluding overseas forces, would be reduced to a militia type by fixing eight months as the maximum period of service. Accordingly, the figures for the principle powers were: France 200,000 troops for home service and a further 200,000 for her overseas commitments; Germany 200,000 at home, overseas nil; Italy 200,000 and 50,000 overseas; Poland 200,000; Rumania 150,000; Czechoslovakia 100,000; Yugoslavia 100,000; Russia 500,000; Belgium 60,000 and 15,000 overseas.

As for land armaments, the maximum calibre for land guns should be 105mm. (4.5 inch) while those countries already possessing guns up to 155mm. (6 inch) could retain them. The maximum tonnage of tanks for all countries would be 16 tons. All prohibited armaments would be destroyed within three years of the coming into force of the convention.

Regarding air armaments, the MacDonald Plan prohibited bombing from the air except for police purposes in outlying regions, and called for the abolition of military and naval aircraft. Effective supervision of civil aviation would be required to prevent transforming civil aircraft into fighting planes. The number of military aircraft allowed to the major air powers (Britain, United States, France, Japan, Italy and Russia) was set at 500 with lower number for other countries. The use of chemical incendiary and bacterial weapons should be prohibited.

Before the expiration of this Convention, a Permanent Disarmament Commission would prepare for a Second Disarmament Conference to deal with further reductions. The British Draft Convention together with subsequent Conventions should replace the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaties.²⁴

The British initiative was an honest but at the same time a hopeless as well as naive attempt to find a middle way to reconcile the differences between Germany and France, thus avoiding a breakdown of the Conference. At a time when it was clear to the British Prime Minister that Germany was already rearming, his plan further provided for a considerable rearmament of Germany and thereby conflicted with the principles laid down in the Five Power Agreement of December 1932, principles upon which MacDonald based his Draft Convention.

It was in fact a Convention providing for the rearmament of Germany and the disarmament of France. It doubled the strength of the German army making it equal to the French. Under its terms, Germany was allowed to possess tanks under 16 tons and unlimited guns under 105mm. (4.5 inch) in calibre. Although the question of quantitative limitation of tanks was left open for negotiations, in principle the Convention accepted Germany's right to

²⁴ Minutes of the General Commission, March 16, 1933, Series B, vol. II, 359-362.

parity with other countries. Finally, according to article 96 of the Convention the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaties would be superseded by the Draft Convention.

True, Germany was denied a military and naval air force, but the air force of France was to be reduced to 500 while Germany possessed a great commercial air fleet which could easily be converted into a military force. While the Draft Convention adopted France's proposal for the standardization of Continental armies on short service basis, it was nonetheless vague on security guarantees so dear to the French, especially in light of German rearmament. The MacDonald Plan was intended to transform the Kellogg Pact into a practical instrument of policy rather than being only a binding agreement not to resort to force. But a decision in designating the aggressor had to be taken by the unanimity of the Great powers and the majority of other signatories of the Pact. What would the attitude of the United States be? Would she be prepared to give up her isolationist policy and agree to take steps against a declared aggressor so as to soothe the fears of those countries who see great risks in disarmament?

After Britain had appeased Kurt von Schleicher by conceding equality in principle in December of 1932 in the naive hope of reaching a disarmament agreement, it went one step further three months later in allowing a considerable degree of German rearmament without giving France adequate security guarantees thereby contradicting that Five Power Agreement. Just as the Five Power Agreement constituted a triumph for Schleicher's militancy, so the MacDonald Plan was a triumph for Hitler, providing him with another justification of his methods of threats, violence, and intransigence as a means of liberating Germany from the Treaty of Versailles. The more obstructionist German policy became, the more concessions she could expect from Britain.

In the same way as the appeasement of Schleicher had failed to produce satisfactory results, so would Hitler's. For even these concessions were not enough to satisfy him. While his ambassador at Geneva paid "lip service" to the Draft Convention, Germany would soon block the path to progress by proposing one hostile amendment after the other. These amendments were so clearly opposed to the letter and spirit of the draft that they seemed designed to wreck it altogether. For after all the British so far had accorded Germany only partial rearmament, when she wanted complete and immediate equality in armaments with other countries.

CHAPTER X

MACDONALD'S PLAN AND HITLER'S "PEACE SPEECH"

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After the Easter recess on April 25, 1933, the General Commission reconvened and began examining the British Draft chapter by chapter, article by article. An atmosphere conducive to progress towards disarmament was not fostered by internal developments within Germany such as the anti-Jewish measures, the wholesale suppression of pacifists, the bellicose language used by Nazi leaders in calling for rearmament. Such manifestations at home were matched at Geneva by Nadozny's intransigence and non compromising attitude towards the MacDonald Plan.

The German stand in regard to the British Draft was revealed on April 27, 1933, when the Commission began discussions on Part II Section I (effectives) which included the French proposals for the standardization of armies for the Continental European States on the basis of short term service, a scheme aiming at the abolition of professional armies of the type of the German Reichswehr. Nadozny's amendments to this section of the draft were tantamount to wrecking it altogether. For he reverted to the same arguments he used in February and March when the question of standardization was discussed. This time, however, he argued with greater vigor and precision despite the concessions the draft granted to Germany.

According to the German delegate, the question of standardization of European armies was not ripe for an immediate decision, at least not at the present time, since Germany "viewed such a proposal with very great reserve and had serious doubts with regard to it." In his view, every state

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After expressing appreciation to the British efforts in solving the disarmament problem, the delegates decided on March 27 to adjourn the Conference for the Easter holiday.

"should be free to develop in its own way and that no army system which did not meet its special requirements or the social economic conditions of the country should be forced upon it." Further, Nadolny objected to the idea that the proposed system should apply to Continental Europe only, and would not be universal. For these reasons he felt that the question of standardization should be referred to the Permanent Disarmament Commission for further study.² Such a move, if accepted by the members of the Commission, would have meant that provisions for standardization could not be decided upon in this first Convention but would have to be delayed for a second Disarmament Conference to be held five years later. In the meantime Germany would be free to keep her professional army side by side with the Storm Troopers and the Stahlhelm, numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

In addition, the German delegate introduced an amendment to Article 9(a) which contained a definition of "effectives." He demanded that trained reserves, that is, those men who had completed their active service but could be called on to perform military service in time of war, should be included in the calculations of France's effectives. Assuming that each reservist performed seven days (one week) duty a year, fifty-two reservists (corresponding to fifty-two weeks) would be considered as³ equivalent to one soldier in continuous service of one year.

² Minutes of the General Commission, April 27, 1933, Series B, vol. II, 424.

³ According to German records (Reichskanzlei Akten, A.K., May 1931, vol. III, D811046), France possessed a trained reserve force of about 4,000,000. In Nadolny's view this number should be divided by 52, the resulting 76,923 would be deducted from the 200,000 effectives allotted to France in the British Draft. Accordingly, France would possess only 127,007 effectives. Further, Germany wanted France to reduce the number of overseas forces stationed near the home country. Here too, Germany had nothing to lose since she had no overseas forces.

Germany, however, introduced an amendment to Article 12 which dealt with the definition of the term "military training." The amendment was designed to exclude from consideration the German semi-military organizations and German police forces in computing the German effectives. Two criteria were suggested for terming an organization "military": 1) the formation was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of War and 2) that the training was given by a training staff belonging to the army proper. Since according to Nadolny, the training of the German police forces and semi-military organizations was given by retired officers rather than by serving officers, that training must not be considered as military. Further, since the police were not administered by the Ministry of War but rather by the Ministry of Interior, it meant that regardless of the military character of the police it would not be reckoned as such. Germany, Nadolny continued, should be authorized to possess any class of arms which other states considered necessary meaning, rearmament.

By rejecting the concept of standardization of armies, Germany refused to abolish the Reichswehr. At the same time, she increased the army's effectives from 100,000 to 200,000 by alleging that the police forces and other para-military organizations had no military character. Her military forces, as far as personnel were concerned, would consist of an army that within its existing size and within its limitations of equipment was one of the most efficient forces in Europe. In addition it would have a wide reservoir of manpower belonging to the different para-military organization.

The German amendments brought Massigli to his feet. He accused the German delegate of trying to destroy the foundations of the British draft, a draft Germany had already accepted in principle. According to the French delegate, the Germans were trying to shelve one of its essential

clauses without the acceptance of which it became impossible to proceed with the others. Anthony Eden, "astonished and perturbed at the extent and significance of the amendments," obtained an adjournment of the Commission for a few days in order to conduct private conversations with Nadolny with the hope that the latter would withdraw or modify his proposals, for otherwise there was no use of the Conference altogether.⁴

The private negotiations were no more satisfactory than the public exchanges in the Commission. In fact Nadolny was even more intransigent, declaring that his government would by no means accede to the idea of standardization that is the abolition of the Reichswehr. His attitude meant that the French would not make any concessions in the matter of material. The result would be a failure of the Conference.

While the question of standardization still remained unsolved, Eden made a strenuous effort to find a solution of the problem regarding police forces. To Nadolny he suggested a proposal allowing each country to retain a quota of militarized police in addition to its regular armed forces, the quota to be fixed in proportion to the number of the country's effectives. If the quota of Germany's effectives was set at 200,000 she would be allowed in addition 20,000 militarized police with the remaining units being disbanded or counted as effectives. Nadolny rejected this

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Patteson to Simon, April 28, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 174. Nadolny's attitude towards the British Plan, should have come as no surprise. For Rheinbaben a member of the German delegation to the Conference in an article in the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung of April 12, 1933, had all but rejected the MacDonald Plan. In his view Germany would have to make three demands. 1) the right to have all weapons which the other nations regarded essential to their security, 2) a degree of German rearmament in the period of transition, 3) complete equality of Germany with all other powers at the end of five year period of transition. Rheinbaben added that Germany would not sign a Disarmament Convention which failed to comply with the last demand. For his further criticism of the British Plan, see Frhr. von Rheinbaben, "Der Englische Abrüstungsplan in Deutsche Urteil," Berliner Monatshefte, vol. 11, No. 5 (May 1933), 488-491.

concession, claiming that his country's police forces had no military character since they were not directly subordinated to the ministry of war and in case of mobilization they were not counted as part of the army.⁵ Nadolny made these assertions despite the fact that the German police forces received military training in the use of weapons to make them capable of tactical operations and lived in military barracks. Nonetheless, on May 1, 1933, the Committee of Effectives by a majority vote decided to include among German effectives about 38,000 members of the Schutzpolizei. Germany immediately rejected this decision.

Since the private exchanges had proven that Germany was in an "obstinate frame of mind,"⁶ Eden returned to London to report to his government on the critical situation at Geneva. He also took the opportunity to warn the German Ambassador there that his government's attitude was about "to strike out one of the essential pillars in the structure of our Draft Convention."⁷ They Germans would be completely isolated.

On Eden's return to Geneva, on May 8, 1933, the Bureau of the Conference convened to discuss the procedure to be adopted in regard to the German amendments. The German delegate wished to continue the first reading examination of the Draft and pass on to the question of material even before the question of effectives had been settled. Eden, however,

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Notes on a Conversation with Nadolny regarding police forces, May 1, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 182-183. In the German view her police had rather a civil character since they were subordinated to civil authorities such as the mayors, county council executives, provincial governors, and the Minister of the Interior. Therefore, they could not be considered as a potential subsidiary army. See Botho Elster, "Die Deutsche Polizei auf der Abrüstungskonferenz," in Zeitschrift für Politik, vol. 23 (1933/34), 98.

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Minutes by Leeper, April 28, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 17357, 47.

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Simon to Rumbold, May 5, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 195-196.

had decided to take a hard line, refusing to proceed with any further discussions until the chapter on effectives had been resolved satisfactorily. He obviously had the active support of Massigli and even of the Italian delegate.⁸ The Conference might have broken down at this point were it not for a further British attempt to save it through additional private conversations, hoping that Germany would abandon her negative stand and submit counter proposals leading to the abolition of her professional army in favor of a standardized short term service army.

Germany's insistence upon the preservation of the Reichswehr, a stand which blocked progress towards disarmament, negated her previous attitude on this question. After all, for the past twelve years one of her major grievances was that the Treaty of Versailles had denied her conscription and trained reserves. Now when it was offered to her, Germany seemed to be wedded to a system of voluntary service. While the official reason for advocating the retention of the Reichswehr was justified on the ground that it was the only stable element upon which Germany could rely to preserve internal security, nonetheless it seemed that the future of the Reichswehr was a topic of debate in the German cabinet. Its preservation or abolition did not depend only upon military considerations, but also involved a question of internal political struggle.

For despite the overwhelming majority that the Nazi Party had received in the elections of March 5, 1933, the German government was a coalition of Nazi and Nationalist Parties. While both parties had a common objective -- the regeneration of Germany -- the origin and the political base of both differed. The Nazis drew their strength from the middle and lower middle classes, while the Nationalist Party represented the military and industrial classes which relied upon the support of the Reichswehr.

Neurath, Hugenberg, senior Reichswehr officers, and especially Blomberg, the Minister of Defense, who was primarily responsible for the instructions given to Nadolny, were determined to save the Reichswehr from destruction at Geneva. For only a Reichswehr without Nazi influence would be able to retain the Nationalists' political individuality and independence, thereby avoiding political destruction by the Nazis in the future. While the Nazis were inclined to favor British proposals of a short term militia composed mainly of S.A. and Stahlhelm to be dominated by the Nazis, the Nationalists on the other hand wanted to retain the Reichswehr side by side with a militia armed with light tanks, airplanes⁹ and heavy artillery.

This analysis carries some validity in view of the fact that on March 15, 1933, Hitler gave Freiherr von Rheinbaben, who was about to leave for Geneva, directives for the Disarmament Conference. In them, Hitler indicated that Germany ought to work for a positive conclusion of the Conference if the Conference would allow German rearmament. As to the future of the Reichswehr, Hitler ordered "no objections to elastic tactics respecting the French plan for standardization of European armies. Possibility of German agreement in principle, taking into consideration the internal needs of Germany for a special type of army. The reduction of

Minutes by Sargent, May 18, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 17357, 101, see also Rumbold to Simon, May 9, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 208-209. Hitler was interested in introducing conscription so as to bring the masses indoctrinated with Nazism into the Reichswehr, thus neutralizing any possible opposition to his rule from the officer corps. See Hitler: Secret Conversations, 510.

the period of service from twelve years to a shorter period is in effect
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 a concession in the direction of French desires."

Hitler's directives were in contrast to those Nadolny had previously received from Blomberg and Neurath. In them it was pointed out that "consent to the French plan of standardization of the defense systems has
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 been rejected in any form - even merely in principle." That indeed was the stand Nadolny took at Geneva all along. When Nadolny inquired from Neurath as to whether there was a change in policy in view of the new instructions Rheinbaben brought with him to Geneva, the German Foreign Minister cabled Nadolny, "I request that you consider the memorandum written by Rheinbaben about his conversations here as non existent and do
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 not file it." The German Defense Minister and the Foreign Office had directed German policy at Geneva and they were interested in the preservation of the Reichswehr. Any change in the stand concerning the future of the Reichswehr would come not from Hitler but again from Blomberg.

