PSF: LONDON NAVAL CONFERENCE, 1934

X

Subject File

PSF London Naval Conference, 1934
(Folder 1 of 3)

Box [redacted] 157

PSF: London Naval Conference

NORMAN H. DAVIS

Claridge's Hotel,
London, England,
March 6, 1934.

PERSONAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
APR 13 1934
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RECEIVED
MAY 3 - 1934
DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

The Honorable
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

I am enclosing a memorandum of my conversation with Mr. MacDonald with regard to the naval question. The British are unquestionably disturbed as to the far-reaching effect which the present Japanese activities may have, and they are most desirous of reaching an agreement with us, if possible, because of the salutary effect which it might have on Japan. I am informed that they are pushing the work at Singapore as rapidly as possible but that this will not be completed until 1937. In the meantime their policy will, in my judgment, be to iron out their differences with us with regard to the maintenance of naval parity, to reach a common understanding as to the Japanese demands for an increased ratio and even to go further, if we are disposed to do so, for the maintenance of peace and the protection of our respective rights and interests.

I understand that, while they all want an agreement with us, Baldwin and some of them are fearful that the Senate might upset any agreement that might be made. For that reason they want to be very careful in doing nothing to arouse Japan's susceptibilities until they know definitely where they stand. That, I think, is MacDonald's chief reason for insisting

Confidential File

that any preliminary negotiations should be most secret. Preliminary conversations such as we have had can, of course, be kept confidential but when it reaches the stage of actual agreement on technical and political questions relating to the navy I doubt if it can be kept secret and I do not quite see the necessity for it. Since the British have taken the initiative in inviting us to have an exchange of views, I think it is wise for us to see that they maintain this position in the negotiations preliminary to the Naval Conference in 1935. Once these are prepared, we could well take the initiative of having the Conference, in case there is to be one, held in Washington.

As to procedure, I would suggest for your consideration, two or three alternatives. First, to accept MacDonald's invitation to have a naval representative and someone representing the Department of State, confer with two corresponding British representatives. To maintain the present strategic position I think it would be wise for us to send someone here. Otherwise, if they send someone to Washington, our strategic position changes. We might designate as naval attache here the Admiral to be chosen for the Navy and Atherton might serve as the opposite to Craigie. In this respect, however, we would be at a disadvantage unless there were someone to agree with MacDonald on the agenda for the preliminary discussions and to keep a hand on the situation and prevent its getting in a jam. I do not see how this could very well be done without causing a lot of speculation unless the principal representative has a reason for being here.

After thinking this over and talking with Bingham and Atherton, I am inclined to favor a second alternative method as follows: Once we have reason to believe that, as a result of

a further exchange of views with Mr. MacDonald during the next few weeks, we can get together, it would be better to let it be known that the British, with a view of preparing for the forthcoming naval conference, are first inviting the Americans to have an exchange of views, after which the discussions will be broadened to include the Japanese and then the French and the Italians. The British may be somewhat reluctant to do this for fear it may strain their relations with Japan, which they wish by all means to avoid unless practically assured of a naval agreement with us, but I think that if they believe our negotiations can be concluded quickly (which I believe would be possible), they will fall into line.

If, however, there should be a meeting within the next month of eight or ten Powers, in a last effort to reach a disarmament agreement, our negotiations with the British could be carried on under this umbrella without any difficulty or embarrassment. The possibility of such a meeting will depend largely upon the attitude of France which at present is not favorable.

Eden, who has told me of his visits to Berlin, Rome and Paris, is satisfied that Hitler now is most desirous of reaching a disarmament agreement and of mollifying France, and from other good sources I am informed that Hitler now feels the need of tranquillity in foreign politics, which is becoming more and more necessary for the organization of his plans for internal reconstruction

On the other hand, Eden feels that Barthou, Tardieu, and even Herriot and Leger (who is rather a key man at the Quai

D'Orsay) do not want a disarmament agreement now and that Benes, for some reason, is becoming less inclined to favor an agreement.

Just now Eden called me by telephone and told me that they had had a meeting of the Committee of the Cabinet on disarmament today and that they had decided to send to Tyrell to be delivered to the French, some further arguments urging them as a matter of self-interest to accept at once, as a basis of negotiation, the British memorandum. This they hope will have some effect but at present they are expecting a temporizing reply. After that they will decide upon the advisability of trying to get a meeting on disarmament, including Germany and all the principal powers.

While the situation does not look promising as to an agreement, the British still feel that when the French have to decide whether, through a disarmament agreement and supervision, to stop German rearmament at about where it is now, or to face the inevitable continued rearmament of Germany in the absence of any control, they will be wise enough to choose the former. The chief source of trouble will be on the part of the manufacturers of armaments and particularly the Comite des Forges and the Germans, who have a financial interest in fomenting international strife. That is the most insidious and powerful influence against which we have to struggle and there is a growing realization here of this.

I am leaving for Sweden tomorrow. I had planned to go today but Mr. Kindersley, who is the British member of the International Committee and is going with me, could not leave until tomorrow. I was unable to arrange to take a boat directly

to Sweden, as I had hoped to do, because at this time of year there is only one boat a week, leaving Saturday night. We therefore have to go by train through Hamburg but I will not go through any of the capitals or see anybody on the Continent.

By the time I get back here in two or three weeks I presume we will know much more about the possibilities of disarmament and whether or not I shall get into that or return home. If, by then, you have any instructions or suggestions with regard to the naval question I hope you will send me word through the Embassy here.

It was gratifying that there should be such a favorable impression everywhere with regard to the end of the first year of your Administration. Even Wilmot Lewis sent a very excellent dispatch, more friendly than those he has been sending heretofore.

With warm regards, I am as ever,

Sincerely yours,

Norman H. Davis

N. H.
NHD:EH

P. S. I may say that Bingham and I, who have discussed these various questions, have reached the same conclusions and our views are identical.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER MACDONALD AND NORMAN H. DAVIS - London, March 2, 1934 - Ambassador Bingham and Mr. Atherton being present.

The Prime Minister, Mr. MacDonald, who went to Ambassador Bingham's for luncheon, came at noon so that we could have a talk beforehand.

I told him Mr. Atherton had reported to Washington his conversation with him several weeks ago with regard to the naval question; that the President and Secretary of State were interested in and sympathetic with the suggestions he had made for a confidential exchange of views with regard to a renewal of the London Naval Treaty and the possible eventualities in case of Japan's refusal to renew the treaty without an increase in her ratio (to which, it was understood, neither the British nor American governments were disposed to agree); and that Mr. Atherton had accordingly been advised to inform him of the receptive attitude of the United States and to inquire when, where and how he thought such an exchange of views should take place.

I then told him that, as nothing more had been heard from him and as I am now on leave of absence and was going through London on my way to Sweden in connection with the Kreuger matter, the President had suggested that I might have a private talk with him in case his ideas had crystallized sufficiently to report them confidentially to the President. He said that since he had received, through Mr. Atherton, the reply from Washington, he had been so occupied with pressing and perplexing questions he had not had time to think the naval question through and to discuss it with the necessary persons here. My impression was that, while

he was most eager to talk, he had rather hoped that we might have some definite proposals to make to him. I accordingly took the position that, since he had made the advance, we were waiting to ascertain more definitely what he has in mind.

He then said that Great Britain would not agree to parity with Japan. He had thought the first step would be to so inform the Japanese Ambassador and to tell him that Great Britain was disturbed by the Japanese talk about an increase in their naval ratio, which was unjustifiable because Great Britain is entitled to a larger ratio than Japan since her fleet has to cover two oceans, whereas Japan has only a limited area to cover. He said he would like to feel that the United States felt the same way about it. Furthermore, he thought he ought to advise the Japanese Ambassador that Great Britain is quite disturbed by their fortifying the mandate islands, which they had no right to do. He said that before having such a talk he thought it well for us to be in accord in refusing to accede parity to Japan, to iron our any differences as regards the future make up of our respective navies and also to decide what we would do with regard to a naval agreement as between ourselves in case Japan refused to renew the present Treaty.

I told him that the United States was also definitely opposed to parity for Japan but that, as regards the proposed talk with the Japanese Ambassador, I thought it would be wiser and more effective for the United States and England each to speak separately to the Japanese, rather than for the one to speak for the other.

I then asked him if he could tell me definitely that

Great Britain would not even consent to an increase in the ratio for Japan. He said he was not yet prepared to state categorically that they would not consent to any modification at all in the ratio, since he had not yet had an opportunity to discuss it with all the proper authorities in the British Government, but that the most that had been suggested by anyone here was that, as a compromise, they might possibly agree on a 10-10-7 ratio provided certain other questions could be settled satisfactorily. I told him that, in my own personal opinion, the present ratio was fixed after considerable thought and negotiation and that the only basis for a modification would be that the present ratio is unfair, and that I did not think such a contention could be upheld because of the relative differences in the functions which the British and American navies have to perform in relation to that of Japan. I told him, furthermore, that as a matter of fact the present ratio is not actually 5-5-3 except as to battleships and battle cruisers, because there is parity as to destroyers and submarines and that, if the question were ever opened up again there would be no limit to where it might go. He said he was inclined to agree entirely with this point of view and that his feeling is that, if England and the United States agree to oppose any increase in the Japanese ratio, the chances are that Japan would be more amenable to reason.

He then said that he would like our two governments to reach an agreement not only as to a continuation of parity between them but also as to the particular categories of vessels. He said that, as a result of his talks with the Admiralty, he felt the only serious difficulty would be with regard to the size of new battleships and that the younger officers in the British navy believe

that it would be desirable in the future to build smaller and less expensive battleships. I told him that this was a matter, of course, which had been argued backwards and forwards and that the difference in view was due to the difference in the problems that faced the respective navies due to the differences in bases, but that if some arrangement could be made whereby certain ports in the Pacific could be neutralized, or used by the American navy, it would probably facilitate an agreement as to the future tonnage of battleships. He said that this raised difficult questions but that it might well be explored.

