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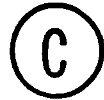
ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND THE GENEVA NAVAL DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE OF 1927

by

 MICHAEL J. BRODE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Anglo-American Relations and the Geneva Naval Disarmament Conference of 1927," submitted by Michael J. Brode in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date Feb. 25, 1972

ABSTRACT

Although the United States and Britain had co-operated effectively during the last years of World War I, their relations deteriorated seriously in the 1920's. This paper examines a notable low point in their relationship, the 1927 Naval Disarmament Conference. That conference was intended to continue the process of naval limitation begun at Washington in 1921, by limiting auxiliary vessels particularily cruisers. Instead the attempt failed completely due to disagreement between Britain and America over total tonnage limitation, cruiser armament and parity between their fleets. The ill-feeling generated at Geneva extended into 1928 and 1929, leading to a mutual expansion of cruiser forces.

Both the American and British naval leaders considered Japan, the third party to the conference, to be their most likely opponent. Despite this common military interest and a shared desire to stabilize the Far East, America and Britain found it impossible to reach agreement in limiting cruisers. On the American side this failure owed much to the lack of a clear Asian

policy and a sense of security on the part of the executive branch. The American government was publicly committed to the "Open Door" policy while unwilling to physically restrain Japan. At the same time the executive had no fear of an immediate threat to American vital interests and was unwilling to seek accommodation with Britain. As a result the naval view point which insisted upon equality with Britain and superiority over Japan, according to the 5:5:3 ratio, dominated American counsels.

British policy was in a state of flux. While the navy was concerned about Japan, some Cabinet members were interested in co-operating with that nation to restore order in China. There was also present in the Cabinet elements antagonistic towards the United States and opposed to accepting equality in cruiser armaments. The Royal Navy feared that, if the United States built up to cruiser equality with Britain, Japan would demand a major increase in naval forces endangering the British in Asia. This view eventually prevailed in the Cabinet, resulting in a refusal to accept compromises negotiated in Geneva. The conference terminated in stalemate.

Both the United States and Britain committed themselves to the Geneva Conference without the realization that in order to reach agreement each would

have to abandon certain technical advantages. Neither nation was prepared to do so. By their failure to reach a compromise, the Anglo-Americans weakened the prestige of the civilian Japanese government, which had been eager for an agreement, and thus lost an opportunity to increase stability in the western Pacific.

The preparation of this paper has depended heavily upon the records of the State and Navy Departments in the National Archives and the Naval History Division, Washington D. C., and the files of the Foreign Office and the Admiralty in the Public Record Office, London. In addition the personal papers of prominent political and military figures have been examined. Important for the American side are the papers of President Calvin Coolidge, Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, Admiral Hilary P. Jones and Admiral Frank Schofield. The British aspect is illuminated by the papers of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, Lord Robert Cecil and Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain. Various newspapers and journals helped to shed light on public attitudes.

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Michael J. Brode

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Despite the relatively close co-operation between Britain and the United States during the last year of the First World War, the 1920's witnessed a growing estrangement between these two powers. While this renewed Anglo-American friction affected many aspects of their relationship, it was, perhaps, most apparent in their attempt to achieve a measure of naval disarmament in the summer of 1927. This attempt and the reasons for its failure are to be the topic of this paper.

Throughout the 1920's traditional sources of anti-British feeling in the United States, such as the Irish and German ethnic groups, had continued their activities, but a more significant source of hostility was trade rivalry between the two nations. For example, the United States opposed British dominance of Middle Eastern oil resources;[1] Britain resented the economic co-operation some American companies offered to the Soviet Union[2] and was concerned about the future of her Latin American trade. To many Englishmen the presence of American forces in several of the Caribbean states and the difficulties in Mexico seemed to presage an American system of economic

control.[3] British trade missions did their best to counteract American influence in the larger states of Latin America which were important British customers.[4] In general, Britain's efforts to regain the mercantile position she had held before the war created friction with the United States.

The issue of war debts compounded the irritation. While on balance Britain was still a creditor nation, in her dealings with the United States she was a debtor.[5] An agreement was worked out covering repayment of this debt, but it did little to soothe feelings. The high American tariff made repayment by direct trade unlikely. American competition in world markets made it difficult for Britain to achieve relative prosperity much less put aside a surplus to be paid to the United States. Many Englishmen resented what they considered a grasping and shortsighted American policy.[6] In the United States, on the other hand, there was caustic comment on Britain's reluctance to pay her legitimate debts.[7]

This American sense of being "cheated" in the matter of war debts was part of a general belief that the United States had been duped into entering the World War. The decision to intervene came under increasing attack during the 1920's and the feeling grew that Americans had died to serve private and foreign interests. Many Americans attributed the involvement of their country in the great holocaust to the work of British propagandists.

The United States, in their estimation, had become the servant of the British Empire. American disillusionment was completed by the apparent ingratitude of her allies[8] and the disappointing results of the war. By 1927 this feeling had reached a point where Senator Hiram Johnson of California, a leader of those determined to disengage America from the world, could express fear of British hostility and a possible concert of Europe and Japan against the United States.[9]

A corresponding spirit of annoyance existed in Britain. America seemed unable or unwilling to recognize the sacrifices Britain had made during the war for the common victory. Many Britons, especially those of the upper class, resented America's new position of world power and economic dominance.[10] Perhaps even more galling to British pride was the cultural impact of American media, especially the cinema.[11] Americans seemed too quick to assume a position of moral superiority and too eager to advise Britain on the proper path to follow in her dealings with other states.[12] Understandably, some Englishmen were embittered by the decline of Britain's position in the Anglo-American relationship.

These points of difference surfaced more easily in the post-war world than previously because, with the defeat of Germany, both nations, and especially Britain, once more felt militarily secure.[13] Apparent security permitted the expression of long supressed ill will.

One factor that came to prominence in the 1920's as a disturber of the Anglo-American peace was naval rivalry. Before America's entrance into the World War, relations had been severely strained by the conflict between Britain's blockade practice and America's view of neutral rights.[14] In 1916 the United States began a massive expansion of its fleet as a counter to both German and British activities. This building program was continued after the war and the United States seemed well on the way to becoming the mightiest naval power on earth.[15] Some American naval officers believed that, since the United States had become Britain's leading commercial rival, war was a possibility.[16] The Royal Navy focused its attention on Japan, but the threat of a conflict with the United States was not ignored.[17] The result was a naval arms race between the victorious naval powers: Britain, Japan and America.

Britain and Japan had difficulty keeping pace with the American building program and even for the United States the strain was onerous. In order to escape the spiralling costs of naval arms and end the hostility created by armament competition, a conference was held in Washington in 1921 to place a limit on the world's major navies. The negotiations resulted in a series of political agreements aimed at stabilizing the Asian situation. These settlements, in turn, made possible one of the rare, successful limitations of armaments,

the Five Power Pact. Britain, America, France, Japan and Italy agreed to place a limit on the total tonnage of their battle fleets. The United States and Britain were allowed 500,000 tons of capital ships each. Japan was permitted 60% of the Anglo-American tonnage and France and Italy 35%.

Lord Balfour, head of the British delegation, announced Great Britain's "...abandonment of her traditional policy of supremacy on the sea and her willingness to accept...naval equality with...the United States."[18] In practice this equality was limited to battle fleets; that is, battleships, battlecruisers and large aircraft carriers. No agreement was reached limiting the total tonnage of auxiliary vessels such as cruisers and destroyers. The only achievement in these categories was to limit the maximum size and armament of individual cruisers to 10,000 tons and 8-inch weapons, an arrangement permitting substantial increase in the fighting capacity of these vessels. The cruiser became the largest warship whose total tonnage was unrestricted. Since most naval men believed artillery would continue to dominate sea warfare, it was not unnatural that competition in cruiser construction would begin.[19]

Following the Washington Conference, both Japan and Britain began to expand their cruiser fleets. Many Americans were angered at these actions. They believed that at Washington the United States had surrendered what

would have become the world's strongest navy in return for a promise of parity with Britain.[20] By expanding her cruiser fleet, Britain appeared to be reneging on that promise.[21] Although the Washington Conference had been a limited success, it had not removed naval rivalry as a factor in Anglo-American relations.

The presence of this rivalry and the other elements of friction should not disguise the common interests of Britain and America. Both nations were satisfied powers, interested in maintaining the status quo. They wished for a stable world, based on the Versailles settlement, which could permit the expansion of trade and prosperity.[22]

The United States in its major roles in the Far East and Latin America aimed at promoting political stability and commercial opportunity. The continuation of the Open Door in China depended on co-operation with European powers. Though the Monroe Doctrine was applied in such a way as to fashion several protectorates[23] in the Caribbean area, South America was open to European commercial and military influence.

Americans were willing to co-operate with Europe and the League of Nations in limited humanitarian endeavors as long as no coercive role was required. The vast majority of Americans distrusted any foreign entanglement that might lead to the use of American armies.[24] Some involvement might be accepted, but the

forceful commitment of the American nation to a cause or a country beyond its borders was most unlikely, given the belief that security was assured without collective action.[25] This rejection of binding obligations did not prevent the United States from seeking international co-operation.[26] Americans never abandoned a sense of world responsibility and they earnestly sought a means to insure world peace short of enforcing it.

A solid underlying basis for Anglo-American co-operation existed, but in the mid-1920's there seemed to be little reason to look below the surface. For the people of the United States foreign policy was not a primary concern. They held, in general, a vague desire to avoid the difficulties of foreign entanglement so that the benefits of the new technological civilization might be fully savored. Overdrawn though the accounts of the "Roaring Twenties" may be, America concentrated more on expanding its material realm than its international role.

President Calvin Coolidge epitomized the domestic emphasis of the era. Local politics had been the center of his life's work.[27] As a mediocre New England politician, Coolidge had displayed the political virtues of party loyalty and an ability to say and do nothing incriminating. These characteristics had taken him up the ladder of political preferment to the office of Governor of Massachusetts. There he had opposed the 1919 Boston police strike and won nationwide attention. His reward

came the next year with the Republican vice-presidential nomination. After the death of President Harding, Coolidge moved up the final step to the highest office in the land.[28]

Coolidge has been called a caretaker and a do-nothing president.[29] In certain respects this charge is valid for he held a theory of government calling for a limited application of federal power. He conceived of his administration as an agent for the business civilization that was reshaping much of America.[30] Government would foster the growth of this industrial society through reducing restrictions of the regulatory agencies, providing tax benefits and promoting foreign trade. Authority to carry out this program encouraging business expansion would be left to Coolidge's key economic advisers---Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover.

In the foreign affairs field the President likewise played a restrained role, leaving Frank B. Kellogg free to devise policy and administer the Department of State. The appointment of Secretary Kellogg has been called "...Coolidge's cardinal error in the diplomatic field."[31] It is true that Kellogg, charged with the conduct of America's foreign policy, often failed to provide firm direction. Yet in his defense it must be stated that Kellogg was working within narrow limits. The public was opposed to any major foreign commitment,

and Kellogg held a restricted view of America's foreign role as well. He believed that the United States had a moral duty to assist in preserving the peace of the world, but he denied any need of such co-operation to insure the country's security.[32]

Within his department Kellogg encountered difficulty. A nervous temperment and a tendency to concentrate work in his own hands made the office a great burden for the elderly Secretary. Undersecretary Joseph C. Grew was rarely informed about major policy decisions and consequently was ill-prepared to serve as Acting Secretary in Kellogg's absence.[33] Grew's replacement by Robert Olds in 1927 and the appointment of two new assistant secretaries placed additional responsibilities on Kellogg. The administration of the Rogers Act and the subsequent friction between consular and diplomatic officers further consumed the Secretary's energy and diverted his attention from policy formulation.[34]

The State Department's limited international program fortunately required little active co-operation from Congress,[35] since, despite Republican majorities in both houses, administration forces on Capitol Hill were weak. Republican dominance was purely nominal for the divisions within the party made administration control difficult. Moreover, Congress was, as is usual in a post-war period, reasserting its autonomy after a period of executive domination of the government.

One of the groups opposing Coolidge's pro-business policies was the farm bloc. This was a bi-partisan coalition which planned to bring relief to the economically distressed farmer. In both 1926 and 1927, at the instigation of this group, Congress passed the McNary-Haugen Bill, only to have the measure twice vetoed. Another opposition group, containing some members of the farm bloc, was the progressive remnant. Although they had lost much of their pre-war strength, the progressives were still an active force capable of delaying, if not defeating, administration measures. Like the farm bloc, membership in the progressives was bipartisan, but the bulk of the adherents claimed to be Republicans. The Democratic Party, while technically in opposition, was badly divided. Many of its members found the economic policies of the Coolidge government congenial.

The major support for Coolidge's plans came from the regular Republican forces of the east. Even here Coolidge's strength was none too certain. The regular Republicans were eager to have Congress assert its independence of the executive. Perhaps more important, the Republican leaders had had little hand in making Coolidge President and were always ready to drop him.[36]

The result of congressional splintering was stalemate and an inert legislature.[37] By 1926 it appeared to many that Coolidge had lost control of the

Congress and perhaps of the party on both domestic and international matters. Congress felt free to oppose the Administration on such issues as Japanese exclusion and World Court Membership since Coolidge would rather give way than endanger support for his domestic program. The dominant congressional voice on foreign affairs was that of Senator William E. Borah, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Borah bitterly opposed any binding international commitment by the United States and any policy tainted with imperialism, even of the economic variety.[38] He supported the President's penchant for strict economy, and in return Kellogg did what he could to assuage the Senator's fear of foreign involvement, but he could not rely on the Senator's partisan support.[39] Most of the progressives agreed with Borah's attitude and their vocal opposition combined with broader isolationist sentiment could frustrate the Administration's cautious international program.

Yet, for the majority of Americans, Coolidge's foreign policy was not offensive, just unimportant. Nevertheless, many people wanted some international action that would fulfill America's traditional moral responsibility. The one gesture that could satisfy this need was disarmament. There was more general agreement on this form of international action than on anything else. It appealed to those who wished the United States to take the lead in efforts toward world peace.

It set a good example for Europe and would enable Europeans to pay their debts. Some felt that disarmament would lead the United States to join the League of Nations, while others believed that in a disarmed world membership in the League would be unnecessary.[40]

Disarmament appealed to the Administration for various reasons. The United States had taken the lead in this field at Washington and it remained the Republicans' greatest diplomatic triumph. It was always tempting to try a repeat of this success. Moreover, disarmament was economically attractive. The President had never been an advocate of major military expenditure. He told the graduating class of Annapolis, in June of 1925, that the United States did not "...believe in or wish to bear the expense of maintaining large standing military forces. The very genius of a republic would be threatened by that policy."[41] In Coolidge's opinion the best method of increasing America's potential military strength would be to reduce the national debt.

American armed forces were already being maintained at a very modest level. The Army was quite small and had a difficult time getting any appropriations. The Navy, while somewhat better off, had fallen below the standard officially set for it---equality with Britain. The American fleet was especially inferior to the British in cruiser strength. Twenty-three of

these ships had been built before 1912 and were obsolete by the time of the Washington Conference. Ten ships had been completed since then, but these were the smaller "OMAHA" class vessel mounting only 6-inch guns and displacing 7500 tons.

The Navy wished to supplement these ships by building up to British strength in the type of cruisers authorized by the Washington Treaty in 1921. In 1924 Congress authorized eight for the American Navy.[42] Even if these ships were completed the United States would still be below the level of the British Navy, and no money had been set aside to begin construction. Instead of gaining equality with Britain in modern cruiser tonnage the United States was falling behind Japan. Since Britain and Japan had enlarged their cruiser force following the Washington Conference, pressure mounted both within the government and in the country to expand and modernize the fleet.[43]

Within the executive most pressure for expansion came from the Department of the Navy. In late 1924 Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur voiced public doubts about the wisdom of economy in the building program. Despite a presidential reprimand he repeated these doubts in 1925.[44] Wilbur, a former judge of the California Supreme Court, was an honest and capable administrator whose tenure as Secretary of the Navy helped erase the taint of the "Teapot Dome" scandal.

Coolidge could not reject his advice out of hand.

Professional naval men were not alone in their campaign for an improved fleet. All those who agreed with them, for whatever reason, were lumped together as the "Big Navy Boys". Besides active members of the Navy, this group included industrialists hoping to profit from the building of new ships, defense minded congressmen and any individual who saw a need for a larger fleet. This need might encompass promotion of American interests and prestige abroad or protection of "fortress America". The "Big Navy Boys" formed an amorphous group with only one common denominator, the desire for a larger navy.

The core of the new Navy was expected to be the heavy vessel. Considerable changes in naval technology had occurred since the First World War. The United States Navy increasingly looked on the airplane as an important auxiliary weapon over which they must have complete control and, therefore, secured the creation of a Bureau of Aeronautics within the Navy Department in 1921. Congress provided for a massive increase in the naval air arm in 1926, giving the United States a considerable lead over both Japan and Britain in naval aviation.[45] Nevertheless, most high ranking naval officers, including Admiral E. W. Eberle, the Chief of Naval Operations, remained convinced that the big gun would dominate naval warfare.[46] The automatic

machinery and recoil equipment of 8-inch or larger rifles required battleship or heavy cruiser size platforms.

Naval planners considered that the responsibility of the battle fleet was to protect American sovereignty, territory, citizens and lines of communication.[47] The main future challenge to these interests seemed to be in the Pacific. The Navy believed that Japan was aiming at the commercial and political domination of the Far East through territorial expansion,[48] a development threatening the "Open Door" in China. Upholding this principle might lead to war with Japan.

In December of 1921 the Army and Navy had prepared a joint contingency plan for war with "ORANGE", the code name for Japan.[49] It was believed that if war occurred Japan would strike first at the Philippines and the fleet anchorage at Manila Bay. The plan provided for the army forces in the Philippines to fight a delaying action while the fleet moved across the Pacific to their relief and then to the blockade of Japan.

The Navy was doubtful of its ability to carry out these duties. Former German islands north of the equator served Japan as bases along the American supply line between Pearl Harbor and Manila Bay. Moreover, the Washington Conference agreements hampered action against Japan in the Western Pacific by limiting American

fortifications in that area and required a 5:3 ratio disadvantageous for a fleet operating at such distance from its home base. The Navy was convinced that at Washington Japan had achieved naval superiority in the Western Pacific.[50]

To carry out the difficult Pacific role the Navy selected the 10,000 ton heavy cruiser. There were several reasons for the Navy's preference for this vessel. More economical than the battleship, its comparable long cruising radius permitted operations far from American bases. Moreover, its 8-inch weapons would match Japanese and British cruiser armament and outshoot lighter vessels, including merchant raiders, armed with 6-inch rifles.

While the Navy was convinced that additional ships of this type were essential if it were to carry out its responsibilities, Coolidge opposed spending the required sums or provoking an arms race. The Navy thus accepted the idea of a further disarmament conference extending the 5:5:3 ratio to heavy cruisers as a way to reconcile military and political aims. It would give the American Navy the relative position it seemed impossible to achieve in the face of British and Japanese cruiser expansion, perhaps reduce international tension and lift the prestige of the Administration.

Like the United States, Britain would have preferred to avoid foreign responsibilities. Yet a return

to the insular status of the late nineteenth century was not possible. Needs of defense and economics tied Britain closely to the continent. Through the League of Nations and the Locarno agreements she was bound to maintain the status quo in Europe, which meant the Versailles settlement. Nevertheless, she hoped for a German revival because of the beneficial effects this would have on the British economy. This policy ran counter to the aims of France who yearned for a security not possible in a Europe containing a strong Germany.[51] A gradual estrangement between the two major European democracies resulted.

The Empire was a source of concern to British statesmen. In the 1920's it stood at its greatest physical extent, but was rapidly losing cohesion and centralized control. India was becoming restless and the Dominions were pressing for, and achieving, national independence.[52] From the vantage point of hindsight the accelerating evolution to the Commonwealth is viewed as inevitable; but many on the scene maintained that Britannia's rule should be upheld as forcefully as when Victoria wore the crown.

In the minds of some ardent imperialists the Empire offered an alternative to world trade. A system of imperial preference would put the Empire on a competitive basis with nations such as the United States.[53] Centrifugal forces eventually were to prove too strong;

but, in the 1920's the idea of empire still influenced British opinion.[54]

The proponents of imperial unity and a preferential tariff found their home in the Conservative Party. The Conservatives had broken from Lloyd-George's coalition government in 1922 but only at some cost to their unity. Men with a fierce sense of loyalty, such as Austen Chamberlain, had found it impossible to make the change graciously. As a result leadership of the party fell to Stanley Baldwin in 1923 and remained with him until 1937, although many Conservatives felt Chamberlain deserved the position.[55]

Baldwin, a wealthy Conservative politician and business man, had been associated with the Cabinet since 1917. His main achievements as Prime Minister were to reunite the Tory Party and to prevent it from becoming the instrument of only one class. In his second Cabinet Baldwin brought together all the leading Conservative lights and the highly controversial Winston Churchill. Baldwin appointed his friends Leo Amery and William Bridgeman, Colonial Secretary and First Lord of the Admiralty, respectively. These two men had supported Baldwin in the break from the Lloyd-George coalition and during his rise to the Primeministership. Both had considerable support among the back bench Conservatives. Amery, an ardent imperialist, was completely at home in the Colonial Office.[56] Bridgeman,

with the reputation of a simple English countryman of bluff honesty, had no experience with the Admiralty, but he labored devotedly on its behalf.[57]

Working closely with Bridgeman was the First Sea Lord, David, Earl Beatty. Beatty was the more colorful of the two men and attracted more public attention during his term as First Sea Lord from 1919 to 1927. His reputation as a naval commander at Jutland and his remarkable intelligence gave him a good deal of authority in arguing the Admiralty's case before the Cabinet.[58]

In addition to these regular Conservatives, Baldwin brought in the former coalition supporters Austen Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead. Chamberlain was acceptable to the bulk of the Conservatives since it was recognized that only his demanding sense of loyalty had kept him with the coalition. He was given the Foreign Office and it was generally agreed that Chamberlain was the major figure in the Conservative Party and government next to Baldwin himself.[59] Birkenhead was named Secretary of State for India.

Austen Chamberlain was not a colorful or outgoing man, but his sense of integrity and honesty inspired the respect of his contemporaries. One said of him that "...he has a warm heart, but it is by no means carried upon his sleeve."[60] In the handling of British foreign affairs Chamberlain had a powerful though not final voice. Other cabinet members, such as

Robert Cecil, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Winston Churchill always demanded that their views be considered,[61] if Baldwin, generally little concerned with foreign policy, did not.

