“Collaboration of the press in the organisation of peace: guiding public opinion towards moral disarmament”
The League of Nations promoting a vital intellectual trend

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Outline:
1. The League of Nations resolutions and activities (overview & paper)
2. Context I: Intellectual trends after World War I (short list)
3. Context II: The international movement of journalists (photos)
4. Conclusions
COLLABORATION DE LA PRESSE A L'ORGANISATION DE LA PAIX

Résolution adoptée par l'Assemblée, le 25 septembre 1925 (après-midi) sur le rapport de la sixième Commission.

L'Assemblée,

Considerant que la presse est le moyen le plus efficace d'orienter l'opinion vers le dénforcement moral — condition et accompagnement du désarmement matériel ;

Invite le Conseil à examiner l'opportunité de la convocation d’un Comité d'experts représentant la presse de différents continents, afin de rechercher les moyens de courser à l'organisation de la paix, notamment :

a) Par la transmission plus facile et moins coûteuse des nouvelles de presse, afin de diminuer les chances de malentendus entre les peuples ;

b) Par la discussion de toutes les questions professionnelles dont la solution peut aider à l'apaisement de l'opinion publique.

SIXIÈME ASSEMBLÉE DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS.

CO-OPERATION OF THE PRESS IN THE ORGANISATION OF PEACE.

Resolution adopted by the Assembly, on September 25th, 1925 (afternoon), on the report of the Sixth Committee.

The Assembly,

Considering that the Press constitutes the most effective means of guiding public opinion towards that moral disarmament which is a concomitant condition of material disarmament ;

Invites the Council to consider the desirability of convening a committee of experts representing the Press of the different continents with a view to determining the methods of contributing towards the organisation of peace, especially :

(a) By ensuring the more rapid and less costly transmission of Press news with a view to reducing risks of international misunderstanding ;

(b) And by discussing all technical problems the settlement of which would be conducive to the tranquilisation of public opinion.

SIXTH ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

I. INTRODUCTION

On September 25th last, during its thirty-fifth session, the Council of the League of Nations, decided, in order to give effect to an Assembly resolution of September 25th, to hold at its next session the desirability of convening a committee of experts representing the Press in the different continents with a view to determining by what means the Press could contribute towards the organisation of peace.

For this purpose the Rapporteur, M. Hyman, the Belgian representative, invited his colleagues to consult the associations of journalists and the associations of newspaper publishers and directors of agencies in their own countries for the purpose of obtaining expert opinions as to the desirability of convening such a committee. He pointed out the International Association of Journalists accredited to the League of Nations could be of value in this enquiry. The Council also requested the Secretary-General of the League of Nations to furnish the next session of the Council (December 1925) with information regarding the point of view of circles immediately affected.

The present documents have been compiled in order to facilitate this enquiry, and those contents with individuals and collective groups, will find in these documents the information necessary for an understanding of the meaning and scope of the Assembly and Council resolutions.
LoN resolution on 25 September 1925

The Assembly,

Considering that the Press constitutes the most effective means of guiding public opinion towards that moral disarmament which is a concomitant condition of material disarmament;

Invites the Council to consider the desirability of conceiving a committee of experts representing the Press of the different continents with a view to determining methods of contributing towards the organisation of peace, especially:

(a) By ensuring the more rapid and less costly transmission of Press news with a view to reducing risks of international misunderstanding;

(b) And by discussing all technical problems the settlement of which would be conducive to the tranquillisation of public opinion.
LEAGUE OF NATIONS

CONFERENCE OF PRESS EXPERTS

(Geneva, August 24th, 1927)

Preparatory Documents.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

CONFERENCE OF PRESS EXPERTS

Geneva, August 1927.

FINAL REPORT
LoN resolution on 24 September 1931

The Assembly,

I Convinced of the great value of the contribution of women to the work of peace and the good understanding between the nations, which is the principal aim of the League of Nations,

Requests the Council to examine the possibility of women co-operating more fully in the work of the League.

II Considering that the organization of peace demands an international spirit freed from all prejudices and misconceptions, (...)

