

# BUREAU INTERNATIONAL DE LA PAIX

FONDÉ EN 1892 PAR LE CONGRÈS UNIVERSEL DE LA PAIX A ROME  
GRAND PRIX A L'EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE DE PARIS 1900 — LAURÉAT DU PRIX NOBEL EN 1910

GENÈVE — Rue Charles-Bonnet, 8 9 octobre 1933

PRÉSIDENCE

Monsieur A. HENDERSON,  
Président de la Conférence  
pour la  
Réduction et la Limitation des Armements

My dear comrade

I deem it my duty, not so much as the President of the International Peace Bureau, but as a socialist, to add some considerations to my official letter handed to you as the expression of the pacifists of the world.

I feel that what will happen in Geneva during the next weeks will be a question of death or life for mankind. Will the delegates at the Desarmament Conference be conscious of their responsibilities and, if not, how is it possible to awaken them to the high duty, which is theirs, to forget or at least to dismiss from their minds their national feelings and to think as worldcitizens. They have to maintain the worldorder, if necessary by means of constraint as is provided for in article 16 of the Covenant, but, alas, very defectively. What happened in the Far East during the Sino-Japanese conflict was a conspicuous proof of its insufficiency. And what might happen in Europe in a near future, if Germany remains in its actual trend of mind, would be a terrific and other proof of this insufficiency. That seems to me the threatening danger which might hamper the Conference of Desarmament and bring it to an unsuccessful end. How could such a catastrophe be avoided? My aim is precisely to suggest to you what I consider as the only solution.

In fact there is only one wild beast in the world. No other country is actually threatening, in Europe at least, any other country. If all the peaceful countries unite openly and sincerely in order to maintain the public worldorder

and combine at once (instead of waiting for a recommendation given by the Council of the League of Nations as provided for in article 16 of the Covenant) the strictly actual necessary forces, no doubt that the only warlike nation would refrain from every recourse to violence. And the Desarmament Conference would not be a failure, for the peaceful nations would not be obliged to combine all the military forces they keep up, to call to order the troublesome country. In my opinion, if my suggestion could be adopted, one third of the military forces of the peaceful nations could be discarded, which means a saving of more than 7.000.000.000 gold-francs!!! Yearly!

Now this solution is not in my opinion the most desirable one. It seems the best in the actual conjuncture. But in a democratic world, based on the principles of justice and equality, danger of war will be reduced to a minimum. Very small police-forces will suffice to maintain public worldorder. Unfortunately the economic difficulties are terrible obstacles to a better understanding among men and too many influential and selfish people deceive the ignorant masses.

To avoid war seems to me the only means to gain time in order to educate the masses and to win supporters for the humane aim which is ours. A new war would be a deadly blow to our movement in favor of the working classes. What happened in Italy and in Germany could probably happen in the other countries of Europe. My proposal might certainly save millions of lives and offer to us the opportunity to further our socialist cause.

With kindest regards

Yours

H. La Fontaine