

WILSON and French Fears Clash at Council Table

RAY American Principles By STANNARD BAKER

The Sunday Journal herewith presents the third chapter of Ray Stannard Baker's story "The Peace" which is an authoritative narrative of how the peace of Paris was concluded.

THERE is a kind of mysterious potency, a symbolism of action and power, in a great document. Here are the words set down; here the point outlined!

Such a great document was the president's original draft of the covenant of the League of Nations. I remember the surcharged atmosphere of the Crillon hotel when the word went round that this document had been at length distributed.

It is easy enough to accept general principles—all the world pays pious homage to the phrase "disarmament" or "limitation of armament"—but the real fight begins with the concrete application of those principles.

Thus it went instantly around Paris—by a kind of wireless telegraph—known to Marconi—what the Americans really meant by the reduction of armaments as expressed in the fourth of the Fourteen Points, "to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety."

Article IV of the president's mysterious new covenant contained the terms of a program that cut at the very root of continental power and safety. Among other things, compulsory military service was to be abolished, not only in Germany, but everywhere.

The storm broke at once; private conferences were held by the president notably one with the alarmed premier of Italy, Orlando; another in which the whole subject of the covenant was discussed with Lord Robert Cecil and General Smuts.

There, the proposal to limit armaments struck at the very roots of European safety. When it touched land armament it set France and Italy a shiver; when it touched naval armament, the British Empire shook, and every small nation in Europe, fearful of its neighbors, was in deadly fear lest, if it were not permitted to keep up a large army, its very existence be endangered.

Therefore, the proposal to limit armaments struck at the very roots of European safety. When it touched land armament it set France and Italy a shiver; when it touched naval armament, the British Empire shook, and every small nation in Europe, fearful of its neighbors, was in deadly fear lest, if it were not permitted to keep up a large army, its very existence be endangered.

France presents her case. At every turn, also, the concrete evidence of what was meant to France were ready at hand: the visual demonstration of their reasons for being afraid!

At every turn, also, the concrete evidence of what was meant to France were ready at hand: the visual demonstration of their reasons for being afraid!

At every turn, also, the concrete evidence of what was meant to France were ready at hand: the visual demonstration of their reasons for being afraid!

At every turn, also, the concrete evidence of what was meant to France were ready at hand: the visual demonstration of their reasons for being afraid!

At every turn, also, the concrete evidence of what was meant to France were ready at hand: the visual demonstration of their reasons for being afraid!

At every turn, also, the concrete evidence of what was meant to France were ready at hand: the visual demonstration of their reasons for being afraid!

mentality for permanently limiting the sovereignty of Germany" and this he could not accept, for it meant an indefinite continuation of the military control of Germany. It also meant constant interference, meddling and prying into trade secrets, which would certainly lead again to war.

If the allied armies were to be maintained forever, in order to control the carrying out of the peace terms; not peace, but allied armed domination would have been established. His government would never agree to enter such an arrangement, and were he to enter into such an agreement, he would be far exceeding his authority under the United States constitution.

FRANCE'S DILEMMA This singleness of devotion to the idea of French safety impaled France upon the horns of a hopeless dilemma, where she still struggles. For, if Germany was to be allowed to weaken her economy, how could she pay the huge bill for reparations? Thus was France buffeted between her fear and her need—but the fear was then and has been ever since, the really dominating element. Distressing as was French devastation, France desired safety more than reconstruction.

This dilemma was strikingly illustrated by the controversy over the army of occupation. The French demanded that a great army remain stationed on the Rhine, the cost of maintenance to be borne by Germany. Time and again it was argued that this meant a reduction of reparation. In one of his slashing outbursts Lloyd George said (June 1, Council of Four), that with "the German army reduced to a strength of 100,000 men, it was ridiculous to maintain an army of occupation of 200,000 men on the Rhine."

It filled in the details of the organization behind the line of defense. It provided for an international staff to which this force was kept up to standard and to prepare plans for its speedy and effective use. So far from forcing the compulsory military service, it provided for the possible adoption of that principle by the entire world, for it permitted the international body to require a member state to adopt compulsory service on recommendation of the general staff.

Its emphasis was on fixing minimum rather than maximum limits upon armaments. On February 7 the French economists set up the third leg of the tripod upon which French security was to rest. This was in a report of the disarmament of Germany by a committee of the supreme war council, headed by M. Loucheur. M. Loucheur was one of the able financial leaders of France and was serving in Clemenceau's cabinet as minister of reconstruction. This report proceeded upon the assumption that industry was to rest upon an economic basis. In order, therefore, to be absolutely safe, the allies must not only impose military disarmament upon Germany with the arm of the Rhine frontier, backed by an armed League of Nations, but Germany must also be disarmed or crippled financially. For here the French clearly recognized their inferiority. The Loucheur report called for supplementing military disarmament by the closing of arms and munitions factories of Germany to prevent rearming. Allied officers were thus to supervise German industry to see that military supplies would be destroyed.