I then told him that, as a result of the talks between Admiral Hepburn and Admiral Bellairs, over a year ago, we both got the impression that it was not impossible for us to reach a mutually satisfactory naval agreement, contingent upon what Japan, France and Italy may do. But, assuming now that we can agree as between ourselves on a maximum and minimum for battleships, such for instance as 15 of 25,000 tons for Great Britain and 14 of 30,000 tons for the United States, this would become purely academic in case Japan refuses to renew the Treaty because, in such event, neither of us would be willing to reduce the size of our present battleships, or the calibre of guns. I expressed the view that we might agree upon a continuance of parity as between ourselves and provide for going up or down, depending upon what other naval powers do. He said this was in line with his ideas and that we would both have to have some provision, in respect of Japan, such as the present escalator clause with respect to France and Italy.

The question was then raised as to the advisability of holding a Conference in 1935 in case Japan definitely informs us

beforehand that she will not agree to a renewal of the Treaty without an increase in her ratio. He said he was concerned about this because, under the Treaty, Great Britain is the Power to issue invitations and she would not want to put Japan in a position to claim afterwards that she was not invited to the Conference. I suggested that if our two countries should agree beforehand as to the future makeup of our navies, and it should then be found impossible to reach an agreement with Japan, a naval treaty could be entered into by us without the necessity of a Conference with other Powers, unless it were found that France and Italy could be brought into the frame-work of a new treaty.

He said another thing which concerned him was that, in case of a general naval Conference as contemplated, in 1935, Great Britain would have to invite Germany and that this would open the doors, necessitating invitations to Yugoslavia, Spain, Turkey, and perhaps Russia and other countries, which would greatly complicate the problem.

Mr. MacDonald thought it essential that the preliminary discussions be most secret in order to avoid arousing prejudices and misunderstandings; and that, in order that such conversations may be carried on freely and without embarrassment to either government, it would be well to proceed as was done year before last, i.e. to have a representative from each of the navies, in conjunction with a representative of the Foreign Office and a corresponding representative of the United States, thresh out the details. He himself, and the principal representative of the United States should not at first take part in the conversations, although they should decide upon the scope of the work and keep in touch with what is going on, but in the background. He said his idea was to designate Admiral Bellairs and Mr. Craigie of the Foreign

for these preliminary negotiations. I asked if it was his idea for these to be held in Washington or London and he said he would like to think this over and talk about it further later on.

There was some discussion of the possible appointment as naval attache, in London or Washington as the case may be, of the person designated to deal with the naval aspects of the work proposed, but no definite view was expressed.

Mr. MacDonald manifested considerable anxiety and concern about the attitude and activities of Japan and said, in effect, that he not only considered it of the greatest importance that the United States and England reconcile any differences in the point of view as to their respective navies but that, for the promotion of world peace and stability, it was vitally important that they cooperate most closely. I told him I had always favored the most friendly cooperation between our two countries and was satisfied that President Roosevelt feels the same way.

I also said that I had been most hopeful about our ability to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement on the naval question but that I had been perplexed by the note his government sent to the United States last September, with regard to our naval program, because there seemed to be no ground whatever for raising any objections about this. He insisted that they recognized we were acting within our treaty rights and that there was no resentment whatever on their part over our program, but said that they had hoped to avoid the expense involved in building new types of vessels and that their note to us was prompted by friendship but that our reply had somewhat disturbed them. I told him I did not see how we could possibly have taken any other position and that the fact that someone from the Admiralty tipped off a Hearst

representative about the sending of the note, had made the situation more difficult. Furthermore, if we had taken any other position it would, under the circumstances, have been construed as a surrender to the dictation of Great Britain. He said he had understood that the leak came from Washington but I assured him that it had not. He then said he was going to look into that further but indicated that this was now a closed incident. He repeated that he was now satisfied from his talks with the Admiralty that the only difficult question between us would be with regard to the size of battleships for which we must find a solution.

In conclusion I told him that I would be back here on my way from Sweden within two or three weeks and would then return home unless developments in disarmament require my presence. He said that during that time he would go into the matter discussed more fully with the different ones here with whom he must consult, and would be glad to have a further discussion with me upon my return.

WHT

PSF: London Naval Conference
File

NORMAN H. DAVIS

London, England.
March 6, 1934.

The Honorable
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

I wrote you today on the naval matter but, in addition to that I think you may be interested in the political situation here which, of course, has a bearing on what may happen.

MacDonald and Simon have both had a rather hard time of late and there has been a particularly strong attack against Simon. He volunteered the information to me Sunday, however, that everything has been straightened out and that there will be no changes in the Cabinet before next Fall. In spite of that there are those who believe that MacDonald may be forced to make some changes.

There seem to be two particularly strong trends of public opinion. One is that the Government must stop standing pat and do something vigorous to cope with the present situation. What you have been doing in America is having a very great influence on the masses of people. A leading Tory member of Parliament told me that the majority of his constituents are saying that the Government should follow your example.

The other trend is in favor of disarmament and peace. The growing opinion seems to be that there can be no peace without a real disarmament agreement and that without this Great Britain will inevitably be drawn into another Euro-

pean war and that, therefore, the wiser and safer course is to make every effort to secure an agreement providing for strict supervision and even, if necessary to insure respect for the Disarmament Treaty, to agree to impose an economic blockade against a nation violating the treaty.

They seem to be getting entirely away from the idea of treaties of guarantee or mutual assistance. There is also a growing realization on the part of the most thoughtful people here that, while Europe offers the principal difficulty just now in the way of disarmament, it is essentially a world problem and should be treated as such, and that England should not go into a treaty that is essentially European.

The Dominions are more concerned about peace and disarmament in the Far East than in Europe and for that reason, as well as the British concern over the effect of the Japanese activities, they feel that the only hope of solution lies through a world treatment of the problem and through British and American cooperation.

With best wishes, I am,

Faithfully yours,

Norman H. Davis

NHD:EH

P. S. I am satisfied that Simon does not hate the United States. In fact, as one man told me, who knows him very intimately and in whom I have absolute confidence, Simon does not hate anything and one of his faults is that he does not hate some things that he ought to hate. He is merely expedient.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE SECRETARY

File

March 13, 1934.

Memorandum for The President.

I have read the attached report with much interest.

C.H.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 5, 1934.

MEMORANDUM FOR

Secretary of State X 2 C

To read and return.

F.D.R.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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MAR 5 - 1934
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SECRETARY OF STATE
MAR 1 3 1934
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London Naval Conf.
PSF

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON

2 March 1934

My dear Mr. President:

I have just received from the United States Naval Attache at Tokyo a report dated 11 January 1934, dealing with Japanese preparations for the next conference on limitation of armaments.

X197
X404

I feel that you will be interested in the contents of this report, consequently I am forwarding it herewith.

Sincerely yours,

H. L. Roosevelt

Acting Secretary of the Navy

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

X18

Report No. 6

JAPAN
January 11, 1934.

Japanese Preparation for next Conference on Limitation of Armaments

The Japanese Government has formed a new group to study Japan's position and policy at the next naval conference, this being part of the government's policy in preparation for the so-called crisis of 1936 which is expected in Japan's international relations.

The new group will be known as the disarmament investigation study committee and is the outgrowth of a series of meetings which have been held by representatives of the Foreign, War and Navy Ministers. Mr. Shigenori Togo, director of the American and European affairs Bureau of the Foreign Office and formerly attached to the Japanese Embassy in Washington is chairman of the committee. Section chiefs from all three ministries will compose the committee with the addition of Navy Captains and Army Colonels who are experts on the technical aspects of Japan's disarmament problems.

The Committee will collect material and data covering all possible measures to be adopted at the forthcoming conference. The draft of these will be submitted to examination to a group of Ministers, Vice Ministers and bureau chiefs. The idea being, according to the press, to prepare for any conceivable measure which may be proposed by the other Powers. Technical preparations are expected to be completed by October this year.

Nothing definite has actually been adopted to date, but, according to reports, the following basic principles probably will be decided upon:-

1. The scope of the coming conference must be restricted to naval questions, such as naval tonnage, maintenance of coastal defenses and maintenance of naval bases. Under no circumstances whatever must other questions relating to the Far East or political issues of the Orient or elsewhere in the world be brought up for discussion.

2. Japan may or may not make proposals to the other Powers concerned regarding preliminary negotiations. However, Japan will make no proposal regarding the date of the conference, place to be held or other matters of procedure.

3. Japan will insist upon the right to participate in any preliminary negotiations. In case other nations hold such preliminary negotiations without the participation of Japan at which plans are made for submitting them later to Japan for approval, Japan will refuse to attend the conference.

The latest report is that the Navy Department authorities charged with making preparations for the 1935 naval disarmament conference are planning to complete a general outline of a new disarmament proposal to be submitted at the 1935 parley.

The agenda of the Disarmament Measures Study Commission mentioned above is given as follows:-

1. How shall Japan dispose of the qualitative and quantitative disarmament proposal, aiming chiefly to achieve reduction of aggressive weapons which was submitted at Geneva in December, 1932.

2. Should Japan notify the Powers concerned at the end of 1934 of her desire to cancel the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty.

3. What are the international situations in America and Europe since the Manchurian incident and the conditions in those countries as regards military and naval armament?

4. Should Japan propose calling a preliminary conference in the spirit of disarmament within this year and prior to the 1935 parley.

5. The preparation of a new naval disarmament plan to be submitted to the 1935 parley.

6. The advisability of discussing at the 1935 parley the questions of non-recognition of Manchukuo by the Powers and the proposed return of the mandated islands in the South Seas to the League as side issues of the disarmament conference.