As a result of German isolation at Geneva on this question, on May 8, 1933, Blomberg granted an interview to the Wolff Telegraph Bureau in which he declared that Germany might modify her refusal and consider the French proposal for army standardization. He suggested the possibility

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Nadolny to Neurath, March 17, 1933, D.G.F.P., 176. Rheinbaben's account of this conference with Hitler differs from the account given in the German documents as recorded by Kreutzwald of Department II. Rheinbaben, in his Viermal Deutschland: Aus dem Erleben eines Seemanns, Diplomaten, Politikers 1895-1954 (272-275), mentions this meeting with Hitler yet does not bring up the question of the Reichswehr in detail, but rather emphasizes Hitler's intransigence, talking of rearmament and being totally against limitation and control of German military budget.

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Nadolny to Neurath, March 18, 1933, D.G.F.P., 179-180. Italics in the document.

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Ibid., March 22, 1933, 192.

of a gradual shortening of the period of service, due to "difficulties in organization" and, since Germany did not have "trained reserves at her disposal," it was incumbent upon her to correct this deficiency gradually.

This vague statement raised hopes of a possible compromise, hopes soon to be shattered. For on May 9, 1933, Nadolny informed Eden that if Germany were to agree to transform her Reichswehr she would have to be compensated in the form of complete equality in armaments by the end of the first Convention. If France were to reduce the number of her aircraft to 500, Germany should be allowed to rearm up to that figure. In the naval sphere, Germany demanded submarines, unless all submarines were abolished. Further, the immediate realization of 100% equality must apply to heavy guns and the remainder of the Convention. An astonished Eden replied that he would have to make this public, "German demands are so preposterous that they would if known produce an explosion of feeling which might be very dangerous...they may represent German crude and clumsy notions of negotiations...it is useless to continue the game." According to Eden this was a new German demand for immediate rearmament, whereas previously Germany had accepted the principle of disarmament by "stages." Nadolny replied that "if it was a new demand so also was the demand for standardization of armies," meaning that if Germany could not rearm what¹³ was the use of all those conversations.

Furthermore, even in regard to Blomberg's statement of May 8, Germany was hardly generous with explanations as to how the Reichswehr would be transformed into an army with a short term of service. Nadolny had asked Neurath for information about the number of members belonging to the para-military formations as well as their period of training since the

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Patteson to Simon, May 9, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 210-211.

Committee of Effectives on May 11, 1933, had decided that those formations were of a military character and therefore would be included in the compilation of German effectives. The Foreign Ministry referred Nadolny's question to Blomberg who answered, "to my regret I am not in a position to supply the desired information about the organization of the future army." Regardless of the character of the future Germany army, he declared, "it is important to get as large a number of personnel of long term service as possible." As to the question of membership in the para-military organizations and their training, the answer, according to Blomberg, should be that since "no military training is being conducted, the number of members in question is zero." ¹⁴ Blomberg's replies not only negated the statement he made on May 8, but, more important, the German Defense Minister had revealed his plan. By demanding a large number of long term personnel and by denying the military character of the para-military organizations, Blomberg had revealed his intention of preserving the Reichswehr as the cadre for an expanded, aggressive army and by its side a second army with shorter period of service. Even more ridiculous was his argument regarding the military character of the semi-military associations in Germany, something to be repeated later by Hitler. ¹⁵

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Blomberg to Nadolny, May 13, 1933, D.G.F.P., 416-418.

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In order to conceal the military character of those organizations, on May 10, 1933 S.A. group leader Ernst ordered the S.A. troops in Berlin and in Brandenburg to prohibit the passing out of any information or reports to the press relating to S.A. affairs such as orders calls to service or training in arms. The taking of photographs of storm barracks was also prohibited. All this in order to avoid the obvious - the military character of those organizations. See Helmut Klotz, Germany's Secret Armaments. trans. H.J. Stenning (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1934), 70.

In face of this German obstructionism, on May 11, 1933, Eden, who had been conducting negotiations with Nadolny for the past week, informed the leaders of French, United States, and Italian delegations that the private conversations had broken down and that it seemed futile to him to continue them unless there was a change in the German attitude.¹⁶

The situation was further complicated by an article appearing in the Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung on May 11, and written by the German Foreign Minister. In the article he made clear Germany's intentions to rearm in all military spheres regardless of the outcome at Geneva. Equality of status,

had been formally acknowledged through the Five Power Declaration of December 11. No agreement about general limitation and reduction of armaments will be acceptable by Germany which does not bring practical realization of this equality of status. Germany's standpoint is morally and legally beyond criticism. What is right for others is right for Germany. Such weapons and armaments as the others hold to be necessary for their security can no longer be dispensed with for Germany's security. The right to live and the freedom of the German nation cannot be determined by a different measure from that used for other nations.¹⁷

For the first time the German Foreign Minister had publicly threatened to rearm. But more interesting was his interpretation of December 11 Agreement which he helped to negotiate. According to Neurath it meant practical equality in armaments, a far cry from equality in principle through disarmament and adequate security guarantees, as the author of the Agreement (MacDonald) meant it be.

Reactions to Neurath's article were not late in coming. During a debate on foreign policy in the House of Lords on May 12, 1933, Lord

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Massigli to Paul-Boncour, May 11, 1933, D.D.F., III, 469.

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Völkerbund, The Disarmament Conference, May 12, 1933, 2-3.

Hailsham the British Minister of War, although not speaking in the name of his government, warned Germany that if she attempted to rearm in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, such action "would bring into operation the sanctions which that Treaty provides" without actually specifying what sanctions he had in mind since the Treaty did not provide for such a possibility in case of its infraction. The provision for armed sanctions such as the re-occupation of the Rhineland was to be found in the sections dealing with reparations. Nonetheless, Hailsham's warning was just another expression of British disenchantment with German tactics. In a statement to the press on the same day, Paul-Boncour declared that if the Disarmament Conference were to fail because of German intransigence the Treaty of Versailles would continue to be applied.¹⁸

Furthermore, the British cabinet after a special meeting, *instructed Eden not to discuss with Nadolny any figures of tanks, guns, and airplanes lest this might be interpreted by Germany that Britain had acceded to her demands for rearmament. The cabinet concluded that public opinion was now united against Germany and that no concessions should be granted to Germany unless she agreed to the principle that disarmament must be reached by stages. Should the Conference break down, the blame must be thrust on Germany's shoulders and her intransigence must be publicly exposed so as to isolate her.¹⁹ In Washington, on May 6, President Roosevelt warned Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, that the United States "regarded Germany as the only possible obstacle to a Disarmament Treaty,

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Le Temps, May 13, 1933.

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B.F.O., CAB., vol. 379, May 12, 1933, 228. Reports from Rome indicated to Mussolini's aversion towards the German attitude. See Graham to Simon, May 13, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 238.

and he hoped that Dr. Schacht²⁰ would give this point of view to Hitler as quickly as possible."

In light of German isolation the cabinet met on May 12 to discuss the situation at Geneva. Neurath gave a grim description of Germany being outvoted at Geneva and so isolated that "even Italy was no longer going along." Hitler accused the former Allies of trying to blame Germany for the failure of the Conference because of her refusal to abandon the Reichswehr the sole factor of internal stability. "Unless we were accorded heavy weapons," said Hitler, "any departure from the system of the Reichswehr was unthinkable for us. Germany would have to accomplish her rearmament through a new approach" since no disarmament Convention would²¹ grant her that. The cabinet decided to call the Reichstag into session on May 17, 1933, when the Chancellor would make a declaration regarding the Disarmament talks at Geneva. This declaration would be followed by a brief discussion, with speakers making statements previously arranged expressing confidence in Hitler's policy. This was a clever tactical move on Hitler's part, for it gave the Center and Social Democrats no other option but to support the German official policy and at the same time to impress the world with a united front on this question. The "new approach" for the accomplishment of German rearmament would take the form of a speech to be delivered on May 17, in which Hitler would declare his country's desire for "peace and disarmament" in a fresh attempt to delude his adversaries while Germany would continue her own rearmament.

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S.D., Memo from the President to Hull, May 6, 1933, 500A15A4/1848.

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Minutes of the Conference of Ministers, May 12, 1933, D.G.F.P., 409-412.

The German press had built up Hitler's upcoming speech, as the most important foreign policy address to be given by the Fuehrer since taking power. Now Europe was impatiently awaiting Hitler's statement. In Geneva, the General Commission adjourned until May 18 hoping that the Chancellor's message would be conciliatory enough as to enable renewal of its discussions.

But, in Germany, Papen, the Vice Chancellor in a speech delivered on May 14, at a Stahlhelm meeting at Muenster accused Lord Hailsham of hypocrisy. He declared that on January 31, 1933, Germany had "struck out the word pacifism from its vocabulary." Pacifist literature, he said, regarded death on the field of honor as something unnatural. The pacifist writers, "did not understand the old German hatred of dying in bed,...they evidently thought it more manly to die of **hardening of the arteries.**" The main reason why German mothers should bear sons, according to Papen, was that there should be more soldiers to die on the field of battle for Germany. In Papen's view, the German Chancellor would be able to say at the end of his life that he had "restored the idea of the German soldier with his immortal qualities of courage, devotion to duty, sacrifice of blood for country...." Was Papen's speech designed to give Hitler a lead to be followed in his declaration of May 17? Or perhaps Hitler preferred to have his deputy say these things which he agreed with but would not like to say them himself? In light of future developments the latter seems probable.

Whatever the purpose of Papen's remarks, they further increased tension in Europe. In France, talk of the desirability of a preventive war

"The Germany of Hitler had been injected with the old Prussian virus," commented The Times (London, May 16, 1933), editorially, "opinion in this country has been turned solidly against Germany by the excesses of the Nazis."

had appeared in the press. So great was the fear that Hitler might follow his deputy's path that Norman Davis urged President Roosevelt to make a public declaration warning Hitler against any action that might aggravate the situation in Europe.²³

Following Davis' urging, on May 16, President Roosevelt addressed a message to the chiefs of state of all countries participating in the Disarmament and Economic Conferences. In his message, he called upon all nations to accept the MacDonald Plan and to eliminate offensive weapons. He urged that no nation should increase its existing armaments over and above the limitations of Treaty obligations. Furthermore, all nations should enter into a solemn and definite pact of non aggression and agree not to send any armed forces across their frontiers. Finally, he included a warning for a potential peace breaker. "If any strong nation refuses to join with genuine sincerity in these concrete efforts for political and economic peace, the civilized world will know where the responsibility for failure lies."²⁴

The long awaited day came. Before a crowded Reichstag, on May 17, Hitler delivered what became known as his famous Friedensrede (Peace Speech). The moderate and conciliatory tone of the speech was probably due to Hailsham's warning, Roosevelt's message, and the general revulsion of feeling in

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Mariner to Hull, May 15, 1933, F.R.U.S., 1933, I, 141-142. See also Cordell Hull, Memoirs (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1948), vol. I, 226-227.

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President Roosevelt to various Chiefs of State, May 16, 1933, F.R.U.S., 1933, I, 143-145. The Economic Conference convened in London on May 12, and dealt with questions such as stabilization of currencies, world trade and a program of economic recovery.

Britain and the United States towards Germany.

Hitler did not echo either Neurath's blunt demand for immediate equality in armaments or the atrocious glorification of war by Papen. On the contrary, Hitler spoke with deep feeling of his dislike of war and Germany's pacific intentions. "It is in the interest of all," said Hitler, "that present day problems should be solved in a reasonable and peaceful manner....The application of violence of any kind in Europe could have no favorable effect upon the political and economic position...the outbreak of such unlimited madness would necessarily cause the collapse of the present social and political order...."

Then the German Chancellor turned to the question of disarmament. Sounding more like Stresemann or Bruening, Hitler declared that Germany had disarmed and complied with all obligations imposed upon her by the Treaty of Versailles which gave her an army of 100,000 while her police forces had only an "exclusively political character." A disarmed Germany, he continued, had the moral right to demand other nations to follow suit. Alluding to France's demand for security, Hitler declared that Germany had accepted all

According to Wheeler-Bennett (Pipe Dream of Peace, 118), Blomberg warned Hitler that with the present state of German armaments he could not be responsible for the results of this policy if it were pursued much further. The possibility of having Blomberg urge Hitler to take a conciliatory stand was out of the question. On the contrary, Blomberg was responsible for the German stand at Geneva and further, had advised Hitler to take a tough line in his upcoming speech and not accept the British plan as a basis for a Convention, unless major changes were made allowing Germany to possess all weapons that are permitted to other countries. He wanted full rearmament. See Memo by Blomberg, May 15, 1933; D.G.F.P., 435-436. After all, Blomberg and Neurath had conducted German policy at Geneva, with Hitler taking a passive attitude in foreign policy. See Nadolny, Mein Beitrag, 130.

obligations of security arising from the signing of the Versailles Treaty, the adherence to the League of Nations, to the Locarno Pact, the Kellogg Pact, the Treaties of Arbitration, and the Pact of Non-Aggression. What other assurances of security could Germany give, Hitler asked? A "defenseless and disarmed" Germany in Hitler's view was in far greater need of security than a France armed with thousands of airplanes, tanks and heavy guns.

Referring to the state of affairs at the Geneva Disarmament Conference, the main reason for the speech, Hitler declared that the German government saw in the British Plan a possible basis for solution of the disarmament
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problems.

However it must demand that the defense force existing in Germany shall not be abolished unless at least qualitative equality²⁷ be accorded to Germany. She must further demand that any change in her present defense force organization which was not chosen by her but imposed on her from abroad, shall follow step by step in the same degree as the actual disarmament of the other states. Germany agrees in principle to a transitional period of five years during which to build up her national security in the expectation that at the end of this period she will really be put on a footing of equality with the other states. She is also entirely ready to renounce all aggressive weapons within a specified period and if their use is forbidden by an international convention. Germany has only one desire, to be able to preserve her independence and defend her frontiers.

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According to Nadolny (Mein Beitrag, 133-134), it was he who, in a conversation with Hitler, urged the Fuehrer to use a conciliatory tone and accept the British Plan as a basis for a future Convention, for otherwise he would only serve France's interests who might use his intransigence as an excuse to break up the Conference. The conversation between the two turned into a row with Hitler shouting at Nadolny telling him that for the past fourteen years he knew how to deal with the French, to which Nadolny replied that in his thirty years of foreign service he made no error. Erroneously, Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert in The Diplomats (New York: Atheneum, 1965), vol. 2, 417-418, attributed the row between Hitler and Nadolny as taking place at the time of Nadolny's dismissal from his ambassadorship in Moscow in the middle of 1934. See also D.C. Watt, "Hitler and Nadolny," Contemporary Review, 96 (July-December, 1959), 53-56.

27

Italics mine.

