

The Oregon Journal

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.

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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. Who had it? What was in it? It had been secretly printed, with the single word "Covenant"—a word the president liked—upon the cover. In it was set forth, concretely for the first time, what the president meant by the proposed League of Nations, and in certain mysterious "supplementary articles" he also developed his ideas regarding some of the specific settlements. He had sent this document to various of the leaders in order to get their reactions.

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—"all the powers subscribing to the treaty of peace. The manufacture of munitions and implements of war by private enterprise or for private profit was to be forbidden. "Full and frank publicity as to all national armaments was to be required, under the old system, military preparation had always rested. And, above all, there was a new standard of armament proposed, that "domestic safety."

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; and the discussion opened up each afternoon both in the Council of Ten and in the important League of Nations commission. For Article IV of the covenant based upon "domestic safety" was undoubtedly the fundamental problem of the peace conference; the problem of the safety of nations and by what means it was to be made secure.

The great war had shaken the old world into ruin; old habits and relationships had broken down, and each nation, feeling its very existence in danger, flew to arms in protest. Each nation had reverted to a primitive reliance upon its own sword. The sword of France was its army, and the army rested upon the institution of compulsory military service. The British was her navy and her power upon the sea.

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. It would have been the wildest of Britain as the president clearly saw, to propose any real disarmament without setting up some new guarantee of safety in place of it, which would relieve the fears of Europe, restore confidence, and propose only what many thoughtful men had proposed before him, and what the American colonies had achieved, a guarantee of safety based upon common agreement, backed by force if necessary, in which the nations could trust; in short, a strong co-operative League of Nations.

But the president, like most Americans—for America had never been thoroughly frightened—did not fully realize until he arrived in Europe how enormously magnified were the fears, and how precarious the safety of Europe; how every discussion, for example, where France was concerned, got back to a question of French security. It was before the peace of any conference, the pream was full of it. As M. Clemenceau expressed it in the Council of Ten (secret minutes, January 30): "The French were the nearest neighbors of Germany, and could be at all times, as they had been in the past, suddenly attacked. . . . France realized that Great Britain had responsibilities in all parts of the world, and could not keep the whole of her strength concentrated at one point. . . . America, which was to be established, it must not begin by placing France in a perilous position. America was to protect by the whole breadth of the ocean, and Great Britain by her fleet."

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! M. Clemenceau: " . . . The fact must be faced that during four years of war the countryside of France had been devastated, and that it was the worst kind of savagery. . . . He wished to repeat what he had already said, that the peace of the world had been such that neither American nor British territories had suffered any harm. . . . He said that France had been so ravaged that it would seem as though recovery would be impossible. . . . The industries of France had been scientifically destroyed. . . . France had lost 1,500,000 men, either killed or mutilated. . . . The president clearly revealed in his speeches at that time that he realized increasingly the gravity of the problem. Among the president's papers in Marshal Foch's detailed memoranda on the

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. He said, March 17 (Secret minutes): "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 struggled. For, if Germany was to be weakened and economically ruined, 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 was the inevitable logic of the military spirit, which is inspired by fear, and stimulates in a nation a greater concern for the weakening or destruction of her enemy than for her own recovery. For, if Germany was allowed to build herself up economically, in order to pay reparations, she would be the same as reestablishing her old position as a power in Europe, and with a more highly developed industrial organization than France and, therefore, according to military logic, again dangerous to French safety.

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 2, 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 would cost 100,000,000 (sterling) a year if the burden were placed on the German exchequer and the result of this would be that there would be nothing left for compensation."

Indeed, the cost of this army of occupation since the armistice has been stupendous. Up to April, 1921, according to the figures officially issued by the reparations commission, the totals are as follows in gold marks: Gold Marks France 1,276,450,838 United States 1,187,827,830 Great Britain 1,016,162,830 Belgium 194,708,228 Italy 10,084,861