7. Establishment of a new policy for a Pacific defense limitation pact.

The report continues that the naval officials will study the above problems with caution with a view to drafting a new disarmament plan based on the spirit of equality in armament right by giving up the present pact, which in their opinion, injures the feeling of security as regards national defense. The new plan is intended to be completed by March for submission to a tripartite conference of the Foreign Office, Navy and War office officials.

The opinion is being expressed in naval circles that should the Powers reject Japan's new proposal based on the desire to promote world peace, stick to the existing naval ratio and attempt to extend the present pact, the Navy would not mind the break-up of the conference and the armament race that would follow it. Japan, it is added, has the strong conviction that the country can defend itself by adopting an economical free naval armament and is, therefore, agreed that the failure the country suffered at the London Naval Conference shall not be repeated.

Lately there has been a report that both the United States and England are considering an extension of the naval treaties for one or two years in view of the recent failure to come to any agreement at Geneva. The unofficial spokesman of the Japanese Navy Department has stated that the Japanese will be unable to agree to this due to Japan's well known position in regard to these treaties.

The above are largely newspaper reports, but as they have been published repeatedly by practically all papers the Naval Attache believes they can be taken as being reliable. There is no question but that the Japanese Navy is now in a high state of efficiency and very confident. They believe they can get what appropriations are necessary to build the number and type of ships they require and that the Japanese navy yards and private plants are fully capable of turning out first class ships. That they can build good ships and in numbers is correct, but it is a question how long the increasingly mounting budgets for the Army and Navy with ever increasing taxes can be borne. The concensus of opinion of students of the situation here, in which the Naval Attache agrees, is that the best answer to Japan's military preparations is to build up our own Navy to full treaty strength as rapidly as possible. An immediate statement and continued propaganda bearing on our intention to replace capital ships, increase our air force and replace overage ships as they become due for replacement and a statement that in case of an upward revision

of Japan's treaty ratio is demanded the United States must take steps to build bases in Guam and the Philippines would be the best and only way to cause naval authorities here to stop and ponder over the question of a "free building policy". The Naval Attache believes that the great pace with which Japan is attempting, and succeeding, to build up her Army and Navy is not with the idea of an immediate war in mind, but to have sufficient armed forces to back up her diplomacy in 1935-36 when she feels she will have the whole world against her as regards withdrawal from the League, the mandated islands, the renewal of the Washington and London treaties, and the situation in the Far East in general.

The Naval Attache also believes that in case the next naval conference fails to reach an agreement, the Japanese will begin at once a regular systematic, though perhaps modest program of submarines, torpedo boats, destroyers, small cruisers and aircraft, in other words ships of comparatively small cost, in order to complete her defensive armaments and make her position in the Far East as secure as possible at as small a cost as possible. These types, which comprise the second replenishment program, are greatly favored by the Japanese naval authorities.

PSF: London Naval Conference

GENERAL BOARD

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	Rear Admiral Clark			Request comment.
	Rear Admiral Woodward	Cmdr.		File.
				Hold available for early call.
	- - - - - - - - - - -			Furnish reference indicated.
				Furnish previous papers.
	Comdr. Schuirmann			Make: (a) Rough copy.
	Lt. Comdr. Dugger			(b) Yellow paper.
	Secretary			(c) White paper (final).
	Chief Clerk			(d) Personal letter.
	Stenographer			Make individual copies.
				Furnish papers indicated.
				See notes.

Notes:

GENERAL BOARD
APR 16 1934
NAVY DEPARTMENT

Interesting and of some importance.

[DO NOT DETACH—This slip is a part of permanent file record]

N. N. I. 88 A
Oct., 1931

ROUTING SLIP

OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE
NAVY DEPARTMENT

Subject N.A. Tokyo report.

Reference

Date April 16, 1934 File No.

From Director of Naval Intelligence	Room No.	To
Secretary of the Navy	2046	
Assistant Secretary of the Navy	2034	
Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Air)	2032	
Asst. Secretary of Navy (Navy Yard Div.)	2033	
Chief, Naval Operations	2054	
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Check Action Required

..... Information and return O. N. I. Room 2721
..... Retain or destroy
..... Note, initial and pass to next
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..... Cognizance activity checked
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Remarks:

GENERAL BOARD
APR 16 1934
NAVY DEPARTMENT

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1931 6-7309

Report No. 89
Japan
March 22, 1934

900 - Navy
902 - Policy

Forecast of Japanese Attitude and Proposals at next Naval Conference

In making a study of the situation which will arise in connection with the next naval conference and the discussions which should result in renewal, the improvement or the abrogation of the Naval Treaties, the Naval Attache feels that the following should be given serious consideration - especially when considering the Japanese attitude and trying to forecast the probable Japanese proposals at the conference.

Political and International Aspects

The Japanese appear to feel that the conference to be called in 1935 is of the greatest importance to them, nationally and internationally. They say that at the conference they must regain the feeling of security which they lost at the London Conference and that they must clear the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust which exists between themselves, the United States and England. The conference then will be more than a naval conference, because the questions involved in accomplishing this are of a much broader scope than the word "Naval" implies. In order to do this the whole Far Eastern situation must be re-examined and outstanding problems settled.

The Washington Conference was a compromise in the interests of general peace, where the United States gave up naval supremacy and renounced the possibility of the use of force in the Far East in return for which Japan, so it was thought, pledged herself to a non-aggressive policy as regards the Asiatic mainland and the islands of the Pacific. Between the Washington Conference and the London Conference several changes in the Far Eastern situation took place, but at the London Conference no account was taken of these changes. The latter conference was entirely concerned with technical questions, adding to the restrictions of warship construction already begun at Washington almost ten years before.

In the same manner since the London Conference changes in the situation in the Far East have taken place. Russia has emerged as a military menace to Japan and is causing her no little anxiety, large portions of China are in a state of political and social collapse, a politically independent Philippines is being discussed, and finally the Japanese have carved out the new state of Manchoukuo and bound themselves by "treaty" to defend it.

In the last two years the Japanese have taken the attitude that other powers may not question their policy in regard to Manchoukuo, or plans for the settlement of the difficulties with China. They are committed to a policy of aggression on the continent and they feel that their manifest destiny lies in controlling as much of the continent as possible. It is obvious that in their present temper they will persist in their present course, and will endeavor to carry out their present policy even though it means bankrupting the nation, or becoming involved in a major war.

It would appear that the only way in which the next conference can possibly succeed is by taking into consideration the political and international background which has been outlined above. Japan's aims on the continent - legitimate and otherwise - must be taken into consideration, and the commitments, obligations and interests of the United States must be considered most carefully.

Japanese Opinion in regard to the Treaties.

Japanese public opinion, skillfully led by the Navy, the Reserve organizations and the more nationalistic of the government leaders is definitely opposed to continuing the naval ratios fixed at Washington and at London unless important political concessions are obtained. The Japanese people have been led to believe that the next conference is one of the most important, if not the most important of the events which combined constitute the so-called crisis of 1935-36. Considering Japanese aims and hopes for a recognition of those aims by the powers, this view is perhaps correct.

The opinion of the officers of the Japanese Navy is almost unanimously opposed to continuing the treaties in their present form. In fact senior officers who had any connection with the London Treaty have been placed in retirement, and even comparatively junior officers who went to London have lost the confidence of the all powerful junior officer group. Japanese naval officers resent the London Treaty - the culmination of this resentment being the participation of young naval officers in the May 15th affair. It would be impossible to maintain the discipline of the fleets in case the naval treaties were extended by a Japanese delegation unless much of a political nature were obtained in return. This point is especially important when the present dominant position of the Army and the Navy in Japan is considered. As far as can be observed the Japanese Army is in full accord with the Navy on the questions of naval ratios.

Both the Foreign Minister and the Naval Minister have stated that Japan is dissatisfied with the naval treaties and have assured the Diet and the people that a revision giving Japan "parity" will be demanded. In view of the above, it is believed that it would be impossible for any Japanese government to sign a further limitation treaty which maintained the present ratio and survive. However, there is no possibility that this situation will arise because by Imperial Ordinance the size of the Navy is determined by the Chief of the Naval General Staff - and the attitude of that officer is a foregone conclusion.

Dangers of the Situation

The dangers of the situation into which the Japanese have placed themselves are obvious. They have committed themselves to destroying the basis of the treaty relationships set up at the former conference, to the doctrine of a free hand in Asia and the doctrine of naval parity. There is no evidence that they intend to change that attitude - and it is doubtful whether any moves designed to make them change that attitude would be successful. The Japanese apparently feel that they may be placed in a position of world isolation but they accept this possibility and seem ready to face it and all its implications. Probably the only change in the international situation which would cause the Japanese to reconsider their position would be the establishment of an agreement between the United States and Great Britain in regard to the Far East. The Japanese have shown how much they fear this by the alarm that was expressed in the press when there were reports that the United States and Great Britain might hold preliminary discussions designed to settle their differences without inviting the Japanese to attend these discussions.

Question of Holding the Conference

In view of the attitude that the Japanese take in regard to the revision of the naval treaties and problems of the Far East, and the possibility that Japanese views are not acceptable to other powers, the question arises as to whether it would not be better to let the naval treaties lapse and not to call a conference. Unless the United States and Great Britain are prepared to accept the Japanese demand for parity - or at least a considerable increase in her present ratio, or to make political concessions of a far reaching nature, it would appear that the confidence is not worth calling together, and that in fact it might be dangerous to do so. Would not the result be only to advertise the fact that the positions of the nations was irreconcilable? At least it would appear that preliminary exchanges of views and opinions would be most desirable, otherwise a deadlock at the beginning of the conference is almost certain to result.

The Naval Attache is of the opinion, however, that if a preliminary conference is held, it should be postponed until the early part of 1933. The more moderate elements of the Japanese Navy - that is the more senior officers - are gradually regaining influence, and the younger officers becoming more rational. It is felt that by the time another year has passed, unless conditions again change, a more conciliatory attitude can be expected from the Japanese Navy.

