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THE POLITICS OF DISARMAMENT

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DISARMAMENT has been the dream of idealists for centuries; as a problem of diplomacy, it dates from the Treaty of Versailles. On the one hand, the Treaty radically reduced the armaments of the defeated Powers; on the other, it imposed on other signatories to the Treaty the obligation to disarm in turn—an obligation which is far from being fulfilled. In naval armaments alone and among the three great naval Powers, Great Britain, the United States and Japan, has there been progress. Land and air armaments in Europe are to-day greater than before the War, and it is to the limitation and reduction of these that the coming Conference will chiefly turn its attention. The obstacles to its success are tremendous. None is perhaps more serious than the fact that the problem of armaments cannot be isolated from politics. Disarmament, indeed, is primarily a political problem. Behind the inevitable disputes at the Conference over tons and guns, over tanks and aeroplanes, and over professional armies and trained reserves, will lurk the conflict in policies of the Great Powers. An understanding of the Conference requires, therefore, an understanding of the political situation.

The Conference meets in an atmosphere of discontent and insecurity in Europe. The primary reason for this state of nerves is the settlement of Versailles itself. While promising disarmament, it unleashed the forces of hate and reaction which have made armaments inevitable. The Settlement followed the approved tradition of crushing the vanquished, though it dressed the tradition in cant phrases of justice and self-determination. Austria-Hungary was dismembered, and Germany partly so. Virtually solid blocks of German population were handed to Poland and Czechoslovakia, and of Magyars, Russians and Bulgars to Roumania, thus creating new Alsace-Lorraine problems for future generations. Crushing burdens of reparations were laid on the vanquished in the name of an outraged humanity, while the defeated Powers were all radically disarmed and Germany subjected to the indignities of military garrisons on the Rhine for fifteen years. Above all, by Balkanizing Central Europe politically the Peace Settlement virtually