While on the surface these statements seemed to ~~imply~~^{imply} that the German government was now prepared to accept the British Plan and to negotiate the question of abolition of the long service professional Reichswehr, a close analysis, however, showed that these were at best ambiguous phrases, and at worst they implied Germany's demand for rearmament. For Hitler accepted the British Plan, requiring the transformation of the Reichswehr, but he laid down two conditions: such a change would proceed in proportion as other states actually disarmed and, what was more important, Germany according to Hitler, must be accorded at least "qualitative equality"-- she must possess an air force, tanks, and heavy guns. Furthermore, while Hitler accepted the principle of a transitional period of five years, he nonetheless inferred that by the end of this period Germany would achieve practical equality in armaments with other states, meaning that if by the end of the agreed period other countries had not destroyed their heavy, tanks and airplanes, Germany would be free to build them. While Hitler accepted the British Plan as a basis for a future convention, the conditions he specified for its acceptance negated the spirit of the plan. For the British Plan was a program designed for disarmament and not immediate and complete German rearmament. Furthermore, it called for disarmament by "stages" and not of complete and total disarmament at once as Hitler demanded. Such conditions were in line with Hitler's views as expressed in the cabinet meeting of May 12 and as such marked no drastic change in German policy.

Moreover, Hitler returned to the point which Nadolny made at Geneva that French colonial troops should be reckoned as part of the French army. Yet on the other hand, he denied that the Nazi S.A. and the Stahlhelm were military organizations, declaring that their purpose was to protect Germany against Communism. "If attempts are now made at Geneva" Hitler emphasized, "to include these organizations which serve exclusively internal purposes

in military effectives, there would be an equally good reason for including the fire brigade, the athletic associations, and others in the military forces." In other words, Germany might be willing to accept an army of 200,000 effectives but without disbanding the Nazi S.A. and Stahlhelm which, despite Hitler's denials, did receive military training and numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

Hitler's ambiguous remarks on disarmament were overshadowed by his plea for peace. For the world which had been disturbed by his previous war like statements, he promised to co-operate for the sake of peace. He welcomed Roosevelt's message as the best method of "overcoming the international crisis." In his view, "no permanent economic reconstruction is possible unless the disarmament question is solved." The German government, said the Chancellor, wished nothing better than to solve all difficult questions with other countries by peaceful means.

Hitler's speech was a masterpiece in political deception. By using a moderate tone and by overstressing the word "peace," he achieved a diplomatic and tactical victory. The speech "comforted the hearts of all who were still hoping against their own instinctive convictions, that the new Germany might become part of a tranquil Europe." Behind Hitler the demagogue and showman, commented The Times of London editorially, "the world caught a first glimpse yesterday of Hitler the statesman." According to The New York Times, the world had just witnessed a "different Hitler... his speech will come as a great relief to the world...it will gratify Americans to see the German Chancellor praising and endorsing the world

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Büro des Reichsministers Akten, May 17, 1933, vol. XVI, D669156-D669166; also in Norman Baynes ed., The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1922-1939 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), vol. II, 1041-1058.

29

F.P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 457.

offer made by their President." For the moment, Hitler succeeded in removing the blame for obstructing the work of the Disarmament Conference which had been attached to Germany prior to his speech. He put France on the defensive, casting her in the villain's role at Geneva. Had he been threatening with war and rearmament (which was going on anyway), France could refuse to disarm and would have had public opinion on her side.

Although the British and American press were impressed by Hitler's words, official opinion in Britain, however, adopted a "wait and see" attitude. The speech was considered extremely clever but something more than words were required to prove Germany's pacific intentions. Hitler had unexpectedly shown that "he can roar as gently as any bucking dove...the French know very well that whatever Herr Hitler says, he is actually re-
³⁰arming Germany." Hitler's "new approach" was not really a change in policy but rather an exercise in public relations. For Hitler realized that rearmament could continue without necessarily having to antagonize the world through hostile statements at home and intransigence at Geneva.

Following Hitler's speech, on May 19, 1933, at a meeting of the General Commission, Nadolny declared that the German government accepted the British Plan not only as a basis for discussion but "as a basis for the future Convention itself," meaning the withdrawal of those amendments rejecting the idea of army standardization, proposals which constituted the main cause for the recent deadlock. The abandonment of the German amendments won the praise of Eden and other representatives, enabling the Commission to proceed with the first discussion of the articles on land armaments. Here Nadolny had come up with what he called a "new idea," namely, an explanation concerning the achievement of practical equality in armaments. Germany,

according to Nadolny, would not claim any armaments that might be defined as "offensive" for a period of five years on the condition that other states forgo such weapons in the same period. On the other hand, Germany demanded full equality with other states in regard to weapons to be defined as "defensive." By one stroke the German delegate had raised anew the old problem which had led to deadlock in the past: the question of what would be considered an "offensive" and "defensive" weapons. Interestingly enough, for Nadolny tanks were "defensive" weapons and in his view Germany therefore ought to possess "samples" of tanks, with the hope that by the end of five years, complete equality would be achieved in this sphere of armaments.

The German delegate applied the same principle to the articles of the draft Convention dealing with naval armaments. He introduced an amendment designed to allow Germany the right to build one more ship before 1936. Such a move was regarded unfavorably by France, and was interpreted as another attempt by Germany to rearm in the naval sphere by laying down a large battleship in reply to the French Dunkerque which in itself was an answer to Germany's "pocket battleships."

Continuing with his tactics, at the first reading of the chapter on air armaments on May 27, 1933, Nadolny rejected the idea that air disarmament should be carried out only by stages as the British Draft envisaged. His proposal illustrated the futility in continuing the discussions altogether when he demanded the total and immediate abolition of aircraft on the ground that Germany had in one year destroyed 15,700 airplanes, 27,000 engines and 547 hangars. Whether or not he actually believed in what he was saying was irrelevant at the moment. More important, however, was the

implication of his statement. Since it was clear to Nadolny that none of the former Allies would agree to follow the German "example," at least not at once, the implication was that the aircraft were ~~not~~ "defensive" weapons and therefore Germany must be allowed to possess them, if not in the same quantity as other states at least as "samples."

This became evident when Nadolny and Rheinbaben on June 2, 1933, discussed the matter with Eden and Londonderry, the British Air Minister. The German representatives pointed out that their country was so anxious to reach a disarmament agreement that it had made great concessions towards that goal by offering to transform the Reichswehr but so far it had not received any quid pro quo. Germany, they claimed, must be allowed to have the aircraft necessary for her defense. ³² The British representatives made it clear, however, that the British Plan contained figures for naval and military air forces which were very low and which would be totally abolished in the next Convention. Should Germany be allowed to possess an air force, the Conference would become a rearmament Conference. "Great Britain wished for dis- ³³ armament and Germany wanted to rearm," concluded Eden.

Hitler's speech had actually brought no marked change in Germany's policy in the disarmament question. It was a change of tone but not of substance. For behind Nadolny's statement of a "disarmed Germany," of his country's "peaceful intentions," and a Germany who wished to have only "samples" of weapons necessary for her defense, the fact was that Germany was already rearming on land and particularly in the air. The conversion of Storm detachments of the Nazis and the Stahlhelm into auxiliary police,

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Meeting between Nadolny, Rheinbaben, Eden and Londonderry, June 3, 1933, Büro des Reichsministers Akten, vol. XVI, D669294.

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Notes of a conversation between Londonderry and Nadolny, June 2, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 315-319.

the establishment of National Labor Corps receiving military training, and the formation of an Air Force showed the futility in trying to reach a disarmament agreement. For what was the use in working for a Convention with Germany, limiting effectives and material, if the military preparations within Germany proceeded unchecked coupled with a nationalistic spirit of revenge against the French and the Poles. How could one ask the French to reduce their air force even to 500 airplanes in face of her neighbor's rearmament?

Since Hitler's speech proved to be nothing but a "smoke screen" the time had finally come for a bold solution, in the words of a senior British official, "to carry the war into the German camp." After Nadolny expounded Germany's "peaceful intentions" the representatives of Britain and France should have done the following:

They should /have/ stood up one after the other and declare that as much as they appreciate the sentiments which have been expressed, it was impossible for disarmament discussions to proceed when to their knowledge Germany is actually rearming. Till this matter had been cleared up by the Council of the League before whom they would propose at once to bring it, it is useless and indeed dishonest to continue the meetings of the General Commission of the Conference.³⁴

Further, in a memorandum to the British Foreign Office, Brigadier Temperley (British senior military adviser to his delegation at Geneva) suggested that Britain and France make it very clear to Germany with the "hint of force in the background" that they insisted upon the strict enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles before continuing any further talks on disarmament:

Germany knew very well that she cannot fight at present and we must call her bluff. She is powerless before the French army and our fleet. Hitler, for all his bombast, must give way. If such steps seem forceful, the only alternative is

to carry out some minimum measure of disarmament and to allow things to drift for another five years by which time unless there is a change of heart in Germany, war seems inevitable. German rearmament will by then be an accomplished fact.³⁵

This suggestion for immediate action was not the result of a retrospect reappraisal but a recommendation written on May 10, 1933, prior to Neurath's article threatening to rearm and Papen's belligerent speech. The latter only lent further urgency to such action since Hitler's "Peace Speech" had changed absolutely nothing. It was this type of action suggested by Brigadier Temperley that Hitler feared most, a fact he made known to ³⁶
Reichswehr senior officers three days after his advent to power.

This was actually the last opportunity presented to the former Allies in which they could call Hitler's bluff, by breaking up the Conference and placing the onus for its failure where it rightfully belonged-- on Hitler's shoulders. Instead, on June 7, 1933, the General Commission decided to adjourn until October 16. In the meantime the President of the Conference would conduct private negotiations with various governments in another attempt to reconcile the divergent points of view. Nadolny objected to the Commission's adjournment warning of "grave consequences" from such action. Again Germany appeared the "discriminated" one, the only one asking for disarmament.

Yet the adjournment of the Conference had actually worked in Hitler's favor. For this would give him an excuse to wreck the Conference and blame Britain and France of obstructing disarmament and publicly justify Germany's ³⁷
rearmament.

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Letter from Cadogan to Leeper, May 10, 1933; D.B.F.P., V, 213-217.

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See above, 148.

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On June 24, 1933, the German press published a report that foreign planes had flown over Berlin and had dropped leaflets insulting the government. This was German fabrication designed to justify rearmament in the air. See above, 156-157.

Despite Britain's attempt to appease Hitler through the MacDonald Plan, according Germany a degree of rearmament while at the same time disarming France by stages, instead of accepting the plan Germany reacted with more intransigence. Hitler's "Peace Speech," designed to extricate Germany from her diplomatic isolation, had failed to produce the expected compromise.

While the MacDonald Plan was discussed at Geneva, parallel diplomatic negotiations went on in Rome and other European capitals resulting in the conclusion on June 7, 1933, of a Four Power Pact between Italy, France, Germany and Britain. This Pact initiated by Mussolini was another attempt to extract Hitler from his isolation and to reinforce Germany's right to equality in armaments.

CHAPTER XI

MUSSOLINI'S INITIATIVE

The Italian ambassador to Germany, Vittorio Cerruti, just returned from consultations in Rome, met Neurath on March 14, 1933. In the course of a lengthy conversation he conveyed to the Foreign Minister Mussolini's appraisal of the European political situation. According to Mussolini, disarmament and treaty revision were the two major problems which must be solved if peace and tranquility were to prevail in Europe.

In regard to disarmament, Mussolini believed that the Geneva Conference was not only following a hopeless course but was destined for complete failure. Germany, in such a case, could not be prevented from rearming, especially in view of reports that the French General Staff was contemplating a preventive war against Italy and Germany. As to treaty revision, the ambassador was authorized to state that "Italy fully recognized and would support the claims of Germany to have East Prussia connected again with the Reich through the elimination of the dividing Corridor."¹ But, the ambassador continued, at the moment Germany was in no military position to pursue an active policy in order to achieve equality of rights in armaments as well as treaty revision. She could, in Mussolini's view, achieve both goals by giving her blessings to a plan drafted by him calling upon the four principal European powers, Britain, France, Italy, and Germany to cooperate among themselves so as to bring about a *détente* by solving these problems in the spirit of the Kellogg Pact, namely, by peaceful means. Should Germany give her approval to the draft, it would then and only then be possible for Mussolini to approach Britain and France.

1Memo by Neurath, March 14, 1933, D.G.F.P., 160-163.

The draft plan entitled Political Pact of Understanding and Cooperation between the Four Western Powers, was handed to Neurath for study by the German government. It contained six articles of which II and III dealt with the questions of revision and disarmament.

Article II

The Four Powers reaffirm, in accordance with the articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the principle of the revision of the treaties of peace in circumstances capable of producing a conflict between nations; but they declare that such a principle of revision can only be applied within the framework of the League of Nations and through mutual recognition of the common nature of the interests involved.

Article III

France, Great Britain and Italy declare that, should the Disarmament Conference only produce partial results, the equality of rights which has been granted to Germany must have a practical application, and Germany undertakes to achieve such equality of rights gradually as a result of successive agreements to be arrived at by the Four Powers through the normal diplomatic channels. The Four Powers undertake to arrive at similar agreements in regard to "equality" for Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria.²

Mussolini's plan could not have come at a better time as far as Hitler was concerned. The violent methods which the Nazis had used in persecuting their opponents at home, and, Germany's intransigent attitude at Geneva had resulted in diplomatic isolation. Now Hitler had found an ally in Mussolini who supported Germany's two major aims in foreign policy-- treaty revision and rearmament. For Mussolini's proposal regarding disarmament had actually envisaged the failure of the Disarmament Conference, a cheerful prospect for Hitler since it meant that he would be free to rearm within the framework of a Four Power Agreement rather than having to face France's "satellites" in an international forum. Although Hitler would still have to face France,

but within such a framework, Germany would be considered as an equal to France as well as Britain and Italy. Furthermore, the fact that Mussolini awaited Germany's approval of his draft as a sine qua non before contacting Britain and France, while concealing this secret from these states, destroyed Mussolini's credibility as an "objective mediator" interested solely in bringing about peace to Europe, a claim accepted naively by France and Britain.³ One could hardly disagree with the French press which called the Mussolini initiative an Italo-German plot directed against France, the Little Entente and Poland.⁴

Even so, the draft received only qualified German approval. The German government was in agreement with Article I since it acknowledged that the Four Western Powers were the sole leaders in implementing European policy. It implied that they could enforce a peace policy on other nations namely the Little Entente and Poland. In Germany's view nevertheless, Articles II and III should be amended.

Although Article II recognized the principle of revision of the peace treaties, yet it made the realization of this principle contingent upon the

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A thorough study of Mussolini's pact could be found in K.H. Jarausch, The Four Power Pact (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965). While the author is correct in assuming that Mussolini's preliminary negotiations with Hitler and his support of the Fuehrer's policies were necessary in order to ascertain that no unwelcome surprise moves could come from Berlin, "while negotiating with Paris and London" (47), implying diplomatic "shrewdness" on Mussolini's part rather than sincerity, it is nonetheless important to note that Hitler took Mussolini's promises regarding revision and disarmament seriously although they were not included in the final watered down pact. As to Mussolini's sincerity in dealing with Hitler, we shall see that he indeed supported Germany's aims in the disarmament question.

