

PART III

NOTES

NOTE A

THE CZAR AND DISARMAMENT

THE Czar's manifesto in favour of international disarmament affords clear proof that kings themselves are feeling the disastrous consequences of the continued State of War. On August 12—new style, August 24—1898, Count Mouravieff, by order of the Emperor, handed a copy of the following Note to the representative of every Power accredited to the Court of St. Petersburg :—

“ A universal peace, and a reduction of the present intolerable burdens imposed on all nations by the excessive armaments of to-day, is the ideal towards which every government should strive.

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“The magnanimous and humanitarian views of His Majesty the Emperor, my august master, are entirely devoted to this cause, convinced that such a measure involves the most essential interests and the legitimate aspirations of every Power. The Imperial Government believes the present moment to be very favourable for an international inquiry into the most effective means of assuring the real and durable peace of all nations, and, in particular, for placing limits upon the progressive enlargement of present armaments.

“The past twenty years have seen a particular and general movement towards the ideal of a universal peace. Maintenance of peace has been the first object of international policy. The Great Powers have concluded alliances for this purpose, and the better assurance of permanent peace has initiated hitherto undreamed-of developments in the armed power of nations, which shrink from no sacrifice in order to enlarge their forces.

“None of these efforts have, hitherto, brought the desired solution. The unceasing increase in financial burdens is threatening the very roots of public prosperity. The intellectual and physical potentialities of the peoples, of labour and capital, are for the most part diverted from their natural channels and unproductively consumed. Millions

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of pounds are spent on engines of warfare which to-day regards as irresistible, but which a single new discovery will to-morrow render valueless. National culture, economic progress, and the production of wealth, are paralysed or miscarry; every advance in the armaments of the Powers ministers less and less to the purpose for which they were created.

“Economic crises, largely due to a system which arms the nations *cap-à-pié*, and to the continual dangers inseparable from such accumulation of warlike material, transform the armed peace of to-day into a burden so overwhelming that the nations support it with daily increasing difficulty. An indefinite prolongation of this system must, therefore, inevitably bring about that cataclysm for whose prevention it was designed, and the mere thought of whose horrors makes every mind shudder. To set a final term on these armaments, and to discover a means of preventing calamities that threaten the entire world, is the supreme duty of every modern State.

“Filled with these feelings, His Majesty deigns to command me to propose a Conference, on the subject of this grave problem, between all governments having representatives accredited to the Imperial Court.

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“ This Conference should, by God’s help, be of fortunate omen for the opening century. It would weld into one powerful unity the efforts of all those States which sincerely seek the triumph of the grand ideal of universal peace, despite every trouble and discord.

“ At the same time it should also cement their efforts by a common consecration to those principles of equity and of right on which the security of States and the well-being of nations repose.”

Count Mouravieff likewise addressed the following circular, under date December 30, 1898—January 13, 1899, new style—to the representatives of the Powers at St. Petersburg, summarising the points suggested for consideration at the Conference :—

“ When, last August, my august master commanded me to propose to the governments, represented at the Court of St. Petersburg, a Conference to inquire into the most efficacious means of assuring the benefits of a real and durable peace to all nations, and, more especially, of placing a term on the present progressive augmentation of armaments, nothing seemed to be opposed to a more or less early realisation of this project.

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“ The eager response of almost every Power to the suggestion of the Imperial Government could not fail to justify this belief. Very conscious of the sympathetic terms, in which most governments couched their reply, the Imperial Cabinet, at the same time, experienced lively satisfaction from the warm testimonies of sympathy addressed to it from every side, and still continuing to arrive, by every social rank and from every quarter of the world.

“ Despite the great current of opinion favouring the idea of a general pacification, the aspect of the political horizon has sensibly changed. Several Powers have lately increased their armaments, vying with one another in the development of their military power, a situation the uncertainty of which might well cause inquiry as to whether the Powers find the present moment opportune for an international discussion of the ideas set forth in the circular of August 12th.

“ Continuing to hope that the elements of trouble clouding the political horizon will soon give place to dispositions of a calmer kind, and such as will be favourable to the success of the projected conference, the Imperial Government is of opinion that an immediate exchange of preliminary ideas in this sense can be undertaken

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between the Powers, and an inquiry initiated without delay into the means of limiting the present augmentation of military and naval armaments—a question evidently becoming more and more urgent in view of recent developments in the line of these armaments—and to prepare a way for the discussion of questions touching the possibility of substituting the pacific action of international diplomacy for the arbitrament of force.

“In the event of the Powers considering the present moment favourable for calling a Conference on this basis, it will certainly be useful to have some understanding between the Cabinets as to the programme to be submitted for discussion. The subjects to be submitted for international discussion at the Conference may be outlined as follows :—

“ 1. Agreement establishing a fixed term during which any augmentation of armaments, by sea or on land, shall be forbidden, and likewise any increase of the appropriations devoted thereto : a general discussion as to possible future measures whereby these armaments and budgets may hereafter be reduced.

“ 2. Agreement forbidding the introduction, for army or navy, of new firearms of whatever kind, or of powders of higher power than those

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already in use, whether for guns or small arms.

“ 3. Restrictions on the use, in wars by land, of such high explosives as are already employed, and prohibition on the discharge of projectiles or explosives of any kind from balloons or similar machines.

“ 4. Prohibition on the use, in naval wars, of submarine torpedo boats, divers, or any destructive engines of such nature, and an undertaking to construct no new rams.

“ 5. Application to naval wars of the stipulations of the Geneva Convention of 1864, on the basis of the additional articles of 1868.

“ 6. Neutralisation, under the same head, of vessels or boats rescuing the shipwrecked, whether during or after a naval engagement.

“ 7. Revision of the declaration of the uses and customs of war drawn up by the Conference of Brussels in 1874, but unratified to the present date.

“ 8. Acceptance in principle of the custom of good offices, mediation, and optional arbitration, in suitable cases, with the intention of avoiding armed conflict between nations ; agreement as to the methods of applying these principles and establishing a uniform system for all such cases.

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“Always understanding that all question of the political relations of States, the present status as established by treaty, and also, in general, all questions not directly included in the programme adopted by the Cabinets, will be entirely excluded from the deliberations of the Conference.

“In addressing to you, Sir, this request that you will take the sense of your government on the subject of this communication, I beg to add that in the interests of the great cause so near to his heart, my august master, His Imperial Majesty, considers that the Conference should not sit in the capital of one of the Great Powers—centres of so many political interests which might prejudice deliberations upon a theme commanding the equal interest of every country.”

Following this Note, the *Official Messenger* published a highly statistical article enumerating the military forces of all the Powers.

“The forces of Russia are more considerable than those of any other European country. Her peace establishment, with an annual conscription of 280,000 men, exceeds 1,000,000 men. On a mobilisation, Russia can take the field with 2,500,000 men, excluding a reserve and