

Despite the limited success of The Hague Conferences, however, I think one has to credit them with the concept which led to the very great interest in disarmament which became evident immediately following World War I. The Hague Conferences brought the question of world disarmament to public notice and perhaps paved the way for future discussions which, unfortunately, were not resumed until the conclusion of World War II. I think, however, that it is worthwhile noting that the two Hague Conferences held at the instigation of Russia have an interesting parallel in that the discussions which were initiated in the United Nations in 1946 were sponsored by Soviet Russia. It is also germane to efforts being carried on today in the field of disarmament to note that at these Conferences one of the important issues on which the Russians were unable to agree with a number of other nations related to the technological disadvantages to which they considered they would be placed in the matter of new fire arms, new explosives, submarines or similar engines of destruction, warships armed with rams, strategic Railways all of which had become subjects for intense discussion.

I think it is well to remember that although The Hague conferences failed to place any limitations upon land armaments, the second conference in particular did succeed in extending the provisions of the Geneva Convention to naval warfare; it obtained some limitations on naval weapons; it declared against bombardment of undefended places, and most indicative of the future, in declaring against the use of poison gas in warfare, it laid the basis for the protocol on gas warfare of 1925.

Immediately following World War I two methods of approach to the problem of world disarmament were evolved. The first was through a system of articles in the League of Nations Covenant, and the second through a series of conferences held outside the framework of the League of Nations. Without going into the details of the efforts made to establish a system of disarmament following World War I, it can be said that the League of Nations in spite of the purposes for which it was established did not succeed because it lacked the support of certain major powers (principally the United States of America which had become isolationist). The fact that the Covenant itself lacked some of the machinery which is now contained in the Charter of the United Nations was, I think, only of secondary importance. Several of the conferences held outside the framework of the League scored limited successes and I will refer briefly to one or two of these efforts in order to draw attention to some of the points which remain of importance in the renewed efforts now underway.

Today when it is clear that the United Nations is the only international body which possibly can provide the framework for such discussions, it is difficult to understand a state of affairs which in the 1920's and 1930's gave better opportunities for reaching agreement on disarmament outside the League of Nations. The debates in the League resulted in a stalemate. The French, because of their very real fear of a resurgent Germany, demanded that security must precede disarmament. The United Kingdom and others took the opposite view, and early lost patience with French preoccupations and anxieties. In the late 1920's, however, a spirit of optimism spread throughout the world when Litvinov for Russia, Kellogg for the United States of America, and Briand for France promoted a treaty to outlaw war and it seemed for a time that as a consequence of this treaty important reductions in armaments might be effected. We must recall that the Washington, Geneva and London Conferences did achieve very substantial reductions in naval armaments, but these were later nullified when Germany and Japan denounced the treaties.

By the 1930's the optimism in which these efforts had begun had changed to pessimism. The last general disarmament effort began