Possible Political Settlement of the Naval Question

The conditions under which the Japanese might abandon their claims for an increased naval ratio - probably parity - are as yet indefinite. Japan's immediate claims on the continent involve a recognition of Manchoukuo as soon as possible, and it is possible that Japan may try to barter for the recognition of the new state and agree to accept the temporary renewal of the treaties and the continuance of the present ratio in return. Possibly she (Japan) would also desire a withdrawal from the Philippines of the armed forces of the United States (though she might make a pledge to respect the neutrality of the islands) and request a revision of the immigration laws which has always been a sore point with her. If the Japanese were able to get the United States to agree to these points it is possible that they might be willing to postpone, for some years, their demand for naval parity.

However, in this connection the Naval Attache desires to point out and to emphasize that if Japan did not agree to accept an inferior naval ratio under the conditions of some such political settlement as outlined above it would be only temporary. Japan's ultimate goal is the establishment of a political, economic and military hegemony of Eastern Asia, but this is looking into the somewhat distant future. Her immediate aim is to consolidate her gains in Manchoukuo. Once that is established, and there is every reason to believe that it will be accomplished, in spite of possible outside interference from Soviet Russia and other sources, the next step will be a demand for parity in naval strength to complete the military side of the picture. In other words, Japan's demand for parity in naval strength would be postponed and not abandoned.

Japanese Ideas regarding the Technical Problems of Naval Ratios

During the past few years there has been considerable discussion by Japanese naval officers, diplomatists, publicists and others regarding the right of small nations to an equality in "sense of security" and equality in "the right to exist". This is very hard to put in concrete form, but in the case of Japan it means that she must feel secure from attack from any quarter, and thus free to carry out her aims on the continent of Asia. She feels that to attain this feeling of security she must have a navy which is capable of maintaining control of the Western Pacific. According to Japanese ideas, the following are the fundamental principles of naval limitation:-

(a) Naval ratios - placing any country in an inferior position as compared to other countries must be abandoned. All nations have the right to maintain such forces as are necessary for their defense, and in sufficient strength to give them a feeling of security. This means that Japan must be allowed parity with the United States and England, at least in principle.

(b) The principle of settling fixed ratios in the six categories of warships must be abandoned. The limiting of navies by dividing warships into classes and then fixing the tonnages in these categories is, according to the Japanese, uneconomical and unscientific.

(c) Total or global tonnage for all nations must be settled first. It is believed that the Japanese desire a limit of 800,000 tons for the United States, British and Japanese navies. This is approximately the size of the Japanese Navy at the present time and to reach this figure the United States and England would be called on to scrap some existing tonnage.

(d) After total tonnages have been fixed, each nation must be allowed to build such ships as she desires inside that total tonnage. Certain small vessels used for coastal patrol duty and certain auxiliaries, such as tenders, oilers etc. should not be limited by treaty.

(e) Vessels which are purely "offensive" in character, such as aircraft carriers should be abolished.

(f) The only condition under which Japan can consider the abolition of submarines is to have battleships and aircraft carriers abolished at the same time.

(g) Air forces must be limited and aircraft bombing prohibited.

In regard to the above, the Japanese have evolved a four point policy. This policy may be summarized as follows:-

(a) Japan will claim at the next conference a naval strength necessary for the maintenance of peace in the Far East.

(b) Japan will demand abolition of ratios as the basis of international agreements regarding navies.

(c) Japan will demand the establishment of the principle of global tonnage as the method of international agreement.

(d) Japan will demand equal rights in naval armaments.

In regard to the first point the Naval Attache desires to comment that the only powers which could challenge Japan's position in the Far East from a naval point of view are the United States and England. Therefore the peace in the Far East, that the Japanese refer to, might be called a "Japanese peace" maintained by the Japanese Fleet, behind which the expansion process would go on.

Given a total tonnage of 800,000 tons, it is interesting to consider what the composition of the Japanese Fleet would be when they had rebuilt it in accordance with their ideas of a defensive navy.

The Naval Attache believes that the following, made after some study of the problem, represents approximately the ideas of the Japanese at the present time.

(a)	Battleships	8	25,000 ton ships	200,000 tons
(b)	Heavy cruisers	12-15	ships	150,000 "
(c)	Light cruisers	20	ships	100,000 "
(d)	Destroyers			150,000 "
(e)	Submarines			150,000 "
(f)	Carriers (if not abolished)			90,000 "

With a Navy as outlined above, and with the United States and Great Britain limited to 800,000 tons each, the Japanese would have accomplished their object - security from attack from the sea - with absolute certainty.

? PST: London Naval Conf.

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Conf.

March 21, 1934.

Dear Mr. President:

These are very interesting and enlightening letters and I am particularly glad to have seen them. The Secretary has also read them.

Mr. Bingham confirms our guess, that while the British are disturbed over the naval situation and are eager to cooperate with us, for the moment at least, they prefer to cooperate "on their own terms," and that "we are to seek their cooperation as a favor to us." However that may be, I am confident that the British are slowly moving towards the realization of the need of a change of front.

Faithfully yours,

William Phillips

The President

The White House.

March 8,
1 9 3 4.

Dear Mr. President:

Since Norman Davis has written you fully about the meeting with the Prime Minister, it is unnecessary for me to go further with that, beyond saying that I fully concur with his conclusions on this subject.

I am enclosing a recent article from the Daily Telegraph, which, in my judgment, is the best one which has yet appeared in a British newspaper, and also an article in the Times by Wilmot Lewis, which is the first one of its type he has written. These two indicate the change in the general attitude here towards the situation in our country.

I had an appointment with Sir John Simon at his office in the House of Commons on last Monday, at 3:45. When I arrived I was told by one of his secretaries that he was on the floor of the House, but would probably be free in a half an hour or possibly longer. I then asked him to say to Sir John when he saw him that if he would be good enough to communicate with my secretary that I would arrange to see him at some other time, and started to leave. The result was rather interesting, as the

secretary urged me to wait only long enough for him to fetch Sir John from the House, and he left hurriedly and in a few moments Sir John appeared. I took up two routine matters with him very briefly, and then told him that I was interested in discussing some phases of the naval situation with him, whereupon he stated that he would like to have Anthony Eden in, and he came in almost immediately. He then told me that the Prime Minister had told him of his meeting with us on Friday, and that the P. M. was preparing a memorandum covering the meeting, a part of which he had seen.

I told him we were naturally interested in the British attitude towards the probable demand by the Japanese for naval parity, and he said that he thought this was a matter which concerned us more than it did the British. I told him, with all due respect for his opinion on the subject, that it was not shared by any man, woman or child in the United States. From that point his attitude changed, and, while proceeding with due legal caution, he made it quite obvious that the British are disturbed over the situation, and are eager to cooperate with us, but as usual, of course, on their own terms; that is to say, that we are to seek their cooperation as a favor to us. He did

not say this, and was suave and courteous, as he always is. They are nervous and anxious. He himself nearly lost his scalp recently, but it is generally thought that there will be no changes in the Cabinet before next Autumn, I believe the government is eager to cooperate with us, but eager to avoid irritating the Japanese until they finish the great system of fortifications they are building at Singapore. I may say I do not think Sir John personally has an attitude of hostility towards our country.

I have thought over this a great deal and feel sure I am right about it. However, he is not only a lawyer, but an English barrister, accustomed to having things prepared and laid in his lap with instructions how to proceed. Hence, he is not an executive, and is always inclined to fall back on legal hairsplitting, and excessively timid about assuming any kind of responsibility for action. I think the foundation has been laid with the Prime Minister and Sir John, and that the next move is up to them, and that they will make it. I believe our strategy should be to stand pat until they come back to us, although it may take some time for them to make up their minds.

With kindest regards,

Very sincerely,

Robert W. Bingham.

The President,
The White House,
Washington, D.C.

March 8,
1 9 3 4.

Dear Mr. President:

Since writing to you this morning, I attended a luncheon given by our retiring Naval attaché, Capt. Arthur L. Bristol, and was seated next to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell. Almost immediately he said to me that he thought our general situation, particularly our Japanese situation, made it highly desirable for both countries to cooperate in dealing with the whole naval situation, and that we could handle the Japanese situation satisfactorily if we handled it together. I told him that I agreed with him and thought there was every reason why we should act together in our common interest. He said that their situation required a number of fast, light cruisers in order to protect their commerce, and I told him that I quite understood that, and, furthermore, told him that our situation required ships large enough to make long journeys and come home, because we did not have the facilities for re-fitting and re-fueling which the British had, and he said that he understood that perfectly. At the end of the conversation I told him that I thought we ought to be able to carry out our naval programs along the

lines best suited to our own countries, without suspicion, competition or hostility, with which he expressed himself as heartily agreeing.

I mention this as supplementary to the information already sent you and to show the attitude of mind which I believe now exists.

Sincerely yours,

Robert W. Bingham

The President,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

Memorandum of Conversation between Mr. Craigie, Admiral Little, Ambassador Bingham and Mr. Norman Davis at Claridges Hotel, London, April 12, 1934.

Mr. Craigie of the Foreign Office and Admiral Little came to my room at 4:30 p.m. today for an informal talk with Ambassador Bingham and myself, as had previously been arranged. It was understood at the outset that the talk was to be exploratory in nature, in advance of possible future arrangements for discussions and negotiations preparatory to the Naval Conference in 1935. It was explained that neither Mr. Bingham nor myself were authorized to make any agreements with regard to this but that, since I was sailing for home, it would be helpful to have all the information possible with regard to the attitude of the British Government on the various questions involved and of the Admiralty with regard to the more technical naval questions.

It was the concensus of opinion that, as to policy, there were two principal questions to be dealt with by the two governments; first, the time and the manner of instituting informal negotiations and, second, of determining what their respective attitudes would be with regard to the Japanese claim for parity or an increased ratio. Among the questions to be dealt with in the contemplated discussions would be the differences of opinion as between the two respective navies with regard to tonnage and future types of vessels, particularly battleships and cruisers, and also whether or not the United States and England should agree to renew the Treaty on the basis of parity between them in case of a failure on the part of Japan to renew on conditions which would be acceptable.