WHAT STANDARD OF ARMAMENT? We come now to the detailed question of what standard of armament was to be the only safe standard upon which to base the mutual guarantee of an association of nations. But when this drastic proposal came up for the first reading in the League of Nations commission, February 6, the word "domestic" was at once pounced upon by French and Japanese delegates against that standard of land armament, even when counterbalanced by the guarantee of a League of Nations, and Great Britain was also probably uncertain as to what it meant in its possible application to naval armament. The actual objection in the meeting came from Baron Makino, the Japanese delegate. He suggested that the words "national safety" be substituted for "domestic safety," and this was adopted and so appears in the final draft of the treaty.

"National safety" as against "domestic safety" represented a weakening of the president's original idea; but in that tumultuous time, before the league was organized, national safety loomed as an overwhelming problem. But the change in wording let in the whole array of French argument and appeal for her own national safety and a hopeless effort to determine what military force was sufficient for national safety when each nation was its own judge of what was necessary to its safety.

M. Bourgeois was quick to seize upon the change in wording to emphasize his demand that the new standard of "national safety" not only demanded strong national armament but a League of Nations with direct international control of armament and a general staff. One of the bitterest controversies of the entire conference developed around this difference between the American view and that of the French.

President Wilson, strongly supported by Lord Robert Cecil, opposed the French idea of international armament. He saw in it, as he said, a method of "substituting international militarism for national militarism," and the whole idea of control was repugnant to him.

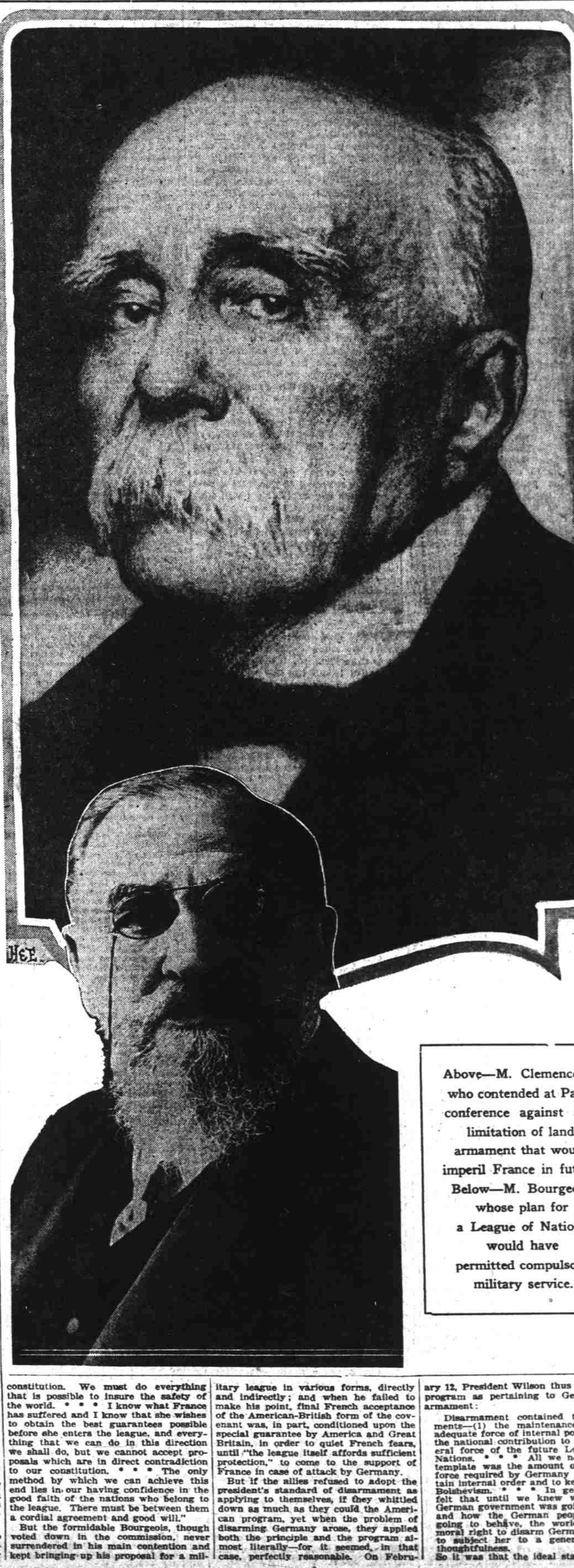
WILSON'S ARGUMENT "No nation," he said, "will consent to control. As for us Americans, we cannot consent to control because of our constitution. We must do everything that is possible to insure the safety of the world. . . . I know what France has suffered and I know that she wishes to obtain the best guarantee possible before she enters the league, and everything that we can do in this direction we shall do, but we cannot accept proposals which are in direct contradiction to our constitution. . . . The only method by which we can achieve this end lies in our having confidence in the good faith of the nations who belong to the league. There must be between them a cordial agreement and good will."

