

## THE FRENCH POSITION REGARDING SANCTIONS AND DISARMAMENT

Two statements given out in the French capital during recent weeks, and subsequent utterances of French delegates in the Twelfth Assembly of the League of Nations, call attention afresh, and in a more emphatic way than ever, to the distinctive and apparently definitive French position regarding disarmament and the prerequisites therefor, and to the fundamental and unescapable issue in the task of organizing international law and government in the world which is involved therein. On July 21st, the French Foreign Office published the reply of the Government of the Republic to an inquiry from the Secretary General of the League of Nations respecting the government's probable attitude in the Disarmament Conference next year, and on August 31st, Mr. Paul Boncour, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Chamber of Deputies, and prospectively a leading French delegate at Geneva this fall and next winter, issued a statement urging a certain attempt at a solution of the problem of peace and disarmament next February, a statement later declared by the Quai d'Orsay to represent official French opinion. Together the two documents constitute an admirable statement of the French position and of the problem in general, a much more systematic statement than Mr. Tardieu made at London last year and a more forceful one.

The primary elements of the French position are by now painfully familiar to all students of international relations, but certain aspects of that position have not been given adequate attention. What is more, students, especially American students, perhaps, of the problem have not yet compelled themselves to think the problem through to its last irreducible elements. It is time that this central and ineluctable issue should be faced and at least mentally settled.

The French position is based upon the thesis that the nation cannot safely disarm unless it is previously given an adequate guarantee of protection for its rights by international community action. This guarantee must be reliable, and hence must be free from those elements of delay and doubt which vitiate the guarantees of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Even after such a guarantee the nations cannot be asked to reduce to a plane of equality, for differences in geographical and political circumstance must be taken into account. And even their reduced armed forces must be available to the League for executing the guarantee of security.

Legally, the French position has no importance today; neither under the Covenant nor under any other existing treaties or legal principles are there any general obligations of guarantee or disarmament at the present time. Logically, the French position may be sound; if the nations desire an effective system of international law and government, a state of peace, and progress in disarmament, it may be strictly logical that they should take the steps suggested by Boncour, as suggested at other times by Bourgeois, by Cecil, by Wilson, and many other thinking statesmen. Ethically, the policy may be a

good one and it might be not only beneficial for the international community but advantageous—economically wise, a saving of substance and energy—for even Great Britain and the United States. But it is the political aspect of the problem which is most urgent just now.

British and American official policy and popular feeling—public opinion so-called—seem resolutely opposed to the French position. The British view, expressed more frequently than the American, holds that disarmament is the proper path to security and peace. This seems to be, to a large extent, a rationalization of a wish, designed to give logical and ethical color to an unwillingness to place national armed forces at League disposal or to participate in any system of international sanctions, in view of what it is feared will be the cost thereof, objection to the present territorial status in Europe and French policy in general, and some fear that any system of sanctions would mean the hegemony of French arms on the Continent. But it may be admitted that, in part, the British-American position is based on a genuine belief that an international system of enforcement would be unworkable, at least until some reduction of national armaments has been obtained, and otherwise objectionable from a truly international point of view. And sincere or disingenuous, like the French, the British-American position must be met on its merits. Would not a fifty or seventy-five per cent reduction of armaments all around materially increase and even assure security to all, without any system of sanctions?

The French reply carries the argument one stage deeper. Disarmament all around without guarantees would, it is held, simply give predominance to those nations with the greatest war potential, and not at all abolish the competitive and even combatative character of contemporary international relations. This predominance might take the form of sudden re-arming, or fighting with whatever weapons might be available—in an age of mechanized warfare—or it might operate as industrial, commercial, financial, and hence political predominance. It is not at all clear that French fear of a sudden re-arming and attack is chimerical, but chimerical or not, it is real; with it goes something of the second calculation also. Unless international protection be given, France intends to hold, by force of her present armaments and refusal to agree to reductions, the advantages which those armaments give her, *vis-a-vis* Germany, *e.g.*, potentially greater in economic, military, and political strength.

At this point there seem to remain only two further considerations to be taken into account.

If British-American statesmen remain unconvinced of the logic, the benefits to their own nations, and the practicability of the international sanctions program, it is obviously their task, if possible, to induce, to use a mild term, the French to abandon their position. France, contending for her own advantage in the whole play of international views and policies, must be met on her own ground of such competition, and forced by manoeuvring and by

pressure of politics into yielding in whole or in part to the "peace and security via disarmament" view. The question of what means of putting pressure upon France are available to British and American, not to mention Italian, German, and Russian, adherents of this view, lies outside the scope of consideration here.

Finally it may be noted that if France is right in fearing that in a disarmed world war potential—or perhaps it should be called peace potential!—would be the measure of predominance, then *a fortiori* success in securing the establishment of an effective system of international sanctions would bring about the same situation. In proportion as such a system of sanctions rendered competition or combat between nations by arms futile, international competition in economic power and in the influence based thereon or upon cultural superiorities would be the order of the day, just as, and even more than, in a disarmed world without sanctions. France possibly would be willing to face this competition, if protected in her recognized rights, in reliance upon her traditions of intellectual and spiritual merit, even including the hazard of revision of the *status quo* by agreement, or possibly even some degree of majority control, concessions which she would most certainly have to make as a price of protection, and perhaps she would ask nothing better. At the present moment she seems, logically and rightly enough under the competitive international system which British and American statesmen refuse to see replaced by a system of truly organized international government, to be holding to her momentary advantage in terms of armaments and alliances.

This is the problem in international organization posed by the recent French utterances and which will demand settlement next year, or the next, or the next, until finally met and disposed of.

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#### THE ESTRADA DOCTRINE

The topic of recognition has been much discussed in the United States recently. A very high government official and a very eminent American international lawyer have lately crossed swords on the question. Yet little notice has been taken here of a new doctrine which has stirred the officials, editors and scholars south of the Rio Grande.<sup>1</sup> The new doctrine seems to be definitely labelled with the name of Estrada, although "*La Doctrina México*," "*La Doctrina Mexicana*" and "*La Doctrina Ortiz Rubio*" have all been suggested as titles. The doctrine is contained in some brief "declarations" made to the press in Mexico City on September 27, 1930, by the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations, Señor Don Genaro Estrada.<sup>2</sup> The declaration is, in effect, an announcement of instructions sent to the diplomatic representatives of Mexico to acquaint them with a new policy

<sup>1</sup> See this JOURNAL, p. 805, *infra*, for book-note reviewing *La Opinion Universal sobre La Doctrina Estrada*. <sup>2</sup> See text of the declaration in this JOURNAL, Supplement, p. 203.