Chamberlain regarded Britain as a great world power and made certain that she played a key role in the European power structure.[62] His emphasis on European matters and his recognition that France was at least partially justified in her demand for security led him to work for the Locarno agreements and the maintainance of what appeared to be a stable order in Western Europe.[63] In Asia, too, Chamberlain wished to create stability and he sought co-operation with the United States and Japan to bring order to China.

Baldwin astonished the country and his party by bringing Churchill into the government and appointing him Chancellor of the Exchequer. Churchill himself was surprised at being offered so important and powerful a post.[64] Not only had Churchill been a staunch coalitionist but for the past twenty years he had been a Liberal and a determined "free trader" in opposition to protectionists such as Amery, Bridgeman and Baldwin.[65] Moreover, despite his obvious talents, Churchill had no real experience in national finance. Baldwin had appointed Churchill because it was essential that he be prevented from rejoining Lloyd-George or creating a rump conservative party.[66] As

Chancellor of the Exchequer Churchill's immense energies would be occupied. Once in office he became completely absorbed in the economic retrenchment policies of his own department and gave them whole hearted support even when they conflicted with programs he had previously championed.[67] Possession of the Exchequer post made Churchill a central figure in Baldwin's government.

With this talented cabinet Baldwin was determined to achieve a measure of social reform and thus heal the bitter division within the country and lay the basis for a "Tory Democracy" that was his ideal society. The general strike of 1925 emphasized the danger of class conflict and the need for social and economic change.

Most public attention in Britain centered on the state of the economy. The country's position as the leading industrial power had been lost before the war began, and the struggle had added exceptional strain. The financial empire which had been a great source of hidden revenue became partially dismantled. Many markets had been given up and much of the carrying trade that was normally in British hands had been forced to seek other channels.[68]

Britain found it difficult after the war to win back her markets since a good deal of her industrial plant was outdated and inefficient. Beyond this Britain

depended heavily on her coal and iron industries which were not as profitable in the 1920's as they had been in the 19th century. The general dislocation of world trade and the loss of British markets to foreign competitors following the World War intensified the difficulties of the British economy.[69]

Loss of markets, industrial decay and chronic large-scale unemployment increased the demand for national expenditure while it reduced tax receipts. The Conservative government was tied to orthodox financial practices precluding deficit spending; at the same time the government rejected the idea of raising taxes. This financial quandary threatened the Conservatives' social reform program by denying adequate resources.[70]

One solution for many Britons was to reduce government expenditure on armaments. Vast sums being spent upon the military despite the post-war reduction of forces could be used to improve the life of the British people. This temptation was strengthened by a genuine desire for disarmament. Reduction in military strength would not only be economically beneficial but would make future wars less likely,[71] since it was widely believed that the possession of weapons led to international tension.

To British leaders, the problem was not so simple. For an island empire dependent on foreign trade an adequate defense was vital. The army was

already reduced to a minimum; the Air Force was receiving substantial support, but it was doubted that any major cuts would be made in its budget;[72] the Navy appeared to be the only service where large savings could be made.

The Royal Navy clearly seemed to occupy a more favorable position than in 1914. Although the great naval rival, Germany, had been defeated and her navy destroyed, the lessons of the war had not affected the basic thinking of the Admiralty. British naval strategy still rested on the big gun; the capital ship remained the heart of the British fleet.[73] Liberal naval appropriations were intended to maintain the battle fleet and to build strength in cruisers. The capital ships would carry a future war to the enemy; a powerful cruiser force would support the battle fleet and counter any threat from surface raiders.[74]

The most likely opponent of the navy was Britain's former ally Japan whose territorial and trade ambitions might easily run counter to British interests in Asia. The Empire east of Suez could become hostage to this potentially hostile power.[75] In the 1920's the British Navy began formulating responses to a challenge from Japan. The Empire did not have the resources to maintain both the main home fleet and a far eastern fleet capable of defeating Japan. The strategy adopted was to construct a major naval base at Singapore which

could sustain both the home and the Asian squadrons. This base was to be given sufficient defensive strength to withstand Japanese attack until the fleet could arrive from European waters.[76]

The Admiralty recognized that the Washington Conference agreements had strengthened the Japanese naval position while weakening that of the United States in Asian waters. When Japan, shortly after the Conference, announced her intention to build eight heavy cruisers, the Admiralty decided that Britain must add seventeen. This would give Britain superiority with a reserve capable of meeting Japanese raids.[77]

The 1924 Admiralty proposals continued the plan for massive cruiser superiority over Japan by insisting that only with seventy cruisers could the safety of the Empire be guaranteed.[78] Further it was necessary to begin work on some of these cruisers immediately. The reason for this haste was the fact that in 1931, according to the terms of the Washington Treaty, Britain would be permitted to replace some of her older battleships. The expense of this replacement program would preclude most cruiser construction.

The Admiralty had a difficult time convincing Ramsay MacDonald that its demands were justified. Although his Labour government began building a few cruisers, it stopped construction at Singapore altogether. The Admiralty argued that such a step could

only be justified if Japan agreed to scrap all of her capital ships.[79] With the return of Baldwin and the Conservatives in the fall of 1924, the Admiralty began a determined drive to obtain the cruisers it deemed necessary and a completed base at Singapore.

Baldwin faced a dilemma: social reform depended on economy, but he could not deny the validity of the Admiralty's claims nor forget the ties of personal loyalty to Bridgeman.[80] Early in 1925 Bridgeman pointed out to both the Cabinet and Baldwin that the Navy could only carry out its task at a certain minimum cost. He urged meeting this cost rather than reducing naval responsibilities.[81] Churchill presented an effective reply to the Admiralty's position. He rejected the likelihood of war with Japan during the next ten years and reminded the Cabinet that social welfare expenditure depended on reduced naval appropriations. Moreover, the building program might only lead to a naval arms race weakening Britain's position.[82]

When the Committee of Imperial Defense supported Churchill's arguments, the Admiralty's Cabinet support was gravely undermined and the entire cruiser program endangered. But Bridgeman had no intention of yielding. The battle over naval estimates became a struggle between the former coalitionists and Baldwin's original supporters. To forestall their resignations Baldwin sided with his early followers and brought the Cabinet

around. The Admiralty accepted a compromise which gave it two cruisers in October 1925, two in February 1926, two in October 1926 and one in February 1927. The Admiralty had gained a victory, but not a triumph. The cabinet majority had wanted to follow Churchill and still favored a reduction in military costs. The Navy would have to seek means of economizing.

Since the Admiralty believed that the number of cruisers was irreducible the sole approach to economy was to restrict the size and armament of individual ships. Eventually the Admiralty decided that substantial savings could be made by building most British cruisers as 6-inch gun vessels of about 7000 ton displacement. Given the numerous British naval bases these ships would have a satisfactory cruising range. By making the 6-inch gun the standard cruiser weapon the value of Britain's numerous light cruisers built during the World War and of her merchantmen, which could carry 6-inch rifles, would be greatly enhanced. A reduction in cruiser size increasingly held attraction for the Admiralty.[83]

One other power---Japan---must be considered in any discussion of naval disarmament in the 1920's. Following the First World War Japanese politics experienced liberalization as civilian parties came to dominate the government, gradually taking power from the military, the elder statesmen and the aristocrats.

The parties remained, however, inherently weak. They lacked any unifying set of principles and were based primarily on personal advantage or rivalry. As a result they lacked broad popular support and often turned for leadership to prominent military figures or bureaucrats. It was the misfortune of these parties that in their formative period they were required to deal with the post-war economic crisis.[84]

Like the United States Japan had, at first, profited from the World War. She had changed from a debtor to a creditor nation and entered markets previously dominated by Western nations. Her most spectacular advances were made in China where, by pressure on the weak government, wise investment and occupation of the German lease hold of Shantung, she had secured a powerful position.[85] After the war the Japanese economy suffered a severe decline. Markets were lost, competition stiffened and the poorly structured financial and industrial machine reverted with difficulty to peace time production. The great Kanto earthquake of 1923 further damaged the staggering Japanese economy. These problems resulted in a continuous imbalance of payments and repeated banking crises, culminating in the failure of hundreds of banks and businesses in 1927.[86]

Thus, the Japanese government was eager to follow a policy of economy. Like Western governments the Japanese civilian leaders sought to reduce

expenditure by lessening the burden of armaments. By 1927 Army and Navy appropriations had fallen to 20% of the budget compared to 42% in 1922.[87]

The ability of governments to place such restrictions on the armed forces stemmed from a decline in the military's prestige.[88] The armed forces had been discredited by the disappointing results of the war; but in the mid-1920's their influence began to revive. In part, this rebirth is explained by a heightened resentment of the United States for excluding Japanese immigration and concern over the British military role in the Far East. More important than these reasons, however, was anxiety about the effect on the nation's economy of events in China.

China had become more important than ever to Japan in the post-war world as a major market, a source of vital raw materials, and, possibly, an area of colonization for Japan's excess population. However, in the 1920's the Nationalist movement in China began to gain ground. The Nationalist Kuomintang movement was based on the city of Canton in Southern China. After 1923 it came increasingly under the influence of the Soviet Union, at the same time as its power grew at the expense of the official Chinese government in Peking. In 1926 the Nationalist forces under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek began to move north into the Yangtse area. In addition to the threat of Bolshevism, Chiang's

army brought a spirit of anti-foreignism: one of its main aims was to terminate the special treaties and extra-territorial rights enjoyed by the Western nations and Japan.[89] Although Chiang was preparing to desert his communist allies, his national objectives and the depredations and excesses of his troops gave the foreign powers with interests in China no cause for comfort.

Japan's first response to the difficulties in China originated with Baron Kijuro Shidehara, a former ambassador to the United States and Foreign Minister, 1924 to 1927 and 1929 to 1931. Shidehara, although a career diplomat, was also a professional politician and a leading proponent of civilian rule and gradual domestic liberalization. His attitude towards China was based on the needs of Japanese economy. Shidehara and his followers believed that Japan could best protect her economic interests in China by maintaining cordial relations with the Chinese, and he advocated restraint in the face of Chinese attacks and boycotts.[90]

It was difficult for the Japanese to exercise forbearance in an area of such vital importance. Both the army and nationalist groups in Japan were deeply concerned by the failure of the government to protect forcefully Japan's interests in China. In the spring of 1927 Baron Tanaka became Prime Minister on the promise of carrying out a more active policy in China. This policy required sending troops to China and resulted in

clashes with the Nationalist forces.[91] As Japanese policy in China became more dependent on the Army the prestige and influence of the military inevitably grew.

This "positive" policy did not involve any immediate serious conflict with the Western powers since they too were using troops to protect their Chinese interests. Both Britain and the United States desired to control Chinese disorder threatening their property and citizens. To some Western leaders Japan began to appear as a source of order in the midst of revolutionary turmoil.

Japanese naval policy was conditioned by needs of economizing, protecting her Chinese interests and offsetting British and American military units. The heavy cruiser forces, bolstered by the eight vessels begun after the Washington Conference, were expected by Japanese planners to perform various roles. The superiority they provided over other naval forces in Asia would allow Japan to raid American lines of communication in the event of war with her most likely enemy,[92] or would offset Britain's large number of light cruisers and armed merchantmen. Moreover, cruisers were useful in maintaining order in Chinese port cities.

Japan's serious economic difficulties made her civilian leaders eager to escape from the further burden of armament expenditure. One solution would satisfy both their desire for security and for a reduction in

expenditure. Japan had reached a point of great relative strength vis-a-vis the United States. Therefore Japanese leaders, civilian and military, favored a treaty which would perpetuate the existing naval situation in the Pacific.

During the 1920's the governments of the United States, Britain and Japan all had reason to favor naval force limitation. However, the navies of these three powers feared that disarmament agreements might weaken their strategic positions. In particular the American and British navies believed that Japan was their most likely enemy, while the Japanese Navy was preparing for a possible war with the United States. Naval leadership would only accept armament limitation on terms of special advantage.

This attitude on the part of the military was not consistent with the views of all civilian leaders. In both the State Department and the Foreign Office there was a belief that the danger from Japan had declined, that co-operation with her to restore order in China might be possible, and that reduction of naval forces was conceivable politically and necessary economically. In the Foreign Office, perhaps because of the strongly anti-British nature of the unrest in China, the desire for co-operation with Japan ran deeper than in the State Department. Japanese civilian leaders for their part had abandoned the idea of territorial

expansion in Asia and were most concerned with economic development. Such development could best be carried out with the aid of Western capital and the availability of Western markets. Paradoxically, the relaxation of tension made disarmament seem less important to some civilian leaders, particularly American.

In Britain, Japan and America, especially the first, an implicit divergence existed between military planning and political-foreign policy considerations. The possibility of naval disarmament was reduced by this discrepancy.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

[1]Selig Adler, The Uncertain Giant, 1921-1941: American Foreign Policy Between the Wars (New York, 1965), p. 74.

[2]James M. Beck to Secretary of State Kellogg, July 24, 1925, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20, Library of Congress. (Hereafter cited as Coolidge Papers.)

[3]The Times (London), January 20, 1927, p. 12.

[4]Kellogg to President Coolidge, August 22, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[5]H. C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1925 (New York, 1955), pp. 758-60.

[6]Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin: A Biography (London, 1969), pp. 145-48. Austen Chamberlain complained to the British Ambassador in Washington that the task of repaying this debt was costly both to British trade and social stability. See Austen Chamberlain to Esme Howard, November 2, 1926, in W. N. Medlicott, Douglas Dakin and M. E. Lambert (eds.), Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Vol. II: The Termination of Military Control in Germany, Middle Eastern and American Questions, 1926-1927, 2 vols. (London, 1968), 866.

[7]Kellogg to Judge E. H. Gary, July 14, 1926, Kellogg Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. (Hereafter cited as Kellogg Papers.)

[8]Robert W. Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century (Chicago, 1953), p. 331. See also Howard to Austen Chamberlain, April 9, 1926, in W. N. Medlicott, op. cit., p. 883.

[9]U. S., Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 2d Sess., 1927, Vol. LXVII, Part I, 991.

[10]Allen, op. cit., p. 729. During the Geneva Naval Conference the resentment felt by the British upper class toward the United States would become more apparent within the Cabinet and exert a considerable influence on the Conference.

[11]Ibid., p. 762.

[12]Max Beloff, Imperial Sunset, I: Britain's Liberal Empire: 1897-1921 (London, 1969), 336.

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[14]For an account of this difference of opinion on neutral rights see Ernest R. May, The World War and American Isolation: 1914-1917 (Chicago, 1954), pp. 305-17.

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[16]Stephen Roskill, Naval Policy Between the Wars, I: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919-1929 (London, 1968), 22-25.

[17]Ibid., p. 283.

[18]Quoted in Harold and Margaret Sprout, Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-122 (Princeton, N. J., 1946), p. 157.

[19]Roskill, op. cit., p. 326. Vincent Davis, The Admiral's Lobby (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1967), p. 130.

[20]George Davis, op. cit., p. 315.

[21]Hector Bywater, Navies and Nations: A Review Of Naval Developments Since the Great War (London, 1927), p. 185.

[22]E. H. Carr, The Twenty Year Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations (New York, 1964), p. 225. Herbert Feis, The Diplomacy of the Dollar, 1919-1932 (Baltimore, 1950), pp. 3-6.

[23]Adler, op. cit., p. 93.

[24]Foster Rhea Dulles, America's Rise to World Power, 1898-1954 (New York, 1963), pp. 144-47.

[25]Osgood, op. cit., p. 350.

[26]L. Ethan Ellis, Republican Foreign Policy, 1921-1933 (New Brunswick, N. J., 1968), pp. 34-37.

[27]Ibid., p. 39.

[28]Donald R. McCoy, Calvin Coolidge, The Quiet President (New York, 1967), pp. 92-97.

[29]Karl Schriftgiesser, This Was Normalcy: An Account of Party Politics During Twelve Republican Years (Boston, 1948), pp. 215-16.

[30]George E. Mowry, The Urban Nation, 1920-1960 (New York, 1965), p. 45.

[31]Selig Adler, The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth Century Reaction (New York, 1961), p. 152.

[32]Robert H.Ferrell, Frank B. Kellogg, Vol. IX of The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, ed. S. F. Bemis (New York, 1963), 15-19.

[33]Joseph C. Grew, Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years: 1904-1945. I (Boston, 1952), 652.

[34]L. Ethan Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg and American Foreign Relations, 1925-1929 (New Brunswick, N. J., 1961), pp. 14-21.

[35]George H. Mayer, The Republican Party: 1854-1964 (New York, 1964), p. 383. "Statesmanship By Negation", New Republic, LV (June 6, 1928), 57-59.

[36]Schriftgiesser, op. cit., p. 18.

[37]Mayer, op. cit., p. 382. Malcolm Moos, The Republicans, A History of Their Party (New York, 1956), p. 346. New York Times, January 18, 1926, Part III, p. 6. "When Is a Congress Not a Congress", New Republic, L (March 16, 1927), 32.

[38]William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York, 1962), pp. 117-23.

[39]Claudius O. Johnson, Borah of Idaho (Seattle, 1936), p. 14. Howard to Austen Chamberlain, December 29, 1926, in Medlicott et al., Documents, pp. 917-18. Adler, Isolationist Impulse, pp. 160-61.

[40]Adler, Uncertain Giant, pp. 39-40 and p. 61.

[41]Calvin Coolidge, Foundations of the Republic: Speeches and Addresses (New York, 1930), p. 240.

[42]Gerald E. Wheeler, Prelude to Pearl Harbour: The United States Navy and the Far East, 1921-1931 (Columbia, Missouri, 1963), pp. 125-26. The authorization of these eight ships was, in turn, used by the Admiralty as a justification for the proposed increase in the cruiser strength of the Royal Navy. See Roskill, op. cit., p. 351.

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[46]Vincent Davis, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

[47]Gerald E. Wheeler, "The United States Navy and the Japanese 'Enemy': 1919-1931", Military Affairs, XXI, (Summer, 1957), 62. Ernest R. May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States", Political Science Quarterly, LXX (June, 1955), 167-70.

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[68] Medlicott, Contemporary England, pp. 73-75. Derek H. Aldcroft and Harry W. Richardson, The British Economy: 1870-1939 (London, 1969), pp. 219-223.

[69] Sidney Pollard, The Development of the British Economy: 1914-1967 (London, 1969), pp. 184-89.

[70] Taylor, op. cit., pp. 236-37.

[71] G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, A Short History of International Affairs, 1920 to 1934 (London, 1936), pp. 51-52.

[72] British military planners overestimated the value of strategic bombing. See Taylor, op. cit., pp. 230-31.

[73]B. B. Schofield, British Sea Power: Naval Policy in the Twentieth Century (London, 1967), pp. 76-77.

[74]Following the First World War the fleet air arm had been turned over to the R. A. F. and those naval officers most concerned with this new weapon had their energies diverted into a fight for a separate naval air force. See Roskill, op. cit., pp. 266-68.

[75]Beloff, op. cit., p. 345. Amery, op. cit., p. 252. Roskill, op. cit., p. 416.

[76]Schofield, op. cit., p. 109. Roskill, op. cit., pp. 278-81.

[77]Roskill, op. cit., p. 342, p. 352, and pp. 388-99.

[78]Ibid., p. 416.

[79]Schofield, op. cit., p. 111.

[80]Middlemas, op. cit., p. 328.

[81]Bridgeman did admit that some savings could be made if the size of cruisers was reduced by an international agreement. See Bridgeman memorandum presented to Stanley Baldwin, February 4, 1925, Stanley Baldwin Papers, Cambridge University Library. Home Affairs, Vol. II Navy Programmes, 1923-1924. (Hereafter cited as Baldwin Papers.)

[82]Middlemas, op. cit., p. 332.

[83]For a description of the struggle over cruiser estimates and the need for economy see Roskill, op. cit., pp. 411-32.

[84]Richard Storry, A History of Modern Japan (Harmondsworth Middlesex, 1960), pp. 163-77.

[85]Ian Nish, The Story of Japan (London, 1968), pp. 142-44.

[86]Morinosuke Kajima, A Brief Diplomatic History of Modern Japan (Rutland, Vermont, 1966), p. 78.

[87]John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, East Asia, II: The Modern Transformation (Boston, 1965), 576.

[88]Captain Malcolm D. Kennedy, _The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan: 1917-1935_ (Berkley, 1969), pp. 62-64.

[89]Fairbank, _op. cit._, p. 685.

[90]Kajima, _op. cit._. p. 77.

[91]Fairbank, _op. cit._, p. 577. Nish, _op. cit._, pp. 149-53.

[92]Akira Iriye, _After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East_ (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 36. Japanese civilian leaders on the other hand feared a war with the United States. See Akira Iriye, _Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations_ (New York, 1967), p. 139.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS

Disarmament had been an official aim of the League of Nations since its foundation, and the period of optimism following the Treaty of Locarno in 1925 seemed an ideal time to strive for this goal. In December of 1925 the Council of the League appointed a Preparatory Commission to meet in Geneva the following May. The purpose of this Commission was to clear the way for a full scale disarmament conference and to give the member states a chance to make their positions known.[1]

The League extended an invitation to the United States to take part[2] and the economy minded Coolidge, eager for some favorable publicity, decided to accept. While the President told Congress that this step did not oblige the United States to attend any full scale conference,[3] participation marked a further acceptance by America of the necessity for co-operation with Europe.[4] The United States was accepting a semiformal relationship with the League in an attempt to solve the twin problems of security and armaments.

The Preparatory Commission discussions concerned all types of armed forces: land, sea and air. Since

the military power of any nation reflected a self-evaluation of needs, there were vast differences of opinion on the possibilities of disarmament and the methods of carrying it out. The most important disagreement was between the continental European powers, led by France, and the chief maritime powers, the United States, Britain and Japan. The continental powers maintained that disarmament could only come when security had been achieved, while the maritime states were more willing to accept disarmament as an avenue to security. The practical point of difference concerned the division of armaments into different categories with separate limitations for each. The continental nations maintained that such distinctions were impossible since all arms constituted a single force working toward a common goal.[5] The maritime powers disagreed with this view and found it impossible to accept the French thesis which struck at the heart of the Washington Conference.[6]

During the Preparatory Conference the French were able to gain majorities for their point of view by mobilizing the voting power of their eastern European allies.[7] Subcommission A, charged with the discussion of technical matters, provided a concise example of the differences between the maritime and continental blocs. In December of 1926 this subcommission voted on the question of whether or not naval forces could be divided

into distinct classes with separate limitation on each class. The ability to make such distinctions was vital to the Washington Treaty and had been generally accepted up to 1926. If it were not, then only a limit on the total tonnage allowed to any nation would be possible. The maritime and continental states divided openly on this issue. The United States, Britain and Japan voted yes; Italy and France and her allies voted no.[8] Any effective naval limitation by the League of Nations was now unlikely.