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Le Temps (March 25, 1933), commented that Mussolini's pact would reduce all middle sized nations to international servitude. And, the Journal des Débats (March 22, 1933), commented that the plan was solely intended to facilitate the revision of treaties meaning the pillage of France and her allies.

provisions of the League of Nations Covenant, an inadequate procedure in the eyes of the German government since it would give the other members of the League (Little Entente and Poland) a voice in the matter. Therefore, according to the Germans, this article ought to be amended to indicate that the principle of revision would be carried out by mutual agreement of the Four Western Powers with the assistance of the League's organs. In such a case the Four Powers would actually play the role of a Directory capable of imposing its views upon lesser powers who rejected even the mention of the word "revision."

In regard to Article III, Germany was clearly in full agreement with Mussolini. Because at Geneva, the German demand for equality of rights in armaments, -- rearmament, "must be given immediate practical expression." But Germany did not go along with the second clause in the first sentence which called for the realization of equality "gradually," meaning by stages, to be determined by successive agreements between the Four Powers. This procedure meant that full equality might not come within the period of the first disarmament Convention (five years), while Germany had been insisting upon complete equality in armaments with other powers within such a period. While Article V of the plan spoke of a period of ten years during which the pact would remain in force, Germany's approval of this article was contingent upon the achievement of practical equality in armaments by the end of the first Disarmament Convention.⁵

As early as the middle of March 1933, a month and a half after coming to power, Hitler indicated his intentions. He would either transform the Disarmament Conference into a rearmament Conference or wreck it altogether. His intentions were revealed by the German amendments to Mussolini's already favorable proposals.

For Mussolini the possibility of concluding a Four Power Pact could mean a personal triumph. He could pose as a statesman who had provided the leadership necessary to establish a peaceful Europe. Accordingly, he instructed his ambassador to Berlin to satisfy German objections to sections of Articles II and III thus making her more amenable to the proposed pact. Following his instructions, on March 17, the Italian ambassador told Buelow that Article I was most crucial and meaningful article in the pact. For by implying the failure of the League of Nations, it left the shaping of European policy up to the Four Powers. In such a case, Articles II and III, he continued, must be read in conjunction with Article I and if so, German objections were meaningless for Italy also agreed that revision should be carried out through an agreement of the Four Powers and only then be confirmed by the League. Nor should Germany object to equality through stages as agreed by the Four since these agreements would come about in a forum different from the present Disarmament Conference. In that forum Germany would be recognized as an equal power, entitled to equality in armaments with other powers.⁶ While these arguments did not fully satisfy Buelow, Germany nonetheless accepted the plan in principle⁷ with the expectation that modifications would be introduced. This Italian attempt to soothe Hitler was a clear indication of the collaboration that already existed between the two countries at this early stage of Nazi control of Germany. Furthermore, prior German approval was Mussolini's condition for having his pact delivered to Britain and France for study. Such approval had to come as soon as possible.

⁶ Cerruti to Buelow, March 17, 1933, D.G.F.P., 177.

⁷ François-Poncet to Paul-Boncour, March 20, 1933, D.D.F., III, 38.

For on March 18, 1933, MacDonald and Simon would arrive in Rome to discuss with Mussolini the deteriorating political situation in Europe and to see whether it was possible to restore peace and security through collaboration among the Western Powers. While the British Ministers were on their way from Geneva to Rome, Fulvio Suvich, the Italian Under Secretary of State, delivered copies of the draft proposed plan to British, French, and German ambassadors, without revealing that the German government had already received the draft of the pact in advance a few days earlier. At the airport, MacDonald and Simon were met by Mussolini and the British ambassador, Ronald Graham, who handed the British Ministers the draft pact which they glanced at in the motor car while driving to the city.

During March 18 and 19 the British Ministers discussed the draft plan with its author at the Palazzo Venezia. In Mussolini's view, his Four Power Pact would guarantee peace and would eliminate from the European scene the idea of two opposing power blocks. This goal, he said, could be achieved by including Germany in a Four Power agreement and by correcting the mistakes made at Versailles: changes in the Polish Corridor and in Hungary's frontiers. MacDonald informed the Italian leader that he and Simon had read his draft with great interest and had found it similar to the policies he had advocated in the past. While agreeing with the draft in principle, Simon maintained that the French would never accept Article II as drafted unless it included a phrase reaffirming the sanctity of treaties. Nor could the British Ministers go along with Mussolini's pessimistic view that the Geneva Disarmament Conference was destined for failure. After all, only three days earlier the British Prime Minister had submitted a new draft Convention intended to revive the Conference and lead it to a successful conclusion. They further objected to the idea that other powers should be excluded from future disarmament agreements even if the Conference were

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to produce no results.

But even so, the British Ministers acknowledged the merits and necessity of treaty revision; they promised to prepare a redraft of Mussolini's original proposals to include certain modifications. Without having any knowledge⁹ about the Italian-German coordination over the new pact, the British Ministers suggested that Germany should be approached through Mussolini, while⁹ they would use their good offices with the French.

On the way back to London, MacDonald and Simon stopped in Paris for conversations with the French government concerning Mussolini's draft. The French Premier pointed out that Article III gave Germany the right to rearm and prejudiced the outcome of the Disarmament Conference. He stressed that making preparations for the failure of the Conference or for partial success amounted to preparing to sanction rearmament. As to revision, Daladier and Paul-Boncour expressed their concern. They wanted to know to what extent¹⁰ Article II went beyond Article 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. They further pointed out that the interests of the states other than the four named should be safeguarded. The French Ministers conceded that close contact between the Four Powers would have a good effect upon Europe, yet they also

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Notes of Conversations held at Pallazo Venezia and British Embassy at Rome, March 18-19, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 70-80.

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On March 19, the British Ministers lunched with the King. In the evening there was a dinner at the British Embassy followed by a reception to which the French American and German ambassadors had been invited. During the day Mussolini had approached Ulrich von Hassel, the German ambassador and had urged him to pretend to MacDonald that the German government had only received Mussolini's draft on March 18 and that his government accepted the main points. By this trick Mussolini hoped to impress the British with the feasibility of the pact, hoping to make them favorably disposed toward it. See Hassel to Neurath, March 19, 1933, D.G.F.P., 184-185.

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Article 19 stated: "The Assembly from time to time advise the consideration by members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world."

believed that any discussion of treaty revision would create great agitation among nations, particularly the Little Entente and Poland. While the British Ministers tried to reassure the French as to the need of modifying the original draft, the French ministers had sensed the possibility of Italian-German plot against France. Nevertheless, they did not reject the proposals outright but remained non-committal.

It was up to the British now to carry the idea further despite French reluctance. In a speech delivered in the House of Commons on March 23, 1933, later described by Mussolini as eloquent and courageous, MacDonald declared that the Four Powers should meet "before they may be driven apart to try to remove by negotiations the dangers that will have to be met in any event." Britain, he declared, accepted Mussolini's suggestion as a basis for discussion and reiterated the need for treaty revision under Article 19 of the Covenant. On the same day, Hitler addressed the Reichstag and sounded a similar note as his counterpart in Britain. The Four Power Pact initiated by the Italian Head of State, said Hitler, "is warmly welcomed by the German government which attaches the greatest importance to this proposal. The German government is ready to collaborate loyally on this plan for the peaceful cooperation of the Four Great European Powers." The two declarations coming on the same day raised alarm and indignation among the governments of the Little Entente and Poland and for good reason. Anything that was welcome at this point to Hitler was ipso facto anathema to them. Their anger was mainly directed at Britain who, in their view, was about to be trapped by Italy and Germany.

Mussolini's pact, Benes told Simon, was nothing less than an attempt to establish a directorate of the four powers which would dictate policy

to the rest of Europe thus degrading the League of Nations which was based upon the principle of cooperation between all states. Treaty revision, he said, could not be dictated from outside the League of Nations but must come about through negotiations between the countries from whom concessions were expected in strict adherence to Article 19 of the Covenant. An angry Nicholas Titulescu went a step further in interpreting the application of Article 19, by arguing that revision could only be by a unanimous vote in the Assembly apart from the states immediately affected.¹²

Poland expressed irritation over Mussolini's initiative by the sensational resignation of her ambassador to Rome on the eve of his departure to the new post. At Geneva on March 25, 1933, the Permanent Council of the Little Entente issued a statement declaring that they "would find it difficult to agree that the cause of good relations between countries was being served by agreements having it as their object to dispose of the rights of third parties.... Agreements of this nature belong to the past and certainly to times anterior to the foundation of the League of Nations. The States of the Little Entente also regret that in the negotiations of the last few days, the idea of revisionist policy should have been emphasized."¹³

These outraged cries came despite British attempts to allay the fears of the smaller powers by introducing modifications in Mussolini's draft thus watering down the statement dealing with revision. Accordingly, the most noticeable change in the draft was a reaffirmation by the Four Powers to respect the provisions of the Covenant since they only "contemplate the possibility of revision of the peace treaties when conditions arise." The

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Record of conversations between Simon Benes and Titulescu, March 25, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 106-113.

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Note communicated by Benes, March 25, 1933, D.D.F., III, 82-83.

application of Article 19 would be carried out by the Four Powers and the states directly concerned within the framework of the League of Nations. As to disarmament, the British modification of Article III was aimed at dispelling any allusion to the possible failure of the Disarmament Conference. On the contrary, it proposed that the Four should recognize the British draft Convention of March 16, 1933 as the basis for a first stage in disarmament. Practical application of equality of rights to Germany¹⁴ would come by stages to which each of the four powers must be a party.

While the British amendments failed to soothe the fears of Poland and the Little Entente, at the same time they caused anger in German circles especially after learning that Mussolini had actually gone along with the British modifications. Mussolini had accepted the modifications because at this point he was more interested in the success of his initiative in principle rather than the acceptance of it in its original form. Not so the Germans. Since the original Italian text was not entirely satisfactory to them, the English text was even less so. In the German view, it simply repeated the provisions of the Covenant. Especially irritating were the words "when conditions arise," meaning that revision would be contingent upon future circumstances and implying the validity of the peace treaties rather than admitting the untenable situation that they had created since 1919 and the need to revise them. As to disarmament, Germany demanded the practical application of equality in armaments at the end of the first Disarmament Convention within a period of five years, a requirement omitted by the British amendment to Article III. Further, Germany would not accede to the British view that successive disarmament agreements would be reached "with the participation of the Four Powers," meaning that other signatories of Versailles would be eligible to participate -- exactly what Germany had tried to avoid.

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For full details of the British text, see D.B.F.P., V, 120-121.

Consequently, Neurath instructed his ambassador in Rome to transmit Germany's objections to Mussolini. In German view, the text of Article II should read:

The Four Powers reaffirm, in accordance with the clauses of the Covenant the principle of revision of such provisions of the Treaty of Peace as might lead to a conflict between states. They declare that they will try to carry out this principle of revision by taking into account the reciprocal interests in question and with the aid of the organs of the League of Nations.

Such a wording of Article II excluded any participation of the Little Entente and Poland in carrying out revision. As to disarmament, Article III in Germany's view should read:

Italy, France and England declare that in case the Disarmament Conference ends with partial results, the equality of rights granted to Germany must receive practical application. Germany undertakes for the period of the first disarmament convention to effect this equality in accordance with a scale resulting from an agreement to be negotiated without delay between the Four Powers through the ordinary channels of diplomacy.¹⁵

Germany was actually inviting the failure of the Disarmament Conference followed by German rearmament through negotiations between the Four Powers. An analysis of the German text revealed that fears of the French allies were justified for the pact envisaged the formation of a Directory of Four to impose its will upon smaller powers.

It was up to Mussolini once more to calm German objections. He reassured the German ambassador that without an "effective possibility of revision and a satisfactory equality of rights," the pact in his view was valueless. Regarding disarmament, the MacDonald disarmament convention could be regarded as having already failed, Mussolini contended. Germany, he declared, "should strengthen her armaments very cautiously until the

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Neurath to Hassel, March 24, 1933, D.G.F.P., 211-217.

dangerous period was over." He even suggested the possibility of co-operation between the two countries with respect to their air forces,¹⁶ "which for both countries was after all the most important factor."

At the same time that Mussolini offered to cooperate in German rearmament in the air, the Italian delegate at Geneva paid lip service to the MacDonald disarmament Plan -- a plan designed to eventually destroy military aircraft.

Yet the British leaders were so unaware of Mussolini's intentions that on March 31, 1933, MacDonald in a personal letter to the Duce could write: "Were success to follow your efforts, I see an open road to all our endeavors to bring the soothing influence of confidence and mutual trust into the mind of Europe....I was very much touched by the cordial support which your delegate offered to our Draft Convention at Geneva.... I feel sure you will agree with me that when the Conference resumes on April 25, our two delegations should work together whole heartedly to push this convention through with a minimum of amendment....I am convinced¹⁷ that this is the first step towards appeasement in Europe." It is tragic to see how far MacDonald trusted Mussolini and believed in his sincerity while the Duce was actually playing the hypocrite. Letters of this kind were especially heartening to Mussolini and Hitler. They had a good reason

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Hassel to Neurath, March 28, 1933, D.G.F.P., 227-228.

¹⁷

Letter from MacDonald to Mussolini, March 31, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 122-125. While Mussolini reassured the German ambassador of Italian support for German rearmament and expressed his hopes for the failure of MacDonald's Draft Convention, in his reply to the British Prime Minister, Mussolini said, "so far as I am concerned, on resumption of the labors of the Conference on the 25th instant the Italian delegation will continue to afford the Plan and the British delegation most cordial support in order to achieve the success of their initiative." See letter from Mussolini to MacDonald, April 10, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 133-135.

to believe that continuation of a policy of political deception would ultimately pay dividends.

But while the British in their naive pursuit for peace had failed to grasp Mussolini's real intentions, the French press and the leaders of the Little Entente kept warning the French and British governments of an Italian-German connivance and continued their campaign against the proposed pact. The French cabinet (divided over whether to accept the plan in principle or reject the idea altogether) found itself between the hammer and the anvil. From one side came the protests from France's allies urging her to respond negatively to Mussolini's initiative. From the other side, Britain cautioned France against torpedoing a proposal for the pacification of Europe. For according to Simon, France's adherence to the pact was vital since Hitler's acceptance of the pact in principle showed him, "to have reverted to Stresemann's policy."¹⁸ Under these circumstances, opposition by France to the pact in principle might cast her in the villain's role as the sole Western Power standing in the way of a possible European détente.