But the formidable Bourgeois, though voted down in the commission, never surrendered in his main contention and kept bringing up his proposal for a military league in various forms, directly and indirectly; and when he failed to make his point, final French acceptance of the American-British form of the covenant was, in part, conditioned upon the special guarantee by America and Great Britain, in order to quiet French fears, until "the league itself affords sufficient protection," to come to the support of France in case of attack by Germany.

But if the allies refused to adopt the president's standard of disarmament as applying to themselves, if they whittled down as much as they could the American program, yet when the problem of disarming Germany arose, they applied both the principle and the program almost literally—for it seemed, in that case, perfectly reasonable. On February 12, President Wilson thus stated the program as pertaining to German disarmament:

Disarmament contained two elements—(1) the maintenance of an adequate force of internal police; (2) the national contribution to the general force of the future League of Nations. . . . All we need contemplate was the amount of armed forces required by Germany to maintain internal order and to keep down Bolshevism. . . . In general he felt that until we knew what the German government was going to be and how the German people were going to behave, the world had no moral right to disarm Germany, and to subject her to a generation of thoughtfulness. So it was that the ideal standard was

EXPOSITORS OF FRENCH PLAN FOR SECURITY



Above—M. Clemenceau, who contended at Paris conference against any limitation of land armament that would imperil France in future. Below—M. Bourgeois, whose plan for a League of Nations would have permitted compulsory military service.

applied to the enemy, compulsory service abolished, the army reduced to a police force of 100,000 men, and the navy to a mere basis of defense. Moreover, as a concession to the French demand for international control which had failed of acceptance as a general proposition, Germany's armaments are subject to investigation at any time by a majority vote of the League of Nations, even after her admission.

So much for the struggle over a standard of disarmament; we come now to the equally bitter controversy over the terms in the program, and the first and most important of these was the proposal to abolish compulsory service. Here were the exact terms of the program as President Wilson originally wrote it:

As the basis for such a reduction of armaments, all the powers subscribing to the treaty of peace, of which this government constitutes a part, agree to abolish conscription and all other forms of compulsory military service, and also agree that their future forces of defense and of international action shall consist of militia or volunteers whose numbers and methods of training shall be fixed after expert inquiry, by the agreements referred to in the last preceding paragraph.

This proposal cut at the very root of the continental military system; and yet the president was here only giving the commonplace American interpretation of the principle of point, and insisting that the world accept the traditional American (and British) policy of volunteer armies as contrasted with conscript armies. Germany had been the originator of the practice of conscription, and it had become the highest expression of the military spirit. He was proposing a wholly different practice, not theoretical, but the traditional method of the English speaking races. Later the proposal, as applied to the smaller states, was to be known, in the discussions of the council of four, as the "American-British Proposal," contrasted with the "French-Italian Proposal."

CONSCRIPTION IS RETAINED. Protests were made at once; one of the earliest by Orlando of Italy. We know exactly what Orlando told the president, for we have it in his own words, used later, in the council of four (May 15):

As then explained to President Wilson, Italy would be unable to raise an army by voluntary service. Such a system would be too difficult in its application to the whole tradition of the country is against it. Consequently, the Italian army will continue to be raised on a basis of compulsory service.

It appeared also that the French held exactly the same position. Even though the president's proposal looked only to the future, when the League of Nations should be functioning, and provided that the plans formulated should be the binding when and only when the League of Nations should be functioning, which might be a long way off—yet the Italians and French were fearful even of discussing the principle as concerning themselves; though they later agreed, with reluctance, to the application of it to Germany and Austria.

These considerations were brought up in the more formal conference with Lord Robert Cecil and General Smuts. Both of these men shared the strong aversion of English-speaking races to the idea of compulsory military service, but both also recognized the practical difficulty of securing the support of France and Italy to a future cooperation of the nations with so strong a provision regarding compulsory service. In the revised draft of the covenant, therefore, the provision regarding compulsory service became Article 8, and was thus whittled down:

It (the executive council) shall include in the feasibility of abolishing compulsory military service, and the substitution of a voluntary basis, and into the military and naval equipment which it is reasonable to maintain.

But even this device of mere inquiry was too strong for the French, and when the article came up for the first time in the League of Nations commission (February 6), which met in the evening in Colonel House's large office in the Crillon hotel, we find M. Bourgeois rising quickly to object. He did not wish even the possibility of abolishing compulsory service to be discussed.