This deadlock was no surprise to the great naval powers since they believed that France had been responsible for the failure to limit auxiliary vessels at Washington.[9] Secretary of State Kellogg had always preferred the separation of the naval problem from the general disarmament talks. He believed that land forces were primarily a regional problem of the European powers.[10] At the opening of the Preparatory Conference the chief American delegate, Hugh S. Gibson,[11] told the assembly that the United States hoped to see concrete proposals such as the extension of the Washington naval limitation principles, considered apart from the general discussions.[12]

The Americans were not alone in seeking separate naval talks. In January of 1926 the Japanese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs had told the American ambassador that his nation had little faith in general

disarmament but was more optimistic about the chances for a purely naval limitation agreement.[13] The Japanese delegation at the Preparatory Conference mentioned this idea privately before the Conference began[14] and on May 23, 1926, Japan publicly suggested the possibility of separate naval discussions at a news conference.[15]

The response of the United States and Britain to these overtures was extremely cautious. Hugh Gibson suggested to Robert Cecil, head of the British delegation,[16] that these proposals were premature and should not be taken up. Cecil agreed but stated that direct negotiations between the interested powers offered the best hope for further naval limitations.[17] Both men concluded that, for the time being, only unofficial talks between their technical advisors should be carried out.[18] President Coolidge let it be known that he considered the Japanese suggestion unnecessary, since the Preparatory Conference was competent to deal with all phases of disarmament. Yet, the possibility remained that the President might reconsider his stand if the Conference failed to make any headway.[19]

As the Conference dragged on the United States decided to encourage separate naval disarmament discussions. Gibson was instructed, with the strictest precautions against publicity, that he was to inform his British and Japanese colleagues, and with their assent the French and Italians, that the United States:

> ...would be disposed to favor any practicable suggestion that might be worked out <u>by informal conference during the course of the meetings of the Preparatory Commission</u> looking toward an extension of the principles of the Washington Naval Conference to other types of war vessels.[20]

Convinced that neither France nor Italy would support separate consideration of naval armaments,[21] Gibson suggested that Admiral Hilary P. Jones[22] visit England and sound out his British counterparts concerning such discussions.[23] Kellogg agreed and instructed Allen Dulles, legal advisor for the American delegation, to accompany Jones in order to discuss the issue with British civilian leaders.[24]

In mid-July of 1926 Dulles and Jones began their conversations with the British. During the course of these talks Admiral Field, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff and advisor to the British delegation at the Preparatory Conference, Robert Cecil and First Lord Bridgeman, pointed out to the Americans the importance of the French and Italian navies to British naval requirements. Though not large by British standards these continental fleets stood astride her lines of communication, and Britain was always required to set aside enough force to deal with them. It was necessary, therefore, that France and Italy adhere to any future naval limitation. The British mentioned, also, the possibility of reducing the size of both battleships and cruisers as a practical approach to further limitation.

The American reply was low keyed stressing the value of overseas bases to British naval strength and suggesting the idea of an escape clause to cover the refusal of France and Italy to agree to limitation. Both Americans and British agreed that there was little likelihood of any success at the Preparatory Conference, but they felt it was essential that the Conference be continued until its futility was obvious.[25] Dulles repeated the American suggestion of informal talks to be held at Geneva.[26] While he personally favored calling a formal naval conference Dulles made it clear to the British that the American government was not suggesting such a definite step.[27] Cecil agreed with the American idea since informal talks at Geneva would not give the impression that Britain was abandoning the League discussions. Privately Cecil was surprised and annoyed that no action had as yet been taken on the American offer.[28]

Cecil delivered a report of these conversations to the Cabinet on the 28th of July, 1926. Approval was given for participation in informal discussions at Geneva with the Japanese and Americans in order to determine whether a satisfactory basis existed for an extension of the Washington Conference principles. This extension could be in the form of either a three power or a general treaty, and France and Italy were to be informed of the British decision and encouraged to take part.[29] Speaking for the Admiralty Bridgeman later warned Cecil not to

take the initiative in these talks nor to commit Britain to any program of limitation.[30] Great Britain was willing to begin consideration of naval disarmament, but with little enthusiasm on the part of the Admiralty.

The Preparatory Conference resumed its discussions in August, but the only result seemed to be an increase in the tension between the continental and maritime states. During the course of the concurrent Anglo-American conversations, Gibson elicited from Cecil a summary of the British position. The Admiralty, Cecil stated, would be ready to accept a reduction in the size of cruisers to as low as 5000 tons but would need the same number of ships as currently possessed in order to guard the lines of communication.[31] His government further desired a reduction in the size of battleships.[32]

American officials subsequently received some information on the British ideas concerning a proper balance between their respective fleets. Austen Chamberlain admitted to Gibson the theoretical right of the United States to cruiser equality but maintained that British need for this type of vessel was greater. Gibson countered with a simple assertion of America's right to parity.[33] Later in talks with Admiral Jones, Lord Beatty also expressed the view that Britain accepted the principle of equality with the United States. He stressed, however, British opposition to the 5:3 ratio in cruisers with Japan. It was Beatty's opinion that any claim by

Japan for more cruisers than were necessary for fleet work was a sign of aggressive intent on her part.[34]

Beatty emphasized Britain's need for a large number of cruisers[35] because of her long lines of communications and suggested that savings would be made by reducing the size of cruisers and battleships. Jones replied that the United States would object to that since American ships needed to have the maximum sea endurance possible. Jones did propose that an agreement might be worked out which would limit the percentage of the total tonnage in cruisers any power could build in maximum size ships, and Beatty agreed this idea was worth studying. The Admirals parted on the understanding that nothing could be done as long as the Preparatory Conference held any hope of success.[36]

As a result of these soundings a good deal of optimism had been generated within the State Department about the future of naval disarmament. Gibson reported that a solid foundation had been laid for the extension of the principles of the Washington Treaty. Kellogg, in turn, recommended to the President that, with the agreement in principle among the chief naval powers on methods and standards for further naval arms limitation the United States should proceed with disarmament negotiations.[37] When Lord Astor warned Kellogg that it would be dangerous for the future of Anglo-American

relations to hold any public conference unless fundamental agreement was already certain, Kellogg replied "... British authorities and the United States are pretty well agreed on program and policies in relation to disarmament."[38]

Not all the difficulties which would attend a naval disarmament conference, however, had been eliminated. The United States had been unable to obtain any precise information on the Japanese viewpoint,[39] but from the tone of the Japanese press it was apparent Japan would seek an improvement in the 5:3 ratio which Britain seemed reluctant to grant. Moreover, it was doubtful that either France or Italy would attend a further naval disarmament conference. This, in turn, would make it difficult for Britain to agree to limitation.[40]

In addition, Kellogg exaggerated the degree of accord between the United States and Britain. It was obvious that Britain would prefer limitation by numbers in categories rather than the Washington Conference formula of tonnage in categories.[41] It was also clear that Britain would desire a relatively large number of light cruisers and her "absolute need" for these ships would make the application of cruiser parity with the United States difficult.

These problems did not present themselves forcefully in 1926 because they were overshadowed by the differences between the continental and maritime powers.

In addition the informal talks which were underway at Geneva were only preliminary soundings and no steps had as yet been taken to call a separate naval conference. The United States and Britain had repeatedly stated that such a conference could not be held so long as there was still hope for the Preparatory Conference. What these talks had achieved was a considerable exchange of information between the United States and Britain. Moreover, they made it clear that eventually a second naval conference would be held.

The political utility of such a conference became increasingly clear to President Coolidge. In 1926 the General Board of the Navy proposed an expensive construction program which was intended to bring the United States fleet up to equality with Britain.[42] This measure had considerable support in Congress and the country.[43] The President resisted this pressure while, at the same time, suggesting that a future limitation of naval armaments would make expansion of the American fleet unnecessary.[44]

In his message to Congress on December 7, 1926, Coolidge claimed that American forces were stronger than ever before in their peacetime history and that the American Navy was fully equal to that of Great Britain. The President went on to say that the United States was engaged in negotiations to broaden the existing treaties designed to eliminate competition in naval armaments and

he promised to carry out further limitations at the proper time. Thus, the President felt it would be undesirable for Congress to appropriate funds for the final three cruisers of the 1924 authorization[45] and he had left them out of the budget.[46]

Congress was not convinced by the President's arguments. On December 15, 1926, Thomas Butler, Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, called on the President with a letter signed by twenty of the twenty-one members of his committee asking that work on the last three cruisers be started. This committee was composed of men who were keenly aware of their duty to provide for the naval defense of the United States and in their opinion an expansion of the American cruiser fleet was vital to this defense. According to this committee the United States was not keeping pace with other naval powers and would rank fourth by 1931. The committee expressed a lack of faith in any successful arms limitation stemming from the League of Nations discussions.[47]

Surprisingly, Butler emerged from the presidential meeting with a plan for authorization of ten new cruisers. The bill authorizing these ships was introduced in the House on December 18, 1926, and Butler claimed to have the President's support. The press gave various interpretations for what appeared to it as an abrupt about face.[48] In fact this gesture on Coolidge's

part was no change in policy at all. No money was to be set aside for the construction of the ships, and the Navy would only be enlarged in the Congressional Record.[49] During a speech at Trenton, New Jersey, Coolidge made it plain that he had not changed his plans. He told the country that a policy of competitive armaments would not advance the cause of peace and that in order to advance this cause the United States must be prepared to make sacrifices.[50] This meant the President was unwilling to expand the Navy.

The Administration's position was amplified during House debates on the naval appropriations bill, in particular on the question of building the final three cruisers of the 1924 authorization. Chairman French of the Appropriations Committee claimed that the American Navy was still second to none and pointed out that most of the large number of British cruisers were older and smaller than American ships.[51] He asked that the House support the President for the sake of economy and the cause of disarmament.[52]

The proponents of cruiser construction refused to accept the Administration's case and emphasized that Congress, not the President, was charged with providing for the defense of the country. Claiming the support of the Navy Department they contended that these three ships were necessary to provide enough cruisers to scout for the main fleet, protect American commerce and especially

to bring the United States up to equality with Great Britain.[53]

It was plain that the issue of the three cruisers had become a test of the President's authority in Congress.[54] The revolt against the President's policies was led by the House Leader, Daniel Garrett,[55] and joined by Speaker of the House, Nicholas Longworth. Fiorello La Guardia felt it strange that on an occasion when he could support the Republican President the party bolted.[56] This opposition to presidential policy was not unusual in the House of Representatives. The distinguishing mark of the cruiser battle was the rebellion of the Republican leaders.[57]

On January 7, 1927, Loring Black, Democrat of New York, proposed an amendment to the naval appropriation bill which would provide $3,000,000 for the construction of the three cruisers. Majority Leader Tilson offered a substitute to this amendment which would set aside only 450,000.[58] Tilson's alternative would provide only enough money to begin designing the ships, but it would keep their authorization alive. On a test vote the Black amendment was rejected 20-165, and following this the Tilson substitute suffered a narrow defeat, 161-183.[59] The President's victory was partially due to a resurgence of loyalty in Republican ranks, but the primary reason was the support he received from Democrats, the farm bloc

and La Follette Republicans.[60] Coolidge had been forced to depend on men usually hostile to his domestic policy and the struggle was not over yet.

The Senate Appropriations Committee decided to continue the battle and, on January 17, 1927, approved the expenditure of $1,200,000 on the cruisers.[61] When the Senate opened debate on the naval appropriations measure, provisions to construct the three cruisers were justified with the same arguments used by navalists in the House: America's need for commerce protection, her poor position in the cruiser class and the right to equality with Britain.[62] The issue came to a vote on February 1, 1927 and, on this occasion, the Coolidge forces were overcome. The appropriation for the cruisers was approved 49-27, a clear majority of the Senate, including many regular Republicans, opposing the President's naval policy.[63] After negotiation between a joint Senate-House committee, the appropriation was reduced to $450,000. Construction of the cruisers could begin, but the President had frustrated his opponents by preventing a large appropriation.

On February 10, 1927, prior to the Conference committee agreement, Coolidge issued invitations for naval disarmament negotiations among the Washington Treaty powers. Something less than a formal conference, the discussions would be carried on by the representatives

to the Preparatory Conference and were to be held under the aegis of the Conference.

The motives behind the Presidential decision to press for these negotiations were manifold. Coolidge intended to under cut the political opposition in Congress and preserve his program of economy. The public had become aware of the Administration's embarrassment on the cruiser issue and Coolidge was influenced by a desire to shore up waning prestige.[64] A further attempt at naval disarmament would divert attention from the Administration's failure to control Congress, might enhance an undistinguished foreign policy, and draw support from the advocates of international co-operation. The President may have hoped that such discussions would lead to an arms limitation advantageous to a diminished American Navy, although, it must be remembered, he was not calling for a full-scale, separate conference, which he still considered a thing of the distant future.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

[1]For brief discussions of the Preparatory Commission Conference see Gathorne-Hardy, op. cit., pp. 163-66, and E. H. Carr, International Relations Between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939 (New York, 1966), pp. 177-81.

[2]The Admiralty had complained that the discussions would be meaningless from the British point of view if the United States did not attend. Admiralty memorandum to the Foreign Office, February 26, 1926, Public Record Office, Foreign Office 371 File (Political), Vol. 11879, W1647. (Hereafter cited as F. O. 371.)

[3]President's address to Congress, December, 1925, Coolidge Papers, Case File 2758.

[4]Adler, Uncertain Giant, p. 44.

[5]Merze Tate, The United States and Armaments (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p. 142.

[6]New York Times, July 3, 1926, p. 4.

[7]Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, July 18, 1926, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX, British Museum MSS. (Hereafter cited as Cecil Papers.)

[8]Report of Sub-Commission A, December, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/44.

[9]Arnold J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs: 1927 (London, 1929), p. 29.

[10]Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg, pp. 159-64. Also see Kellogg to Secretary of War, Dwight F. Davis, January 4, 1926, Hilary P. Jones Papers, Library of Congress. (Hereafter cited as Jones Papers.)

[11]Hugh S. Gibson was a career diplomat and American ambassador to Belgium. During the late 1920's

and 1930's he was a leading American civilian expert on disarmament.

[12]Toynbee, op. cit., p. 27.

[13]Ambassador MacVeagh to Kellogg, January 5, 1926 in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1926, I (Washington, 1941), 44. (Hereafter cited as Foreign Relations 1926.)

[14]Kellogg to MacVeagh, May 2, 1926, Foreign Relations 1926, p. 54.

[15]Jones to Wilbur, May 24, 1926, Jones Papers.

[16]Robert Cecil, Viscount Chelwood, was the chief British delegate to the League of Nations and a member of Baldwin's cabinet. He was devoted to the cause of world peace and convinced that disarmament was essential if this goal were to be reached.

[17]Gibson to Kellogg, May 20, 1926, Foreign relations 1926, p. 104.

[18]The Admiralty only accepted this proposal with the proviso that no part of the talks were to be considered binding. Cecil to the Foreign Office, May 23, 1926, F. O. 371, Vol. 11881, W4584.

[19]Howard to the Foreign Office, May 24, 1926, F. O. 371, Vol. 11881, W4552.

[20]Kellogg to Gibson, June 16, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/9. (The underlining is my own.)

[21]Gibson to Kellogg, June 18, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/10.

[22]The Admiral was president of the General Board of the Navy and a member of the American delegations to the Preparatory, Geneva and London Disarmament Conferences. He was convinced of the value of the big gun in naval warfare and adamant that the United States achieve parity with Britain in all classes of vessels. At this time he opposed private discussions with the British for fear that word of this would leak to the press and embarrass his government. Jones to Wilbur, July 13, 1926, Jones Papers.

[23]Gibson to Kellogg, June 27, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/19.

[24]The American Ambassador in London, Alanson B. Houghton, was opposed to both these talks and American participation in the Preparatory Conference on the grounds that the American and British positions were actually far apart. Such talks, he felt, could only lead to recriminations. Kellogg assured him that the United States was seeking only information not negotiations. See Houghton to Kellogg, July 13, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/49, and Kellogg to Gibson, July 13, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/20.

[25]Houghton to Kellogg, July 26, 1926, with a memorandum of the talks between Jones, Dulles, Bridgeman, Field and Cecil, July 13-14, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/20.

[26]Houghton to Kellogg, July 26, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/53.

[27]Memorandum by Allen Dulles of his conversation with Cecil, July 28, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/118.

[28]Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, July 26, 1926, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX.

[29]Cab. 23/55, 48(26)2a, July 28, 1926.

[30]Bridgeman to Cecil, July 29, 1926, Cecil Papers, Vol. XXVIII.

[31]Memorandum by Cecil of a conversation with Gibson, September 24, 1926, F. O. 371, Vol. 11889, W9494. Cecil was probably referring not only to cruisers built and under construction but in addition to ships authorized, for a total of 71 ships if none were scrapped. See table in Toynbee, <u>op. cit</u>., p. 32.

[32]Gibson to Kellogg, September 27, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/150.

[33]Gibson to Kellogg, September 30, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/154½.

[34]Houghton to Kellogg, November 10, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/213.

[35]Beatty gave the figure of 100 cruisers as an illustration of British needs. Jones did not feel that this was a claim for a specific number of ships.

[36]Memorandum of a conversation with Beatty, November 10, 1926, Jones Papers.

[37]Gibson to Kellogg, November 5, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/240 and Report to the President, November 6, 1926, Kellogg Papers.

[38]Kellogg to Lord Astor, November 22, 1926, Kellogg Papers.

[39]Gibson to Kellogg, September 30, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/154½. The Japanese government may have felt it necessary to keep their position secret so as to avoid unfavorable public reaction in the United States.

[40]Kellogg to Coolidge, December 16, 1926, Decimal File 500A15A/258a.

[41]Jones to Admiral E. W. Eberle, August 14, 1926, Jones Papers.

[42]Roskill, _op. cit._, pp. 457-58.

[43]Toynbee, _op. cit._, p. 31.

[44]_New York Times_, October 11, 1926, p. 16.

[45]Two of these ships had been laid down in 1926 and three more had been given appropriations and were to be started in 1927. The final three had not been appropriated for and if the money was not set aside by the end of the 69th Congress their authorization would lapse.

[46]The President's message to Congress, December 7, 1926, in _Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1927_, I (Washington, 1942), viii-xxviii. (Hereafter cited as _Foreign Relations 1927_.)

[47]_New York Times_, December 16, 1926, p. 1. See also Coolidge Papers, December 15, 1926, Case File 2758.

[48]"Cruisers and Congress," _Independent_, CXVIII (January 8, 1927), 33. _New York Times_, December 29, 1926, p. 20. "The Week," _New Republic_, L (December 29, 1926), 148-49.

[49]"Ten Bright, New Shiny Paper Ships," _Independent_, CXVIII (January 15, 1927), 22.

[50]_New York Times_, December 30, 1926, p. 1.

[51]The British government was so impressed with French's presentation that the British ambassador was instructed to use it as a defense of the British position during the Geneva Conference. See Foreign Office to Sir E. Howard, July 8, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12670, W6349.

[52]U. S., Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 2d. Sess., 1927, Vol. LXVIII, Part 1, 1088-91.

[53]*Ibid.*, p. 1127, p. 1134, p. 1091, p. 1144 and p. 1233.

[54]Ibid., p. 1098. The Times (London), January 6, 1927, p. 10.

[55]New York Times, January 6, 1927, p. 1.

[56]U. S., Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 2d. Sess., 1927, Vol. LXVIII, Part 2, 1233.

[57]New York Times, January 6, 1927, p. 26.

[58]U. S., Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 2d. Sess., 1927, Vol. LXXVII, Part 2, 1230.

[59]*Ibid.*, pp. 1251-53.

[60]New York Times, January 8, 1927, p. 1.

[61]New York Times, January 18, 1927, p. 3.

[62]U. S., Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 2d. Sess., 1927, Vol. LXXVII, Part 2, 2060-65.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 2677. New York Times, February 2, 1927, p. 1.

[64]"The Navy and the Nation," Outlook, CXLV (January 12, 1927), 42. New York Times, January 10, 1927, p. 22. "Please May We Share the Ocean?," Outlook, CXLV (January 27, 1927), 10-11.

CHAPTER III

SETTING THE STAGE

Resentful of the Washington Treaty classification of their military status and absorbed with problems of continental defense, France and Italy rejected Coolidge's invitation.[1] The American government was unconcerned at the refusal of these minor naval powers but anxious that Britain and Japan accept the American invitation.[2] To ensure acceptance the State Department promised special consideration for the security needs of Japan and Britain.

The Japanese were assured that there would be no rigid formula for the talks. In effect, this meant that the United States would not insist that the 5:3 ratio serve as the basis of discussions. The American Ambassador informed the British government that the United States was seeking a limitation rather than a reduction of forces.[3] With these guarantees and the assurance of each others participation, the British and Japanese agreed to take part in the conversations.[4]

The form of the discussions remained to be settled. The Americans had originally invited the other powers to undertake conversations "...not as a separate conference but as a contribution toward the work of

disarmament being carried on at Geneva."[5] By the end of March it was plain that the American view of the talks had changed. The British Foreign Office noted that:

> ...the United States government no longer contemplate preliminary conversations and that the proceedings will take the form of a regular conference from the outset.[6]

There were two reasons for this change in attitude. Japan, acting upon the assumption that the United States intended to hold a formal conference, appointed a first rank delegation, including Viscount Ishii, Ambassador to France and Viscount Saito, Governor General of Korea, instead of allowing her delegates to the Preparatory Conference to carry on negotiations. These appointments automatically raised the prestige of the meetings, but they had a more important side effect. Saito and Ishii could not be in Geneva before the middle of June. As a result, the naval discussions could not be held as a part of the Preparatory Conference which would adjourn before June.[7] Following the Japanese lead the British also appointed a prestigious delegation led by two cabinet members, W. C. Bridgeman and Robert Cecil.

The United States government, therefore, despite some embarrassment at being pushed further and faster than it had intended to go, accepted the idea of a formal naval conference.[8] The only acknowledgement of the change made by the American government was a brief statement to the British ambassador, Sir Esme Howard. It

would have been difficult to back out after initiating the meetings and, in any event, Japanese enthusiasm must have encouraged the belief that the time was ripe for a full scale conference. Moreover, Britain and America seemed to have reached a measure of agreement during the Preparatory Conference. Nevertheless, President Coolidge did not feel responsible for summoning this separate naval conference and as a result was not fully committed to its success.