In order to avoid the prospect of diplomatic isolation, and at the same time calm her allies if at all possible, France decided to adopt a middle of the road approach. She accepted the pact in principle while insisting on her own modifications of Articles II and III. Coming on top of those proposed previously by Britain, the effect was to water down Mussolini's original draft to such a degree as to be valueless to Germany. For example, in the French draft submitted to Mussolini on April 10, 1933, Article II omitted all direct reference to revision of treaties which had appeared both

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Simon to Graham, March 31, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 119.

in Mussolini's and British drafts. Instead it called for the application of Articles 10, 16, and 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations whenever the circumstances arose. As to Article III dealing with disarmament, the French referred to the December 11, 1932, Agreement which promised Germany equality of rights in armaments within a system which provided security for all nations. This to be attained only by stages in conformity with Article 7 of the Covenant. Through these amendments, France finally secured the agreement of the Permanent Council of the Little Entente to the draft pact. These powers were willing to accept the pact since it now reiterated the competence of the League and its Covenant, failing to mention the word "revision," while the unanimity of the Assembly was required in the application of Article 19.

For Germany, the British amendments were bad enough, but the French were totally unacceptable. This view was made known to Mussolini by Goering when he visited Rome on May 19-20, 1933.

Ultimately, consultations held between Mussolini, the British and French ambassadors resulted in the drafting of a new text on May 21 based upon the amendments submitted by the respective states. Article III was altered out of all recognition from Mussolini's original proposal. It no longer spoke even of equality of rights in armaments to Germany. In addition it was watered down until the four signatory powers promised to their utmost for the success of the Disarmament Conference and, should the Conference fail, they promised to consult on a common line of action.

On June 7, 1933, Mussolini delivered a speech before the Italian Senate praising the Four Powers for their efforts in negotiating the pact. He paid special tribute to the new Germany who "desires peace and not war, a constructive peace at home and abroad." In the evening the pact was initialled

at the Pallazo Venezia by Mussolini and the French, British, and German
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ambassadors.

For Germany the pact in its final form was a far cry from Mussolini's original draft. But even so, the Four Power Pact represented political progress. The essence of the pact for Germany lay in those articles providing for collaboration and consultation between the Four Western Powers. They meant that Germany was now recognized as one of them. The pact was a morale boost for Germany in her present diplomatic isolation. For only six months after the Nazi revolution Germany a defeated power was now accepted in the Great power club. In the words of Neurath, the pact "disavows all attempts at isolating Germany and gives expression to the idea that Germany can be not an object but only the participating subject of European policy...such a pact must necessarily increase the prestige of the Reich Government" since it once again proved its moderation and desire
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for peace.

Furthermore, from the German point of view the way in which the preliminary negotiations had been conducted was significant. The collaboration and close coordination between Germany and Italy over the pact as early as mid March 1933, even before the draft was made known to the British and the French, had given Hitler an indispensable ally when most needed. This

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For a synoptic table of British, French and Italian drafts, German amendments and the final text of the Four Power Pact, see Wheeler-Bennett, ed., Documents on International Affairs 1933, 240-250.

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Circular of the Foreign Minister, June 7, 1933, D.G.F.P., 532-533.

development had been kept secret by Mussolini. Even in his Senate speech of June 7, he claimed that the first "elaboration of the outline was carried out on March 18-19 during the visit of MacDonald and John Simon in Rome."

Moreover, as far as the German policy in the disarmament question was concerned, the pact was especially important. While Article III of the pact spoke of Four Power collaboration for the success of the Disarmament Conference, the spirit of the pact however envisaged a situation in which the Geneva Conference would fail and then the question would be solved among the "Big Four." The recognition of Germany as one of the "Four" would mean that she was entitled to equality in armaments with other powers. Such equality would be much easier to achieve within the framework of the pact rather than in the international forum at Geneva where France and her "satellites" formed a united bloc against Germany. Since Hitler never believed that the Disarmament Conference would legalize German rearmament, the Four Power Pact would become the substitute method to achieve German goals once the Conference failed.²¹ In which case according to Goering, Germany would have to deal only "with a small body of four, and in this²² Mussolini promised his support at all times." This is not to suggest that Hitler would not have wrecked the Conference had Mussolini's initiative failed. But its success made it easier for him later to decide upon this course of action.

Mussolini's plan was clearly in Hitler's favor despite the vagueness in its ultimate form. Throughout the negotiations the Duce indicated his support for German demands in terms of revision and disarmament as seen in Articles II and III of his original draft. At the same time, Mussolini

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Paul-Boncour to Jouvenel, April 26, 1933, D.D.F., III, 320-321.

22

Memo by Neurath, May 22, 1933, D.G.F.P., 479.

engaged in a policy of "bluff" in his negotiations with Britain and France in order to gain their acquiescence in his scheme. Mussolini's initiative was anything but helpful towards a solution of the disarmament problem because it fed Hitler's appetite for rearmament, thereby reducing the chances for a successful conclusion of the Geneva Conference. Consequently, when Arthur Henderson in the middle of July 1933 had travelled to Berlin and other European capitals to discuss the disarmament problem in order to reach agreement on the MacDonald Plan, he had indeed embarked upon a fruitless mission, "like Diogenes looking for a honest man."²³ His own paper, the London Daily Herald, referring to the gloomy prospects of the Disarmament Conference after the conclusion of the Four Power Pact wrote on June 8: "It is only too plain that with the possible exception of the Soviet Union and the United States the Big Powers are now anxious to end the whole business and have the whole matter settled by an antiquated seductiveness of a four power junta." As future events would show that course of action was most acceptable to Germany.

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Wheeler-Bennett, Pipe Dream of Peace, 164. When the Disarmament Conference adjourned in June 30, it empowered its President to pursue private negotiations to reach agreement on disarmament when the Conference reconvened.

CHAPTER XII

HITLER WRECKS THE CONFERENCE

On June 8, 1933, when the Bureau of the Conference had decided to adjourn and allow Henderson to embark upon his "disarmament pilgrimage" to major European capitals, a flurry of diplomatic activity initiated by Norman Davis broke out in Paris. Its outcome would have a great bearing upon the future course of the Conference and eventually would provide Hitler with the pretext to break up the Disarmament Conference.

In conversations between Daladier, Lord Londonderry, Eden and Norman Davis, the French Premier brought up the familiar and **ever convincing** argument of an increasingly rearmed Germany. He declared that any disarmament on the part of France would depend on security guarantees. Daladier had given up hope of any pacts of mutual assistance so unacceptable to Britain and certainly to the United States. Instead, he spoke of "technical guarantees" -- a system of controlling armaments and arms manufacture to guard against secret German rearmament.

In what appeared a complete departure from the British Disarmament Plan, the French Premier had for the first time advanced a proposal for a Convention consisting of two periods. The first 3-4 years would be a probationary period in which a system of supervision and control of armaments would be established. In that time Germany's intentions and actions in the question of armaments would be subject to investigation. The probationary period would be followed by a second period of four years in which France would accept substantial disarmament down to the German level, providing that supervision had proved efficient and Germany had not rearmed. In other words, France would agree to reduce her armaments at the end of a trial period if

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the trial had proved satisfactory.

The new French stand was realistic and understandable. In face of a Germany proceeding apace with rearmament, a fact acknowledged ~~now even by~~² John Simon, the Anglo-Saxon powers had offered very little in terms of security guarantees in case of German aggression against France. Britain would not go beyond the vague and dubious guarantees included in the Locarno Pact, nor would she accept a rigid "definition of aggressor" that might call for immediate military assistance. She might have gone along with some action to satisfy France only if the United States agreed to abandon her³ neutrality -- an illusory prospect so far. In these circumstances, France put all her hopes on supervision as the only means capable of forestalling a sudden German onslaught so feared by the French. Under effective and automatic supervision, Germany, so the French believed, would be incapable of accumulating the weapons necessary for aggression. In such a case, France could begin to disarm to the German level. It must be remembered that since

¹
Record of a conversation held at the Quai d'Orsay, June 8, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 336-348.

²
Minute by Simon, June 26, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 17363, 50.

³
On May 22, 1933 Norman Davis in a statement to the General Commission declared that the United States, for the sake of achieving a Disarmament Convention, was willing to accept the MacDonald Plan and refrain from any action which might defeat a collective effort of nations against an aggressor. His declaration meant that if nations imposed sanctions against another nation defined as the aggressor, the United States would not interfere with such action. By agreeing to refuse to trade with an aggressor state, the United States had changed its traditional policies of neutrality and freedom of the seas. But when the President had sought Congressional approval of legislation giving him the right to embargo shipments of arms to an aggressor nation, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on May 27, 1933, rejected such a resolution and instead amended it to require the President to embargo shipments to all nations involved in a conflict thus making no distinction between the aggressor and the victim of aggression. The high hopes of a change in American isolationist policy as implied in Davis' statement proved to be an illusion.

the war France had already reduced her military service from three to one year making her forces numerically inferior to those of Germany. Her only superiority lay in equipment, and a reduction in that area to the German level could be carried out only after Germany's peaceful intentions had been tested.

While Norman Davis refused to consider any system of supervision unless linked with a detailed plan of disarmament, Eden was sympathetic to Daladier's proposal of a two stage Convention and urged his government to accept it.⁴ Before Henderson's departure to major European capitals for private conversations, Eden informed him about the new French position. Henderson's itinerary included Paris, Rome, Berlin, and Prague.

On July 11, 1933, Henderson arrived in Paris where he held talks with the French Ministers. During the talks, he was presented with a memorandum containing the suggestion made by Daladier on June 8. In the meantime the French Premier had consulted his cabinet and was now prepared to commit his country to disarmament after the trial period, the first time this offer had been made by a French government since the beginning of the Conference.

According to the memorandum, during the first stage of the Convention, the probationary period, France and other states would agree not to manufacture any further armaments prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles. The German Reichswehr would be transformed into a short term service army of 200,000 men and a strict system of supervision would be instituted in order to ascertain German "good behavior." Should supervision prove successful, France would agree to prohibit the maintenance of heavy artillery above 155mm. to reduce tanks to a total of 3,000 tons (from the present total of 12,000 tons) as well as aviation material by 50 per cent. Instead of

destroying the banned material, France would have it transferred to the League of Nations or the Permanent Disarmament Commission who would see to its abolition. The precise way that the French had declared their willingness to disarm was a clear indication that the Daladier government was sincerely interested in a successful outcome of the Disarmament Conference.⁵ Henderson was also told that France would be ready to make further concessions if Germany expressed willingness to cooperate in achieving disarmament rather than rearming.⁶

After leaving Paris, Henderson's mission became more and more an exercise in futility. On July 14, 1933, the President of the Disarmament Conference discussed the French proposals with Mussolini and Suvich in Rome where both rejected them outright. In Mussolini's view the "French plan was unsuitable as a whole and in its particulars, it was more of a plan of supervision than of disarmament." According to Suvich "one could visualize disarmament with supervision and without supervision, but not supervision without disarmament."⁷ The Italian Ministers praised Hitler's attitude as expressed in his speech of May 17, 1933. Mussolini had thus maintained his loyalty to Hitler in the question of disarmament, as promised during the negotiations of the Four Power Pact, incidentally signed a day later on July 15. The Italian leader had even predicted that the French proposals had no chance of being accepted by the Germans, a fact Henderson had already realized, but even so Mussolini's attitude did not make his task any easier.

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Minutes by Ashley Clark, August 12, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 17366, W9445/40/98.

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For full details of Henderson's conversations in Paris, see Paul-Boncour to Corbin, July 13, 1933, D.D.F., III, 897-899. See also the annexed memorandum.

7

Hassel to Neurath, July 16, 1933, D.G.F.P., 651-653.

Arriving in Berlin on July 17, 1933, Henderson detailed the new French position in talks on the same day with Neurath, Blomberg, and the State Secretary of the Air Ministry, Erhard Milch. He suggested that a Permanent Disarmament Commission whose purpose would be to organize the entire system of supervision should be set up as soon as possible even before the conclusion of a convention. To avoid an immediate German rejection of the French plan, Henderson expressed his personal view that the first period of the Disarmament Convention might be shorter than the French wished, -- three years -- resulting in a seven rather than an eight year convention. His proposal meant that France would begin to disarm a year earlier. Henderson had nothing new to report to his hosts, however, for they had already learned about the French proposals from Mussolini. Although the Germans were polite enough not to reject them outright, their answer came the next morning in a manner that should have convinced anyone of the uselessness in negotiating a Disarmament Convention with Hitler. For on July 18, 1933, while Henderson was still in Berlin, Hitler issued a decree designed to absorb the S.A. into the Reichswehr by organizing them in eight regional groups (Obergruppen) corresponding with those of the Reichswehr. The S.A., whose military efficiency so far was very inadequate, would in the course of such a process develop into a formidable fighting force. Only a few weeks earlier Nadolny claimed that the semi-military organizations had no military training and could not possibly be included in the number of effectives allotted to Germany. It was ironic that Hitler's decree was promulgated the day after Henderson's arrival in Berlin in what was to be the most visible step taken yet by post war Germany towards rearmament.

On the same day a second session was held between Henderson and the German Ministers. This time he received a memorandum entitled "The German Point of View" in the disarmament question which was nothing more than a

reiteration of the position German spokesmen had taken since the appearance of the MacDonald Plan. The only significant change dealt with supervision. While accepting a system of control, including periodic and automatic supervision, Neurath made it clear that "supervision could have reference only to the execution of the future convention but not the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty" thus indirectly conceding for the first time that the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles had already been breached. The July 18, 1933, memorandum demanded that all aggressive weapons be destroyed by all states within a five-year period, and the non-aggressive weapons, on the other hand, to be allowed to all states. In regard to military aircraft, for a transitional period Germany would content herself with a smaller quantity than other states.⁸ Despite this minor concession, the memorandum was another indication that Germany would settle for nothing less than rearmament.

Hitler re-emphasized the futility of Henderson's mission on July 21 when he rejected the idea of a trial period. Nor would Hitler listen to Henderson's lectures about the bad feeling prevailing in Europe against Germany. In answer to the President's complaint about German rearmament in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler replied that the "S.A. men were merely a political foundation which could not be considered as having military value,"⁹ thereby contradicting the sense of his own decree promulgated three days earlier.

The Berlin conversations had shown that the gap between the French and German positions was now wider than ever, if not unbridgeable. In spite of the optimistic report Henderson gave to the press at the end of his visit,

⁸
Memo by Neurath, July 19, 1933, Büro des Reichsministers Akten, vol. XVII, D669470-D669471.

⁹
Memo by Neurath, July 22, 1933, Büro des Reichsministers Akten, vol. XVII, D669480-D669482.

it was clear to British officials that the German "claims are much higher and their attitude much stiffer than when they first began to press the question last year." Their aim was to achieve real equality in armaments¹⁰ by the end of a five-year convention.