Mr. Craigie said that with regard to arranging for the informal negotiations it was important for Japan not to get the idea that we were combining against them, but that since it was desirable that we should clear up certain questions before taking up negotiations with Japan, the British Government might communicate with the United States and Japan at the same time, stating in effect that it was deemed desirable

to have discussions preparatory to the Conference in 1935 and inviting them to send representatives to London for this purpose; and that it might then be arranged for the conversations with the United States to begin some days in advance, which would be easy to do without arousing any suspicion because of the greater length of time that Japan would require to get representatives here. He said he thought they should at the same time notify France and Italy so that they would be prepared later on to join in conversations. He also said that while they might arrange to have the conversations in Washington if we preferred, he thought it was better to have them in London because it would make it easier to deal with France and Italy. He said, however, that this was a question which the government would have to pass upon, but he assumed the Cabinet would reach a decision on it within a week and that they would then inform Ambassador Bingham so that he could get word to Washington, perhaps by the time I arrive, so that the United States Government could then make its decision.

With regard to the Japanese claim for parity or an increased ratio Admiral Little said that, from the naval standpoint, they would be opposed to any increase in the Japanese ratio; that he did not see how Japan could justify such a claim; that the Washington treaties were negotiated on the basis of security and that since the navies of England and the United States have much more territory to protect in a defensive way, whereas Japan has only a very limited area, from a defensive standpoint the Japanese were already on a parity. Craigie said that, while the British Government had not made any formal decision with regard to this, he felt that nothing had happened since the treaties establishing the ratios which would justify any increase for the Japanese and that he felt that, while Japan would at first make such demands, they would finally give in provided we do not ask for any reduction in the present treaty level, since the Japanese contend that a nation with an inferior ratio is weakened more relatively by a reduction than a nation with a larger ratio. We asked Admiral Little if he agreed to that and he said he

thought there was nothing in it and that, as a matter of fact, if the British navy were reduced he thought it would be put relatively more at a disadvantage for an operation in the Far East than Japan.

After considerable discussion it was the concensus of opinion that it would be desirable as soon as possible for the British and American governments to determine definitely whether or not they would stand together in opposition to any Japanese increase and that it would, perhaps, be advisable for each one to let the Japanese know what its attitude was, even, if possible, before the informal negotiations began so as to prevent the Japanese from going any further on a false scent.

I then told Admiral Little that, while I had neither the authority nor the technical knowledge to discuss the differences in point of view between our two navies with regard to certain types of vessels, etc., as to which we were all, however, more or less conversant, it would be helpful to know what the present attitude of the British Admiralty is and what they have in mind as to a future treaty, if he would feel disposed to give me such information. He said that he would be glad to do so.

He said, with regard to battleships, that there was a well-known and he thought now better understood difference; that, as we know, the British Admiralty would prefer battleships of 25,000 tons equipped with 12 inch guns; that their reason for such preference was largely a question of economy and a belief that if all battleships in the future were reduced to this each would be relatively as well off. He said, however, that because of our lack of bases we, of course, felt the need of battleships of greater tonnage, but that, if the calibre of guns should be reduced to 12 inches, he doubted if we would want battleships of more than 25,000 tons. I told him I was under the impression that our navy had doubts as to the practicability of a 12 inch gun as compared to a 14 inch gun and that I seriously doubted if they would agree to a 12 inch gun. I said I had understood that Japan had objected to reducing the calibre of guns of battleships below 14 inches and Craigie and Admiral Little said that was true.

We then discussed the possibility of a compromise

on 30,000 ton battleships with 14 inch guns. Admiral Little said that even for a 14 inch gun battleship they would prefer 28,000 or 28,500 tons but that perhaps they would, if necessary, consent to a 30,000 ton battleship with 14 inch guns. I told him I did not know just how our navy would feel about this.

I then asked Admiral Little what their views were with regard to cruisers and said that the note that the British Government had sent regarding our 10,000 ton 6 inch cruisers had been quite a surprise and had been hard to understand in view of the fact that one of the chief conditions of the United States at the London Naval Conference was for the right to such cruisers and a limited number of 8 inch gun cruisers, all of which was provided for under the Treaty. Craigie then siad that the note was sent in the most friendly spirit; that while there was no question of our right to do this the British Government, which was most desirous of keeping cruisers down to 7,000 tons had finally consented to a Treaty for six years duration in the hope that during that period we would not see fit to build the new type which was authorized under the Treaty. We intimated that there was no ground upon which to base such an expectation, which he admitted to be the case. I furthermore said that, while I understood that it had been the definite policy of our navy to build such types, none had been launched previously because there had been no appropriation, but that, after all, Japan was the first one to lay down a new type of 8,500 ton cruiser, which they had done considerably before we had, and I asked if they had protested to the Japanese. Admiral Little said that it was only considerably after the laying down of these cruisers by the Japanese, that they learned about it and that, in fact, it was just about the time that we began to lay down ours. Craigie then said that perhaps they should have communicated with the Japanese but that they thought it was more important to reach an understanding with us and had therefore communicated with us at once in the hope that we might be able to reconsider before we had gone too far. Admiral Little then said that, realizing the very definite views and insis-

tence of the American navy with regard to cruisers up to 10,000 tons, he thought the British Admiralty would agree to a continuance of the provisions in the present Treaty provided that the same principle that had been applicable to 8 inch gun cruisers should be extended to 6 inch gun cruisers. In asking him to explain just what he meant he said that he thought that, in addition to the global tonnage, some limit should be fixed upon the number of 10,000 ton 6 inch cruisers. In other words, that while they would not object to such cruisers, if we should have the right to put all of our permitted cruiser tonnage into 10,000 ton vessels they would find it difficult to keep to the smaller cruisers; that what they need above all are numbers whereas we are more interested in tonnage.

Craigie then remarked that they were also interested in economy and that it cost less to build smaller cruisers. I told him that I had understood it would cost less to put all of the allowed tonnage in larger vessels, to which Admiral Little agreed.

As regards destroyers, Admiral Little said that if it were not possible to get France to limit her submarines to 75,000 tons the British would probably have to insist upon the right to a larger tonnage in destroyers. I asked him if it would not be a little difficult to insist upon this since they have not kept fully up to the destroyer allowance that is now permitted. He intimated that that was so and indicated that perhaps they would not be insistent upon that.

As to submarines Craigie and Little both said that they hoped to get a reduction and, of course, abolition of submarines but that they did not see much chance of this.

With regard to air-craft carriers, Admiral Little said that they would favor limiting the size of air-craft carriers in the future to that which both navies are now building. There was then some discussion as to a possible reduction.

I remarked that my own personal view was that, aside from practical considerations, it might have a bad effect on public opinion of the world if no reduction whatever were provided for under a new treaty; that from a naval standpoint it would seem to me wise and desirable to agree upon a reasonable, practical, long-term program which would involve some economies as well as certain reductions and a more scientific rounding out of navies. Admiral Little agreed with this view. He said that the British navy was in favor of reduction but by tonnage rather than by numbers, whereas, under the Hoover proposal, we had advocated a reduction in tonnage through a reduction in numbers and not in the size of vessels. He indicated that public opinion would likely be unfavorable to the building of any more such expensive battleships as those of the present type and that if we could possibly agree upon a reduction in tonnage and calibre of guns it would make a tremendous difference in the ultimate cost of maintaining the navies and be more apt to ensure public support. He and Craigie both said however that they did not see how they could possibly agree to reduce the number of battleships for the future and that a proposal to that effect would make it much more difficult to get the Japanese to agree to a renewal without an increase in their ratio.

Craigie said that it was, furthermore, difficult to reduce the number of battleships without raising real complications with regard to the Japanese ratio because it was not possible to cut a battleship in two. He remarked that when Admiral Hepburn and Admiral Bellairs were discussing this question over a year ago some consideration was given to allowing the United States to have fourteen battleships of say 30,000 tons and the British fifteen of 25,000 tons but that this would raise difficulties with the British as regards Japan.

There was then some discussion as to the desirability of a naval agreement in any event between our two countries which, it was suggested, would provide for maintaining parity but also for raising or lowering the level depending upon what the other naval powers might do.

In concluding the conversation Craigie and Admiral Little both said they had been glad to have this talk, which

they thought would be most helpful; that they were most desirous of reaching an agreement with us; that there was more reason than ever why we should cooperate in the most friendly way and that there seemed to be more than ever a better understanding as to the points of view of the respective navies and a desire to reconcile them in a fair and practicable way.

Mr. Craigie in saying good bye, stated that he thought it was of the utmost importance that we act quickly with regard to the proposed negotiations and he asked how soon I could come back to London and I told him that I would probably be back for the meeting of the General Commission in Geneva. He said he thought it would be advisable to have the meetings even before the 23rd. I told him that so far as I was concerned it would be very difficult to go home and get back a week ahead of the Geneva meeting. It was then suggested that we might arrange to have the meetings begin in Geneva at that time.

WHD

PSF London Naval Conf.

NORMAN H. DAVIS
48 WALL STREET
NEW YORK

April 23, 1934.

Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

I did not write you from London giving an account of the last talks with the British on the naval matter because these only took place the last few days before I sailed and I expected to arrive by the time a letter would arrive. I tried to reach you by telephone Friday night and also Saturday morning to tell you how the naval matter stands but you were engaged and unable to talk to me at the time.

As a result of the talks in London I feel that there is not going to be any particular difficulty with the British over the technical naval questions themselves.