The change in the character of the conference explains, in part, the lack of preparation contributing to the failure of the negotiations and to criticism of the Coolidge Administration's role in the breakdown.[9] The talks which were to have been carried out within the Preparatory Commission framework could have provided an additional opportunity to clarify national objectives and increased the likelihood of reaching an agreement. A further explanation for the limited exchange of information prior to the conference derives from the British concern for secrecy.[10] During the course of the second session of the Preparatory Conference Robert Cecil asked for permission to "...treat the Americans as if they were one of ourselves."[11] Baldwin replied immediately that Cecil was to say nothing to the Americans concerning the British position at the coming Coolidge disarmament conference.[12] In late May of 1926 the Cabinet gave its approval to the Admiralty request that no publicity be

given to the British position before the conference began.[13] This emphasis on secrecy made any exchange of information impossible, although the basis for this decision is understandable since such reticence had worked well for the Americans in 1921.

The plans the Admiralty wished kept secret made use of the American statement promising special attention for the individual needs of each power. The 5:5:3 ratio was to be abandoned and replaced by the principle of "special need". To establish a case for this need the Admiralty prepared a chart showing a relationship between the volume of trade and the vulnerability of trade routes.[14] On the basis of this chart the Admiralty estimated British cruiser needs at seventy ships while the United States would be permitted forty-seven, and Japan twenty-one.[15]

The Admiralty proposed the division of cruisers into two classes: light cruisers of 7500 tons armed with 6-inch guns and heavy cruisers of 10,000 tons carrying 8-inch weapons. Because of Britain's special need the Admiralty wished to avoid placing any limit on the number of light cruisers[16] and would only accept a restriction on that class of vessel if it gave Britain numerical superiority over both the United States and Japan.[17]

In addition the Admiralty suggested that Britain offer a further reduction in the size of battleships. The tonnage of the individual ships, already restricted

at Washington, was to be reduced from 35,000 tons to 28,000 tons and their gun calibre from 16-inch to 13.5-inch. The life of these vessels was to be extended from twenty to twenty-five years. Britain had built two capital ships since the Washington Conference, the Rodney and the Nelson. Both were superior to any ships in the American fleet. If replacement ships were reduced in size, these two vessels would help give Britain long-term naval superiority.[18] In addition, Britain had exceeded her tonnage allotment in battleships by 49,000 tons.[19] Even if the Washington Treaty replacement schedule were followed, it would be 1953 before the United States achieved ton-for-ton equality with Britain.

At the Cabinet meeting held on May 23, 1927, the government decided to accept the Admiralty's plans for the conference. Since no real opposition to the Admiralty's proposals arose it is safe to assume that the Cabinet did not realize how deeply those plans would offend the United States. Members, such as Robert Cecil, who were devoted to disarmament probably felt that the Navy's proposals provided an adequate starting point which could be compromised during the course of negotiations. The sailors overestimated their control of the British delegation[20] and underestimated the impact their proposals would have on the other powers. The decision of the Navy to depart from the principles of the Washington Conference and the belief that the other powers

would submit to British requirements were to have serious and unfortunate consequences for the Conference.

With the scheduling of a full-scale conference, the American government was required to re-examine the character of its delegation. Hugh Gibson had advised Kellogg to match the prestigious British and Japanese delegations by appointing Charles Evans Hughes to lead the American delegation and suggested that several senators might also be included.[21] Hughes declined the invitation while at the same time advising "...strongly against sending anybody, i.e. anyone of reputation."[22] Coolidge had always remained in favor of relying on his representative to the Preparatory Conference and, after Hughes' refusal, he and Kellogg returned to this idea. Admiral Jones was raised to the status of co-leader with Hugh Gibson in order not to "overload" the American delegation with civilians. Allen Dulles was named legal advisor and the "best naval people" were sent as technical advisors.

While the American delegation was relatively undistinguished compared to that of Britain or Japan, this lack of prestige does not appear to have hampered the forceful presentation of the American case. However, it did permit Washington to retain very close control over discussions and signified that the Administration did not attach overwhelming importance to the talks and could not be expected to make major concessions for the

sake of an agreement.

As in Great Britain American civilian leaders requested that their Navy prepare plans for the conference.[23] The General Board of the Navy responded by drawing up a series of reports between April and June of 1927 outlining the Navy's concept of America's international goals and estimating the force needed for their achievement. The General Board examined the policies of Britain and Japan, suggested their probable negotiating tactics, and recommended American responses.[24]

The Board believed that Britain had three great national policies: naval supremacy for the defense of the Empire, the domination of world markets and opposition to the control of Europe by any one power. Subordinate to these major aims were lesser goals such as mercantile marine supremacy, and control of communications, fuel sources, trade routes and specific strategic bases. The Board predicted that these policies would lead Britain to reject the 5:3 ratio with Japan in cruisers and to oppose limitation on fortifications at Singapore. Britain would only accept naval equality with the United States in battle fleets and would seek a reduction in the size of battleships and the creation of a second class of cruisers of about 7500 tons. Because of her desire to patrol her trade routes, Britain would want a total of

about sixty-four cruisers. Obviously, despite the Admiralty's desire for secrecy the American Navy possessed an accurate idea of the British objectives.[25]

The Navy recommended that the United States insist upon parity with Britain and ignore British claims of special needs for three reasons. First, American foreign trade was equal to that of Great Britain. Second, Britain's plea for ships to guard her commerce disguised the fact that these ships could be used for blockade and other restrictions on neutral trade. Third, the entire claim for special consideration was exaggerated since Britain had three main areas of food supply and not all would be closed in any war.[26]

The General Board expressed serious anxieties about Japanese intentions which it believed to be the political, commercial and military domination of the Western Pacific. In order to carry out this program Japan had four subordinate policies. Other nations were to be rendered weak in the Western Pacific; China was to be exploited; Japan would seek control of areas with vital raw materials, and maintain the best navy in the Western Pacific. It was predicted that these policies would lead the Japanese to attempt to further limit the fortification of American and British Pacific naval bases and seek to improve the 5:3 ratio in cruisers. Both these aims were to be opposed since, otherwise, the

Navy could not protect American commerce or territory in the Far East.[27] Moreover, because Britain could serve as a counterweight to Japanese domination of Asia the United States was not to oppose additional fortifications at Singapore.[28]

Japan's intention to obtain an improvement in the 5:3 cruiser ratio was confirmed when American naval intelligence intercepted the Japanese instructions to their delegates. Her increasing strength in these vessels had, in fact, well exceeded the 5:3 quotient. Her government desired to formalize this situation in a treaty but opposed any agreement calling for an increase in the existing Japanese naval program. A status quo treaty which simply stopped all future cruiser construction would not only preserve the lead over the United States in these ships but would entail no further expense. Japan did not desire to urge further restrictions on either American or British naval bases.[29]

Finally, the General Board reviewed basic American goals. These were, it was believed, an avoidance of binding alliances, the maintenance of the Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door policy, and, curiously, the exclusion of oriental immigrants. The Navy was to be kept sufficiently strong to carry out these aims, to guard American commerce, and to protect American overseas and continental possessions.

The General Board felt it necessary to insist

upon the 8-inch gun cruiser and to oppose the British plan to create a class of 6-inch gun light cruisers. Few naval bases and the short cruising radius of the light cruiser would limit American use of the ship. Numerous British merchant vessels mounting the 6-inch weapon could offset an American light cruiser force, and these light vessels would not be able to defend United States communication lines across the Pacific against Japanese 8-inch gun cruisers.[30]

To reduce the danger from Japanese raiders the General Board desired a low total tonnage in the cruiser class. With most cruisers required to operate with the battle fleet relatively few would be free for raiding duties. In addition the Navy knew it would be difficult to secure Congressional appropriations and felt that the "...maximum figure for cruiser tonnage should be placed so low that we might reasonably be expected to build to the allowed tonnage."[31] The proposed maximum was 400,000 tons.

These reports reflected the evaluation of professional military men whose training and duty led them to seek the strongest possible Navy for the United States. It was up to the civilian leaders to decide how much technical disadvantage could be permitted in return for an end to naval competition. The American government decided to accept, almost totally, the Navy's program for

arms limitation. The only modification was a decision to accept a class of light cruisers, armed, however, with 8-inch weapons. Lack of State Department criticism of these plans indicates Kellogg's conviction that extension of the Washington Conference principles offered the only hope of obtaining military advantage at no cost. Ignoring the warnings from Ambassador Houghton and Allen Dulles concerning the gulf between the American and British positions, Kellogg failed to realize the improbability of securing agreement on such proposals. The United States acted as if the political differences between the maritime powers which had led to the cruiser race could be settled by extending perfunctorily the 5:5:3 ratio.[32]

Some awareness of the bargaining necessary to achieve compromise was held by Admiral Jones. He proposed that only heavy cruisers be counted at 100% of their actual tonnage while light cruisers would be counted at a smaller percentage.[33] This would allow Britain more ships and a higher total tonnage than the United States, while American ships would have greater individual fighting power. The government kept this idea in reserve but displayed an unwillingness to deviate from the principles set forward in the General Board reports.

Thus, each of the powers had developed plans

for the Conference unsusceptible to compromise. The United States looked to an extension of the Washington Treaty and Japan favored a status quo arrangement. Great Britain had the most complex proposals which would allow her numerical superiority because of her "special need". Ironically, the knowledge of the differences between the three nations did not chill enthusiasm for the Conference and Robert Cecil believed that not even the Admirals could delay success longer than three weeks.[34]

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

[1] Herrick to Kellogg, February 15, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/22. E. R. Baldwin, "France's Empty Chair: A French Explanation", Outlook, CXLVI (July 27, 1927), 414-15.

[2] Memorandum by W. R. Castle, March 5, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/64.

[3] Joseph C. Grew to Houghton, February 21, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/41.

[4] Austen Chamberlain to Houghton, February 25, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12661, W1581.

[5] Undated statement prepared by Kellogg for delivery to the Senate Foreign Relations and Naval Committees, 1927, Kellogg Papers.

[6] G. Villiers to Howard, April 5, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12664, W3040.

[7] Japanese Embassy to the Department of State, February 19, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/54.

[8] The President denied ever giving Undersecretary Grew, who was in charge of the Department in early March, authority to accept separate three power talks with Japan and Britain. See Grew, op. cit., pp. 696-97.

[9] Benjamin Williams, The United States and Disarmament (New York, 1931), pp. 167-68. Tate, op. cit., pp. 145-46. Toynbee, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

[10] Bridgeman stressed this point to Austen Chamberlain, F. O. 371, Vol. 12666, W3670.

[11] Cecil to Baldwin, March 9, 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 130/2.

[12] Baldwin to Cecil, March 9, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. X.

[13]Cab. 24, Vol. 187, C. P. 159, May 23, 1927.

[14]Memorandum by Captain Egerton, February 17, 1927, Admiralty 116 file in the Public Record Office, Case 5710, Ref. 3371, P. D. 02773. (Hereafter cited as Adm. 116.)

[15]Memorandum on cruiser limitation, March 17, 1927, Adm. 116, Case 5760, Ref. 3371, P. D. 02807. See also Middlemas, *op. cit.*, p. 368 and Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

[16]During the remainder of this paper the Washington Treaty type cruiser will be referred to as the 'heavy cruiser' and the smaller class as the 'light cruiser' although these terms were not adopted until the London Conference of 1930. Admiralty memo, June 14, 1927, Adm. 116, Ref. 5710, P. D. 02873.

[17]Admiralty memoranda presented to the C.I.D., May 7, 1927, Adm. 116, Ref. 5710, P. D. 02832/27. Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

[18]Memorandum prepared by Allen Dulles, June 22, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 140, Box 5, File 250.01.

[19]*Detroit Free Press*, July 11, 1927, p. 1. *New York Times*, July 11, 1927, p. 1.

[20]W. S. Chalmers, *The Life and Letters of David, Earl Beatty* (London, 1951), p. 914.

[21]Gibson to Kellogg, March 17, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/115.

[22]Kellogg to Houghton, May 2, 1927, Kellogg Papers.

[23]Kellogg to Wilbur, March 18, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/104a.

[24]These reports are in the State Department Decimal Files in the National Archives under Decimal File 500A15A1/684. (Hereafter cited as General Board Reports.)

[25]General Board Reports, April 21, 1927, Part Ia and April 25, 1927, Part III. See also O'Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[26]D. C. Watt, "American Strategic Interests and

Anxieties in the West Indies: An Historical Examination", Royal United Services Institution Journal, CVIII (August, 1963), 227-28.

[27]General Board Reports, April 21, 1927, Part Ia, and May 7, 1927.

[28]General Board Report, April 22, 1927.

[29]ALUSNA to NAVINTEL, June 13, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/261. Memorandum of a conversation between W. R. Castle and Saburi of the Japanese Delegation, May 19, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/241. See also an interview with Viscount Saito in the New York Times, April 11, 1927, p. 5.

[30]General Board Report, April 25, 1927, Part III. See also Wheeler, Prelude to Pearl Harbor, pp. 143-44.

[31]General Board Report, April 25, 1927, Part III.

[32]New York Times, May 21, 1927, p. 18.

[33]Memorandum on the reduction of naval arms, February 21, 1927, Jones Papers.

[34]Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, June 17, 1927, Austen Chamberlain Papers, Vol. 261.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONFERENCE: PHASE ONE

The Conference began on June 20, 1927, with Hugh Gibson, as chairman, addressing the first public session. He stated that the United States had summoned the Conference to end naval competition by extending the principles of the Washington Treaty to auxiliary vessels. Such an extension would limit naval armaments to the lowest level consistent with national security and would reduce the threat of aggression.

With these expected preliminaries out of the way Gibson delivered the specific American proposals, the most important of which dealt with cruisers.[1] This category was to include all combat vessels between 3000 and 10,000 tons armed with any weapon up to 8-inch calibre. The United States proposed that Britain and herself accept a maximum tonnage somewhere between 250,000 and 300,000 tons in this class while Japan, in accordance with the 5:3 ratio, was to be allowed 150,000 to 180,000 tons. Gibson emphasized that these figures were not final and that the United States would welcome proposals for limitation at an even lower level.

In closing Gibson warned the other delegates of America's potential strength. He pointed out with some exaggeration that only by calling the Conference had President Coolidge prevented Congress from launching a massive naval building program.

Bridgeman followed Gibson with a presentation of British proposals which followed closely the General Board's predictions. Britain urged further restrictions on battleships by reducing their gun calibre from 16-inch to 13.5-inch and their maximum tonnage to under 30,000 tons. The British accepted the 5:5:3 ratio in heavy cruisers but asked that a strict limit be placed on the number of these ships allowed to each power. They then proposed that a second class of cruiser be established limited to 7500 tons individual displacement and armed with no more than a 6-inch gun. Bridgeman hinted that it might be possible to limit the number of these ships if all other questions facing the Conference were settled satisfactorily.

Viscount Saito arose last to describe the Japanese plans. The Japanese, like the British, believed naval strength was relative to a country's special needs. Unlike Great Britain, the Japanese contended that existing naval strengths were an accurate reflection of these needs. Saito proposed a naval holiday. All three powers would complete their present programs, but no new

building was to be allowed. This was the least complicated plan offered, but it was also the least likely to be accepted. The speeches over, the first plenary session adjourned. Each having made a plea for special advantage, the delegations had now to see if an acceptable compromise could be forged.[2]

Following the close of the first public session the delegates established the procedure which the Conference was to follow. A committee composed of professional naval men would examine the technical differences between the three sets of proposals presented at the opening meeting and submit reports to an executive committee made up of the chief delegates. Both the United States and Britain had rejected the French thesis that armaments must be measured in terms of ability to wage war, preferring to deal with disarmament as a simple question of quantities of men and weapons. The use of a technical committee was a result of this viewpoint. Unfortunately, security depended not only on numbers of cruisers but on several imponderables that could only be adjusted by a political settlement. As a result the technical talks which dominated the early stage of the Conference had only limited results.[3]

Nevertheless, the nine sessions of the technical committee accomplished a good deal of useful work. Tentative agreement was reached to divide destroyers into

two classes with an overall tonnage limit in the neighborhood of 250,000 tons for the United States and Britain and 150,000 tons for Japan.[4] A provisional tonnage limit of about 80,000 tons was agreed upon for submarines and an attempt by Japan to create an unlimited class of small submarines was rebuffed by both the United States and Britain.[5] These successes were solid but minor. On the problems of limiting larger vessels the technical committee made little headway. The meeting became an arena in which each power attempted to gain support for its particular approach to naval disarmament.

One of the earliest issued to be settled, albeit negatively, was the British proposal to further reduce the individual size of battleships. The Japanese were favorably impressed with the British plan for several reasons.[6] A reduction in the size of battleships would carry with it substantial savings on military expenditure. Moreover, if the battleship class were reduced in size the cruising radius of the American fleet would be shortened and Japan made more secure in the Western Pacific. To encourage consideration of the proposal the Japanese pointed out to the Americans that discussions about the replacement of overage battleships, in accordance with the terms of the Washington Treaty, would not begin until late in 1931, at which time the Japanese Diet would have already adjourned. The Diet

would be forced to make naval appropriations before the results of the 1931 negotiations were known unless the issue were settled during the current discussions.

The American government accepted the validity of this point. Kellogg told Ambassador Matsudaira that the United States would be willing to open discussions on the Washington Treaty in early 1931 so that the Japanese Diet could act on the results of the 1931 meetings.[7] Aside from this small step the United States opposed consideration of further battleship limitation. Opening the subject would allow France and Italy, as signatories of the Washington Treaty, to disrupt the Geneva Conference without becoming involved in negotiations. In addition the American delegation doubted the intrinsic value of the British proposal since no battleships could be built until 1931, and any savings from a 1927 agreement would be purely theoretical.

The Japanese were warned that if one section of the Washington Treaty could be revised then the entire agreement could be modified. Gibson pointed out that many Americans wished to see their far eastern bases fortified and that the Japanese were risking the destruction of all that had been accomplished at Washington.[8]

In the end the Japanese decided that battleship limitation could be discussed only if all the other

issues facing the Conference were settled. The United States agreed to exchange information on the subject but only informally. Reluctantly the British admitted that battleship limitation would have to be dropped.[9]

Discussion of the battleship issue had created acrimony and distrust without achieving any concrete result. The episode confirmed American suspicions that the British intended to retain battle fleet supremacy. The British believed that the Americans had rejected a viable approach to economy out of little more than spite.[10] This controversy was not central to the failure of the Conference, but it added to the spirit of distrust and friction that eventually affected the talks.

Cruiser limitation remained the fundamental concern of the Conference. For the Americans one of the major obstacles in the way of resolving this issue was the Japanese desire for a revision of the 5:3 ratio.[11] The Americans were informed by Viscount Saito that Japan considered cruisers defensive weapons and intended to ask for 70% of the American tonnage or a 5:3.5 ratio. Admiral Jones, supported by Gibson and Dulles, insisted that because the United States did not have a first class naval base in the Far East the effective ratio in the Western Pacific was 5:5.[12] During the early stages of the Conference the American delegates were convinced that the purpose of the ratio was to provide a

mathematical balance between the rival fleets and therefore they largely restricted their activities to supporting their naval advisors. Gibson did point out to the Japanese that this precise balancing was essential politically because it enabled naval authorities to resist aggressive public opinion.[13]

Despite the well-known anxiety of Australia and New Zealand, the British delegation exhibited very little concern about the Japanese desire for an improved ratio. Bridgeman foreshadowed his later flexibility by expressing a willingness to allow Japan a better than 5:3 ratio on the proposed class of small cruisers.[14] However, he was not reflecting the desires of the Admiralty, which opposed even the 5:3 ratio. Bridgeman and Beatty ordinarily worked closely together and yet the First Lord's view on the ratio issue came as a disagreeable surprise to Beatty. Obviously the Japanese could be expected to support much of the British program in return for a concession on the ratio, but the Royal Navy did not believe that Japanese support was worth such a price. Bridgeman may have believed that Japan simply would not have the capacity to build beyond a 5:3 ratio if Britain had seventy cruisers. In any event his stance eventually brought trouble for himself and the British delegation.

Japan persisted in her demand for a better ratio although this problem was overshadowed by

Anglo-American difficulties. The issue was always present in the minds of the delegates and the knowledge that it must eventually be settled exerted an influence on the character of later negotiations.[15]

The most crucial issue facing the Conference was the disagreement between the United States and Britain over the cruiser limitation.[16] The United States learned the details of the British cruiser proposals when on June 28, 1927, representatives on the technical committee refused to discuss the division of cruisers into two classes until learning what tonnage Britain would demand. Britain asked for fifteen 10,000 ton cruisers and fifty-five cruisers of a smaller tonnage, plus five additional cruisers if mine-layers were to be included in the limitation. The total tonnage required would be the result of the multiplication of the number of ships by the maximum individual tonnage of vessels in each class. American experts estimated this figure at 562,000 tons.[17]

Admiral Field admitted that building a few large ships would be cheaper than building many small vessels, but he insisted that geographical position and imperial responsibilities made a large number essential for Britain. Moreover, Field emphasized that each one of the British vessels must be individually equal to any contemporary vessel in that class possessed by any other power. This meant that the American plan to allow Britain to retain more vessels than the United States

in return for accepting superior armaments on the American ships could not be accepted. Britain would allow no power to have more heavy cruisers than herself.

Even the Admiralty realized that their proposals would amount to an overall increase in cruiser tonnage. Naturally it was difficult for the British delegation to defend such demands at what was ostensibly a disarmament conference. In fact, Britain's proposals would reduce her own expenditure while increasing it for the other two powers. Under the Admiralty plan Britain would be able to retain many of her small 6-inch gun cruisers. If the 8-inch gun were permitted on all cruisers Britain would have to replace these ships in order to maintain equality with the United States.[18]

The American delegation was surprised both at the size of the British demands, which exceeded their forecasts,[19] and the determination with which these demands had been put forward. The American technical advisors repeated that the high tonnage levels and the 6-inch gun cruiser were not in American interests and should be opposed. While the General Board of the Navy had rather accurately predicted the nature of British demands both the Navy and the civilian leaders had generally expected that Britain would give way to the United States. It was, however, becoming apparent that the British delegation did not feel the need to concede to American demands.

These Anglo-American difficulties were compounded

by the issue of parity. Parity was interpreted in America as meaning the right of the United States Navy to ton-for-ton equality with the British fleet in all classes of vessels. Most Americans believed that the equality had been won at Washington in 1922 but, in fact, Britain had only accepted battle fleet equality at that time.