Henderson's efforts to achieve a compromise between the conflicting German and French views had proven futile. The recess of the Disarmament Conference was drawing to a close but as yet no acceptable formula was in sight. On the contrary, it was apparent that the Conference was reaching a critical stage -- it was moving towards a breakdown. Already the German press had attacked the French proposals for two stage disarmament Convention. France, the Vossische Zeitung claimed, wanted control without disarmament. The French policy was one of procrastination yet without Germany nothing would be achieved. The Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung commented that the system of control was directed only against Germany. The paper contended that before control would be instituted, France was demanding an investigation into German armaments. Control of armaments and the period of probation were to be preceded by a humiliating investigation which, in the paper's view, no self respecting state could accept. In a move to underscore the precarious state of the Disarmament Conference, Neurath told the press on September 15, 1933, that the Conference must either produce immediate equality in armaments for Germany or the whole idea of disarmament would be shattered. In essence the German campaign aimed at placing France in the villain's role and blaming her for the eventual breakdown of the Conference.

To offset the German attacks, from September 18 till 22, 1933, Anthony Eden conducted a series of Anglo-French discussions in Paris with Daladier and Paul-Boncour later joined by Simon and Norman Davis. The talks were

initiated by the French government in order to secure the full support of Britain, the United States, and possibly Italy at the re-opening of the Disarmament Conference. By now the British government was prepared in principle to accept the French view that permanent and automatic control of armaments on an international basis must be established before further disarmament could be expected, with the effectiveness of such control being tested during a trial period of four years.

These Anglo-French talks were a continuation of those held on June 8 but with the difference that now the French had reiterated in precise terms their intention to disarm after a satisfactory trial period. Daladier made it clear that France would never agree that during the first period Germany should be permitted to have prototypes of weapons such as tanks, heavy artillery, and airplanes. He pointed out that since the heavily armed states under the terms of the Convention would undertake to disarm during the second period to the German level, it was unnecessary for Germany to be allowed types of arms in common with other nations that she would have to destroy any way after a few years. But, as a concession, Daladier agreed that since a reduction of effectives and the conversion of the Reichswehr from 100,000 to 200,000 men would take place in the first period of the Convention, Germany might justly be entitled to have a larger quantity of the weapons at present allowed to her under the Treaty of Versailles, in proportion to a larger number of effectives, but by no means should Germany have "samples" of heavy weapons.

The French strategy emerging from these talks, was simply to arrive at an identity of views between France and Britain so that no wedge be driven between their delegations at Geneva. If their delegations could return to Geneva in full understanding and perhaps with Italian support, then the

acceptance of international control and disarmament could be presented as a clear issue on which the Hitler government would be compelled to show its true intentions. If Germany refused to accept a fair, sincere offer of participation in a system which would apply equally to all, it would then be clear where responsibility for a breakdown lay. This strategy was an overwhelming success at least as far as Britain and the United States were concerned. For the first time since the beginning of the Disarmament Conference, Britain and France saw eye to eye.

What were the motives behind this shift in British policy? According to Simon it resulted from a very great change "in the quarters previously most sympathetic to Germany owing to the enthronement of Hitlerism and some of its recent manifestations." ¹¹ The "recent manifestations" referred not only to increased German rearmament but also to German subversive activities against Austria including terrorism, anti Austrian broadcasts, and the dropping of seditious pamphlets on Austrian territory from German airplanes. Finally the British had begun to see the reason in the French arguments and realized that the latest French proposals had actually provided a practical way for carrying out the December 11, 1932 Agreement calling for equality of rights in armaments through disarmament within a regime of security.

Simon's task now was to have the Italians modify their plan so as not to permit German rearmament during the trial period. For this purpose, he met Pompeo Aloisi on September 23, 1933. But Aloisi reiterated his government's intention that even during the first period Germany should be allowed some of the weapons prohibited to her such as tanks and fighter airplanes for defense purposes. Simon made it clear to Aloisi that the British government found it difficult to agree "that during the first period of the

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Simon to Tyrrell, September 21, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 609.

Convention, Germany should be allowed to rearm in any way." He did, however, suggest that by shortening the first period means might be found of avoiding the concessions of prototypes to Germany. But the British attempt to bring Italy in line proved unsuccessful.

Simon's next task on the agenda was to convince the Germans to accept the French proposals. On September 23, 1933,¹² in Geneva, Simon and Eden called upon Neurath to discuss the French plan. The British Ministers learned that Neurath regarded a four year trial period as an extension of German discrimination. Such a period, he claimed, was unacceptable to his government, and he insisted Germany "be permitted at once to procure all the arms that were not prohibited to others," meaning immediate equality in armaments. Should Germany consent to a convention consisting of two parts, then, in Neurath's view, precise amounts and types of weapons to be destroyed in the second period by the armed nations must be laid down in the new¹³ convention.

The account of the conversation as given by Neurath differs from the one given in the British documents according to which the German Foreign Minister agreed in principle to a two-period Convention and demanded "samples" of weapons prohibited to Germany. Simon rejected the possibility of granting Germany such weapons in the first period, however, he suggested that a compromise might be found by shortening the first period to three years and extending

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With the opening of the fourteenth session of the Assembly of the League of Nations on September 25, the Foreign Ministers of the major powers came to Geneva and the occasion was utilized for further consultations concerning disarmament.

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Memo by Neurath, September 24, 1933, D.G.F.P., 836-838.

the second to five years, thus Germany might obtain some "samples" sooner and at the same time advance the disarmament of other states. Although Neurath did not commit himself, Simon got the feeling that the German Foreign Minister "was impressed by the suggestion and that along this road there might be a way of compromise which would avoid his demand for im-¹⁴mediate rearmament." This version of the conversation seemed to be accurate for Norman Davis in his later talk with Neurath received the same¹⁵ impression. In light of this account, Germany's later stand would contrast with the position taken by Neurath in his talk with Simon.

Although Neurath considered further talks with Paul-Boncour as "useless at this time," he nevertheless held another meeting with Simon on September 29, just before his return to Berlin. Then the British Secretary of State expressed a hope that the Germans would give up the idea of obtaining "samples" during the first period of the Convention and instead,¹⁶ as a compromise, shorten the trial period. Simon also inquired as to what sort of numbers Neurath had in mind in his references to "samples." Neurath promised to report on the matter to Berlin and inform the British as to the German position concerning the questions raised by Simon.

From the private contacts that had taken place in Geneva during the last week of September, it appeared to the British and Americans that the stumbling block towards reaching an agreement was the German demand for "samples" during the trial period which the French, British, and Americans

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Record of Conversation between Simon and Neurath, September 23, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 632-635.

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See below, 239-240.

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This again confirms that the English version of the September 23, 1933, conversation was correct.

refused to grant for it meant acceding to German rearmament. To the British, the German attitude seemed unreasonable; it was all a question of timing. How could Germany "refuse a Convention which would concede them what they ask [now] in 1938, simply because they cannot obtain it in 1934." But they had also concluded from their talks with Neurath that he had at least in principle accepted the idea of a two stage convention and supervision. The question of "samples," although unresolved, was still open for negotiations, and the possibility of granting Germany a "small sop" in this sphere remained open.¹⁷ Now the Western Powers awaited a German response.

The answer from Berlin, however, was contrary to Anglo-French and American expectation. On October 3, 1933, Prince Otto von Bismarck, the German Chargé d'Affaires in London, cabled his Foreign Minister saying that based upon private information from officials close to Simon, the British Foreign Secretary had already drafted a new disarmament convention which was a complete revision of their previous draft of March 16, 1933. The new draft rejected the German demand for "samples" of weapons in the trial period since such a convention would mean the rearmament rather than the disarmament of Germany. According to Bismarck the Americans supported Simon's draft and it would be presented to the British cabinet for approval.¹⁸

Bismarck's account could not be supported from any other source except the British documents which differed from the German.¹⁹ Judging from Neurath's dispatches to Berlin while in Geneva and Bismarck's account one cannot but conclude that the German officials had already made up their minds in advance that the Disarmament Conference must be wrecked and the only way to do it was

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Patteson to Simon, Oct. 5, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 658.

18

Bismarck to the Foreign Ministry, Oct. 4, 1933, D.G.F.P., 885-886.

19

See D.B.F.P., V, 669, footnote 1.

by accentuating the negative in the Anglo-French approach thereby facilitating the task of making up a suitable pretext for the approaching event. There was not yet a conclusive and official British stand although Britain had made up her mind not to allow German rearmament in principle, but except for that, both they and the Americans were still looking for some compromise. Furthermore, by October 4, that is, a day after Bismarck's dispatch to Berlin, Simon was still awaiting a German response to his conversations with Neurath in Geneva before deciding on a definite and conclusive course of action. As to the Americans, Norman Davis as of October 5, suggested that a way towards compromise could be found by allowing Germany to acquire a number of observation (as distinct from "pursuit") airplanes²⁰ in the first period.

Despite this inconclusive and unofficial evidence sent by Bismarck, the German government took a position which would soon lead to the breakdown of the Conference. The long awaited pretext was finally at hand.

On October 4, Hitler, Blomberg, and Buelow met to discuss the "new Simon plan." Both the Chancellor and the Reichswehr Minister expressed the opinion that Germany should not negotiate at all on the basis of the new draft. But Hitler realized that to avoid alienating world opinion Germany could not cause a breakdown of the Conference either by rejecting supervision or by demanding fulfillment of his rearmament demands. Instead, the blame for the breakdown of the Conference should be shifted to France and Britain by having Germany revert to the "original question" -- deliver an ultimatum to the Western Powers to disarm or grant Germany full equality in armaments with France. Otherwise Germany would withdraw from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. As in the case

of his famous speech of May 17, 1933, Hitler would again deliver a speech in the Reichstag and play a martyr's role before German and world opinion. Buelow concurred with the Fuehrer's view, and he pointed out that because a breakdown of the Conference was imminent, ultimatums should be issued to the important delegations before Germany's formal withdrawal. Immediately he issued instructions to Ernst Weizsaecker, who was then at Geneva, "to retreat to the MacDonald Plan as we interpret it and without change for the worse."²¹

Fateful decisions had been taken to wreck an international Conference which had opened with high hopes for disarmament as a major contributory force towards the establishment of a peaceful Europe, and to withdraw from the League of Nations. Both decisions were ostensibly based upon verbal reports received by Bismarck, while Hitler and Blomberg were still anxiously awaiting the details of the "new Simon Plan."

On October 6, 1933, a disappointed John Simon finally received the long awaited German response from Otto von Bismarck. The Charge d'Affaires declared that Germany would not accept the idea of a trial period but could agree only to the MacDonald Plan of March 16, 1933, calling for a five year period convention. Germany, however, would not object if this period were divided into two periods of two and three years. But equality in armaments ought to be provided in the first two years meaning immediate rearmament. According to Bismarck, these views were based on the Agreement of December 11, 1932. Simon declared that the new German position was a retreat from the views held by Neurath during his recent stay in Geneva. Then Neurath had hinted at a limited number of "samples," but in the new communication these were omitted. The new German position ignored the plan of stages,

a key element in the MacDonald Plan and instead now demanded immediate equality in armaments. How could Germany claim that her position was based on the December 11 Agreement, Simon asked, when there was absolutely no²² reference to security in her communication? Moreover, Germany was asking for rearmament without mentioning the word "supervision."

The Italian reaction to the German move was even angrier than the British. Suvich who called it "a remarkable step backward," asked the German ambassador frankly "whether it meant that the Germans desire to break off negotiations altogether for if this was the case they better say so outright." The Italians also regarded the German proposals as a great departure from Neurath's recent attitude at Geneva, yet they were still in favor²³ in granting "samples" to Germany in the first of a two period convention.

Why had German policy changed? Why had Neurath in the summer of 1933 been satisfied with "samples" but by October 6 Germany demanded weapons that were retained in any convention by the armed powers? Bismarck's communication of October 3, dealing with the "new Simon Plan," seemed to be only the pretext for the change in policy. According to Benes, who was on very friendly terms with Nadolny and who seemed to predict accurately Germany's motives throughout the Conference, the reason behind this change was increased German

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Simon to Phipps, October 6, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 662-664.

23

Graham to Simon, October 7, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 664-665. In Mussolini's view, "German policy was at the moment in the hands of two men Hitler and Goering, one a dreamer, the other an ex-inmate of a lunatic asylum, neither of them conspicuous for reason or logic and both of them suffering from an inferiority complex and a bitter sense of injustice." See Graham to Wellesly, October 11, 1933, D.B.F.P., V, 674-675. Mussolini's attitude towards the German leadership, yet not to Germany's case as a whole, may have been changed by Hitler's subversive activities in Austria.

arms production. In the summer of 1933, Germany had only prototypes of forbidden weapons and consequently wanted a new convention permitting her to retain them under supervision. By the fall, however, she was so far armed that the permission to have only prototypes would have meant the destruction of numerous weapons that a convention could not have allowed her to possess. Benes was convinced that Germany would not accept a Convention which did not cover German rearmament.

In light of the German reply of October 6, 1933, which seemed to confirm Benes' point of view, the British cabinet, in a meeting on October 9, decided to accept the French thesis in its entirety as official British policy. Britain would oppose any Germany rearmament in the first stage, and the disarmament of other powers would be effected during the second. In this way equality of armaments would be achieved through disarmament once Germany's "good faith" was tested by automatic supervision. For the first time since the beginning of the Disarmament deliberations, Britain had finally sided all the way with France. It was a tardy change. Such a stand might have been more productive if it had been taken after the fall of Bruening since the French had claimed all along that Germany was re-arming while talking disarmament. British vacillation during 1933 had only encouraged Hitler to raise the price for accommodation. But even now Britain's toughness was mainly verbal without any muscle behind it, a truth well known to Hitler.

By October 11, 1933, Nadolny learned from his Foreign Minister that since the British cabinet's decision was irreconcilable with the German demand for equality, Germany would withdraw from the Conference. The statement regarding the break off would be made by the Chancellor in Berlin.

On the same day Nadolny had interviews with Paul-Boncour, Norman Davis, and Eden but no visible change in their positions could be detected. The Western Powers remained firm against any German rearmament. On the morning of October 12, Neurath cabled Nadolny: "The Chancellor requests you to come here immediately to report." Nadolny reported that Simon wanted to continue the negotiations and there was a possibility that a conciliatory formula might after all emerge through the mediation of the Italians and Americans.²⁵ He asked for a delay in his departure. But in the evening of the same day Neurath wired Nadolny saying, "I request you to proceed with your departure as ordered."²⁶

On October 13, 1933, the Reich cabinet met with Nadolny present. He urged moderation and asked Hitler to allow him to return to Geneva to continue the negotiations. But Hitler refused.²⁷ Instead the Chancellor declared that Germany would not sign a Convention which did not accord equality of rights in armaments. Therefore in the Fuehrer's view;

it becomes a necessity to defeat the draft and thereby torpedo the Disarmament Conference. In such a situation, compelled by the force of circumstances one must decide to act. The path of negotiations is now closed. We shall therefore have to leave both the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations, since the conditions that we be recognized as a nation with equality of rights is not fulfilled.²⁸

Italian mediation, Hitler continued, would achieve results not at Geneva but only in the framework of the Four Power Pact. On this day, the decision to wreck the Conference, already taken as early as October 4, 1933,

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Davis to Hull, Oct. 13, 1933, F.R.U.S., 1933, I, 255-258.

