MEMORANDUM

Memorandum on the Establishment of Demilitarized Frontier Zones as an Additional Means of Security

by

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1. One of the principal difficulties in connection with the proposed Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, which is under the consideration of the Temporary Mixed Commission, consists in devising means for deciding at a moment of International crisis when hostilities between two States may have begun, which State is the aggressor.

It is proposed, in the draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee which the Commission is studying, that the Council should decide this point and that failing other evidence, that State should be considered the aggressor whose troops have violated the territory of another.

2. It is clear that decisions on this point would be greatly facilitated if, on the frontier between the two States about to go to war, there existed a demilitarized frontier zone into which both of them had undertaken not to send its military forces. If, further, the supervision of such a zone were in the hands of a Commissioner or Commissioners appointed by the League of Nations, who could, if either State sent its forces into the zone, so report to the Council of the League, the decisions of the Council would be immensely facilitated.
3. The establishment of such demilitarized zones under League supervision might, in other ways, give definite and concrete security against the danger of sudden attack to the States on both sides of them.

In the agreements under which such zones would be established, provisions might be inserted which would have the effect of rendering military concentrations, preparatory to attack, very difficult, if not impossible, to carry out. These provisions, although they would not render attack impossible, might cause such delay to the aggressor as to make the position of the State attacked much stronger than it otherwise would be. It is therefore perhaps worth while for the Temporary Mixed Commission to examine how such zones might be established.

4. It may be suggested that an agreement for the establishment of such a frontier zone might include some or all of the following stipulations:

(a) The zone should be at least thirty miles in width.

(b) In this zone, no military fortifications or works of any sort should be constructed.

(c) The conscription or military training of the population of the zone should be forbidden.

(d) No military camps or barracks should be situated in the zone.

(e) No depots of military stores or ammunitions should
be allowed.  

(f) No manufacture of arms or munitions of any sort should be carried out.

For ensuring that these obligations were effectively carried out in the whole zone, the Council of the League should appoint an impartial Commissioner or Commissioners who should reside in the zone and who should have the necessary rights of inspection and enquiry. Such Commissioners should be directly responsible to the Council and removable by them alone.

5. It is also worth consideration whether some effective measures might not be taken which would render difficult the use of the railways in the zone for sudden aggressive attack. The following suggestions may be worth consideration.

(a) Only such railway lines and sidings as are necessary for strictly commercial traffic should be permitted, the remainder being destroyed. Legitimate requirements in this respect might be determined by impartial experts appointed by the Transit Committee of the League.

Undoubtedly the destruction of all military sidings and other military facilities would render very difficult sudden concentration of forces in the zone.

(b) It might even be possible to destroy existing lines altogether if they were built for strategical purposes. The
impartial experts of the League could again
make recommendations on this point. This
would be a most costly expedient but might,
in certain cases, prove worth while.

(c) A permanent supervision or control of the railway
administration in the demilitarized zone
might possibly be effected by the appointment
of League officials to participate in this
Administration. This proposal, no doubt, is
full of difficulties, but it may be worth
careful consideration by the Temporary Mixed
Commission. If it proved practicable, it
might provide a guaranty that the railways in
the zone would not be used without warning
for sudden concentrations or attack.
6. It might even prove possible, in certain special cases where there is great danger of the outbreak of hostilities between two countries, to establish in the demilitarized zone a permanent International gendarmerie or police force to render more effective all the provisions sketched above. Once again, this is a proposal which is surrounded by difficulties and no doubt such an International force would be very costly to maintain. It would be, however, an excellent investment for the members of the League, if, by providing an effective means of security, it thereby helped to bring about a considerable and rapid reduction of armaments.

I, therefore, venture to put it forward, together with the other suggestions outlined above, for the earnest consideration of the members of the Temporary Mixed Commission.