Parity had important connotations for the United States Navy. Obtaining it justified the destruction of many of the new American battleships as specified in the Treaty of Washington and it ensured that America would always have free use of the world's oceans.[20] The American Navy elevated parity in all classes of vessels to the status of a doctrine since it provided a definite standard on which to base claims for fleet strength. The Navy had no intention of abandoning the barely adequate ratio established at Washington.[21]

American insistence on equality with Britain had been stressed at several of the meetings held prior to the Geneva Conference and most American negotiators believed that Great Britain had accepted the point. Nevertheless, early in the Conference Bridgeman suggested that the United States might not care to build up to the British level in cruisers. Gibson replied that the United States would decide that point when she considered her own needs but that he must insist on the theoretical right to equality since he had "...no intention of living

permanently abroad."[22]

Additional American response to this British proposal concerning parity was rapid and effective. Kellogg told a news conference that: "This Government will not and can not accept anything but parity with Great Britain on every class of ships."[23] The American Charge d'Affaires in London then re-emphasized the point to William Tyrrell, Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Tyrrell informed him that Britain recognized the principle of parity and that a telegram to this effect would be sent to Geneva. He further asked that the Americans not be misled about British intentions by hostile press reports.[24]

On June 29 Prime Minister Baldwin instructed Bridgeman to announce:

> ...publicly and at once, what we believe to be the line on which you are working, namely, that while we mean to build cruisers up to our needs we lay down no condition limiting America's cruisers to a smaller number.
>
> Do you see any objections?[25]

This was not precisely an acknowledgment of parity but on June 30th the British delegation acted as though it were. After visiting Gibson, Bridgeman issued a statement to the press informing them that: "Great Britain has no intention of contesting the principle of parity between the naval strength of the United States and Great Britain."[26]

For a time this declaration cleared the air,

Gibson believed that Britain had abandoned her attempt to gain naval superiority.[27] The British delegation also believed the issue was closed. Unfortunately this was not the case. If parity was no longer considered a central issue in Geneva, it was beginning to dominate discussions in London and was eventually to form one of the obstacles that brought the Conference to grief.

The British delegation having officially accepted parity and having made a full statement of their cruiser needs, the United States presented its counter proposal. At the eighth session of the technical committee Admiral Jones read a statement based on recent instructions from Washington which he described as "...one from which they could hardly consider receding much."[28] Jones asserted the American intention to refuse any limitation which authorized a cruiser force of more than 400,000 tons before December 31, 1936. Within this tonnage the United States would require twenty-five heavy cruisers, and the remainder of American tonnage would be built in light cruisers armed with 8-inch guns. Jones stated that these terms represented a maximum effort to reach the British position.

These terms had been delivered almost as an ultimatum, a fact which Admiral Jones deplored and he had read some sections only at Gibson's insistence.[29] To ease the resulting tension the terms were referred the following day to the executive committee of delegation

chiefs. Bridgeman stated that if the American position was final he had no hope of reaching an agreement and certainly no authority to do so. Attempting to soothe British feelings by cautioning Bridgeman not to take the terms too seriously, Gibson gave the impression that he did not support Admiral Jones. In fact, Gibson no longer felt it necessary to maintain so determined an opposition against the British since he now expected help from the Japanese.[30]

Little has been said about the Japanese part in these negotiations, largely because Japan had not become deeply involved in them. The Japanese had told the Americans that they opposed the British cruiser program, but they had not made this opposition clear to the British delegation.[31] The primary reason for the Japanese dislike of the British proposals was the high tonnage level. Japan would have to engage in a considerable building program even to maintain the 5:3 ratio with Britain. In addition the Japanese opposed the idea of a separate class of light cruisers armed with 6-inch guns because such vessels would not adequately meet Japan's needs and would allow Britain to make use of numerous armed merchantmen.

Gibson was convinced that with these attitudes the Japanese would begin to assist in reducing British demands. On July 6 the Japanese informed the other delegations that they considered even the American 400,000

ton proposal too high. They would prefer a combined tonnage of 450,000 for both cruisers and destroyers for America and Britain, while Japan would get 300,000 tons. This was a low total tonnage and a distinct improvement on the 5:3 ratio.

Bridgeman was disappointed that the Japanese had decided to support the American position.[32] The British stressed that the small cruisers they required were strictly defensive in nature and that the American plan called for many heavy cruisers and thus an increase in the offensive power of fleets. Admiral Field pointed out that under the Japanese plan Britain would be forced to take a ten year building holiday which would practically destroy her capacity to build cruisers.[33] Despite these objections the Japanese persisted in their attitude. Gibson reported that the Japanese were insisting upon tonnage levels "...which would represent genuine limitation and the American delegation is firmly convinced of their sincerity in this regard."[34]

Progress at the Conference was hampered not only by the substantive differences between delegations but also by a growing spirit of hostility among the delegates. The press played a significant role in generating this antangonism. Most of the reports of the Conference coming to the United States from Geneva were distinctly anti-British.[35] Britain was accused of trying to recover naval superiority and escape from the promise of the

Washington Treaty.[36] It was rumored that Britain was attempting to reassert control over neutral commerce and revive the Anglo-Japanese alliance.[37] Even the British press was not overly warm to the proposals of their government.[38]

It was Ambassador Howard's responsibility to counteract the poisonous effect of these articles, but he was hampered in his efforts by the fact that he never really was informed as to the nature of the British proposals. The Admiralty had surrounded their case with so much secrecy that the British ambassadors in both Washington and Tokyo[39] had to depend on out of date reports to learn the position of their government. Howard complained repeatedly[40] but, despite the fact that Lord Cecil and several important figures in the Foreign Office agreed with him,[41] nothing was done to rectify the situation. This public criticism was especially trying for Bridgeman, who seems to have had little respect for the press, and it probably contributed to his hasty acceptance of parity with the United States.

Personal friction also developed at the Conference. Bridgeman, Cecil and Field were all angered by the obstinacy of the Americans and particularly by Admiral Jones's stubborn repetition of the American position.[42] Gibson, on the other hand, blamed the Conference's difficulties on Bridgeman who was "...narrow-minded, obstinate and entirely impervious to broad

aspect of the problem."[43]

The growing edge to Anglo-American discussions came to a head at the meeting of chief delegates on July 9th. In response to a Japanese suggestion that the United States limit herself to ten heavy cruisers, Admiral Jones repeated the demand for twenty-five such ships and refused to accept even this restriction until total cruiser tonnage was established. Both Lord Cecil and Admirals Field and Jellicoe attacked Jones's presentation and the atmosphere became tense.

Admiral Frank H. Schofield, a member of the General Board of the Navy and a naval advisor with the American delegation, described the scene in these words:

> In refutation Lord Cecil had some general remarks to make in support of Admiral Field, then Admiral Jones took very sharp issue with Admiral Field, displaying considerable feeling. Discussions then became rather heated as between Admiral Jones on one side and Admiral Field on the other, until Lord Cecil made a remark to the effect that something Admiral Jones had said was nonsense, when Mr. Gibson immediately indicated a movement to leave the conference, saying that the conversation could not continue on any [such] plane as that.[44]

The British left a different account of the outburst. R. C. Campbell, legal advisor of the British delegation, blamed it on Jones's attempt to dictate "... to us what he considered to be an adequate navy for the British Empire" and stated that Jones had begun his:

> ...dogged, stupid and exasperating insistence on his one and only theme when the British delegation suddenly saw red. The first Lord visibly swelled and

> gave vent to some extremely pungent remarks in his gruff way. Field, who is usually the soul of courtesy and patience, made an obviously restrained speech in which he exposed the absurdity of the American method which, though he did not say so in so many words, was merely a political expedient and not a method which any naval officer who knew his business could possibly adopt. Finally, Milord Cecil fell upon Jones and told him that he was talking nonsense.[45]

Campbell was left with the impression that Gibson did not support Jones but was unable to control his technical advisors. Unusual in degree, such display of temper was by no means an isolated incident.

Bad feeling was not limited to struggles between the delegations. The American technical staff was hostile to Allen Dulles who, it was believed, was attaining too much authority.[46] After the stormy July 9 Gibson requested that Dulles take Admiral Jones's place at meetings of the chief delegates despite Jones's rank as co-leader of the American delegation. This attempt to ease tension, and to conciliate the British who disliked the Admiral, worried the American naval advisors who believed Dulles was overly ready to compromise the United States's strategic interests.[47] The naval personnel also believed that the American ambassador in London was not giving sufficient support to their case. Bridgeman had a similar complaint about the British ambassador in Washington.[48] At one point Kellogg suggested tentatively to Gibson that an adjournment might allow tempers to cool and aid discussions.

Though the clash of personalities continued to hamper amicable negotiations,[49] the bitterness of the July 9 session convinced Gibson that only compromise could save the Conference. Following that meeting he sounded his delegation on the idea. He suggested that, if Britain would accept a 400,000 total tonnage limitation, the United States should agree to build the type of ship Britain desired plus fifteen heavy cruisers. Admiral Jones felt that such a limitation on heavy cruisers would be unacceptable and Admiral Schofield opposed the plan "...with all the force he could command."[50] Gibson managed to overcome this opposition, for that evening Schofield informed a British colleague that the United States would only insist on fifteen heavy cruisers. Authority to reduce the proportion of heavy cruisers that the United States would require was the only major concession that Gibson's original instructions permitted.

In an attempt to avoid a repetition of executive committee acrimony, the American initiative was turned over to an informal committee composed of junior delegates. The United States was represented by Allen Dulles and Captain Smythe while M. Saburi and Captain Hara were present for Japan and R. C. Campbell and Captain Egerton for Britain. The British presented their response to the new proposal to this committee.

Great Britain agreed to a limit of 550,000 tons on her combined cruiser and destroyer tonnage if certain

conditions were met: an age limit for cruisers of sixteen years, a limitation on heavy cruiser numbers of twelve for the United States and Britain and eight for Japan, and the 6000 ton, 6-inch gun restrictions for the light cruiser class. Beyond the 550,000 ton limitation each nation was to be allowed 20% of its total tonnage in overage ships.[51] It was the retention of these overage ships that would allow Britain to maintain the number of cruisers she considered necessary, by permitting an overall 660,000 tons of cruisers and destroyers.

The modifications of the Anglo-American positions opened a possibility of compromise.[52] Gibson was convinced that Britain had lowered her tonnage demands sufficiently that the United States now occupied the middle ground and could find acceptable any arrangement the other two nations worked out.[53] He suggested to Bridgeman that "...if some basis can be found which is mutually acceptable to the British and Japanese delegations, I feel sure that it will be possible for the American delegation to make the agreement complete."[54]

Acting on Gibson's suggestion Admirals Field and Kobayashi met on July 14 to seek accomodation of the British and Japanese programs. With Kobayashi continuing to insist on both the 3.25 ratio and a maximum of 315,000 tons of surface auxiliaries, Admiral Field suggested that the Japanese transfer to the cruiser class 10,000 submarine tons, thus permitting the desired additional

vessels of this type. Japan would achieve the 3.25 ratio since Britain would agree to reduce her tonnage requirements from 550,000 to 500,000 although raising the percentage of additional overage vessels to 25%. Including the overage ships Britain would have a total of 443,700 tons in cruisers,[55] apportioned among twelve heavy and fifty-four light cruisers.[56]

Britain had made significant concessions to arrange this agreement. In addition to allowing Japan a 5:3.25 ratio in cruisers Britain had lowered the number of ships she demanded. Moreover, under this compromise, many of the British ships would be old vessels, not of the fighting calibre the Admiralty had originally desired.[57]

Japan too had retreated from her original position. She accepted an increase in total tonnage which she would reach by retaining older ships and transfering submarine tonnage to cruisers. However, since her ships deteriorated more rapidly than did their British counterparts, this clause gave Britain special advantage. Kobayashi tentatively agreed to restrict light cruiser armament to the 6-inch gun, though unwilling to bind himself to this point in view of the unpopularity of the weapon with the Japanese Navy.[58]

The American naval advisors were upset at the Anglo-Japanese compromise. They believed that the 5:3.25 ratio, and any restrictions on the 8-inch gun gave Japan

a tremendous advantage in the Western Pacific.[59] The retention of overage vessels was considered a further drawback since the United States had no ships of this type worth keeping. Since they considered the 6000-ton cruiser too small to carry the large rifles, the naval officers insisted that the smallest cruiser of value to the United States would be of 8300 tons. Finally, even if the compromise were accepted without change, the United States would be forced to undertake a considerable building program to reach parity with Britain.[60]

Gibson delivered these objections at an informal meeting of chief delegates on July 19, emphasizing, however, that the British-Japanese arrangement was within the realm of negotiation. He indicated his main concern was that the United States retain the right to use the desired weapon. After building the proposed twelve heavy cruisers, and keeping the ten existing OMAHA class cruisers, the United States would have only 100,000 cruiser tons unallocated. Gibson suggested permitting the United States the right to arm ships built in this division with the 8-inch gun, adding that these vessels probably would not be constructed. He offered to include in the agreement an escape clause proposed by Dulles which would permit Britain to denounce the treaty if one of the signatories began building 8-inch gun ships above the 12:12:8 heavy cruiser limit.[61]

Following the collapse of the Conference some, including Robert Cecil,[62] would say that at this moment

success was likely. Bridgeman held that the United States seemed interested in the compromise plan and would not insist on the 8-inch gun on all their ships although they disliked having their hands tied publicly.[63] In his report to London Bridgeman stressed that agreement had been reached with Japan and that if negotiations were continued a successful conclusion of the Conference was possible.

The reasons for the flexibility of the British delegation at this point in the Conference must be sought in the minds of the two leaders, Cecil and Bridgeman. Robert Cecil was one of the greatest proponents of disarmament on the British scene. He considered disarmament essential to peace and peace vital to the survival of the British Empire. It is not surprising that he would support any compromise that would forward the progress of disarmament.

The motives behind Bridgeman's willingness to negotiate are less direct than Cecil's. Bridgeman realized that a successful Conference would redound to the credit of his party and improve both his own reputation and that of his leader and friend, Baldwin. Success at Geneva would be a political asset for the Conservative party. Bridgeman had also been through the Cabinet fights on naval estimates in 1925 and he realized there was strong feeling even within Conservative ranks, in favor of trimming naval expenses. A limitation along

the lines of the program worked out with the Japanese would reduce costs, while maintaining what Bridgeman believed to be an adequate cruiser force. Finally, Gibson's suggestion that the United States would probably not avail herself of a theoretical right to build all 8-inch gun ships, may have convinced Bridgeman that America could safely be allowed some freedom of action in cruiser armament.

It is likely that Gibson had become aware of Bridgeman's flexibility on the 8-inch gun issue and realized that the British delegation was ready to accept the American demand for this weapon. Determination to reach agreement seemed to rule the Conference.[64] The readiness to compromise evident in the Anglo-Japanese accomodation, the removal of Admiral Jones from the bargaining table in order to placate the British and the American willingness to accept a class of light cruisers if not the 6-inch gun, all indicated that a break through was likely. But when agreement seemed possible, negotiations halted as the British delegation returned to London.

CHAPTER IV

FOOTNOTES

[1]For a summary of these proposals see Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-47.

[2]The Verbatim Report of the First Plenary Session, June 20, 1927, National Archives, Record Group 43, Records of the United States Delegation to the Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armaments held at Geneva, June 20 to August 4, 1927, Entry 139, Box 2, File 250.01. (Hereafter cited as Records of the Conference.)

[3]Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

[4]Minutes of the 5th Session of the Technical Committee, June 30, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 140, Box 2, File 110.1.

[5]Minutes of the 6th Session of the Technical Committee, July 1, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 140, Box 2, File 110.1.

[6]Gibson to Kellogg, June 22, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/313.

[7]Memorandum of a conversation between Kellogg and the Japanese Ambassador, June, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/361.

[8]Gibson to Kellogg, June 27, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/332.

[9]Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, July 8, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 140, Box 2, File 110.

[10]Cecil to the Foreign Office, June 22, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX. See also Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 499. He states that Sea Lords Chatfield, Dreyer, and Field felt that battleship reduction offered the best hope of reducing the heavy burden of expensive naval construction.

[11]Gibson to Kellogg, June 26, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[12]The Diary of Rear Admiral Frank H. Schofield, Naval History Division, Washington Navy Yard, June 21, 1927, p. 7. (Hereafter cited as Schofield Diary.) Gibson to Kellogg, June 22, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20; and Decimal File 500A15A1/314.

[13]Memorandum of conversation between Gibson and Ishii, June 22, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 148, Box 5, File 250.01.

[14]Bridgeman to the Prime Minister, June 23, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12669, W5825.

[15]Viscount Kikujiro Ishii, Diplomatic Commentaries, trans. W. R. Langdon (Baltimore, 1936), pp. 198-99.

[16]Kellogg to Coolidge, June 22, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20. Middlemas, op. cit., p. 368.

[17]No Congress would authorize sufficient funds to build up to this figure. See Roskill, op. cit., p. 506.

[18]Admiral Beatty estimated that thirty cruisers designed for work in the North Sea would have to be scrapped. Statement by Admiral Beatty to the Cabinet, July 12, 1927, Cab. 24, Vol. 187, C. P. 193.

[19]Many Americans, both civilians and officers, were aware that any treaty would necessitate an increase in the American fleet. Schofield Diary, June 28, 1927, p. 22. New York Times, July 10, 1927, Part II, p. 10.

[20]George Davis, op. cit., p. 315.

[21]Some officers believed parity was not enough and that the United States must insist on cruiser superiority. See Captain L. M. Overstreet, U.S.N., "Cruiser Ratios", Outlook, CXLVI (June 29, 1927), 283.

[22]Memorandum of conversation between Gibson and Bridgeman, June 23, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 140, Box 5, File 250.01.

[23]Summary of the Secretary of State's news conference, June 25, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[24]Sterling to Kellogg, June 28, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[25]Prime Minister to Bridgeman, June 29, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12669, W6026.

[26]Gibson to Kellogg, June 30, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Minutes of the 8th Session of the Technical Committee, July 15, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 139, Box 2, File 110.1.

[29]Schofield Diary, July 5, 1927, pp. 49-50. The British delegation received a totally different impression, and Bridgeman later expressed the opinion that Jones had read the statement without showing it to Gibson. See Roskill, op. cit., p. 505.

[30]Schofield Diary, July 6, 1927, pp. 37-39.

[31]Conversation between Gibson and Saburi, July 1, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 139, Box 2, File 250.

[32]Bridgeman to Baldwin, July 7, 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 130/5.

[33]Informal meeting of delegates at the Beau Rivage Hotel, July 6, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 139, Box 2, File 110.1.

[34]Gibson to Kellogg, July 6, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[35]Howard to the Foreign Office, June 22, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12676, W6204.

[36]Detroit Free Press, June 27, p. 6; and "Sea Power at Geneva," New Republic, LI (June 22, 1927), 109-12. The British desire for such a large number of cruisers seemed to be turning the conference into a legalized arms race. See "Is This Naval Limitation," New Republic, LI (July 13, 1927), 109. New York Times, July 2, 1927, p. 16.

[37]"Naval Conference," Outlook, CXLVI (June 29, 1927), 267. "Snags in the Way of Naval Disarmament," Literary Digest, XCIV (July 12, 1927), 6. Detroit Free Press, June 22, 1927, p. 2, and June 29, 1927, p. 4. "Geneva and Neutrality," Nation, CXXV (September 14, 1927), 241. "The Dilemma of Sea Power," New Republic, LI (July 20, 1927), 213-15.

[38]*Manchester Guardian*, July 5, 1927, p. 11.

[39]Tilley to the Foreign Office, July 4, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12676, W6204.

[40]Howard to Austen Chamberlain, July 1, 1927, Austen Chamberlain Papers, Vol. 261.

[41]Tyrell to Cecil, June 27, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX.

[42]Bridgeman to the Prime Minister, July 12, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12671, W6509. Some Americans sympathized with the British over Jones's practice of restating his case ad infinitum. Hugh R. Wilson, *Diplomat Between the Wars* (New York, 1941), p. 218.

[43]Gibson to Kellogg, July 3, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[44]Schofield Diary, July 9, 1927, p. 67. Gibson reported to Kellogg that Cecil had twice lost his temper and that it had been necessary to take exception to his language. Gibson to Kellogg, July 9, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A/389.

[45]Campbell to Villiers, July 16, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12673, W7207.

[46]Schofield Diary, July 11, 1927, p. 73.

[47]Schofield opposed the appointment of Allen Dulles because "...he was not sound on the naval point of view." Schofield Diary, July 11, 1927, p. 73.

[48]Bridgeman to the Prime Minister, July 7, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12671, W6350.

[49]Kellogg to Gibson, July 10, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/400.

[50]Schofield Diary, July 9, 1927, p. 69.

[51]Minutes of the meeting of the informal committee, July 12, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 139, Box 1, File 110.1.

[52]Gibson to Kellogg, July 12, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[53]Ellis, *Frank B. Kellogg*, pp. 174-75.

[54]Bridgeman to the Prime Minister, July 14, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12672, W6660.

[55]This total included 88,740 tons of overage vessels.

[56]Bridgeman to the Prime Minister and Cabinet, July 16, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12672, W6719.

[57]Schofield Diary, July 16, 1927, p. 86. The compromise permitted the retention of certain specific vessels which were included in the total tonnage allowance of each nation but which were armed with greater than 6-inch guns or were above 6000 tons displacement. For Britain these ships were the YORK and four HAWKINS class cruisers; for the United States the ten OMAHA class cruisers; for Japan four cruisers of the FURUTAKA class. Since many of these British and Japanese ships had 8-inch guns the United States was to be allowed to build some additional 8-inch gun ships to equalize the situation.

[58]Bridgeman to the Prime Minister, July 16, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12672, W6727. Toynbee, op. cit., p. 61.

[59]Gibson to Kellogg, July 18, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/446.

[60]Gibson to Kellogg, July 18, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/448.

[61]Minutes of an informal meeting of delegates, July 19, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 139, Box 1, File 110.1. Gibson to Kellogg, July 23, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/475 contains the text of the 'Dulles Clause'.

[62]Robert Cecil, A Great Experiment: An Autobiography (London, 1941), pp. 185-87.

[63]Minutes of the Tenth Conference of the British Delegation, July 19, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12673, W7102. Bridgeman was probably misinterpreting Gibson's suggestion that the United States would not make use of all its tonnage allotment.

[64]Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg, p. 177. The Times (London) felt that a speedy and sucessful end was in sight. The Times (London), July 19, 1927, p. 14.

CHAPTER V

THE CONFERENCE: PHASE TWO

During the afternoon of July 19, 1927, Bridgeman was informed that grave misunderstandings, unresolvable by cable, existed between the Cabinet and the British delegation. Bridgeman was ordered by London to:

> ...return to explain to us the exact position reached at Geneva, what alternatives are open to us and what their effect both political and naval would be.[1]

This recall order was no surprise to the delegates. Differences between the Cabinet and the representatives in Geneva had been growing ever since Bridgeman's June 30th statement to the press accepting parity with America in all classes of vessels.