²⁶

Nadolny to Neurath, Oct. 12, 1933, D.G.F.P., 915-916.

²⁷

Nadolny, 140.

²⁸

Minutes of the Conferences of Ministers, Oct. 13, 1933, D.G.F.P., 923-927.

29
 became definite. Hitler, however, withheld the official withdrawal notice until Simon had publicly stated the Anglo-French conditions to the Bureau of the Conference, scheduled to reconvene the next day.

On the morning of October 14, 1933, the Bureau heard a statement from John Simon in which he endorsed the French plan for a two period Convention with the first to be a probationary. The American, French, and Italian representatives concurred. Because of the absence of Neurath and Nadolny from Geneva, the German delegate, Rheinbaben, declared that Germany demanded real disarmament on the part of the heavily armed states and the immediate application of the principle of equality of rights in armaments. Rheinbaben's remarks, although restrained, were all but academic. The meeting of the Bureau ended at about 12:30. By 3 P.M.

Henderson received a telegram from the German Foreign Minister:

In light of the course which recent discussions of the Powers concerned have taken in the matter of disarmament, it is now clear that the Disarmament Conference will not fulfill its sole object, namely, general disarmament. It is also clear that this failure of the Conference is due solely to unwillingness on the part of the highly armed states to carry out their contractual obligation to disarm. This renders impossible the satisfaction of Germany's claims to equality of rights and the condition on which the German Government agreed at the beginning of this year again to take part in the work thus no longer exists. The German Government is accordingly compelled to leave the Disarmament Conference.

Unable to obtain a disarmament convention legalizing German rearmament, Hitler, on October 14, 1933, in an "irrational reflex action loudly slammed the two doors of the Disarmament Conference and the League." 30 Hitler's decisions met with the approval of the Reichswehr Minister and Neurath,

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In the evening, telegrams were sent out to German embassies in Western Europe announcing the decision taken by the cabinet.

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Schmidt, 282.

31
 Buelow, and Weizsaecker. According to his own testimony at the Nuremburg trial, Neurath admitted that as early as September, 1933, he advised Hitler to leave the Conference since Germany could no longer hope for satisfactory results. 32 As early as September 5, Colonel Otto von Stuelpangel told Skirpa the Lithuanian military attaché in Berlin that he did not believe that anything could be achieved at Geneva therefore Germany would withdraw from the Conference and rearm. 33 In the first decisive step taken in the field of foreign policy by Hitler, the Defense Ministry and the Foreign Office were of one mind.

But not Nadolny. Although he supported Hitler's aims at the Conference, he nonetheless urged moderation and opposed Germany's withdrawal until the very day when it occurred. The official notice of abrupt withdrawal had been sent to Henderson without Nadolny's knowledge, a fact which greatly disturbed the ambassador who had served his country well at a time when his country was diplomatically isolated. 34

Why had Hitler abandoned Geneva on October 14, 1933? The main reason was that Hitler looked upon the Disarmament Conference as an international forum which had a value only if it produced a convention legalizing Germany's secret rearmament and her future public rearmament. Should such a convention be impossible to achieve, Hitler had planned Germany's withdrawal from the moment he came into office, a decision implied in his conversations with senior officers of the Reichswehr on February 3, 1933 and in the first cabinet meeting as Chancellor on February 8, when he made clear his intention

31
 Paul Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse: A Study of German Diplomats under the Nazi Regime (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), 38.

32
Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), Supplement B, 1504.

33
 Le Général Renondeau to Daladier, Sept. 5, 1933, D.D.F., IV, 308.

34
 Nadolny, 140.

of embarking upon full scale rearmament. But why had he waited till October 1933? The problem for the German government was to find a situation in which withdrawal could be justified in the eyes of their own people and world opinion. There was a need for a pretext which would make it possible for Hitler to play the martyr's role. By September of 1933, such an opportunity appeared when the French proposed a two period convention, later embodied in the Simon plan which denied Germany any rearmament. Now Hitler could blame the British and the French for abandoning their original plan. According to Hitler's interpretation it was satisfactory since it permitted German immediate rearmament. Hitler's action proved that Germany would never sign a convention that could prevent her from rearming, nor could she accept any convention which would involve the control of her armaments and which might reveal that Hitler had been rearming Germany for some time.

Moreover, Hitler and his associates regarded Geneva as being an unsuitable forum for the solution of Germany's grievances. The League of Nations, according to the Fuehrer, was a forum in which little countries³⁵ found satisfaction by arrogantly voting against Germany. The Germans, Weizsaecker wrote, "were not suited to Geneva...the German does not cut a happy figure at congresses...the chief beneficiaries of conferences as far³⁶ as I could see, were the representatives of dark haired nations." In this case he alluded to France and her satellites. By October 1933, Hitler had a better forum where Germany would get a sympathetic hearing -- the forum

35

Henry Picker, Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier, 1941-1942 (Bonn: Athenaum Verlag, 1951), 54.

36

As quoted in Seabury, 178, footnote 43.

where Germany had been recognized as an equal power, -- within the framework of the Four Power Pact, signed on July 15, 1933. As a result of the breakdown of the Disarmament Conference, Hitler told the Reich cabinet on October 13, the disarmament question would now be transferred to a European directory under Mussolini's leadership. But French objections to such a solution dealt a blow to Hitler's hopes in this respect.

Another important motive for Hitler's abandonment of Geneva on October 14, 1933, was domestic in nature -- problems the Nazi Revolution had faced at home. By October 1933 the Nazi economic programs had not gotten off the ground. The unemployment that Hitler promised to solve still plagued Germany, improvements in the economic conditions were not yet in sight. Hitler's leadership had been challenged by the radical Left wing of the Party which wanted to carry out the Socialist rather than the Nationalist part of the Nazi Party program. Therefore, domestic political considerations might have given Hitler the feeling that diversion was necessary at this juncture. The Simon Plan and Germany's subsequent withdrawal from Geneva gave Hitler issues he could use to rally the German people behind him. For the Nazis sought to achieve with a foreign political issue which no German could dare ignore that which their "Socialist" program failed to achieve. Since the Nazis had come to power in great part through the exploitation of the Treaty of Versailles, the disarmament issue was chosen as means of marshalling the German people behind the regime.

On the evening of October 14, 1933, Hitler explained his actions to the German people in a broadcast speech. He accused Britain and France of humiliating the German nation by their refusal to grant moral and material equality of rights in armaments to Germany. As a result, said

Hitler, Germany had no choice but to leave Geneva. Hitler declared that as a visible expression of the united will of the German government and its people he would ask the President to dissolve the Reichstag in order to submit the policy of his government to the nation in a referendum and to give the people a chance to elect deputies who would support a policy of peace and honor for Germany.

In a decree issued on October 14, 1933, the President of the Reich dissolved the Reichstag, ordering new elections and a referendum on November 12, 1933. The people were asked to vote on the question: "Do you approve the policy of the government laid before you?" The policy the German people were asked to approve was peace at home, peace abroad, and above all equality in armaments for Germany. On November 12, 1933, 95% of the votes favored the Government's policy and over 92% elected candidates of the Nazi Party. Hitler had used a foreign policy issue to rid the Reichstag of all relics of the party system and thereby strengthening his political position at home. His success proved to the world that for the first time since the end of World War I one man could speak in the name of a united German nation.

Hitler's abandonment of Geneva could be regarded as a brilliant stroke as long as the calculation that the other powers would hesitate to take serious action against Germany proved right. His moves were not without risks considering Germany's military inferiority. The possibility of punitive action against Germany, such as sanctions or another occupation of the Ruhr or a Polish invasion of East Prussia were possible means of retaliation not discounted by Hitler and Blomberg. Indeed the Germans were preparing for a defensive war. On October 25, 1933, Blomberg issued a directive for the Armed Forces to respond with armed resistance in case

of French violation of German territory whether on land, air, or sea (by sinking a German merchant ship).³⁷ But such defensive action could not withstand a concerted military campaign against Germany, had the former Allies decided to do so.

Yet nothing of this sort had happened. It was Hitler's first gamble in foreign policy and it proved successful. He could draw satisfaction from the comparative calm with which the European powers reacted to his actions.

To France, Hitler's diplomatic coup confirmed her deepest suspicions of Germany's bad faith in the matter of disarmament. And while the French General Staff was willing to engage in a preventive war against Germany, Daladier on the other hand, believed that the Disarmament Conference ought to continue its work and attempt to complete a Convention which would then be submitted to Germany. Any possibility of military action by France alone was out of the question since neither Britain, the United States, nor Italy would support such action. The idea was dropped altogether. On the contrary, Britain, realizing that Hitler was proceeding with rearmament, preferred to revert to her policy of appeasement rather than contemplate punitive action. The United States, while officially condemning Hitler's moves, used them as another justification for her isolationist policy pointing out that since disarmament was basically a European problem, with Hitler's withdrawal she had nothing to contribute any longer to the Disarmament Conference, and Norman Davis departed with his delegation to Washington never to return.³⁸ Mussolini, contemptuous of Geneva, indicated

³⁷ Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, vol. VI, C-140, 952-954.

³⁸ Hull to Davis, Oct. 16, 1933, F.R.U.S., 1933, I, 277.

that the Disarmament Conference could no longer proceed with its work without Germany. The logical means of solving the problem therefore lay within the framework of the Four Power Pact.³⁹ Hitler gambled and won. The inability of the Western Powers to agree on any concerted plan, let alone punitive action against Germany in their first test with Hitler, could only have encouraged him to adopt the system of blackmail and bluff as the basis of his future foreign policy.

As to disarmament, although the Conference met intermittently until the middle of 1934, it was for all practical purposes a dead issue. When the Western Powers sought to renew negotiations, Hitler pointed out that disarmament was out of the question. Instead he spoke of limitations in armaments for his intention behind the coup of October 14, 1933, was "to carry out one sided rearmament-i.e. to use the method of illegal self help,⁴⁰ a method which would one day prove dangerous for Germany and for peace." Indeed, on October 18, 1933, the British were informed by the French that Germany was turning out thirty airplanes a day, since the majority of motor car factories were now engaged in manufacturing airplane machinery. While those facts seemed improbable yet even if Germany manufactured only three airplanes a day this would give them 1095 in one year! Britain had⁴¹ 770!

Thus, October 14, 1933, was a sad day for all those who believed that the conclusion of a Disarmament Convention would constitute the first step towards a peaceful Europe. More tragic were the conclusions that each one of the antagonists reached in formulating their future policy as a result

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Long to Hull, Oct. 15, 1933, F.R.U.S., 1933, I, 269.

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Ernst Weizsaecker, Memoirs, trans. John Andrews (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 99.

⁴¹

Minutes by Leeper, Oct. 18, 1933, B.F.O., vol. 16735, 84.

of the failure of the Disarmament Conference and Germany's abrupt withdrawal from the League of Nations.

The weakness and vacillation of the Western Powers have taught Hitler that the tactics used during the Conference could be applied to other aspects of foreign policy with equal success in the future. The failure of the Western Powers to retaliate against Germany when she withdrew from the disarmament talks and the League of Nations, had most probably encouraged Hitler to proceed with the militarization of the Rheinland in 1936 with the feeling that risk was worth taking. Papen who was the only member of the German cabinet objecting to Germany's withdrawal from the League⁴² lest the French might use force against Germany, had for the same reason advised Hitler against the reoccupation of the demilitarized zone of the Rheinland. Hitler, however, proceeded with his plan to invade the Rheinland and later implied (May 1942) that as in 1933 he was proven right and Papen wrong. Hitler also repeated the same "show" of October 1933 for maximum internal and external effect. On March 29, 1936 he called for general elections to the Reichstag and 99% of the German people approved his policy.⁴³

The Western Powers on the other hand failed to find a satisfactory method countering such tactics. Appeasement was the wrong answer.

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Franz von Papen, Memoirs, trans. Brian Connell (New York: Dutton, 1953), p. 297.

⁴³

Picker, Hitlers Tischgespräche, 432-433.

CONCLUSION

Germany's demand for equality of rights in armaments involved two aspects, political and technical. From the political point of view, she argued that her acceptance into the League of Nations as an equal member with equal rights entailed a recognition on the part of the former Allies that in terms of national defense Germany must not remain on a different and lower level. The political or juridical recognition of equality as it applied to disarmament should be carried out by the replacement of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles with a new Disarmament Convention-- meaning Treaty revision. As to the technical aspect of equality in armaments, from the first day of the discussions in the Preparatory Commission and throughout the disarmament deliberations in the Conference, German representatives in their written proposals and speeches continuously focused attention on Germany's legal and moral right to demand disarmament on the part of the former Allies. They based their arguments on the method imposed upon her at Versailles, and as a fulfillment of the pledges given to her at Versailles by the ex-victors.

Germany had no legal right to demand the disarmament of other nations within a specific period of time or down to the level prescribed by Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. For the Preamble to Part V and the accompanying letter of Clemenceau were not legal conditions upon which the fulfillment by Germany of Part V depended, nor did any article or phrase in the Versailles Treaty promise equality of armaments to Germany. Germany's case was strongest on moral grounds because Article 164 of the Treaty and the Clemenceau letter contemplated a possible deviation from the clauses laid down in the Peace Treaty after the entry of Germany into the League of Nations.

Therefore, Bruening's policy of demanding equality of rights in armaments by stressing its political aspect -- a Disarmament Convention to replace Part V of the Treaty -- and, his consistent plea for disarmament of the former Allies as means of achieving technical equality in armaments was morally sustainable. These demands as put forward by Bruening at the crucial meeting at Bessinge were moderate and Germany's circumventions and violations of the Treaty of Versailles were not at all extensive. There MacDonald and Stimson recognized the justice in Bruening's stand except Tardieu whose "diplomatic" illness prevented him from attending. Bruening's proposals at Bessinge should have been agreed to by the former Allies, not because their adoption might have saved the Bruening government as contemporary observers claimed, but rather because they were just and moderate. French intransigence and her unwillingness to make even the slightest gesture towards disarmament remained the main obstacle in achieving any agreement with Bruening. Until his dismissal, the French hard line did not change, and, when there was a slight movement towards moderation as a result of Tardieu's electoral defeat, it was too little and too late to affect Bruening's fate. It can be justly argued that Tardieu's obstructionist tactics were as responsible for the failure of the Conference in its first stage as Hitler's one year later. The difference between the two lay in the fact that while Tardieu was against French disarmament, Hitler demanded German rearmament. Both cases, however, spelled disaster for the Conference's future.

Even more regrettable was the submission of Britain and the United States to Tardieu's tactics and their impotence to extract any degree of moderation from the French. Yet later they succumbed to the pressures and

blackmail of Papen and Schleicher by forcing the moderate Herriot to grant the former what they have refused to Bruening -- the December 11, 1932 Agreement recognizing Germany's right to equality in principle "within a regime of security," with the Germans emphasizing the first part of the sentence at the expense of the latter.