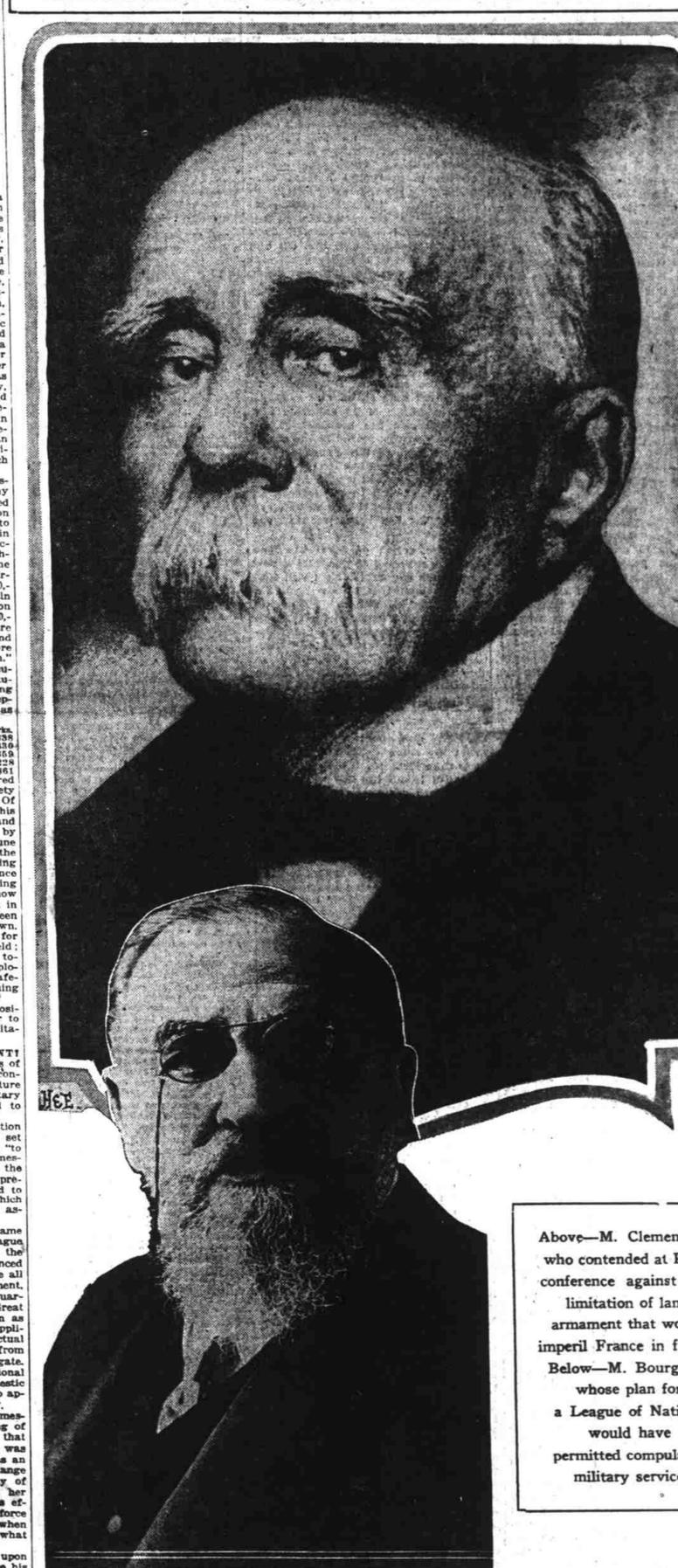
Yet the French consistently preferred these enormous expenditures for safety rather than for reconstruction. Of course, there is another aspect of this policy; for, by this method, bitterly and somewhat exaggeratedly described by Lloyd George in the argument of June 4, already referred to, of quelling the French army on Germany and making Germany pay the cost of it, France gets back part of the cost. In passing it may be noted that Germany is now being taxed to support the militarism in France from which she has herself been absolved, though by no desire of her own.

This dilemma in the economic field; and thus did the economists work together with the soldiers and the diplomats for the French conception of safety—although at the same time pursuing the irreconcilable aim of reparation. All these elements in the French position must be borne in mind in order to understand the struggle over the limitation of armaments.

WHAT STANDARD OF ARMAMENT? We come now to the detailed question that struggle and the first of these concerns the vital problem of a future standard of armament. What military force should a nation be permitted to keep? President Wilson's original conception of a standard of disarmament as set forth in point four was a reduction "to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety"—which will no doubt in the future, when the world is genuinely prepared to face the problem, be found 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 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 said in it, as he said, a method of "substituting international militarism for national militarism," and the whole idea of control was repugnant to him. "No nation," he said, "will consent to control. As for us Americans, we cannot consent to control because of our

EXPOSITORS OF FRENCH PLAN FOR SECURITY



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, 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 morally right to disarm Germany, and to subject her to a generation of thoughtfulness. So it was that the ideal standard was

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 one, and 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 into 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. Lyautey, the other French delegate, and, finally, 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 armaments which shall be reasonable in 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. But the abolition of compulsory service was forced upon Germany! And it may, indeed, prove to be one of the real gains at Paris; this destruction of the practice in the citadel of its origin. It will undoubtedly have far-reaching 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 (he meant 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, thereby relieving the consciences of such of their industries as are adaptable to warlike purposes. In the matter of manufacture of munitions of war by private enterprises, so long as the practice of conscription is in 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 nations and implements of war shall not be manufactured by private enterprise or for private profit. This occasioned considerable discussion, for the conscription method of the English speaking nations, with little industrial development, at the mercy of great nations. The provision was cut out of one draft of the covenant, restored by another by the president's motion and it finally appears in the treaty as follows:

The members of the league agree that the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions and implements of war shall be restricted to such extent as may be necessary for domestic safety. 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 by the French and which 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 "Military 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 on the feasibility of limitation of armaments as the council is empowered to do under Article VIII. GAIN FOR DISARMAMENT 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 78 of the covenant. President Wilson suggested that it would make the naval, military and air arms more acceptable to the enemy if they were presented as prearranged by the treaty for general limitation of armaments for all nations. M. Clemenceau said he would like to see the formula before he agreed, and he presented the following preamble in the following words: In order to render possible the institution of general limitation of the armaments of all nations, the American 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, 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. 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.)

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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.