With regard to the contemplated informal negotiations preparatory to the Naval Conference, Secretary Hull cabled me, as you are probably aware, that it was deemed wiser to adopt as a procedure the alternative indicated in my letter to you of March 6th. We accordingly directed our conversations to that end, with the result that the British came to the conclusion, subject to the approval of the Cabinet, that it would be better for them to openly invite us to sit down and talk over naval matters with them, and that, in order to avoid arousing Japanese suspicions, an invitation should be issued

to the Japanese at the same time to join in the negotiations which, however, would be so arranged that our conversations would begin at least a week ahead of those in which we would both join with the Japanese. Just before I left they told me that it might take a week or two to take up this question with the Cabinet but that they would send word through Bingham as soon as possible and arrange the details, if this were satisfactory to the United States' government.

There are some interesting side lights and certain important aspects about this whole situation which I will be glad to discuss with you at your convenience.

As ever,

Faithfully yours,

Norman H. Davis

P.S. I am enclosing a memorandum of the conversation we had which sums up the discussions and tentative conclusions.

Pst 1 London Naval Conf.

File
Private

April 23, 1934.

My dear Mr. President:

Norman Davis has reported to you in writing, and doubtless also verbally, the conferences with the Prime Minister on March 2nd, and with Admiral Little and Mr. Craigie on April 12th. In addition, I have discussed the naval situation twice with Sir John Simon, first on March 5th and second on April 20th. In view of the Japanese statement on China, while I had an appointment with him on a routine matter, after disposing of that I told him that I had seen his statement in the House of Commons the day before to the effect that he had nothing to say on the Japanese matter because he had not seen the text of the statement. He told me he had now seen the full statement from the British Ambassador to Tokio and read it to me. He then said he considered the situation very grave indeed, and that undoubtedly great pressure would be brought upon the British government by British financial interests, if the Japanese attempted to carry out their plan. More than ever he hoped for cooperation between our government and the British government in handling the whole Japanese

situation. The new development has increased his interest greatly on the whole problem. I told him I had no instructions from our government on this subject, and spoke my personal views only on this later phase, but that I agreed with him that the situation was grave, and that cooperation between our governments was desirable. At a favorable opportunity, I discussed the subject of the coming naval conference with Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, First Lord of the Admiralty, and found him fully alive to the situation and very frank in stating that he thought cooperation between our governments in dealing with the Japanese was essential. Later the subject came up with the Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Roger Keyes, now retired, and a member of Parliament, but very influential in naval circles, who expressed the same opinion emphatically.

I dined recently with the Ray Athertons, and after dinner had a very interesting talk with Lord Hailsham. He said that neither this, nor any other British government, could give the French any guaranty of military support in advance, and that, in his opinion, this meant that any disarmament agreement of value was impossible. He said that he thought that economic sanctions might prove of great value

in preventing war, but that his government could not undertake them without the support of the United States, and that they were proceeding on the theory that any such support was unobtainable.

He said that if the British government prevented the sale to belligerents of munitions, war material and the necessities of life without similar action by the United States, such action would not only be futile, but no British government could afford to attempt it. I told him I thought it desirable at least to explore this subject, without assuming in advance that some form of cooperation between the two governments was impossible. He also expressed himself as being in full sympathy with the effort to bring about cooperation between the British and ourselves in dealing with the naval program.

At his own suggestion, the Prince of Wales came to the Embassy, and, while I merely touched upon the naval situation with him, he made a statement which I want to give to you. He said he was convinced that there must be a change in conditions here, and a correction of social injustices among the English people, which would relieve poverty and distress; that this must come and that it would come either wisely, constructively and conservatively, which would save

the country, or it would come violently, which would destroy it. I told him that this was the basis on which you were proceeding, and were succeeding in the United States. He said that he was just coming to that, and that he thought what England most needed was just the type of leadership which you were giving to the United States.

I want to tell you now my opinion on the debt situation for what it may be worth. As things stand now, I believe it is probable that the British will work satisfactorily with us in connection with the naval conference. The recent menacing and dangerous statement by the Japanese as to the relations with China has made this cooperation the more probable. If Congress had adjourned by the middle of this month, consideration of the debt question might be on a different basis. I understand now that it is not likely to adjourn before the middle of May, if then. At any rate, very little time will be left before June 15th. I hope you may consider it wise and practicable, despite the Johnson bill, to accept another token payment on the 15th of June, so that six months will be left in which the British may prepare for the next payment on such terms as you deem proper. I do not mean to convey that I think there is any-

thing in the situation which entitles them to this further consideration, but I want to deprive them of any opportunity to claim that they were not given ample notice. From my position here I cannot, of course, see the situation in the full and complete light and from all of its angles, as you see it, but I feel I must give you my opinion, based on the facts as I see them.

The British are deeply concerned over the situation, both in Europe and in the Far East. They realize they are in no position to repel an attack from the air. They believe all hope for disarmament is gone, and I am convinced that all thoughtful people here believe that the only hope for peace in the world lies in cooperation between the British and ourselves, and that they eagerly desire it. They want peace as earnestly and sincerely as we want it, and we are in a better position to deal with them now than in all the long period since I have known them. We are in a good position to treat with them, so far as it may be advantageous to us. For these reasons, I believe to precipitate the debt question in the short time remaining before the 15th of June, would make it much more difficult to deal with them, and would give them the opportunity for

complaint on account of the shortness of time, of which I should like to see them deprived.

Moreover, I fully agree with the view you suggested to me of a settlement of this difficult question along the lines you mentioned. In the long run I believe a reasonable concession would strengthen our efforts for peace and make for our advantage as well as theirs. I have accepted an invitation from Sir Robert Vansittart to lunch with him at his country place on Sunday. He said he wanted to talk to me privately and alone on the Japanese situation.

On Thursday, my wife and I are dining and spending the night at Windsor Castle.

I shall write you by next Tuesday's pouch about my interview with Sir Robert and also tell you what happens at Windsor Castle.

Sir Roger Keyes asked me to express his warm regards to you.

With every good wish for you and yours,

Sincerely yours,

Robert W. Bingham

The President,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

PSF: London Naval Conf.

TELEGRAM SENT

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (A-1)

June 26, 1934

9 p.m.

AMEMBASSY

LONDON

270

FROM THE PRESIDENT FOR DAVIS.

QUOTE. Tell the Prime Minister confidentially from me that it is still my thought that the difficult situation of modern civilization throughout the world demands for the social and economic good of human beings a reduction in armaments and not an increase; that I am well aware of the pressure exercised by Navy Departments and Admiralties; that, nevertheless, I hope those in high authority in government will work with me for a new naval treaty calling for a reduction in navies and that to the end I have suggested a renewal of the Washington and London treaties for at lest ten years on a basis of a 20% reduction to be accomplished during that ten year period.

I am not going into technicalities of tonnage or classes or guns at this time, because these can be solved if the naval nations agree on the big basic principle. UNQUOTE.

2-#270 to Amembassy, London,
June 26, 1934, 9 p.m.

The President says that the Prime Minister may communicate this message to the Cabinet, if he so desires, but he requests that no (repeat no) publicity be given to it at the present stage.

HULL

(WP)

U WP/AB

PSF: London Naval Conf.

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

June 27, 1934.

My dear Mr. President:

The attached telegram is so serious that I hope you will read it in full.

Faithfully yours,

William Phillips

The President
The White House.

REP

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

LONDON

Dated June 27, 1934

Rec'd 1:46 p. m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

363, June 27, 5 p. m.

PERSONAL FOR PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY FROM NORMAN DAVIS.

Your 269 and 270 of June 26th are very helpful. We are having a meeting in MacDonald's office at the House of Commons at 3:30 this afternoon which we will report at once.

In the meantime Bingham and I are impressed by the fact that while the British are showing disturbance over our reaction to their technical proposals they are holding strongly to their position. They intimate that we have misconstruad the spirit and intention which animates them and do not fully appreciate the difficulties they are facing. In substance they tell us that in 1930 England and America faced a single problem, namely, the Japanese; whereas today America still faces only this single problem, England now also faces the acute problem of Europe which is relatively academic to the United States. Although they believe that real understanding between the United States, Great Britain is developing in spite of many differences, which in the long run will grow and improve, they feel that our policy in the Pacific is an

uncertain

REP

2-#363, From London, June 27, 5 p.m.

uncertain factor, increasingly so on account of our withdrawal from the Philippines, and that, therefore, they must, themselves, be prepared for all eventualities. This opinion is predominent in the Baldwin group which is the dominant factor in British politics. They are thus confronted with the problem of dealing with the Japanese alone, for which they want to be prepared but which they do not wish to tackle until the European situation is eased. While they do not definitely say so they intimate that if they cannot count on our cooperation in the Pacific they must be prepared to deal with it alone but that if we could agree upon a policy of cooperation in the Far East - which they would like very much to do - our differences on technical naval questions would automatically solve themselves. They intimate however that public opinion here would not approve of any understanding with us as to such a policy unless it were embodied in an agreement ratified by the Senate.

I believe they would deplore with the utmost frankness the development of any impression that Anglo-American naval conversations were unsatisfactory. In their view it is not practicable to reach a more definite understanding on technical questions now as they must wait until the more imponderable questions clarify themselves to some extent.

Some

REP

3-#363, From London, June 27, 5 p.m.

Some of these imponderables will doubtless be somewhat clarified by the forthcoming bilateral conversations with the French and Japanese, and other imponderables as well as European and especially the German situation will probably diminish between now and next spring. So that even if conversations should shortly cease temporarily, the British desire that they be adjourned on the understanding that we had examined not only the positions of the two Governments as to the date and place of the conference but the conditions under which the two Governments would be prepared to continue the naval treaties. In this manner we not only do not close the door to further discussions but also remove any impression of tension. The British state frankly that, if we fail to reach an agreement with Japan, they feel that the only wise course would be for the two of us to reach a naval agreement which would then automatically facilitate reconcilement of our views with regard to technical naval programs. They think, however, that it would be inadvisable and premature to consider this until such a contingency arises.