Germany extracted this concession by pursuing a policy of threats of withdrawal from the Conference and rearmament, thereby destroying the moral basis of the German claim. She now demanded equality of rights in armaments not through disarmament as Bruening had done, and which by now Herriot was more inclined to accept, but rather through German rearmament as the August 29, 1932, memorandum indicated. Indeed, this was the major difference between Bruening's policy and the policies of Papen and Schleicher, -- the former spoke of disarmament, the latter of rearmament. Because of the method the pair pursued they won their demand. In his policy Papen emphasized German rearmament, not because France was unwilling to disarm and equality in armaments could be achieved by German rearmament, but rather because his policy had been influenced by the generals, specifically Schleicher who made no secret of Germany's demand for rearmament.

Because of these tactics, British and American concession in granting the December 11, 1932 Agreement was unwarranted, and could only encourage further demands. It was the first instance of appeasement of German intransigence by Britain and the United States since the beginning of the Conference, a fact well understood by Hitler. Barely a week in office, he told senior Reichswehr officers and his cabinet that since equality in principle had been recognized, Germany should now rearm at a faster pace because the Western Powers expected her to do so.

Hitler's rise to power had actually turned the whole Disarmament Conference into a fruitless exercise of trying to achieve the impossible -- disarmament. He was uninterested in a convention limiting armaments: his objective was to first achieve parity in armaments with France and her allies and followed by superiority in armaments. Yet at the same time the Conference became a forum where Hitler's representatives constantly urged disarmament to the German level while submitting proposals designed to wreck that goal. These tactics were a German ploy to obscure her own rearmament.

While Britain was very much aware of these tactics she failed to pursue a policy of firmness against them as France demanded but rather gave in to German demands for rearmament, and at the same time tried to disarm France through the MacDonald Plan. But even this did not satisfy Hitler, for he wanted complete equality in armaments with France at the end of a five-year period, and rejected the concept of arriving at equality in armaments by stages. When Britain had finally seen reason and adopted the French plan for a two period convention which included first supervision and then disarmament, Hitler reverted to the MacDonald Plan but interpreted it to mean immediate German rearmament -- a claim denied by the British. Now Hitler had finally obtained the long sought pretext to wreck the Conference. He accused Britain of destroying her own Plan thereby shifting the blame for the Conference's breakdown on Britain and France. But had Britain acted more firmly earlier when Hitler's obstructionist tactics were so obvious the blame for the breakdown could have been thrust upon him where it actually belonged.

Hitler's wrecking of the Conference on October 14, 1933, could have been interpreted at the time as abrupt without previous planning. Yet when his

tactics from the day he came into office are examined, such as his promise to senior officers to rearm and Nadolny's intransigence at Geneva, one can conclude that Hitler set the stage for the breakdown of the Conference. All that was needed was a pretext in order to shift the blame to others to enable Hitler to play a martyr's role for maximum internal and external consumption. The "new Simon plan" filled this role.

Hitler expected some type of retaliation from the Western powers against Germany because of his withdrawal from both the Conference and the League of Nations. Not only had such an action not taken place, but actually Britain and France still hoped to reach a disarmament agreement with Hitler through private negotiations outside the Conference giving him the opportunity to raise the price for accommodation.

In his first encounter with the Western powers Hitler had tested their firmness and found appeasement and vacillation as their response to his tactics. He had achieved a diplomatic victory because the Western powers had failed to retaliate. And if this was the case in 1933, why should not such a method of conducting foreign policy not be adopted by Hitler in the future? At least he remembered their lack of action when he decided to invade the Rheinland in 1936 believing rightly that the risk was worth taking. Hitler got the right measurements of his opponents as early as 1933 if not earlier. Unfortunately it took much longer for Hitler's opponents to find the right answer to his strategy. It all began at the Geneva Disarmament Conference.

Another important lesson from the deliberations and the failure of the Disarmament Conference has relevance today. It was the unwillingness of the United States to contribute to French security that made it impossible for France to disarm in face of German rearmament. The United States who

urged France to disarm yet offered nothing in terms of guaranteeing French security, had indirectly contributed to the failure of the Conference prior to the coming of Hitler to power. As in the past so today American commitment to the security of the free world is imperative for the preservation of peace.

And finally, a parallel can be drawn between the disarmament negotiations of the early 1930's and the SALT talks today. Then the powers were concerned with the limitation and ultimately the abolition of military aircraft -- the weapon which caused greatest destruction to civilian population in World War II. They viewed air power as the most awesome and destructive weapon, the same way as we view today the ICBM (Inter Continental Ballistic Missile). Furthermore, the Geneva Disarmament Conference had slight chance of success because it concentrated on the technical aspects of disarmament (qualitative and quantitative) without first solving the political problems which compelled nations to rearm. For the SALT talks to succeed today there is first the need to establish an atmosphere of "good faith" and trust among the super powers before the technical questions are dealt with. It is only peace and mutual trust that make disarmament possible. After the fall of Bruening, such an atmosphere no longer existed in Europe thereby rendering disarmament illusory.

APPENDIX A.

Letter from the British Secretary of State John Simon to the Prime Minister regarding a conversation held on April 18, 1932, in Geneva between Simon and Bruening. It was the first in a series of meetings that the German Chancellor held throughout the week with the leaders of the Western Powers culminating in the Bessinge talks of April 26, 1932. As in this conversation, the Chancellor had always stressed Germany's willingness to arrive at equality of rights in armaments by having the heavily armed states begin a process of gradual disarmament towards the German level. It shows Bruening's position in the question of disarmament.

My Dear Prime Minister.

18 April 1932.

I had an hour's conversation with Dr. Bruening this morning. We talked about disarmament and reparations. We referred to the Resolution which is now being discussed in the General Commission of the Conference to the effect that the reduction of armaments as provided for in Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, can be "completely achieved only by stages and by means of successive revisions which should follow each other at the shortest possible intervals." I told Dr. Bruening that I had criticized the final phrase on the ground that revision at very short intervals was likely to encourage those who ought to make substantial reductions now in delaying their effort on the ground that another opportunity would soon occur. But I had had in mind a second objection which I would like to appreciate. Supposing that it was possible to secure a substantial measure of qualitative disarmament with the result that some of the weapons of war prohibited to Germany under the Treaty of Versailles were generally abandoned, it ought I thought to be possible to meet the German thesis of equality of treatment without increasing German armaments by leaving Germany to insert of her own free will her existing maxima in the schedule in which each country was under the Draft Convention to insert the maxima required. The result would be that the limitation placed upon Germany

would be arrived at by the same process as the limitations placed upon any other country, and the special methods imposed by Part V of the Treaty would no longer apply. But the result would be that though Germany was bound by the maxima she inserted in the schedule, she would only be bound for the period during which the new convention operated. If this period was for seven or ten years, this might not so likely provoke objections from France as would be the case if revision took place at very short intervals. I proposed therefore, to urge that the draft of the Resolution now being considered should be modified in order to give the convention we were now trying to reach a longer prospect of life.

Dr. Bruening expressed himself as much interested in this idea and agreed that on the conditions I had named there might be much to be said for meeting the claim of Germany to equality of treatment by some such method. Germany had no desire to increase her armaments or spend more money on them if a reasonable measure of disarmament was brought about elsewhere. This led us to speak about the French Plan which Dr. Bruening declared would be regarded in Germany as little more than a bad joke.

I told him that after mentioning the matter to the Americans and the Italians I had formed the idea that it might be well to put forward in the Disarmament Conference (before the French proposals for transferring weapons to the League of Nations for the purposes of an International Force) a resolution in the name of the United Kingdom that the Conference was in favor of qualitative disarmament i.e. the selection of certain classes or descriptions of weapons with a view to prohibiting by International Convention their possession or use by any state. Bruening was much in favor of my suggestion and very complimentary as to the proposed resolution. But he was extremely anxious that nothing should be done which would lead the French to throw in their hand and declare opposition in such a form as would show that no good could ever come out of the Disarmament Conference.

I have pointed out to Bruening that it was most undesirable that the first effective vote in the Conference should be taken on the French Plan. This was equally undesirable whether the majority was in favor of the plan or against it. If the plan was defeated by a majority, the French would say that the Powers voting against them had destroyed all hopes of disarmament. If the French got a majority for their plan, this would be equally serious for most certainly it could not be accepted by many great Powers including Italy and ourselves, neither was America in favor of it. Therefore, the right course was to take the first vote on some earlier matter and qualitative disarmament in the terms I suggested was the best available topic. Bruening as I have said, agreed, provided always that we could be sure that it did not provoke a French outburst.

APPENDIX B.

Letter from Walford Selby (senior official in the British Foreign Office later Ambassador in Vienna) to the Secretary of State, describing the policies pursued by the Papen Government as presented in the Völkerbund - a semi official German paper dealing with questions arising in the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference. This was a warning but dismissed by the British Government.

Secretary of State.

October 10, 1932.

I have read through this document /Völkerbund/ with great interest.

Unquestionably on the surface it presents a case which it is very difficult if not impossible to answer. Does, however, the position remain the same if it is read in the light of the "background?" That background I endeavored to set out in a paper I submitted to you when you first came into Office.

In the light of the case as I see it, the German document immediately becomes susceptible of effective answer and assumes the sole aspect of propaganda and special pleading in which the Germans are always so expert.

No purpose would be served by taking up all the points of the German document, but I would select two from the explanatory statement of the Völkerbund as examples of the presentation of the German case which ignore most of the main factors in the situation.

"Germany," says the Völkerbund, "desires to make a more rational use of her defense budget in order to enable her better to meet the special requirements of the German situation, and also to render easier its adaptation to the rapid development of military technique, and to the innovations of military strategy and tactics." A very reasonable and legitimate aspiration, if we did not happen to have been told (e.g. Mr. Yencken) that one of the reasons for the pressure being exercised by the German Government at the Disarmament Conference lay in the fact that the plans of the German

Defense Ministry had been for some time under preparation and were now ready, and the Defense Ministry wished to be free to put them into immediate operation. In the view of some competent opinion, - I admit not all, - the carrying out of these plans would have the effect of permitting to Germany a far greater accretion of military strength than the proposals in themselves would seem to indicate. To put the point plainly, the constitution of a militia in Germany might not be quite the same inoffensive proceeding as the constitution of a militia in some other country.

"Germany," says the Völkerbund, "has the same right to national security as every other state." None can dispute the justice of such a contention. But who is it that threatens the "security" of Germany in existing circumstances, unless we accept the position that her security and her future are indeed imperiled by the Peace Settlements, and that she is entitled to strengthen the military backing for her diplomacy to ensure establishment of her security, by forcing a "peaceful" solution of everything she objects to in the Peace Treaties.

Mr. Yencken told me that many Germans were of opinion that such "peaceful" solutions of outstanding problems could be achieved, if German diplomacy had the backing of greater military force - an argument which a German would be disposed to use without perceiving that there was nothing very peculiar about it.

A reversal of the Eastern frontier settlement remains, of course, the first objective of Germany, but we cannot overlook her more remote objectives when that small issue has been disposed of to the satisfaction of the German people. One has to bear in mind the German agitation for overseas expansion which directly touches our position. A memorandum on the subject has just reached us from our Embassy in Berlin. Mr. Yencken informed me the memorandum was couched in very moderate terms, having regard to the agitation in Germany which showed a tendency to increase.

To sum up, I do not feel that we can consider the question of "concession" to Germany in the matter of armaments without regard to its effect on the problem of the Peace Settlements as a whole and the ultimate peace of Europe, and that we should accordingly do well to stand firmly by the principle so admirably set forth in your recent note, that "His Majesty's Government can give no countenance or encouragement to the disregard of Treaty obligations" and that as regards German armaments there must be "at any rate no material increase."

The two attached telegrams from Berlin Nos. 51 and 52 of September 28, indicate the everlasting tendency of Germany to minimize and show contempt for all and every concession made to her, as regards modification of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty in her favour, in order to force the pace as regards realisation of the next aim of the German programme.

It is this tendency, coupled with increasing German political agitation, which has so greatly contributed to complicate the task of the Disarmament Conference. It is Germany herself who is more responsible than any other Power for retarding the progress of that Conference, and precipitating the present difficult situation and it is, I venture to suggest, little short of impudent imposture on her part that she should now make the attempt to shelve the blame on to the shoulders of the other participants in the Conference.

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I. PRIMARY SOURCESa. Unpublished Documents

The unpublished documents used in this study were: Reichskanzlei Akten, Allgemeine Abrüstung, Abrüstungskonferenz, vols., IV and V; Auswärtiges Amt, Büro des Reichsministers Akten, vols., XIII, XVI, XVIII and Reichskanzlei Akten, Kabinettsprotokolle, vols., 107, 109. These unpublished records are deposited in the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. Of great value in learning about the German policy at Geneva were the British Foreign Office Correspondence for the years 1932-1933; the records of British Cabinet meetings, and John Simon's Private Letters. These documents are found in the Public Record Office, London. The State Department records deposited in the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., as well as the unpublished Henry L. Stimson diary and papers deposited in the Yale University Library were of primary importance in shedding out new light concerning basic differences between the policies of Bruening and Papen.

b. Published Documents

The following published documents have been used in this study. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series C, The Third Reich, First Phase vol. I January-October 1933, published by the United States Printing Office, Washington, D. C. Three volumes of published British documents. These were volumes III, IV, V of Documents in British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Second Series, edited by E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London. Four volumes of published French documents were most valuable in terms of studying French reaction to German proposals. These were volumes I, II, III, IV of Documents Diplomatiques Français 1932-1939, First Series, published in Paris during 1964-1966. Used in this work were, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference 1919, vol. XIII and for 1932-1933 vol. I. These volumes were published by the United States Government Printing Office. Three volumes of Documents on International Affairs for Years 1930-1933, edited by Wheeler-Bennett, John W. published in London, Oxford University Press 1931-1934. Regarding speeches and proposals submitted by the German representatives at Geneva, the League of Nations records have been used. Included were: Minutes of the Preparatory Commission for 1926-1931; Verbatim Records of the Plenary Meetings Series A, vol. I, February-July 1932; Minutes of the General Commission, Series B, vol. I, February-July 23, 1932, vol. II, December 14, 1932-June 29, 1933; Minutes of the Bureau, Series C, vol. I, September 21, 1932-June 27, 1933 - all published at Geneva between 1932-1934. Also used were Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Supplement B and vol. VI, published by the United States Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

c. Newspapers

Newspapers which very often expressed the official point of view of German governments such as the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Germania, Völkischer Beobachter, and the Völkerbund were read with the object of tracing German policy through editorial comments and articles. Also The Times of London and The New York Times have been read in order to find out how Western public opinion viewed the German case at Geneva. From the French point of view, Le Temps, which often expressed official policy was important reading because of its editorial comments concerning French reaction to German policy.

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