

MEMORANDUM

ON THE REALISATION OF THE
MORAL DESARMAMENT

submitted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Poland to the Secretary General of the
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For some time the problem of moral disarmament has interested not only public opinion but also responsible statesmen.

The international situation is increasingly unstable owing to the dangerous agitation of certain elements which endeavour to poison relations between the peoples and to sow the seeds of fresh conflicts in the minds of their supporters. The appeals to hatred in certain quarters are arousing universal uneasiness and creating an atmosphere of distrust which frustrates all efforts for the consolidation of peace. This problem calls for the particular attention on the part of the Disarmament Conference, the results of which are bound to be influenced by the degree of mutual confidence prevailing between the participating Governments. This confidence in a large measure depends on securing an improvement in the moral and political situation in Europe.

Everyone who wishes the Conference to meet with

the fullest possible success is therefore faced with an important question, namely, how to counteract the movement against peace and assure a moral détente by concerted action of the Governments.

In submitting the present memorandum to the Governments invited to the Conference, the Polish Government desires to draw attention to the value of achieving moral disarmament, and to suggest at the same time a few of the spheres where this is most urgently required.

National laws must always reconcile the freedom of the individual with the interests of the community; certain restrictions must be placed on this freedom in order to safeguard the higher interests of society. With a few rare exceptions the interests of the community, to which the freedom of the individual was subordinated, have hitherto been thought to coincide with the interests of the various social classes existing within the nation. But a higher society exists outside the nation, namely, international society.

Why should not domestic legislations take this society's interests into account as well as those of the national society?

The problem was raised in 1927 at the First International Conference for the Unification of Criminal Law. Certain legislative work along these lines was also undertaken in three countries: Brazil, Roumania and Poland. The draft penal codes of these three coun-

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tries explicitly stipulate that any person guilty of incitement to war shall be punished with imprisonment. The Brazilian draft code goes even further, punishing also persons stirring up popular agitation with a view to exerting pressure on the Government in favour of war whilst diplomatic negotiations are pending with a foreign country, and, more generally, any person attempting to disturb international relations. So far these three draft codes still remain alone amid penal legislation elsewhere, which is, in this respect, out of date. Would it not be worth while unifying every Government's efforts towards a general modification of criminal codes? The latter should be extended by the addition of one or more articles for the defence of peace and international solidarity against the criminal activities of certain individuals or groups of individuals. Expert jurists would find the proper formulae and define what acts calculated to disturb international relations should be punished by penal legislation. The jurists's suggestions might serve as a basis for an international convention binding the Governments to introduce the proposed modification in their respective penal codes. This would be an effectual way of co-ordinating and concerting Government activity in this sphere.

The Governments of almost every country have adhered to the principle of condemning war as an instrument of national policy, and have since endeavou-

red to base their international actions on this principle. Their domestic policy should also be based on this principle, and severe measures taken to deal with any person attempting to undermine the moral bases of world peace by a propaganda of hatred. A suitable modification of national legislations would only be the logical complement of international agreements now in force.

Several penal codes explicitly state that any person guilty of founding or directing, or of only belonging to an organisation with illegal aims would be liable to appropriate penalties. After a modification of the criminal law in the sense indicated above, this provision would be applicable to any person guilty of belonging to an association with aims dangerous to peace. The activities of certain associations might be even more effectually counteracted by making this provision embrace organisations whose aims appear to be legal, but whose activity had been proved to be dangerous to peace.