Requests the Council to consider the possibility of studying, with the help of the Press, the difficult problem of the spread of false information which may threaten to disturb the peace or the good understanding between nations.
CONFERENCE DES BUREAUX DE PRESSE GOUVERNEMENTAUX ET DE REPRESENTANTS DE LA PRESSE
tenue à
Copenhague, du 11 au 14 janvier 1932

CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENTAL PRESS BUREAUX AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS
held at
Copenhagen, January 11th to 14th, 1932

II CONFERENCIA INTERNACIONAL DE OFICINAS GUBERNAMENTALES DE PRENSA Y DE REPRESENTANTES DE PRENSA
MADRID, 1933.

II CONFERENCE DES BUREAUX DE PRESSE GOUVERNEMENTAUX ET DE REPRESENTANTS DE LA PRESSE
MADRID, 1933.

II CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENTAL PRESS BUREAUX AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS
MADRID, 1933.
LoN resolution on 26 September 1934

The Assembly, (...) In view of the valuable contribution made by the Conference to the problem of the spread of false news which might endanger the maintenance of peace and a good understanding among the nations; Hoping that the proposed enquiries into the technical and financial means of putting an end to the spread of false news and in regard to the correction of false news appearing in the Press may prove successful; (...) Requests the Council to authorize the Secretary-General to facilitate, by such means as are at his disposal, the preparation for and organisation of the next Conference of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives, by lending the services of the appropriate sections of the League to perform the secretarial work (…)
No further LoN conferences, nor resolutions on collaboration of the Press in the organisation of peace after 1934

But the international federation of newspaper editors and publishers adopted its own convention on the correction of false news in 1936

Meanwhile, LoN pursued relevant activities in the context of the World Disarmament Conference prepared since 1925 and finally convened in 1932–33, under the title Moral Disarmament
LEAGUE OF NATIONS

MORAL DISARMAMENT

MEMORANDUM FROM THE POLISH GOVERNMENT

At the request of the Polish Government, the Secretary-General has the honour to communicate to the Governments invited to the Disarmament Conference a letter from the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, and a memorandum annexed thereto on moral disarmament.

LETTER FROM THE POLISH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.


[Translation.]

With reference to the statements made by the Polish delegate at the last session of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, the discussions in the Special Committee appointed to prepare a draft general Convention for strengthening the Means of preventing War, and my own statement at the Council meeting of May 21st last during the discussion of that Committee's report, I beg to forward to you herewith a memorandum from the Polish Government concerning the practical attainment of moral disarmament. I would request you to transmit this document to all the Governments invited to the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments and I should be grateful if you would be good enough to give it the widest possible publicity.

In the Polish Government's opinion the problem is one of great importance for the future work of the Disarmament Conference. In this connection, the statements made by the French "Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the twelfth session of the League Assembly and by the British and French Minister at the annual meeting of the "Burma Memorial Trust" this year may be recalled.

Further, two great international associations, the International Federation of League of Nations Societies and the World Peace League, devoted special resolutions to this problem at their Congresses this year. Their appeals to the Governments should not be in vain.

At the twelfth session of the Assembly, the problem of moral disarmament has also been raised by the Spanish delegation, which has submitted a proposal of great interest. This proposal, however, only deals with certain aspects of the problem. The Polish Government believes that the question should be examined in its entirety and that the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, where all the principal countries of the world will be represented, is alone capable of finding practical and adequate solutions of this important question, which is closely bound up with the future Convention for the Limitation and Reduction of Armaments.

(Signed) Auguste Zaleski
Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Modern Means of Spreading Information Utilised in the Cause of Peace

In the early 1930s, film and radio became central to LoN activities of intellectual co-operation, with the International Educational Cinematographic Institute established in Rome and the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation pursuing educational aspects of broadcasting. LoN resolution on 24 September 1931 started a process leading to adoption of the International Convention on the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace.
CONFERENCE FOR THE CONCLUSION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CONCERNING THE USE OF A BROADCASTING SERVICE IN THE CAUSE OF PEACE: APPOINT TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF THE CONFERENCE.