This position was further developed by Signor Orlando of Italy and M. Loucheur, the other French delegate, and, in order to meet this determined opposition even to the mention of compulsory military service and yet keep a door open for future action by the League of Nations, the president proposed the following substitute:

The executive council shall also determine for the consideration and action of the several governments military equipment and armament in fair and reasonable proportion to the scale of forces maintained, and these limits when adopted, shall not be exceeded without the permission of the body of delegates.

In short, the president here throws the whole power of initiating action into the hands of the future League of Nations. While this proposal was adopted at the moment, it did not, by any means, close the discussion, and the final wording of the proposal was reached only after much controversy and the introduction of the idea of "special risk" so vigorously demanded by the French. Here is the wording as it finally appears in the treaty:

The council, taking account of the geographical situation and circumstances of each state, shall formulate proposals for such reduction for the consideration and action of the several governments. Such plans shall be subject to reconsideration and revision at least every 10 years. After these plans shall have been adopted by the several governments, the limits of armaments therein fixed shall not be exceeded without the concurrence of the council.

economic as well as military results, for a million or so young men will be working in industry in Germany while a corresponding million or so are marching and learning to shoot at the expense of the state in France and Italy.

GAINS FOR DISARMAMENT. A real gain was also made in the matter of publicity as a factor in the limitation of armaments. Publicity, in President Wilson's first draft of the covenant, had formed one of the cornerstones of the program. "There shall be full and frank publicity to all national armaments and military and naval programs." Here again French fears presented an obstacle. M. Bourgeois argued that so long as certain powers (the main Germany) remained outside the league, it would be folly to let them know the military secrets of those inside, and even when they came in, one must not trust them too far. What he wanted was publicity regarding the German armament, but not the armament of the allied nations. Finally, "full and frank publicity" became "exchange of information" among themselves—a more limited proposal, but an advance over anything in the past. The final clause of the covenant upon this subject reads as follows:

The members of the league undertake to exchange full and frank information as to the scale of their armaments, their military, naval and air programs, and the general character of such of their industries as are adaptable to warlike purposes.

In the matter of manufacture of munitions of war by private enterprises, though the practice of conscription is a full program, yet there is an advance over anything in the past. The president had taken a positive stand on this subject in his original covenant. "The conscription method of the English speaking races. Later the proposal, as applied to the smaller states, was to be known, in the discussions of the council of four, as the 'American-British Proposal,' contrasted with the 'French-Italian Proposal.'"

The members of the league agree that the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions and implements of war shall not be undertaken by any state which is not a member of the league which are not able to manufacture the munitions and implements of war necessary for their own defense.

Not only are there these gains in dealing with concrete aspects of the problem of disarmament but the treaty sets up machinery which has been used to bring the subject of limitation of armaments to the attention of the whole world. This provision is in Article IX of the covenant; which was originally presented to the League of Nations as a compromise with the French demand for an international general staff. It provides that "a permanent commission shall be constituted to advise the council on the execution of Articles I and VIII on military, naval and air questions generally." This permanent commission was named the "Inter-Allied Commission of the Council in May, 1920, and its first work was not to draw up plans for the use of league forces, as the French desired, but to report to the council on the limitation of armaments as the council is empowered to do under Article VIII.

Another important general gain lies in the formal acknowledgment by all the nations of the principle of limitation of armaments as one of the conditions of the peace. This originated in a proposal by President Wilson, which was included in the military, naval and air clauses of the treaty, which now appears on page 178 of the document. This was the colleague in the secret.

President Wilson suggested that it would make the naval, military and air arms more acceptable to the enemy if they were presented as preparatory to the treaty for general limitation of armaments for all nations. M. Clemenceau said he would like to see the formula before he agreed. The formula was included in the preamble in the following words:

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

General Bliss regards this as one of the most important provisions in the treaty. "In all good faith and honor," he said in his address at Philadelphia. "These 37 nations and Germany have pledged themselves to initiate as soon as practicable a general limitation of armaments after Germany has complied with her first obligation."

But the greatest gain of all, potentially, was in securing the adoption of a new instrumentality in the League of Nations for guaranteeing the safety of armaments of all nations. The necessity of keeping up great armaments to preserve their own safety. This is the root of the problem of national safety. The provisions of the treaty would represent the most fundamental factor of all in reducing armament. To have got the league through and to have brought all the allies into contact, without admitting the poisonous element of the French armament plan, and thus extending rather than curtailing the military organization and chapter, was the greatest achievement, although purchased at the sacrifice of part of the actual disarmament program.

Such are the provisions of the treaty of Versailles; the basis arrived at in Paris for dealing with the problem of limitation of armaments. The main problem discussed in this chapter was that of land armament, with which France was chiefly concerned and in which American principles and program came most directly into contact, with French fears and needs; but there were also other vital problems of disarmament, notably naval armament where British and American and American interests appear, and disarmament of small nations, methods of dealing with the new instrumentalities of war, and, finally, the problem of arming negroes, all of which will be treated in the following chapters.

(To be continued next Sunday.)