Winston Churchill had opposed Baldwin's instructions to the delegation chief on that subject by arguing that parity was impossible between the United States, whose fleet was maintained for prestige, and Britain, who depended on her fleet for survival. Churchill held that the American cruiser fleet was too small to present a threat to Britain and recommended that Great Britain retain her freedom of action but set a slow pace in cruiser construction even if the United States expanded its

fleet. Eventually the Americans would cool off and wasteful expenditure would be avoided.[2] Churchill's opposition to parity was seconded by Admiral Beatty, but the majority of the Cabinet had decided to support Baldwin's instructions to Bridgeman. This message did not precisely accept parity, but did state that no limit could be placed on the American fleet restricting it to a lower level than that of Great Britain.

On learning that the delegation had interpreted his message to mean the complete acceptance of parity Baldwin prepared a message for Ambassador Howard in Washington ordering him to:

> ...confirm to the United States government statement made by Mr. Bridgeman and Lord Cecil to Mr. Gibson at Geneva, that H. M. Government do not dispute or contest in any way, claim of the United States to absolute parity and that they fully agree that Geneva negotiations should be conducted on that basis.[3]

Before this message could be sent Admiral Beatty prevailed on Baldwin to cancel it.[4] Beatty maintained that accepting parity while demanding seventy cruisers justified the American claim that Britain was fostering armament construction. The Admiralty believed Japan would insist on fifty cruisers if her potential enemy, the United States, possessed seventy. In order to maintain the 2:1 ratio over Japan the Admiralty would have to raise its own demands. Parity would result in an upward spiral of cruiser needs making a treaty impossible.[5]

Beatty's presentation confirmed that the Royal

Navy considered Japan its most likely opponent. But all members of the government did not share this view. Both Austen Chamberlain and Winston Churchill were interested in a return to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The trouble in China gave emphasis to this desire. British trade had been severely hurt by Nationalist boycotts and civil turmoil. British civilian leaders then were not as quick as the Royal Navy to oppose an improved naval ratio for Japan; a friendly relationship with that country might be valuable in dealing with China.[6]

Despite its concern with Japan the Admiralty did not ignore the possibility of conflict with America. Beatty had pointed out that parity would give the United States battle fleet superiority since the British could not concentrate their fleet as effectively as the Americans and, in any event, the 6-inch gun would be no match for the American heavy cruiser weapons. Prior to the First World War the Royal Navy had not taken the American fleet into consideration as a possible enemy.[7] In the 1920's, with increasing tension between Britain and America, the Admiralty no longer ignored American naval strength.

Some of the reasons for the deteriorating state of Anglo-American relations have already been mentioned, but one factor merits special consideration. The upper classes of British society had become increasingly

irritated with the United States.[8] Members of this class were well represented in Baldwin's Cabinet, and their attitudes were to have a marked effect on the Conference.

Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretary, believed it was time to stand up to the Americans;[9] Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, was worried that if the Americans built up to parity the British would "...become the vassals of the United States of America."[10] Even Austen Chamberlain regretted that the Anglo-Japanese alliance had been sacrificed in order to placate a nation like the United States which would never offer Britain effective support.[11] This spirit of resentment directed at America was bound to influence the Cabinet against the pleas for compromise from its delegation.

Such dislike and suspicion of America was a hallmark of the right wing of the Tory Party. It did not necessarily imply support for the Admiralty since many Conservatives looked for a return to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Churchill was of the opinion that the Admiralty had overestimated the danger of war with Japan and was not sufficiently concerned with the danger from America.[12] Nevertheless, the Admiralty supporters and those concerned about, or hostile to, the United States were able to join forces in opposing the acceptance of parity and the 8-inch gun cruiser.

The first act of this coalition was to revise

Baldwin's proposed instructions to Howard. The Ambassador was not to bind Britain to the doctrine of parity; although Britain would not object to the United States building up to British levels, she would not accept equal naval forces as a fixed principle.[13] On July 6th the Cabinet decided to support the original Admiralty plan. Parity would be accepted only in heavy cruisers.[14] Bridgeman was ordered to stop working for total tonnage limitation and to return to a limitation by number. He was also informed that:

> In relation to the second and less important class of cruisers we cannot...surrender our freedom of action and we do not question right of other countries to decide at their discretion upon their own arrangements.[15]

In violation of these instructions the British delegation had continued to negotiate on the basis of a total tonnage restriction on both heavy and light cruisers. Bridgeman probably felt that a tonnage limitation which provided Britain with a sufficient number of ships was acceptable, and, since he had publicly acknowledged the right of the United States to parity, a limit on light cruisers seemed inevitable.

On July 14, while Admirals Field and Kobayashi were attempting to reach a compromise, Bridgeman was instructed to request a weeks adjournment.[16] He replied that the delegation would return if ordered, but that such a step would cripple the Conference and give the

impression that the government had lost confidence in its delegation.[17] Bridgeman's protests delayed but did not prevent action. On July 19, the same day Gibson delivered the American objections to the Anglo-Japanese proposals, the Cabinet made its final decision. The delegation must return and account for its actions to the home government.

The delegation and its antagonists presented their arguments at a Cabinet meeting on July 21. Admiral Beatty summarized the coalition's objections to the compromise plan: the plan gave the United States the right to parity by treaty; it allowed Japan a 5:3.25 ratio instead of the existing 2:1 ratio. Those who supported the delegation felt it unlikely that the United States would make use of its right to parity. They insisted that the British government was too deeply committed to the principle to make an honourable withdrawal and that the Anglo-Japanese compromise offered the only hope of eventual agreement.[18]

After considerable discussion two courses appeared open to the Cabinet. The Admiralty plan called for the complete rejection of the Anglo-Japanese compromise and an adherence to the original British position. Britain would accept a 12:12:8 limit on heavy cruisers, but avoid any numerical limitation on light cruisers, which would be restricted to 6000 tons and

6-inch armament.

The delegates insisted that the United States and Japan would reject this plan and suggested an alternative skirting the parity problem. Great Britain verbally would indicate the number of small cruisers she would require and raise no objection to the United States having an equal number, but no reference to the parity principle would be included in the treaty. The Anglo-Japanese compromise would be modified to allow Britain seventy instead of sixty-six cruisers within a total tonnage acceptable to the United States. The majority seemed to accept this alternative, though the issue was far from settled at the close of the meeting.[19]

Chamberlain wrote to Baldwin on July 22, urging him to delay a trip to Canada and attend a Cabinet meeting to be held that afternoon. Churchill and his followers, Lord Birkenhead and Joynson-Hicks with the aid of Admiral Beatty, were still insisting that the delegation return to the original British plan on a take it or leave it basis. Chamberlain believed that both Cecil and Bridgeman would refuse to return to Geneva if this were done. He advised the Prime Minister to settle the issue since Baldwin was "...faced with the possibility of a split in your cabinet of the most fatal kind."[20]

Chamberlain, himself, had decided not to support the Admiralty, although at one time he had been deeply

impressed by Beatty's arguments. Returning to the original British position would put the delegates in an untenable position. In addition, Chamberlain had some hopes that the United States, Japan and Britain might intervene together in China in order to restore order and protect foreign interests. Any retraction of promises at Geneva would stir up considerable ill will and make co-operation in China impossible.[21]

Taking the Foreign Secretary's advice, Baldwin chaired the meeting. Salisbury, the Lord Privy Seal, reported that the dominion representatives at Geneva all felt it imperative that Great Britain continue with the Anglo-Japanese compromise plan. The majority of the Cabinet supported this view with the important caveat that a treaty should not elevate parity to the level of a principle.[22] The Admiralty was instructed to modify the compromise plan accordingly and present the revisions on July 25. Baldwin, under the impression that the issue was closed, left for Canada. In fact, Churchill and the Admiralty had not given up the fight.

When the Admiralty presented the modification on July 25, Chamberlain mistakenly allowed Churchill to reopen the parity question. The resulting scene was described to Baldwin in the following words:

> Willie Bridgeman was not only very worried but exceedingly angry, and at one time was in a minority of one. I gather that they pressed him to go back to Geneva, admitting that he had exceeded his

> instructions with regard to parity, to which he replied bluntly that he would do no such thing, but he was quite prepared to announce that the British Government had changed its mind.[23]

In the end the delegates were able to withstand the proposal that they should publicly renounce parity, but their success precluded Cabinet concession on the cruiser armament question. Admiral Beatty maintained that the hidden acceptance of parity would bind Britain to a principle of inferiority on the sea. If America and Japan made full use of their rights under the modified compromise plan, the Admiralty could not guarantee to fulfill its responsibilities. In the face of this kind of threat, it is not remarkable that the delegates scarcely could obtain a hearing on their request for flexibility on the 6-inch gun issue. Although the delegates felt some concession was vital to obtaining a treaty, the majority of the Cabinet rejected the idea. It is doubtful that either Cecil or Bridgeman had a clear concept of what sort of compromise to offer on this problem. Only after their return to Geneva did Bridgeman offer a suggestion. Nevertheless the British delegation was aware that their position would have to be modified in order to obtain a treaty.

For some Cabinet members, such as Churchill and Lord Birkenhead, the weapons issue was a god send. It provided an opportunity to destroy a Conference whose

results they feared without reneging on any public pledge. Others, including Chamberlain, were anxious about the Navy's professed inability to protect the sea lanes. The acceptance of parity seemed to be enough of a concession to the United States; yielding on the 8-inch gun, shich the Navy claimed would give America naval superiority, seemed to be asking too much.

As the delegates prepared to leave England, Cecil warned that if the Conference failed because of differences over the 6-inch gun "...he must be free to consider his position."[24] Despite this threat of resignation, the British position was publicly announced in the House of Commons,[25] an action making future compromise unlikely.

During the British absence the Americans reexamined their own position. Gibson felt that the Conference had reached a crucial point and only a concession by either Britain or America on the 8-inch gun could bring success. He recommended slight modifications of the American proposals: an improved ratio for Japan and acceptance of a light cruiser category in accordance with his proposition of July 19 and the American pre-Conference decision that the United States need only request 60%-70% of total tonnage in heavy cruisers. Gibson advised his government that in the face of the softening British attitude on cruiser armament the demand for an

all 8-inch gun force should be maintained.[26] Kellogg agreed, with apparent reluctance,[27] to the recommendations for compromise and insisted that any class of small cruisers must be armed with the 8-inch rifle.[28]

The unyielding tone of Kellogg's messages reflected the influence of Secretary of the Navy Wilbur and E. W. Eberle, Chief of Naval Operations. Kellogg handled all material coming from the Conference personally, yet he sought the opinion of the Navy Department on every issue. Believing that the United States could make good use of the 6-inch gun cruiser proposed by Britain, he, nevertheless, felt less competent to judge naval issues than Wilbur and Eberle.[29] The Navy Department was naturally unwilling to depart from the program developed by its own General Board and as a result the American government was unlikely to moderate its demand substantially.

Inflexibility was imparted to the American position by the attitude of the President. During the entire period of negotiations Coolidge remained on vacation in South Dakota. He received numerous telegrams from Kellogg concerning the discussions, but took little hand in shaping negotiations. When he did act it was to prevent the spread of any spirit of conciliation and to demand adherence to the original American position.

Coolidge does not appear to have been vitally

concerned with the success or failure of the Conference. It had not been the President's intention to summon this formal disarmament conference and he assumed little responsibility towards it. He already had forestalled sizeable armament appropriations and had reached his decision not to run for re-election. The political impact of the Conference no longer interested him. Moreover, Coolidge was convinced of American invulnerability. If other powers were not wise enough to take advantage of the American proposals, then the United States could quite easily see to her own security.[30]

On two occasions Coolidge sent direct instructions to Kellogg concerning the Conference. On July 29, he ordered Kellogg to: "Tell Gibson what is needed is not excuses or soft words but a clear, strong statement of American position. Let the blame fall where it may."[31] Again, during the British absence, the President cautioned Kellogg to "...be content with having made a fair proposal and leave others with the responsibility for its rejection."[32] This "take it or leave it" approach to diplomacy was not likely to encourage the spirit of compromise necessary for eventual agreement.

Kellogg did not share his chief's indifference to the Geneva discussions. The Secretary of State sincerely hoped for a major success and worked diligently toward that end. However, Kellogg felt obliged to ensure that

the American position at Geneva correspond to the attitude of the President and the naval specialists.[33] Political considerations also limited the Secretary of State's freedom of action. He warned Gibson that any treaty containing a substantial improvement of the Japanese ratio could not win Senate approval.[34]

When the Geneva meeting reconvened on July 28 the likelihood of compromise had waned. The American delegation realized that the British position had hardened: the terms brought back from London provided no room for maneuver on cruiser weapons and called for a higher tonnage than proposed in the Anglo-Japanese plan.[35] Gibson asked if the British government insisted that the light cruiser be restricted to the 6-inch gun. Cecil replied that this was the case and that any treaty which did not limit the larger weapon was expanding world armaments. Bridgeman added that the most Britain could do was to allow the United States equality of tonnage in both classes. Gibson told the British that while he would forward their plan to his government he now had little hope of success.

To overcome what Gibson then characterized as an insuperable road block, the British delegation once more requested permission to offer a compromise on the 6-inch gun problem.[36] The Cabinet remained hostile to this idea. Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, reminded Austen

Chamberlain that:

> The advice given to the Cabinet on the last occasion by the Naval Lords of the Admiralty was of such a serious character that many of us feel we should be well out of the agreement and certainly any further concessions would be impossible.[37]

Admiral Beatty admitted that the United States might compel Great Britain to use the 8-inch gun; nevertheless, acceptance of this weapon as the standard cruiser armament would be unwise.

This was a weak point in the Admiralty's case. Should the Conference collapse then the United States would be completely free to expand her cruiser fleet, building all her cruisers as 10,000 ton 8-inch gun ships. Eight such vessels were under construction, and the United States would probably exceed the limit of twelve heavy cruisers assigned to her in the Anglo-Japanese compromise. If Britain wished to maintain equality with America she would have to compete in building heavy cruisers.

Still the Cabinet followed Beatty. Bridgeman was informed that nothing had occurred to cause the Cabinet to change its decision and he could not be authorized to make any compromise. If the Americans gave way on the issue well and good;[38] if not, then at least parity had been avoided even at the cost of a treaty.

The American government was convinced that the Conference was doomed,[39] yet preferred to have the talks

adjourn sine die rather than admit complete failure.[40] Kellogg suggested to Gibson that a final plenary session requested by the British be cancelled and the Conference adjourned for a few months so that discussions might be reopened. Forestalling the public declarations of the plenary session might preserve what flexibility remained in the various proposals.[41] Kellogg's suggestion met no sympathy from the President who ordered the Secretary to "have a clear firm statement made of our position."[42] Wishing to avoid recrimination, Kellogg modified Gibson's proposed speech to the plenary session, reducing its anti-British tone. In particular, Kellogg deleted a section which thanked Japan for her close co-operation, because of the "...invidious comparison with Great Britain."[43]

Just as the Conference appeared ready to collapse, the Japanese came up with a new plan. As in the Anglo-Japanese compromise, a 12:12:8 limit was to be set on the number of heavy cruisers. Individual light cruisers were not to exceed 8000 tons, but the Japanese plan made no mention of the armament to be carried on those vessels. The problem of the 8-inch gun was simply ignored. Reference to total tonnage was similarly omitted. Japan and Britain would be permitted to complete their authorized programs; America would be allowed to build up to British strength but prohibited from exceeding British cruiser strength before 1931 when the

treaty was to be renegotiated.[44]

This new plan, leaving the United States free to arm all her cruisers with 8-inch guns, would amount to a surrender by the British on the question of armament. To provide limitation of cruiser weapons while meeting Japanese and American compromise aims, Bridgeman and Cecil at this point proposed an alternative to the "Dulles Clause". This latter scheme would have permitted Britain to reconvene the Conference if she felt the building program of one of the signatories threatened her interests. Failing to secure an agreement, Britain would be free to terminate the treaty. The British delegates had disliked this plan because it placed the burden for action on their government, which might be reluctant to terminate the treaty once it was in operation.

Under the new proposition the 6-inch gun would remain the standard cruiser weapon. Any nation which wanted to build 8-inch gun ships in excess of 12:12:8 must give formal notice of its intention to the other powers. These nations might then reconvene the Conference and if no agreement were reached the treaty would lapse. The United States would have the theoretical right to build 8-inch gun cruisers, but Britain could opt out of the treaty if she did so. The onus of action was shifted to the United States,[45] and the weapons problem postponed until the United States actually built 8-inch

gun ships beyond the twelve heavy cruisers. From Gibson's statements there was a good chance that this event might be long delayed.

Admiral Pound, who had replaced Admiral Field, opposed the idea by forecasting the future danger of an outgunned British fleet facing the American Navy. The delegation consequently decided to send two messages to the Cabinet, one giving the Bridgeman-Cecil view and the other Admiral Pound's objections.[46] The Cabinet sided with Admiral Pound, summarily rejecting both the 'Dulles Clause' and its alternative.

The Cabinet did not dismiss the Japanese proposal so quickly. It asked for further information as to what the Japanese meant by 'authorized programs'.[47] Meeting on August 3, to clarify this aspect of the Japanese proposal, the delegates became embroiled in further disputes. The British maintained that 'authorized program' should refer to any ship whose construction had been approved. If taken in this sense the restriction would be almost meaningless given the level of British authorization. The Americans insisted that the term be restricted to mean only those ships for which funds had been appropriated prior to the Conference. They then asked if the British could guarantee that their cruiser tonnage would not exceed 400,000 tons if the British definition were used. When the British replied in the

negative, Gibson announced that the Japanese proposals did not constitute a basis for fruitful negotiations.[48] The final attempt at compromise had failed.

Anglo-American differences over cruiser armament had frustrated the possibility of agreement. It became apparent, immediately after the Conference reconvened, that neither the British nor American governments would sacrifice their basic objectives. The last minute Japanese plan was an attempt to salvage a compromise retaining the essentials of each nation's program. The United States would have been left free to use the 8-inch gun, while Britain would have been allowed to build the number of cruisers she desired. When even this proposal failed it was recognized that all hope of any agreement was futile.

The final remaining problem was to settle upon the procedure for the last plenary session. The British continued to insist on their right to make a separate address. It was finally decided that each delegation would make a public declaration of its position, but that in the interest of good will no public debate would take place.

The final session of the Conference was held on the afternoon of August 4, 1927. All three delegations expressed the pious hope that, despite their superficial disagreement, the Conference had helped the cause

of disarmament. The closing statements were relatively brief and mild causing no great outcry. Although it was possible to terminate the Conference without any serious public displays of international hostility, bitter feelings had been aroused between the American and British governments which continued to grow in the aftermath of the Conference.

CHAPTER V

FOOTNOTES

[1]Prime Minister to Bridgeman, July 19, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12672, W6845.

[2]Churchill once more questioned the Admiralty's claim for 70 cruisers. Memorandum by Winston Churchill presented to the Cabinet June 29, 1927, Cab. 24, Vol. 187, C. P. 189.

[3]Prime Minister to Howard, July 1, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12670, W6110.

[4]Beatty to the Prime Minister, June 30, 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 130/3.

[5]Statement by Beatty included in Cabinet decesion, July 4, 1927, 38(27)5, Cab. 23/55.

[6]Iriye, Across the Pacific, p. 154 and Iriye, Imperialism, p. 191. In addition certain influential Englishmen believed that the United States was partially responsible for anti-British sentiment in China. See a speech by Sir Auckland Geddes, former ambassador to the U. S., in Hamilton, Ontario, April 14, 1927, Decimal File 711.41/162.

[7]Bradford Perkins, The Great Rapprochment: England and the United States, 1895-1914 (New York, 1968), pp. 245-46.

[8]Allen, op. cit., p. 729. See Chap. I for an explanation of the basis for this resentment.

[9]Hankey to Balfour, June 29, 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 130/3.

[10]Birkenhead memorandum, July 21, 1927, Cab. 24, Vol. 188, C. P. 210.

[11]Austen Chamberlain to Howard, April 25, 1927, Austen Chamberlain Papers, F. O. 800, Vol. 260.

[12]Roskill, op. cit., p. 464.

[13]Foreign Office to Howard, July 4, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12670, W6229.

[14]Cabinet Decision, July 6, 1927, 39(27)8, Cab. 23/55.

[15]Cabinet to British Delegation, July 7, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX. The delegation was 'mortified' to receive these instructions. Campbell to Villiers, July 10, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12673, W7351.

[16]Prime Minister to Bridgeman, July 14, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12672, W6647.

[17]Bridgeman to the Prime Minister, July 14, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12672, W6656. Cecil warned that if he were recalled he might not return to Geneva. Cecil to Lord Salisbury, July 14, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX.

[18]Amery to Baldwin, July 21, 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 130/6; and Birkenhead memorandum, July 21, 1927, Cab. 24, Vol. 188, C. P. 210.

[19]Minutes of the Cabinet meeting, July 21, 1927, Cab. 24, Vol 188, C. P. 211. Middlemas, op. cit., pp. 370-71.

[20]Austen Chamberlain to Baldwin, July 22, 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 130/6.

[21]Austen Chamberlain to Howard, May 8, 1927, F. O. 800, Vol. 260.

[22]Conclusion of the Cabinet, July 22, 1927, Cab. 23/55, 43(27)1.

[23]Davidson (Baldwin's political manager) to Baldwin, July 27, 1927, Baldwin Papers, Vol. 140/6.

[24]Conclusions of the Cabinet, July 26, 1927, Cab. 23/55, 44(27)1.

[25]Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCIX (1927), 1246-1253.

[26]Gibson to Kellogg, July 18, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A/448.

[27]Kellogg to Gibson, July 19, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/446.

[28]Kellogg to Gibson, July 21, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/467a.

[29]Kellogg to the President, July 22, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/486a.

[30]Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg, pp. 238-39.

[31]Kellogg to Gibson, July 9, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/394.

[32]Coolidge to Kellogg, July 25, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20, or Decimal File 500A15A1/487a.

[33]Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg, p. 234.

[34]Kellogg to Gibson, July 25, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/474.

[35]Gibson to Kellogg, July 28, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/499.

[36]British Delegation to Cabinet, July 28, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12674, W8063. In his work on Kellogg Professor L. Ethan Ellis states that neither the American nor British delegations considered compromise on the 6-inch versus 8-inch gun question. This appears true of the Americans but the British repeatedly sought authority to compromise. See Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg, pp. 183-84.