We will agree with the British this afternoon as to the lead to give the press.

BINGHAM

WSB

PSF
London Naval Conf File

REP

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

LONDON

Dated June 28, 1934

Rec'd 3 p. m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

367, June 28, 5 p. m.

PERSONAL FOR THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY FROM NORMAN DAVIS.

As a result of the meeting with the British yesterday I got the distinct impression, which Ambassador Bingham shares, that they are not prepared now to agree upon a renewal of the London Treaty without important modifications. While insisting that the program submitted to us was not a proposal, and that Anglo-American cooperation was more important than anything else, they did not recede from their position but did urge us to have patience and continue our efforts in a friendly and accommodating spirit to reach a treaty agreement ultimately. My personal opinion is that their strategy is directed in the last analysis towards either having a navy that will enable them independently to take care of themselves in the various eventualities they envisage or to say at a given time that if we can agree upon a common policy in contractual form

in

REP

in the Far East which would give them advance assurance that they would not have to deal with Japan single handed, then they would not need so large a navy.

While the British feel that the possibility of a conflict with us is too remote to be taken into their calculations and while the Admiralty is, I am persuaded, in favor of the closestpossible friendship with our navy and opposed to making concessions to Japan, they are nevertheless concerned over our superiority in large cruisers and likewise over those of the Japanese.

They are also concerned over the fact that the increase in the French naval tonnage has been, since the Washington Treaty only ten thousand tons less than the British.

The preoccupations of the Admiralty is primarily a technical naval one but the preoccupation of the Cabinet over the political situation has won them around to a large extent to the Admiralty point of view. They admitted yesterday, however, that if they could reach an agreement with France it would help them to make some modifications in their program. But Baldwin even then expressed more concern about Japan.

What the British would apparently like very much to do is to see just how close we could get together, primarily

in

REP

3-#367, From London, June 28, 5 p.m.

in the way of reducing battleship tonnage and caliber of guns and how much of an increase in cruiser tonnage would be allowed. If we are then not too far apart to make ultimate agreement seem impossible they would like to let the situation stand until they can see what they can do with France and then what we can both do with Japan, and failing in that what we could agree upon as between us.

Since the British want a larger naval program they would be embarrassed to have it publicly known that we are proposing a reduction. I am hoping Baldwin will realize that if the United States and England should both propose to Japan a renewal of the London Treaty with such modifications as will result in a net total tonnage reduction, we would be on better ground to refuse a change in ratio. Adopt whatever course may be deemed in case Japan refuses to sign.

As MacDonald is now out of it and Baldwin is taking over my judgment is that before taking any further steps I should have a frank and full private talk with Baldwin which he has told me he would like to have.

BINGHAM

KLP

PSF: London home file.

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (A-1)

London

Dated June 29, 1934

Rec'd 1:45 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

369, June 29, 4 p.m.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY.

Your 270, June 26, 9 p.m.

The Prime Minister requests that the following personal and confidential message be telegraphed to President.

"To the President from the Prime Minister.

Many thanks for message, sentiment of which I fully reciprocate. British problem, however, has to be brought down to reality. We do not envisage increases except in certain directions in definite relation to international needs, while in other directions we urge reductions, for example, in a cut of perhaps twenty per cent in the size of capital ships and in size and numbers of submarines. European maritime nations enormously increasing naval power. Far East armaments also increasing our risks. Therefore either stand still or reductions depends solely on conditions. Should be delighted to reduce ten, twenty, or thirty per cent if risks were reduced in similar proportion.

It is not

2-#369 from London, June 29, 4 p.m.

It is not a question of desire but of realistic need. We have explained in great confidence our obligations and risks to American representatives and hope that mutual examination and understanding will lead to an agreement on how to face the situation, remembering that a thorough understanding between us will enable us within bounds of our separate possibilities to maintain complete cooperation, because I firmly believe that that is an essential condition of the maintenance of sanity and peace in the world.

Regret profoundly that my eye sight compels me to leave at once for three months rest. We are all delighted to have your charming mother with us".

BINGHAM

KLP

HPD

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

BSF London Naval Conf.

October 4, 1934.

NAVAL LIMITATION AND SECURITY.

There appear below some pertinent quotations from statements of the Delegates of the United States, the British Empire and Japan, at the Washington Naval Conference, quoted from the official Minutes of that Conference. Few, however, are quite as apt as we had hoped.

1922

Mr. Hughes (U.S.A.):- "This Treaty ends, absolutely ends, the race in competition in naval armament. (Applause). At the same time it leaves the relative security of the great naval Powers unimpaired." ***** (Fifth session, February 1, 1922, page 243).

Mr. Balfour (British Empire):- "Let no one think that this abandonment of rivalry in ship building, this diminution of fleets, this scrapping of great weapons of war involves diminished security for any nation. I do not think we need have feared such a result even if no supplementary arrangements had been made; but we have been fortunate enough to make a supplementary arrangement that puts the matter beyond doubt or cavil. I do not think any clause in any treaty is more happily contrived for dealing with the special peculiarities and difficulties of the Pacific situation than that which determines the places where the great naval Powers are permitted to build or extend their naval bases. I do not say that is a necessary part of the policy. I do say that it is a most felicitous addition to it; that with this clause in the Treaty we can say with absolute assurance that this diminution in the instruments of war has been accompanied by a great augmentation in the sense of national security." (Sixth session, February 4, pages 366 and 368).

Baron Kato

Baron Kato (Japan):- "Japan has never claimed nor had any intention of claiming to have a naval establishment equal in strength to that of either the United States or the British Empire. Her existing plan will show conclusively that she had never in view preparation for offensive war." *** (Second Session, November 15, page 106).

PM

London Naval Conf PSP

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

October 4, 1934.

"SECURITY AT THE LONDON NAVAL CONFERENCE.

1930

(Quotations from Minutes of Sixth Plenary Meeting, April 22, 1930)

Mr. MacDonald: "Competition had begun; nations were at the fatal moment of once again, by a process of mental delusion, reducing their security against war by increasing their armaments. *****

"The Treaty carries us to 1936, when further progress in the same direction ought to be possible. The British Government place a very high value on Paris pacts and treaties for the peaceful settlement of disputes, and they therefore made an offer to come to an agreement upon all-round reductions in naval strengths from battleships to submarines, in such a way as not to entail a loss of security upon any nation. Such an agreement has been come to between the United States, Japan and ourselves, but the European situation was harder to resolve." (Mr. MacDonald then proceeds to discuss the Escape Clause.- page 104).

Mr. Stimson. " We signed this Treaty now before us with a realization that it fixes our naval relationship with the British Commonwealth of Nations upon a fair and lasting basis and that it is equally advantageous to us all. It also establishes our naval relationship with our good neighbor across the Pacific and ensures the continuous growth of our friendship with that great Nation towards whom we have grown to look for stability and progress in the Far East. *****

" The fundamental purpose for which we of the American Delegation came to London was to help in the promotion of good relationship between the nations of the earth. It is our belief that the limitation of armament by mutual agreement is one of the most effective methods of increasing the confidence of each nation in the pacific intentions of every other nation. We believe that such

such limitation increases the ability of every nation to carry out its own pacific intentions. As we believe that limitation of itself increases security, so we look forward in the future to periodically recurring conferences, confident that in that way we shall obtain an ever increasing security with an ever decreasing armament. We believe that naval limitation is one of the most accurate measures of the world's belief in the possibility of the settlement of all international matters by pacific and rational means." (Pages 106 to 107).

Mr. Wakatsuki.

" ***** Japan, from her ardent desire to see the cause of peace promoted, from her conviction that the conclusion of a treaty like the present will naturally strengthen the sense of national safety, and in the spirit of accommodation and harmony, has gladly agreed to the present treaty." (This statement, however, is coupled with reference to the limited duration of the treaty and to reconsideration of naval strengths at the next conference.- page 115).

PSF
London Naval Conf

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OCT 6 - 1934
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

October 5, 1934

500A15a5

Dear Mr. President:

When I returned to the Department I found that Mr. Davis had suggested a final paragraph for the telegram to Ambassador Bingham which he was very anxious to have included in the message. I am, accordingly, sending you the draft of the completed message, which I will send if it meets with your approval.

I am also enclosing your letter to Mr. Davis which follows the lines of your draft with the exception of one insertion at the bottom of page four beginning, "I earnestly hope that France and Italy" etc., etc. This insertion was suggested by Mr. Davis. If the letter now meets

500A15a5/201

OCT 8 - 1934

The President,

The White House.

with your approval will you kindly sign it and I will forward it at once to Mr. Davis, who has already left for New York?

Faithfully yours,

Cordell Hull

Enclosures:
Draft of telegram to
Ambassador Bingham;
Draft of letter to
The Honorable Norman Davis.

AK

FWR

file "private"

PSF
London File Naval Conf (5) (1)

October 5, 1934.

My dear Mr. Davis:

In asking you to return to London to continue and expand the conversations begun last June preparatory to the Naval Conference in 1935, I am fully aware of the gravity of the problems before you and your British and Japanese colleagues. The object of next year's Conference is "to frame a new Treaty to replace and carry out the purposes of the present Treaty." The purposes themselves are "to prevent the dangers and to reduce the burdens inherent in competitive armament" and "to carry forward the work begun by the Washington Naval Conference and to facilitate progressive realization of general limitation and reduction of armament."

The Washington Naval Conference of 1922 brought to the world the first important voluntary agreement for limitation and reduction of armament. It stands out

The Honorable
Norman H. Davis,
59 East Seventy-ninth Street,
New York City.

out as a mile-stone in civilization.

It was supplemented by the London Naval Treaty of 1930, which recognized the underlying thought that the good work begun should be progressive - in other words, that further limitation and reduction should be sought.

Today the United States adheres to that goal. That must be our first consideration.