Propaganda aimed at disturbing friendly international relations is usually carried on by associations or in the press. The problem of the press was raised by the Swedish Government at the meeting of the Special Committee appointed to consider measures for preventing war. That Government drew the Committee's attention to the disastrous influence a certain section of the press might exercise during an international crisis. The Polish Government fully shares this

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view. Not only when an international dispute has arisen, but also in daily life, the press may exert, if it so desires, a salutary influence by calming people's minds and supporting the Council of the League in its difficult task as mediator, or it may play fatal part by stirring up feeling and misrepresenting the facts of the case. Here, too, the intervention of the community would be of the utmost importance, for it alone would be capable of averting mischievous press campaigns. Where must remedies be sought? An article punishing any person guilty of publishing false and tendentious reports on the international situation might possibly be usefully inserted in penal codes. But to punish the author of false news is only a repressive measure which though of undoubted value, does nothing to correct the wrong information. This last result might be secured by extending the application of the right of reply to foreign Governments. The latter would be entitled to ask a newspaper to correct false information it had published concerning the position of their countries. To prevent abuses, provision might be made for any rectification from a foreign legation to be sent through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country where the newspaper is published.

Other means of combating newspaper excesses, as, for instance, the setting up of an international disciplinary tribunal for journalists, might also be considered. This tribunal, the composition of which would

be determined by an international press conference, would be competent to try, on the application of a professional press organisation, any journalist charged with pursuing activities dangerous to peace. The court would be entitled to expel the accused from the journalistic profession, and its decision would be upheld in every country. Another effective means of preventing the false presentation of the international situation would be to set up at Geneva an international information bureau, whose reports would be accepted by the whole world because of its international prestige.

International press conferences might be held every year. The whole problem of moral disarmament, in so far as it affects the press, should be examined by the conference of journalists, whose report would serve as a basis for Government decisions. Journalists themselves would be the most competent people to draw up a system of safeguarding international interests without compromising the freedom of the press. It may be noted that the question of moral disarmament was the subject of important discussions at the Geneva Press Conference in 1927.

In order to secure lasting moral disarmament, a great effort must be made to protect young people from everything capable of breeding in them hatred of a foreign nation. School teachers should therefore be forbidden to abuse their position by arousing in their pupils' minds distrust and ill-will towards forei-

gners. School books, particularly those dealing with history, geography, etc., etc., would also have to be examined. On the other hand, compulsory instruction should be given to young people to render them familiar with the aims and organisation of the League of Nations. The Sub-Committee of Experts of the International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation framed certain recommendations on this subject. This Committee recommended, **inter alia:** 1) compulsory instruction in all schools in regard to the work and aims of the League of Nations, and more generally the development of international co-operation; 2) the formation of special League of Nations chairs in faculties of law; 3) the elimination from school books of everything capable of arousing hatred of foreigners, etc., etc. These recommendations have not, however, been carried out everywhere. Time is passing, and the position remains very much the same as it was before the foundation of the League. The possibility of the practical realisation of the Committee of Experts suggestions might therefore be usefully considered. An international convention binding Governments to take certain measures for eliminating from school instruction the elements of hatred and inculcating in young people's minds the dominating ideas of the League of Nations would be the most effectual way of making real progress towards educating young people in the spirit of international solidarity.

Certain competent bodies (for instance the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation and the International Educational Cinematographic Institute) should be instructed to investigate the problem of moral disarmament in so far as it is affected by broadcasting, the theatre and cinema. The practical suggestions resulting from these investigations might be used as a basis for concerted Government action. The Polish Government takes the liberty of adding as an annex the text of the agreement concluded on March 31 st. 1931, between the Reichs - Rundfunk - Gesellschaft m. b. H. and the „Polskie Radio“ Company concerning this very problem of moral disarmament. This agreement may go to show that practical results on these lines are in no way impossible.

The Polish Government is convinced that there are still other spheres where moral disarmament might be achieved practically. It does not therefore claim that its memorandum is exhaustive. In submitting it to the Governments who will participate in the Disarmament Conference it desired to draw their attention to the possibility and value of fruitful activity. Moral disarmament will make no headway if we stop short at fine phrases. What is needed is action. The Polish Government is certain that the other Governments will not refuse to make a thorough investigation of the problem.

Drukarnia „Kobiety Współczesnej“, Marszałkowska 148.