[37]Joynson-Hicks to Austen Chamberlain, July 29, 1927, Austen Chamberlain Papers, F. O. 800, Vol. 261.

[38]Cabinet to the Delegation, July 29, 1927, Cab. 23/55, 46(27)1.

[39]Schofield Diary, July 29, 1927, pp. 98-99.

[40]Chilton to Foreign Office, report of a conversation with Castle, July 19, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12673, W7222.

[41]Kellogg to Gibson, July 29, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/503.

[42]Kellogg to Gibson, July 30, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/510.

[43]Kellogg to Gibson, July 29, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/506.

[44]Kellogg to Coolidge, August 3, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/525.

[45]Bridgeman to the Foreign Office, August 2, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12673, W7276-7277. Gibson seemed to accept the idea (of formal notice). See Gibson to Kellogg, July 31, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/512.

[46]Minutes of the twelfth meeting of British Delegations, August 1, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12674, W7497.

[47]Discussions and decisions of the Cabinet, August 3, 1927, Cab. 24, Vol. 188, C. P. 219.

[48]Minutes of an informal meeting of delegates, August 3, 1927, Records of the Conference, Entry 139, Box 1, File 110.1.

CHAPTER VI

AFTERMATH

In the United States the immediate reaction to the failure at Geneva was restrained. The press expressed the hope that the Conference had at least cleared the air and perhaps made eventual agreement possible.[1] Not unnaturally Britain was blamed for her insistence on a high total tonnage, but some of the responsibility for the collapse was assigned to the United States.[2] Even the Foreign Office felt the American press was being temperate.[3]

The failure seemed to cause little political embarrassment for the Republican party. While some European papers attributed Coolidge's refusal to run for re-election, announced on August 2, 1927, to the fiasco at Geneva, it was generally well known that such foreign difficulties had little effect on domestic political prospects.[4] Democrats, as well as Republicans, promised to support the position of the Administration.[5]

This tranquil state of affairs did not last long. The first trouble came from within the Administration itself. In a speech at Buffalo, New York, before both Kellogg and Prime Minister Baldwin, Vice-President Dawes

accused the State Department of insufficient preparation for the Conference.[6] The press picked up this idea and began to attack Republican handling of foreign affairs.[7] Gradually, as the economic implications of the disarmament breakdown became more apparent,[8] the reaction of the press grew more critical. Nevertheless, the censure was usually meted out equally to Britain and America since it was believed that "...the errors as between the governments of the United States and Great Britain, were approximately even."[9]

Secretary of State Kellogg had not given up his hopes for disarmament. He still believed something could be arranged through normal diplomatic channels. This optimism was completely dispelled by his meeting with Baldwin on August 7 at Buffalo, New York. Kellogg claimed to have been eager to discuss the cruiser question, but Baldwin "...would not say a word about it."[10] Kellogg was left with the impression that the British government had never wanted a disarmament agreement and was distinctly unfriendly toward the United States.

The tense state of Anglo-American relations was further revealed at a meeting between Kellogg and Sir Esme Howard on October 25. Howard asked that American officials refrain from making inflammatory speeches about British actions. Kellogg considered Howard's attitude impudent replying that he would reserve the right to say

what he pleased.[11] He pointed out that British statesmen were publicly discussing the cruiser issue. Kellogg was particularily upset that Baldwin had said that Britain would do no more than complete those vessels for which funds had been appropriated, reaching a cruiser tonnage of 378,000 tons.[12] Why, Kellogg asked, could Baldwin not have said this earlier when it would have meant agreement. Howard referred the matter to the Foreign Office and was told that Kellogg had raised a "...hideous conundrum which it would be best to avoid."[13] While the American public had not been greatly upset at the Geneva failure, official Washington was growing increasingly hostile to Great Britain.

The collapse of the disarmament conference and the succeeding atmosphere of recrimination appeared to doom the President's plan for economy. It was generally recognized in both official[14] and public circles[15] that some steps must be taken to enlarge the American fleet. This need was accepted only with reluctance by the majority of Americans who hoped to keep expenditures to a minimum.[16] The United States should build up to its needs, no further,[17] and Coolidge cautioned the Navy to remain moderate in its demands.[18] In a message to Congress President Coolidge sounded a note of annoyance with Great Britain and called for an increase in the American Navy. For the first time Coolidge, the high

priest of economy, had sanctioned expansion of the fleet.[19]

The first attempt by the big navy forces to take advantage of favorable conditions was too ambitious and resulted in a public reaction. On December 14, 1927, Chairman Butler of the House Naval Affairs Committee submitted the Navy's plan which became known as the "71 Ship Bill". This measure called for the construction of twenty-five large cruisers, five aircraft carriers, thirty-two submarines and nine destroyer leaders,[20] at an estimated cost of $740,000,000.[21]

Even the failure at Geneva had not prepared the American people or Congress for so great an expenditure.[22] The plan was criticized as "...calculated to persuade the world that the United States is headed for a rampage."[23] Press hostility was echoed in Congress and in lack of support from the Executive.[24] The London Times Washington correspondent doubted the bill would pass, but he reminded his readers that America had every intention of building up to parity with the British fleet.[25]

In response to the barrage of criticism the "71 Ship Bill" was withdrawn and replaced by a less expensive program.[26] This much reduced plan called for the construction of only one aircraft carrier and fifteen cruisers.[27] This reduction was not as drastic as it

first appeared. The original bill had called for five cruisers to be built every year for five years. This modified plan asked for five cruisers a year for three years. At the end of that time, if the situation warranted it, ten more cruisers could be built. The House passed the bill on March 17, 1928; however, the Senate still balked and the matter did not come to a vote. Not until the spring of 1929, in changed international circumstances, was it found possible to secure final approval for this expansion of America's cruiser force.

British response to the failure of the Conference was not unlike the reaction in the United States. There was a general acceptance of Britain's need for a sufficient cruiser force to guard her lines of communication and trade routes coupled with a desire to avoid bad relations with the United States. The position taken by the government was approved, but it was hoped that attempts at disarmament would not be abandoned.

The Times maintained that the Conference had broken up over the different strategic needs of Great Britain and America, not over parity, which the Times insisted was "...contested in principle by nobody."[28] That some members of the Cabinet had contested this issue was made plain by Winston Churchill a few days later when he stated that:

> ...we are not able now and I hope at no future time--to embody in a solemn international agreement

> any words which would bind us to the principle of mathematical parity in naval strength.[29]

At the same time Lord Balfour presented a defence of British tonnage demands. The section of the Cabinet which had opposed compromise at Geneva was attempting to explain its actions to the nation, but a defeated Cabinet member was about to steal its publicity.

Robert Cecil informed Chamberlain immediately after the Conference that he intended to carry out his threat to resign.[30] Chamberlain replied apprehensively that his resignation would harm the Empire and remove disarmament's major spokesman from the Cabinet.[31] Disregarding Chamberlain's caution, Cecil submitted his resignation to Baldwin. He complained that some members of the Cabinet had so opposed parity that they wished to destroy the Conference rather than accept it. The majority had not supported this view, but had so severely limited the ability of the delegation to compromise that agreement became impossible. Such lack of faith in disarmament, said Cecil prevented him from remaining a member of the Cabinet.[32]

The government attempted to belittle the significance of Cecil's resignation, but it attracted a good deal of public attention. The publicity became more unfavorable to the government when Cecil presented his case to the House of Lords. His charge that the Cabinet had no real concern with disarmament and that Churchill

and his followers had opposed parity made the position of the Conservative leadership very difficult.[33] These accusations seemed to justify the American position at the Conference and lost the government support of Cecil's followers, the League of Nations Union. In later years this loss was to cost the Conservative party dearly.[34]

One method for Britain to improve relations with the United States while avoiding naval parity was suggested by the press and several public figures, who expressed the view that the real reason for American insistence on parity was concern over enforcing neutral rights during war time. This argument held that the United States would forego the concern for parity if Britain were to relent in her interpretation of maritime law.[35]

On the suggestion of Ambassador Howard, Chamberlain presented a memorandum to the Cabinet entitled "Belligerent Rights at Sea and the Relations Between the United States and Great Britain". He wished to know if the Cabinet considered it advisable to modify Britain's broad interpretation of blockade rights in order to secure American friendship in any future war.[36]

With the divisions reforming over naval policy, the Cabinet decided to establish a committee to examine the possibility of negotiations with the United States on neutral rights. After months of discussion, committee

members generally agreed that any conference on this issue would either lead to further difficulties with the United States or to the loss of vital interests by Britain. Nevertheless the possibility of some concession was not ruled out and consideration of maritime law continued until the Conservatives left office in 1929.[37]

A second approach to placating those upset by the failure at Geneva and by Cecil's resignation would be a unilateral reduction in the British cruiser program. Churchill recommended such a move on the basis of Japan's unwillingness to expand her present fleet and America's naval weakness. He pointed out that even a massive American building program would not soon result in equality. If Britain reduced ship construction, the United States would probably lose her interest in cruisers. Reduction should start, he suggested, by eliminating the six cruisers authorized in 1927 and 1928. In the face of Cabinet resistance[38] the Chancellor was able to secure agreement on eliminating four of the vessels, and the Conservative government left office before the remaining two ships were begun; the Labour government cancelled work on them.[39]

Churchill's basic strategy, therefore, won out. He aimed at keeping a free hand for Britain while at the same time refraining from naval competition with the United States. Churchill was unconcerned by the

possibility of some slight American advantage in cruisers as long as Britain retained her freedom of action. Parity, he believed, would bind Britain to a dangerous principle, while an arms race with America was financial suicide. Therefore, Churchill sided with the Admiralty in undermining the Geneva Conference, but in its wake he was the most determined of the opponents of naval expansion.

The Royal Navy was pleased with the results of the Geneva Conference but not with its aftermath. British cruiser construction was reduced at the time the United States was authorizing construction of an additional fifteen heavy cruisers. These ships, if added to the eight already under construction, would give the United States a fleet of twenty-three 8-inch gun vessels; as a result America could have a cruiser fleet superior to that of Great Britain. The Admiralty's victory at Geneva turned sour as they found it difficult to match American naval construction.

Failure of the three-power naval talks resulted in a tentative re-orientation of British policy toward France bringing further contention with the United States. During the 1928 meetings of the Preparatory Commission Britain and France had discovered two major areas of disagreement over disarmament. In naval limitation France preferred an overall tonnage allotment

within which any type of ship could be built, while Britain demanded separate limitation for each class of vessel. On land armament France maintained that only the number of men actually serving in the armed forces should be limited, and resisted British attempts to place a ceiling on the number of trained reserves. Chamberlain, who had always sympathized with the French desire for security, hoped that a compromise could be worked out which would end criticism of Britain's role at the three-power conference and improve relations with France.

An accomodation was arrived at which placed limits on certain categories of naval vessels and did not restrict trained reserves. This plan elicited a sharp reaction from the United States[40] since it limited only 8-inch gun ships. The 6-inch gun cruisers were to constitute an unlimited class leaving Britain free to build as many as she desired.[41] Americans felt that Britain was trying both to renew the Anglo-French entente and dupe the United States into accepting a plan rejected just the year before by obscuring Britain's freedom to build 6-inch gun cruisers. In comparison with the contemporaneous negotiations surrounding the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the compromise appeared especially devious.[42]

The hostile reaction to the Anglo-French plan led those two governments to abandon the project in late

September of 1928. Nevertheless, President Coolidge attacked the proposals in his Armistice day speech and Kellogg pointedly avoided Britain during his trip to Europe for the signing of the Pact of Paris. The deterioration of Anglo-American relations was partially responsible for the Senate's acceptance of the "15 Cruiser Bill" on February 13, 1929.[43]

By the close of 1928 many on both sides of the Atlantic were anxious about the state of Anglo-American relations. Speculation on the possibility of war had been current since the collapse of the Geneva Conference; it had become more common following the Anglo-French compromise proposal.[44] Chamberlain might feel that despite poor relations the "...thought of war did not enter into anyone's calculations",[45] but not everyone agreed with him. William Tyrell considered hostilities between America and Britain definitely possible and he warned that it was "...childish to stake one's whole existence on the gamble that two nations must be forever friends."[46]

Following Coolidge's Armistice day speech the Foreign Office grew more concerned. R. R. Craigie, an American expert with the Foreign Office, expressed the belief that relations had reached their lowest point since 1920. If this situation were allowed to go on he felt conditions might parallel those existing between England and Germany in 1914. R. C. Campbell agreed,

stating that it was now necessary to "...make our utmost limit of concession."[47]

Eventually, the government began to consider some new approach to the United States, Baldwin even offering to visit the United States to discuss the cruiser problem,[48] but the Conservative ministry shortly fell to MacDonald's Labour party.

With new governments in power, unencumbered by the need to defend the positions taken at Geneva, antagonism dissipated. In his inaugural address President Hoover promised a fresh approach to disarmament.[49] The form of this new approach was made public by Hugh Gibson in a speech to the Preparatory Commission in April of 1929. The United States would no longer insist on ton-for-ton equality with Britain but would accept parity of fighting strength.[50] The concept was based on the belief that a system could be worked out which would balance a small number of 8-inch gun cruisers with a somewhat larger number of 6-inch gun ships. The United States was suggesting that Britain accept greater total cruiser tonnage in return for permitting the United States a superior heavy cruiser fleet.

Discussions were begun between American and British officials to find a "yardstick" to measure the fighting capacity of a ship. Though it was found impossible to agree on any system of measurement, re-opening

of discussions at the ambassadorial level helped to dispel the hostility generated at Geneva.[51]

A further reason for improved Anglo-American feelings was an increased concern about Japan. In the immediate aftermath of the Geneva Conference, both the United States and British governments had expressed satisfaction at the attitude of Japan.[52] That nation seemed to be a source of stability in an area threatened by unrest and civil war. While this view was shared by neither British nor American naval officers, civilian leaders in each country either seriously considered the idea of co-operation with Japan or were not overly concerned with the need to restrain her.

By 1928, however, America and Britain had become anxious about Japanese intentions in China. The 'positive' policy of Baron Tanaka was leading to clashes with Nationalist forces threatening the Open Door, ostensibly guaranteed at the Washington Conference. The economic crisis starting in 1929 deepened Western fears of Japan and increased the Japanese desire to secure markets and materials in China. Moreover, the consolidation of the Nationalist regime and its new anti-communist basis made it more acceptable to the West.

As a result from 1929 onward Anglo-American diplomatic co-operation increased. This collaboration aimed at restraining Japan resulted in the London

Conference decisions of 1930. There, the United States and Britain, with their own differences largely settled, and the principle of parity firmly established, were able to prevent Japan from obtaining the 10:10:7 ratio she sought in heavy cruisers.[53] The Anglo-Saxon powers continued to seek security through disarmament agreements, but as the international climate became increasingly hostile to their common interests they found it necessary to co-operate in pursuit of this goal. In a rearming world each found it dangerous and unreasonable to carry on the bitter rivalry of the Geneva Conference.

CHAPTER VI

FOOTNOTES

[1]"The Week," New Republic, LI (August 24, 1927), 54-57. "The End of the Naval Conference," Outlook, CXLIV (August 10, 1927), 471. J. Carter, "Where Do We Go From Geneva," Independent, CXIX (August 27, 1927), 198-200. Detroit Free Press, August 1, 1927, p. 6. New York Times, July 30, 1927, p. 14.

[2]Detroit Free Press, August 6, 1927, p. 6. New York Times, July 29, 1927, p. 18. "Scandal at Geneva," Nation, CXX (July 13, 1927), 33. "After the Disarmament Failure," Literary Digest, XCIV (September 10, 1927), 18-19.

[3]Note by Vansittart on press summaries from the U. S., August 30, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12035, A5073.

[4]New York Times, July 31, 1927, p. 10. W. A. White, Masks in a Pageant (New York, 1930), p. 454. J. Spargo, "Coolidge in Spite of Himself," North American Review, CXXIV (September, 1927), 337-47.

[5]Kellogg to Gibson, August 3, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[6]New York Times, August 8, 1927, p. 1. The State Department denied Dawes' charges saying that preliminary discussions had taken place during the Preparatory talks and that the British had never mentioned their opposition to the 8-inch gun at that time. New York Times, August 9, 1927, p. 7.

[7]"Disgrace at Geneva," Nation, CXXV (August 10, 1927), 127. G. Glasgow, "Naval Limitation Conference," Contemporary Review, CXXXII (September, 1927), 383.

[8]"What the Failure of the Naval Conference Means," Literary Digest, XCIV (August 20, 1927), 8-9.

[9]R. Hooker, "Geneva Naval Conference," Yale Review, XVII (June, 1928), 263.

[10]Kellogg to William Phillips (American Minister in Ottawa), August 9, 1927, Kellogg Papers.

[11]Conversation between Kellogg and Howard, October 25, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/631.

[12]Baldwin made this statement in connection with a Cabinet dispute over the British cruiser program which will be discussed at a later point in the chapter.

[13]Howard to Foreign Office, October 25, 1927, and reply from Tyrell, December 8, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12676, W10845.

[14]Kellogg to Frank Symonds, August 17, 1927, Kellogg Papers. Statement by Admiral Jones, New York Times, August 16, 1927, p. 27.

[15]New York Times, August 10, 1927, p. 1.

[16]"How the Geneva Conference Hits Our Taxpayers," Literary Digest, XCIV (August 27, 1927), 5.

[17]Statement by Secretary Wilbur, New York Times, August 25, 1927, p. 2. "The End of the Naval Conference," Outlook, CXLIV (August 17, 1927), 497.

[18]Coolidge to Wilbur, August 13, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 13.

[19]Address of the President to Congress, December 6, 1927, Foreign Relations, 1928, I, vii-viii.

[20]U. S., Congressional Record, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., 1927, Vol. LXIX, Part I, 479.

[21]The Times (London), December 15, 1927, p. 16.

[22]"Billions Now Asked For a Huge Naval Program," Literary Digest, XCVI (January 28, 1928), 12-13. New York Times, January 13, 1928, p. 22. "The Bone of Naval Contention," New Republic, L (January 4, 1927), 179.

[23]"Editorial Paragraphs," Nation, CXXV (December 21, 1927), 695.

[24]Statement by Senator Borah, New York Times, January 23, 1928, p. 1.

[25]The Times (London), December 16, 1927, p. 14.

[26]"The Big Navy Congressman Hears From Home," Literary Digest, XCIV (March 3, 1928), 10-11. Wheeler, Prelude to Pearl Harbor, pp. 150-52.

[27]New York Times, February 24, 1928, p. 20. "A Cruiser Victory That May Aid Disarmament," Literary Digest, C (February 16, 1929), 5.

[28]The Times (London), August 6, 1927, p. 11.

[29]Ibid., August 8, 1927, p. 12.

[30]Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, August 7, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX.

[31]Austen Chamberlain to Cecil, August 8, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX.

[32]Cecil to Baldwin, August 9, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. IX.

[33]Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Lords), LXIX (1927), 84-94.

[34]G. M. Young, Stanley Baldwin (London, 1952), p. 129. Middlemas, op. cit., pp. 371-72.

[35]The Times (London), August 5, 1927, p. 10. "Is There Any Maritime Law?," New Republic, LIII (December 14, 1927), 88. "Security on Land and Sea," New Republic, LII (October 15, 1927), 159-61. Col. House to Cecil, August 30, 1927, Cecil Papers, Vol. XXIX. Ishii, op. cit., p. 201.

[36]Memorandum by Austen Chamberlain, October 26, 1927, Cab. 24, Vol. 189, C. P. 258.

[37]Roskill, op. cit., p. 549.

[38]Middlemas, op. cit., p. 340.

[39]Roskill, op. cit., pp. 555-59.

[40]Chilton to the Foreign Office, August 23, 1928, F. O. 371, Vol. 14480, W8272. New York Times, August 1, 1928, p. 10. "The Anglo-French Naval Agreement," Literary Digest, XCIX (August 18, 1928), 8-10.

[41]Memorandum on the Anglo-French Compromise, August 4, 1928, Jones Papers.

[42]Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg, p. 188.

[43]New York Times, November 12, 1927, p. 1. "Coolidge's Call Down to Europe," Literary Digest, XCIX (December 1, 1928), 8-10. Wheeler, Prelude to Pearl Harbor, p. 155.

[44]New York Times, August 6, 1927, p. 4. H. M. Tomlinson, "If War Should Come; An Englishman to America," Harpers Monthly, CLVI (December, 1927), 71-77. The Times (London), August 15, 1927, p. 12. Howard to Austen Chamberlain, July 19, 1927, Austen Chamberlain Papers, F. O. 800, Vol. 261.

[45]Austen Chamberlain to Howard, August 10, 1927, Austen Chamberlain Papers, F. O. 800, Vol. 261.

[46]Minute by Tyrell, September 15, 1927, Austen Chamberlain Papers, F. O. 800, Vol. 261.

[47]Campbell was referring to the cruiser question. Memorandum by Campbell, October 29, 1928, F. O. 371, Vol. 13382, W10442.

[48]Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg, p. 190.

[49]New York Times, March 5, 1929, p. 1.

[50]This was not unlike Admiral Jones's suggestion prior to the Geneva Conference. Memorandum by Allen Dulles, Decimal File, 500A15A1/618½; and Allen Dulles, "The Threat of Anglo-American Naval Rivalry," Foreign Affairs Quarterly, VII (January, 1929), 173-82.

[51]Raymond G. O'Connor, "The 'Yardstick' and Naval Disarmament in the 1920's," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLV (December, 1958), 441-63.

[52]Conversation between Kellogg and Matsudaira, August 5, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1/555. Bridgeman to Austen Chamberlain, August 6, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12674, W8063.

[53]Gerald E. Wheeler, "Isolated Japan: Anglo-American Diplomatic Co-operation, 1927-1936," Pacific Historical Review, XXX (May, 1961), 165-70.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Understandably, studies of American foreign policy rarely give much attention to the Geneva Naval Disarmament Conference. The Conference failed in both of its avowed objectives. It did not succeed in limiting competition in naval armaments and it failed to reduce world tensions. Instead the Conference led to an increase of friction between Britain and America, two powers whose interests were remarkably close. These shortcomings make the negotiations at Geneva worthy of closer scrutiny in order to fully understand the collapse of the Conference.

Numerous reasons have been put forward for the failure of this Conference. Most have an element of truth, but do not go far enough in explaining why a Conference begun with so much optimism should fail so completely.

One of the first criticisms made of the Conference was that too little groundwork for discussion had been laid before the formal talks began.[1] This lack of preparation, it was charged, placed too great a burden on the Geneva talks. It was alleged that more behind the scenes discussions would have given the governments

a fuller appreciation of the difficulties facing a conference. There is some justice in this accusation. Certainly there was little contact between the British and American governments in the months following the American summoning of the Conference and even less contact with the Japanese.