Report by the French representative.

In accordance with a resolution of the Assembly of 1935, the Council of the League of Nations, at its meeting on January 20th, 1936, convened an inter-governmental Conference to conclude an International Convention concerning the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace. *

The preparatory work for the Conference was carried out by the Intellectual Co-operation Organisation.

The Council decided to invite to the said Conference the Members of the League of Nations and the following non-Member States: United States of America, Brazil, Costa Rica, Free City of Danzig, Egypt, Germany, Ireland and Japan.

The Conference was held at the League of Nations Secretariat from September 17th to 23rd, 1936.

The Governments of the countries mentioned below were represented: Albania, Argentine Republic, Belgium, United States of Brazil, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, India, Irish Free State, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the United States of Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Uruguay, Yugoslavia.

* Document C.399.M.252.1936.XII.


Official texts in French and in English. This Convention was registered with the Secretariat in accordance with its Article 11, on April 2nd, 1938, the date of its entry into force.


Having recognised the need for preventing, by means of rules established by common agreement, broadcasting from being used in a manner prejudicial to good international understanding;

Prompted, moreover, by the desire to utilise, by the application of these rules, the possibilities offered by this medium of intercommunication for promoting better mutual understanding between peoples:

1 Ratifications:

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Accessions:

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<td>BURMA</td>
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From the Convention on the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace

Article 1
The High Contracting Parties mutually undertake to prohibit and, if occasion arises, to stop without delay the broadcasting within their respective territories of any transmission which to the detriment of good international understanding is of such a character as to incite the population of any territory to acts incompatible with the internal order or the security of a territory of a High Contracting Party.

Article 2
The High Contracting Parties mutually undertake to ensure that transmissions from stations within their respective territories shall not constitute an incitement either to war against another High Contracting Party or to acts likely to lead thereto.

Article 3
The High Contracting Parties mutually undertake (...) any transmission likely to harm good international understanding by incorrect statements (...)

Context I: Intellectual trends after World War I

Parliamentary democracy prevailed, e.g. in the Weimar Republic
Radicalism proceeded in ideologies, inspired i.a. by Soviet Communism
Progressivism promoted social reforms, including trade unions (ILO)
Modernism flourished in culture and beyond
Pacifism accompanied peace movements against militarism
Idealism figured in politics and political science
Decolonization was brewing in Asia, Africa and Latin America (hastened by Japan’s unprecedented victory over Russia in 1905)
Context II:
History of the international movement of journalists
First international associations of journalists

*International Union of Press Associations (IUPA)* 1894–1936


*Press Congress of the World (PCW)* 1915–1927

Initiated by Americans in ”World Press Parliament” in St Louis 1904

*International Association of Journalists accredited to the League of Nations (IAJA)* 1921–1936

*Fédération Internationale des Journalistes (FIJ)* 1926–1940
RENSEIGNEMENTS
PROCÈS-VERBAUX DES SÉANCES
ET
DISCOURS COMMUNIQUÉS
IUPA Congress in Rome 1899
World Press Parliament in StLouis 1904
IAJA in Geneva in the 1920s
Zum Kongreß

der Fédération Internationale des Journalistes

in Berlin vom 22. bis 25. Oktober 1930

Gruß des Herrn Reidsministers des Auswärtigen Dr. Curtius


[Signature]
FIJ Executive Committee in The Hague 1931
FIJ Tribunal of Honour in The Hague 1931
Congress of the Union of National Journalist Unions in Venice 1942
Conclusions

• LoN and media remains a forgotten story which needs to be rediscovered (and the paper from 1986 published).
• The elements of the story are highly topical in today’s world with nuclear weapons and increased globalization.
• The normative parameters for the media are clearly articulated, neither compromising nor deferring excessively to freedom.
• LoN represents idealism, which came under criticism from the rising school of realism in international relations.
• LoN stands for the emerging principles of solidarism and pluralism.
• LoN was no historical failure; while not preventing WW II, it did lay the foundations for the UN and the post-war international order, including decolonization.