The Washington and London Conferences were not mere mathematical formulae. The limitations fixed on the relative Naval Forces were based on the comparative defensive needs of the Powers concerned; they did not involve the sacrifice of any vital interests on the part of their participant; they left the relative security of the great Naval Powers unimpaired.

The abandonment of these Treaties would throw the principle of relative security wholly out of balance; it would result in competitive Naval building, the consequence of which no one can foretell.

I ask you, therefore, at the first opportunity

to

to propose to the British and Japanese a substantial proportional reduction in the present Naval levels. I suggest a total tonnage reducti n of twenty per cent below existing Treaty tonnage. If it is not possible to agree on this percentage, please seek from the British and Japanese a lesser reduction - fifteen per cent or ten per cent or five per cent. The United States must adhere to the high purpose of progressive reduction. It will be a heartening thing to the people of the world if you and your colleagues can attain this end.

Only if all else fails should you seek to secure agreement providing for the maintenance and extension of existing Treaties over as long a period as possible.

I am compelled to make one other point clear. I cannot approve, nor would I be willing to submit to the Senate of the United States any new Treaty calling for larger Navies. Governments impelled by common sense and the good of humanity ought to seek Treaties reducing armaments; they have no right to seek Treaties

increasing

increasing armaments.

Excessive armaments are in themselves conducive to those fears and suspicions which breed war. Competition in armament is a still great menace. The world would rightly reproach Great Britain, Japan and the United States if we moved against the current of progressive thought. We three Nations, the principal Naval Powers, have nothing to fear from one another. We cannot escape our responsibilities, joint and several, for world peace and recovery.

I am convinced that if the basic principle of continued naval limitation with progressive reduction can be adhered to this year and next, the technicalities of ship tonnage, of ship classes, of gun calibers and of other weapons, can be solved by friendly conference. I earnestly hope that France and Italy, which are full parties to the Washington Treaty, will see their way to participate fully in our efforts to achieve further naval limitation and reduction.

The important matter to keep constantly before

your

your eyes is the principle of reduction — the maintenance of one of the greatest achievements of friendly relations between Nations.

Sincerely yours,

"file personal" Naval Conf!

DRAFT

My dear Mr. Davis:

In asking you to return to London to continue and expand the conversations begun last June preparatory to the Naval Conference in 1935, I am fully aware of the gravity and complexity of the problems with which you and your British and Japanese colleagues have to deal. The object of next year's Conference and hence of the present conversations is succinctly stated in Article 23 of the London Naval Treaty which is "to frame a new treaty to replace and carry out the purposes of the present treaty" which terminates on December 31, 1936. These purposes as set forth in the preamble of that treaty are "to prevent the dangers and to reduce the burdens inherent in competitive armament" and "to carry forward the work begun by the Washington Naval Conference and to facilitate progressive realization of general limitation and reduction of armament".

Serious differences have developed with regard to the existing treaties which cannot be glossed

over

over and which make agreement difficult. Yet the need for agreement is so imperative and the failure would be so disturbing that I am loathe to believe that there cannot be a meeting of minds unless there has been a departure in national policy and hence a change in view with regard to the theory and principle upon which the present treaties of naval limitation are based. The United States, Great Britain and Japan as the three largest Naval Powers have set an example to the world by signing two treaties, those of Washington and London, which together limited and reduced their navies in their entirety. In doing so each voluntarily surrendered in part the exercise of its sovereign right to build a fleet without limit. The sacrifices thereby accepted were mutual and so were the benefits.

These treaties were not merely mathematical formulae for arriving at definite levels of naval strength. They had a far wider purpose as was evidenced by the setting in which they were concluded. They constitute a group of inter-

related agreements and the existing limits fixed on the relative naval forces are based on the principle of comparative defensive needs of the Powers concerned and did not involve the sacrifice of any vital interests on the part of either participant. They ended a competitive race in naval construction and reduced the expense, the suspicion and the feeling of insecurity that existed beforehand. In thus establishing an equilibrium and increasing the security of each of the respective Powers against attack, they undertook to maintain the status quo as to military stations in the Pacific within a large area. Those treaties have been a stabilizing force and their abandonment would create a disequilibrium the consequences of which no one can foretell.

The United States has consistently favored naval reduction to the lowest proportionate levels acceptable to the other Naval Powers. I ask you therefore at the first opportunity to propose to the British and Japanese a substantial and

proportionate reduction in the present naval levels. I suggest 20%, not necessarily a reduction category by category but a reduction which would take into account the peculiar necessities of each nation without altering the total naval needs as they have already been determined by the three nations.

If it is not possible to agree upon 20% or a lesser reduction, then you may in a last effort to secure agreement propose the maintenance and extension for as long a period as possible of existing treaties with only such modifications in detail as the circumstances may require. The important consideration to bear in mind is the avoidance of a naval race within the near future, a race which could profit none of the competitors since it would be idle to expect an increase by one country not to provoke at least a corresponding increase in the other two. No country can count on improving its relative position in a new race in armaments while such a race would in fact clearly

increase the very feeling of insecurity from which it grew.

The experience of the past fifty years has proved conclusively that excessive armaments are themselves conducive to those fears and suspicions which breed war. Moreover, such a race would inevitably result in an economic and financial strain that could be ill endured. The world would rightly reproach us for moving against the current of progressive thought. These three nations, the principal Naval Powers, with nothing to fear from one another, cannot escape their responsibilities, joint and several, for world peace and recovery.

The Government of the United States does not wish to urge any other Power to extend the existing naval treaties if in its considered opinion it would be detrimental to its vital interests. I am, however, persuaded that it is not in the interests of any one of the three largest Naval Powers to abandon the principles and policies upon which they agreed to reduce and limit their respective navies.

NORMAN H. DAVIS
48 WALL STREET
NEW YORK

P.F.

October 1, 1934.

My dear Mr. President:

I am sending you herewith a draft of the letter from you to me, with regard to the naval conversations, which is along the lines we discussed. Although this may require some polishing, I am sending it along in order that you may read it before our talk on Wednesday and decide whether or not it meets with your views and what, if any, changes you would like to have incorporated.

With best wishes, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

Norman H. Davis

The Honorable
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

Letter from the President to Norman H. Davis

DRAFT

In asking you to return to London for the purpose of continuing and expanding the preparatory naval conversations begun last June, I am fully aware of the gravity and complexity of the problems which will confront you and your British and Japanese colleagues. Serious differences of viewpoint have developed during the past years and cannot be glossed over. Yet the need for agreement is so imperative and failure would be so disconcerting, that I cannot believe the obstacles will be found insuperable. The three principal naval Powers have set an example to the world in arms reduction by mutual agreement. The London Treaty, added to that of Washington, ended all naval competition between them for six years. The limitations therein agreed to were based on a series of relevant factors and their interaction proved the best means of promoting friendly relations, peace and security. The benefits to all three and to mankind were incalculable and no one can afford to assume the responsibility for discarding them. By continuing and extending the mutual cooperation to end naval competition which they have pursued under the present naval treaties, the three Nations will make a signal contribution toward relieving the critical international situation and ensuring lasting peace.

To achieve this end no sacrifice of vital national interests is, or need be, required of any participant. The object of next year's Conference - and hence of the present conversations - is succinctly stated in Article 23 of the London Naval Treaty: "to frame a new treaty to replace and to carry out the purposes of the present Treaty." These

purposes/

purposes - as set forth in the preamble of the Treaty - are "to prevent the dangers and reduce the burdens inherent in competitive armament", and "to carry forward the work begun by the Washington Naval Conference and to facilitate progressive realization of general limitation and reduction of armaments." Under the two treaties the entire fleets of the three principal naval Powers were reduced and limited.

The task before us now, as I see it, is not only to maintain the ground thus far gained through naval reduction and limitation, but to advance through still further reduction, not necessarily a reduction category by category but a reduction taking into account the peculiar needs of each nation, without altering relative naval strengths. The United States has always favored reduction to the lowest proportional levels acceptable to the other naval Powers and I have already authorized you to propose a 20 per cent cut in total treaty tonnages as a next step in progressive naval reduction. Such cut would leave the relative standing of each Power unaffected, since it is an axiom of naval limitation that naval strengths are relative.

If it should prove impossible to secure agreement for material reduction in the treaty totals, it becomes imperative to reach a common understanding that at least the existing limitations be maintained and extended for as long a period as possible. In no other manner can the threat of a new race within the near future be avoided - a race which could profit none of the competitors, for it would be idle to expect an increase by one country not to provoke at least a correspond-

ing increase/

ing increase in the other two. A new race in armaments would thus not improve the relative position of any one of the three, while it would in fact, greatly increase the very feeling of insecurity from which it grew; for the experience of the past fifty years has proved conclusively that excessive armaments are themselves conducive to those fears and suspicions which breed war. Moreover, such a race would inevitably result in an economic and financial strain that could be ill endured. The world would rightly reproach them for moving against the current of progressive thought. These three nations, the principal naval Powers, with nothing to fear from one another, cannot escape their responsibilities, joint and several, for world peace and recovery.

There are, of course, certain provisions and limitations in the existing naval treaties to which each of the Powers concerned has some objection but which were accepted because they were essential to agreement and because it was realized that the advantages, as a whole, to be derived from such a comprehensive agreement would more than compensate for any of the concessions required to secure it. There are now certain elements in each country who object to the limitations imposed by these treaties and who think it preferable to let the existing treaties lapse, if they cannot be modified entirely to their liking, thus leaving each nation free to alter or increase its navy as it sees fit. They little visualize how far afield such a backward step would lead and how many are the contingencies which could up-set their calculations. I am indeed persuaded that it is not in the interest of any one of these three great naval Powers to increase the

present/

present instability and distress in the world by an abandonment of the principles and policies upon which they agreed to a reduction and limitation of their respective navies.

I cannot doubt that the British and Japanese Governments share this belief, and that you and your colleagues will succeed in finding a common basis for giving practical effect to this conviction.

Faithfully yours,