The reasons for this failure to communicate, for example the British desire for secrecy and the American vagueness about the form of the talks, are discussed in Chapter III. Perhaps the most important reason was the belief that sufficient preparation had already been made during the Preparatory Conference.[2] For example, the General Board of the Navy had a fairly accurate idea of the British position. The inadequate exchange of information prevented an appreciation by each nation of the degree of importance the other attached to its program. It was not discovered until well into the Conference that both British and American governments intended to hold their respective positions with tenacity. Preliminary discussions would not so much have added information on other countries' demands as they would have shown how little desire there was to compromise.

While behind the scenes talks might have shown that a Conference was not likely to succeed, and therefore might have precluded Anglo-American friction, the lack of such discussions does not in itself account for

the debacle at Geneva. The main reasons for failure must be sought elsewhere. One factor partially responsible for the poor results was the personal animosity that developed between the delegations. As described earlier[3] the British representatives were particularly irritated by Admiral Jones's stubborn insistence on his own point of view. In some accounts of the Geneva Conference Admiral Jones has received considerable criticism because of his attitude.

Not all this abuse appears to be justified. Certainly Jones was committed to a defense of the Navy's plans for disarmament, but his extremely rigid stance seems to have been a facet of the American strategy for the Conference. Jones was to present the hardline American policy which Gibson would be prepared to modify in return for concessions from Japan or Britain. On at least one occasion, the July 5th meeting of the Technical Committee, Jones adopted a rigid position only at Gibson's insistence.[4] Later, when Gibson decided that the moment had come to seek out a political compromise he removed Jones from the negotiations, replacing him with Allen Dulles. Significantly Jones returned to the discussions when the American position hardened during the British absence in London.

The use of Jones as a symbol of the most extreme American position had tactical benefits. Gibson's

concession on the number of heavy cruisers demanded by the United States and his suggestion that America might not make use of the freedom to build all 8-inch gun ships were put in a favorable light. Nevertheless, this approach to negotiation created unnecessary strain with the British delegation. Nor was this method completely successful. Any threat that America might outbuild Britain was partially discredited by America's lack of a strong cruiser force, and the apparent unwillingness of the executive and Congress to provide for one.[5] On the other hand the overwhelming economic superiority of the United States meant that neither Britain nor Japan could disregard America's potential for cruiser construction.

The British delegation was not without some responsibility for the growth of hostility at the Conference. Bridgeman's naturally gruff demeanor and Cecil's temporary irascibility, stemming from a period of illness, grated on sensitive American feelings.

The criticism which the British delegation received from its own government was a major cause of friction. Accused of violating instructions, exceeding its authority and endangering Britain's maritime position, the British at Geneva felt angry and hostile. The American delegation was aware of these feelings, but probably felt they were directed towards the United States.

Even within delegations tension existed which hampered the smooth functioning of the Conference. Most notable in this regard was the antipathy felt by the American naval experts for Allen Dulles. As Dulles gained more authority the naval advisors feared he would bargain away America's strategic interest. They were therefore eager to see the end of the Conference even if no agreement was reached.

The press contributed to the bitterness of the Geneva Conference.[6] While most correspondents were simply engaged in reporting the Conference, some of the American newsmen, in particular William Shearer, had a strong anti-British bias and worked to discredit Britain in American opinion. Their criticism upset Bridgeman, whose sensitivity to public abuse contributed to his hasty pronouncement concerning parity.

Although partially responsible for this action by Bridgeman, the main shortcoming of the press was its failure to arouse public concern about the Conference. Only at moments of conflict did the general populace show an interest in the discussions and then they supported their respective governments. During the Conference public attention was distracted by transoceanic flights and sensational domestic events such as the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. The people of Britain and America were generally content to accept their

governments' statements or to ignore the Conference; public opinion was never mobilized to force compromise on the various governments.

A further obstacle to success was the relatively weak position of the American delegation. While Bridgeman, Cecil and Saito were political figures of the first rank in their nations, Gibson was a newly appointed ambassador who could suggest policy but could not challenge the decisions of the government as did both Bridgeman and Cecil, albeit unsuccessfully. Cecil and Bridgeman insisted that their government support the delegation's acceptance of parity and fought for compromise on the issues of total tonnage and cruiser armament. In contrast, the American delegation was unable to make any decision without first referring the matter to Washington where the influence of the Navy Department and the President restricted the possibilities of concession. In fact the American delegation did not suggest any major changes in the original American proposal and their freedom to negotiate on even minor points, such as a slight change in the ratio with Japan, was severely limited.

A major stumbling block was the divergence in military planning between Britain and America. Both the American Navy and the Royal Navy believed that their most likely enemy was Japan.[7] However, in preparing to meet this enemy the American and British Navies evolved

different strategies.

The United States, on the outbreak of war, intended to send her fleet from Pearl Harbor to Manila Bay, there to relieve the Philippine garrison and then to go on to destroy the Japanese fleet and blockade the home islands. With this plan for a trans-Pacific campaign and with few naval bases the United States Navy wanted large cruisers, with long cruising range and mounting the 8-inch gun. Such vessels were felt necessary to protect the lines of communication and to offset Japan's ability to arm her many merchant ships with 6-inch cannon.

Possessing many naval bases and a major fleet anchorage at Singapore, Britain did not need long range, heavy cruisers. Moreover, Britain wished to limit 8-inch gun cruisers rather than the smaller vessels since she had a large force of 6-inch gun ships and many more merchant ships than Japan which could be armed with 6-inch weapons. In a war with Japan the Royal Navy, operating from Singapore, would have considerable margin of superiority over the Japanese fleet and still have enough cruisers to protect the trade lanes from surface raiders.

These differences in American and British strategy were complicated by parity. The United States, by demanding tonnage equality with British and the right to build all this tonnage in heavy cruisers was, in

effect, asking for naval superiority since American 8-inch gun cruisers would be better fighting machines than the small British ships. Moreover, the highest total tonnage America would accept barely provided Britain enough ships to protect her commerce.

Naval superiority was a sensitive issue because neither the United States Navy nor the Royal Navy had eliminated the other as a potential enemy; the clash between British blockade practice and American interpretation of neutral rights contained seeds for future dispute. While the possibility of war was fairly remote neither the American nor British Navy could completely ignore it.

The most important implication of Anglo-American naval parity was the effect it might have upon Japan. If the United States built up to British levels in cruiser tonnage then Japan would likely insist upon expanding her cruiser fleet. The Admiralty would then demand an increase in British strength to maintain a 2:1 ratio in cruisers over Japan. The Americans would undoubtedly require a corresponding increase and an upward spiral of cruiser construction would be underway totally defeating the purpose of the Geneva Conference. Moreover, if Britain gave in to the American demand for an 8-inch gun cruiser force then Japan too would have the right to use this weapon, and Britain's existing 6-inch

gun ships and her armed merchant vessels would be outclassed. While a compromise was arranged on the tonnage problem the Admiralty refused to relent on its opposition to the 8-inch gun.

This decision was, probably, shortsighted. As Dominion representatives had been quick to point out, if the Conference failed the United States might begin construction of 8-inch gun cruisers. Britain would then have to follow suit and without a treaty there would be no limit on the number of such large vessels.

Indeed a powerful American cruiser force might act as a deterrent to Japanese ambitions. The Japanese military would be loath to take any aggressive action against Britain if such a step would leave them vulnerable to American intervention. Even though no alliance bound America to assist Britain, Japanese leaders would be forced to consider the possibility of joint opposition and would be less likely to endanger British interests.

The charge that the Conference failure can be traced to the undue influence of the naval delegates appears inaccurate. Even Admiral Jones who, as a co-delegate, was in the strongest position of all the professional naval people, remained under the control of the civilian leader Hugh Gibson. The most effective naval influence was felt, not in Geneva, but in Washington and

London. The Navy Department and Admiralty provided their respective governments with programs for the Conference and managed to have these programs adhered to without any major changes. The naval leaders were doing no more than their duty in pointing out the type of ship and degree of disarmament considered best suited to their countries' needs. It was the decision of the civilian leaders to insist upon their navies' blueprint for the Conference that led to the collapse of negotiations.

The fundamental cause of the failure at Geneva was the decision, made in both the United States and Britain, to require their delegations to follow, without significant compromise, the plans set forward by their own navies. Paradoxically, while the civilian governments accepted these plans they did not completely adhere to the underlying assumption: the probability of war with Japan.

The State Department suspected that its own and Japanese interests were, at least possibly, reconcilable. It was satisfied that Japan had abandoned its exaggerated imperialism expressed in the twenty-one demands of 1915. Moreover, Secretary Kellogg was disappointed with the progress of China toward stability. In 1927 it seemed doubtful that China would ever achieve internal peace and unity. The desire to protect China from the

Japanese menace had waned since the Washington Conference. Finally, economic ties between Japan and America had become very close in the 1920's. Some Americans felt that it would be more appropriate to co-operate with Japan in exploiting China than to compete with her. All these factors combined to relax Japanese-American relations.

The Geneva Conference suffered from the lack of a well defined American policy toward Asia. Much of the confusion centered around the issue of the "Open Door" policy and the protection of Chinese territorial integrity. The Navy still thought in terms of defending both these aims but the State Department was divided on these points. The United States did not possess the physical means to enforce the "Open Door" and this weakness implied that the American government should accept Japan's special position in China. Nevertheless, the Nine Power Agreement still paid lip service to the sanctity of the "Open Door". The United States had not decided whether to support Chinese nationalism, co-operate with Japan and Britain in restoring order in China, or to act with Britain to restrain Japan.[8]

The confusion in American Asiatic policy reduced the possibilities for success at the Geneva Conference. The main purpose of the American fleet was to carry out the aims of the American government in Asia and until

these aims were clarified it would be difficult for civilian leaders to decide upon the degree of naval disarmament best suited to the United States. In the face of this uncertainty the Navy reasoned that it must be prepared to defend the "Open Door" policy singlehandedly. The civilian leaders, without a coherent policy of their own and led by the domestically oriented Coolidge, accepted the Navy's program.

At the same time, the lack of any immediate source of friction between America and Japan made co-operation between the Anglo-Saxons appear less important and allowed the United States government to indulge in a spirit of complete independence. Instead of causing the United States to moderate the demands of its Navy, this feeling of security in regard to Japan meant that American leaders had little reason to seek co-operation with Britain.

There were other factors inducing the American government to accept the advice of its professional naval men. Kellogg, who was eager for a disarmament agreement, did not feel competent to challenge the Navy's plans. The President took little interest in the discussions, but directed what influence he exerted toward preventing Kellogg from changing the American program. Both Kellogg and Coolidge basically felt that America was militarily secure. A disarmament treaty might be beneficial for its

economic advantages or domestic political gain but America's vital interests were not felt to be involved. The civilian leaders were, therefore, complacent about the Conference and allowed the concepts formulated by naval men, who were more certain of their aims, to heavily influence the Conference.

The British government, too, decided to follow its Navy's plan for the Conference, although, because of the importance of cruisers to Britain, the entire question of naval disarmament was closely examined in the Cabinet. As in the United States British civilian leadership did not totally share the Navy's fear of Japan. While the Admiralty's intention to safeguard British interests in Asia was recognized as valid, there was a desire in the Foreign Office and Cabinet to co-operate with Japan in putting an end to the unrest in China.

This lack of concern about Japan allowed the Conservative Cabinet to express some pent up resentment against the United States. Many Conservatives were glad of the opportunity to oppose American wishes on cruiser disarmament and this sentiment prejudiced the Cabinet against compromise.[9]

Britain's policy towards Asia was uncertain. While less inclined than the Americans to defend China, Britain had no desire to see Japan dominate Asia. The

Royal Navy looked upon Japan as a possible enemy, at the same time as the Foreign Office toyed with the idea of a joint Anglo-Japanese intervention in Chinese affairs. As in the United States no settled decision was made on what attitude to take toward Japanese ambitions and the situation was allowed to drift.

The decision to follow the Admiralty's advice had validity. Building 6-inch gun cruisers was cheaper from the British point of view and would enhance the value of British armed merchantmen. It also meant that Britain's large fleet of existing 6-inch gun ships would not be outclassed. Moreover, the Cabinet recognized that Britain's blockade practices might lead in time of war to difficulty with the United States. The 8-inch gun would give American cruisers the ability to break the British blockade. Also, parity in cruisers would limit the British fleet to the same level as a nation whose navy existed primarily for prestige. Therefore, although many Cabinet members did not accept the reasoning behind the Admiralty's plans for the Geneva Conference, they refused to alter those plans because of concern about America or the desire to retain Britain's freedom of action.

The collapse of the Geneva Conference publicly showed that the friendly relations between America and Britain developed before the First World War had not become an immutable condition. When not threatened by a

major enemy the United States and Britain had no need to avoid mutual recrimination and hostility.

Official feeling in the United States did not become seriously anti-British during the Conference but there was a sense of hurt surprise at Baldwin's stubbornness in refusing to accept the American position. For a generation Great Britain had usually given way before American demands and British opposition at Geneva was unsettling. Both the President and Kellogg were genuinely surprised at the size of the British cruiser proposals. Coolidge concluded that Britain had decided to regain naval supremacy and that this attempt stemmed at least partially from concern about the potential strength of the American fleet.

Neither Coolidge nor Kellogg was deeply upset at this British attitude. At worst their feelings amounted only to annoyance with what they considered a short-sighted policy on the part of Great Britain. Cruisers were simply not as important to the United States as to Britain. America could unilaterally maintain parity or achieve naval supremacy if she considered it necessary.

It was in the wake of the Conference that Anglo-American relations suffered a severe deterioration. However this friction was primarily on the official level and consisted more of general resentment than any major conflict of interest. While the governments on both

sides of the Atlantic continued to exhibit some bitterness throughout 1928, there was no great public anger in either Britain or America. Even the outburst of hostility following the Anglo-French compromise was superficial and quickly died away. No deep public animosity had been aroused which might have seriously delayed an Anglo-American reconciliation once such a step was decided upon by new governments.

A broader evaluation of the effect of the Geneva Conference in terms of its contribution to the overall policy of the United States and Britain is possible. In general, Britain and the United States wished to see a continuation of the international status quo. Both were satisfied powers with no desire to increase their territorial possessions and both favored a stable international order which would allow an increase of trade and a further development of prosperity. It was in the interest of both nations to restrain any power that attempted to upset world order.

Arms limitation was a policy intended to contribute to world stability by decreasing tension and reducing the ability of states to resort to war. The effectiveness of disarmament agreements to fulfill such aims was probably exaggerated in the public mind of the 1920's. Armaments were more a reflection of existing international animosity than the cause of such feelings.

Moreover, any industrial state could quickly supply itself with the sinews of war once a decision to fight had been made. This is not to say that disarmament was without value as a concrete sign of the intention of states to live together amicably and as a check to sudden outbursts of hostility but the importance of this approach to a peaceful world was over emphasized in the aftermath of the World War.

In the light of the basic British and American aims, and the real though limited efficacy of disarmament, the Geneva Conference was an attainable and worthwhile effort. Success at Geneva would have quieted fears that competition in cruiser armaments was imminent and added a further buttress to the military balance in the Pacific. However, at Geneva neither the British nor the Americans were sufficiently determined to achieve success. Neither nation was flexible enough in its demands to bring about a compromise agreement.

The timing of the Conference was appropriate in many regards. No great outburst of cruiser competition had yet taken place and the Conference might forestall any such competition. In addition, the Japanese government appears to have been eager for agreement and it would have been possible for the Anglo-Americans to take advantage of this Japanese attitude.

A formal conference may not have been the best means for achieving disarmament. The use of this

approach attracted a great deal of publicity and made compromise more difficult. In their refusal to seek alternate approaches to disarmament the Anglo-Saxons were again inflexible. Once it became apparent that the formal talks were in difficulty other channels of negotiation were considered but no resolute effort was made by any party to the Conference, with the possible exception of Secretary Kellogg, to insure that the discussion of cruiser disarmament continued.

The positions taken by the three powers at Geneva illustrated the fact that they all underestimated the degree of importance the others would attach to their programs. All three governments hoped to gain some special advantage but all such attempts were met with determined opposition and in the light of the inflexibility of these programs the Conference had little chance for success.

The failure of the Geneva Conference is symbolic of the international scene in the 1920's. The immediate effects of the collapse of the Conference were a relatively minor deterioration in Anglo-American relations and an increase in spending on naval armaments. The breakdown of the Conference, however, may have a deeper significance as a lost opportunity.

The futility of the disarmament negotiations emphasized the inability of Britain and America to

co-operate when both were basically secure. At a time when Japan was sincerely interested in limiting armaments, Britain and America through their failure to compromise contributed to the weakening of civilian prestige and the rise of militarism in Japan and forfeited a chance to stabilize the Asian situation. With their powers at their zenith compared to any possible opponent, Britain and America allowed events to drift without formulating a coherent, co-operative strategy. The coming economic crisis would destroy the hope that foreign troubles would dissolve at the same time as it sharply reduced the range of foreign policy options available to the divided Atlantic nations.

CHAPTER VII

FOOTNOTES

[1]Benjamin H. Williams, The United States and Disarmament (New York, 1931), pp. 167-68. Tate, op. cit., pp. 145-46. Roskill, op. cit., p. 514.

[2]Chpt. III, p. 62 and p. 66.

[3]Chpt. IV, pp. 89-91.

[4]Chpt. IV, p. 86. Roskill claims that Jones achieved ascendancy in the American delegation. The American naval experts did not agree and felt Jones had been removed from his rightful position of authority. Roskill, op. cit., p. 514.

[5]Senator Borah stated on the day after the Conference opened that the Senate would never appropriate sufficient funds to build up to British levels in cruisers. Detroit Free Press, June 22, 1927, p. 1.

[6]Chpt. IV, p. 88 and Appendix.

[7]The American Navy's decision that Japan was its main enemy is discussed in Chpt. I, pp. 15-16 and Chpt. III, pp. 67-68. That the Royal Navy likewise considered Japan its main opponent is pointed out in Chpt. I, pp. 23-24 and in Beatty's discussions with Jones in Chpt. II, p. 47.

[8]Thomas H. Buckley, The United States and the Washington Conference: 1921-1922 (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1970), pp. 187-90.

[9]Chpt. I, p. 3 and Chpt. V, pp. 104-05.

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APPENDIX

THE PRESS AND BUSINESS INFLUENCE
AT THE GENEVA NAVAL DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

As has been mentioned in Chapter IV the American press was distinctly hostile to Great Britain during the Geneva Conference. One fact about this anti-British bias particularly impressed Ambassador Howard. Few American newspapers repeated in their editorial pages the anti-British tone of their Geneva correspondents.[1] On the contrary their editorials seemed temperate and even sympathetic.[2] The hostility to Britain seemed to be generated in Geneva.

There were a variety of reasons for the unfriendly attitude of the American correspondents toward Great Britain. The press tended to emphasize the elements of drama in the Conference, particularly the points of conflict between Britain and America. In addition many American newsmen had the feeling that they were held in contempt by the British delegation; at no time did the British handle their relations with the fourth estate with genuine good will.[3] A third reason, and one generally credited with more influence than the preceding

two, was the role of William Baldwin Shearer, a long-time propagandist for an enlarged American Navy[4] and correspondent for the New York News, a Hearst paper. Shearer was employed both as a reporter and as an agent for American shipbuilding interests.

During the Conference Shearer had frequent meetings with Admiral Schofield and occasional talks with Admiral Jones but his real influence seems to have been with the American press corps. He distributed to these journalists anti-British material[5] which influenced the dispatches from Geneva since Shearer was well informed on naval matters. With only three public sessions at Geneva the press depended on superficial pronouncements from the delegations.[6] It is no surprise that Shearer's handouts were well received by the reporters at Geneva.

Learning from Scotland Yard that Shearer had been implicated in various criminal activities and currently was employed by the Bethlehem Steel Company, the British government protested in both Geneva and Washington. In response Kellogg asked Gibson if anyone matching Shearer's description was known to the American delegation. Gibson replied in the negative saying that the accusation of business influence was probably a British attempt to discredit the patriotic tone of the American press.[7]

Kellogg also wrote to Charles M. Schwab, President of Bethlehem Steel Company, who also denied the allegation. Later Schwab told Kellogg that he had simply rejected the charge as ridiculous, but upon checking into the case he discovered that officials at his Boston shipyard had hired Shearer to supply reports on the Conference.[8]

In September of 1929 public attention was focused on Shearer when he brought suit against several shipbuilding companies for failing to pay him adequately for his work in discrediting the Conference in the American media. When the case was dismissed, the Senate opened hearings on the matter. The Senate strongly condemned the use of such agents but doubted that Shearer had any serious impact on the negotiations. The generalization appears substantially correct, although Shearer's intrigues did strain British patience and contribute to hasty action on the part of the British delegation.

APPENDIX

FOOTNOTES

[1]Howard to the Foreign Office, June 23, 1927, F. O. 371, Vol. 12669, W5816.

[2]The New York Times offers the best example of the divergence between editorial policy and the reports from Geneva. Wythe Williams, the New York Times correspondent, was among those most hostile to the British position. In its editorials the New York Times denied his reports that Britain and Japan were joining forces to defeat the United States. See, New York Times, July 29, 1927, p. 24 and July 2, 1927, p. 16. The editorials of the Detroit Free Press advocated a compromise on cruiser tonnage and did not follow the blustering tone of the reports from Geneva. Detroit Free Press, July 7, 1927, p. 6. Howard to Austen Chamberlain, Austen Chamberlain Papers, F. O. 800, July 13, 1927, Vol. 261.

[3]Silas Brent, "International Window Smashing: The Role of Our Newspapers in Foreign Affairs," Harpers Monthly, CLVII (September, 1928), 423.

[4]J. Carter, "American Correspondents and British Delegates: Some Reasons for the Failure at Geneva," Independent, CXIX (August 13, 1927), 150-51.

[5]"Shearer, the Newspapers and a Betrayed Public," Christian Century, XLVI (October 30, 1929), pp. 1335-37. Shearer lumped together the Japanese, the British and the Bolsheviks as the main enemies of the United States. New York Times, December 7, 1926, p. 12.

[6]P. J. Noel Baker, Disarmament and the Coolidge Conference (London, 1927), p. 9. Tate, op. cit., p. 144.

[7]Gibson to Kellogg, July 14, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Case File 20.

[8]Schwab to Kellogg, December 19, 1927, Decimal File 500A15A1 William B. Shearer/38.