

The Armistices

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Source: *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Oct., 1922), pp. 509-522

Published by: [American Society of International Law](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2187576>

Accessed: 24/05/2014 18:54

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## THE ARMISTICES <sup>1</sup>

BY GENERAL TASKER H. BLISS

*American Military Representative with the Supreme War Council*

This work was published early in the course of the Paris Peace Conference. Even at that time its title was somewhat misleading. Practically all of the so-called secret documents contained in it, including the extracts from the proceedings of the Allied Council which adopted the armistice terms, had already been published in every country that took any interest in the war. A considerable part of the work is devoted to the activities of the *Socialistes*, the *Syndicalistes* and the *Internationalistes* towards effecting a peace before the war should be fought to a conclusion; as well as to the so-called "affaires" of Caillaux, Bolo Pasha, Prince Sixte de Parme, *et al.*, based upon the current publications of the press. These are probably what the author means by the "Négotiations Secrètes."

That part of the work which relates to the armistices consists, mainly, of the proceedings, then already published, of the Allied Council at Versailles, October 31–November 4, 1918. This Allied Council consisted of the Supreme War Council, to which were attached representatives, designated *ad hoc*, of Japan and of several of the smaller allied countries. It is important to remember that the Supreme War Council itself consisted solely of the political representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and the United States, to whom were attached, but not as voting members of the Council, a military representative of each of those four countries, as an adviser for his own government.

The author of this work gives the impression that the above-mentioned Allied Council drew up the terms of the armistices. This is not the fact. Its official proceedings show that when it met it had before it drafts for its consideration. Its sole function was to trim the edges and round-off the corners, in doing which there was an opportunity to consider points raised by the smaller Powers that had not been represented in the preparation of the drafts. Nor does the author discuss the reasons or motives that governed the consideration of these drafts, by paragraphs or in their entirety. He fails to note that this Council adopted not four but two armistices, because two had been entered upon before the Council met. Nor does he note the significance of prior consideration being given to the armistice with Austria-Hungary. This prior consideration was due to the fact that the

<sup>1</sup> *Mermeiz: Les Négotiations Secrètes et les Quatre Armistices, avec Pièces Justificatives.* 5th edition. Paris: 1921. Librairie Ollendorff. Pp. 355.

Allies knew that Austria-Hungary would accept any conditions for an armistice. The armistice with this Power was, therefore, approved first and sent to General Diaz to put into effect. One of its articles provided that,

“The Allies shall have the right of free movement over all roads, rail and waterways, in Austro-Hungarian territory, and of the use of the necessary Austrian and Hungarian means of transportation.

“The Armies of the Allied and Associated Powers *shall occupy such strategic points in Austria-Hungary* at such times as they may deem necessary to enable them to conduct military operations or to maintain order.”

The underscored words should be noted in connection with subsequent remarks of the reviewer on the armistice with Germany. Suffice it to say here that a plan of further military operations against Germany, should such be necessary, had already been prepared in anticipation of the above condition in the Austrian armistice and to meet the extreme contingency of Germany refusing an armistice after she had herself asked for it. This plan was submitted to the Supreme War Council and approved by it late in the day of November 4, 1918, in its

*Resolutions in regard to operations against Germany through Austria*

The Supreme War Council agrees to the following resolutions:

1. To approve the plan of operations against Germany through Austria proposed by Marshal Foch, General Bliss, General Wilson and General di Robilant.<sup>2</sup>

2. That Marshal Foch shall have the supreme strategical direction of operations against Germany on all fronts, including the Southern and Eastern.

3. That the Military Advisers of the British, French, Italian and United States Governments shall immediately examine the following questions:

“(a) The possibility of taking immediate steps to send a force, which shall include the Czecho-Slovak forces on the French and Italian fronts, to Bohemia and Galicia, with the following objects:

“To organize these countries against invasion by Germany;

“To prevent the export to Germany of oil, coal, or any other material, and to render these available to the Allied forces;

“To establish aerodromes for the purpose of bombing Germany.

“(b) The immediate cooperation of General Franchet d’Espèray<sup>3</sup> in these objects.”

In the opinion of the reviewer, the conditions of the armistice with Austria, which showed Germany that such a plan of operations was on the cards, would have obliged the latter Power to accept any conditions that might have been proposed in the armistice with it. For reasons to be given, he believes that had the proper conditions been imposed, real peace would have been brought much nearer and Europe at this moment would be more advanced in the process of recovery from the war.

<sup>2</sup> Committee appointed by the Supreme War Council to prepare a plan of operations.

<sup>3</sup> Commander-in-chief of the Army of the East, who had operated from his base in Macedonia and had already concluded armistices with Bulgaria and Hungary.

The fact is that, with the exception of the people who made them and those most directly affected by them, no one is or has been interested in any of the armistices except the one with Germany. After that one went into effect, after the German Government had utterly collapsed and with it all possibility of military effort, some people, who had cordially approved the armistice but who now for the first time appreciated the military helplessness of their enemy, began to ask the questions, Why were not the terms of the armistice different? Why was it made at all? Why didn't the Allies march to Berlin? Even then, although these men knew and then said that had it not been for the intervention of the United States in the war the Allies would have been defeated, there were some who, at first ignorantly and then maliciously, attributed some sinister purpose to the United States, a desire to rob the Allies of the fruits of the common victory. At various times since then this idea has been inculcated in various quarters, sometimes in ignorance, generally in malice. Recently, when the falsehood was moribund from inanition, it has been revived by an alleged interview, the authenticity of which has been denied, with a distinguished member of the literary world, and now widely circulated. He is quoted as saying,

“America had forced the Allies into making peace at the first opportunity instead of insisting upon finishing in Berlin. America quit the day of the Armistice without waiting to see the thing through.

Although these statements are not to be attributed to the recently alleged source, they are the exact charges notoriously and frequently made by many writers and speakers. It is proper, therefore, to examine into their truth.

Passing for the moment the allegation in the first of the above sentences, what is “the thing,” mentioned in the second, that America did not wait to see through? Was there anything left to “see through” except the conclusion of formal peace? Did not America appoint her peace delegates before any other great Power did? Did they not arrive in Paris before any others were appointed, before even those of the French were announced? And after the consideration of the terms of peace began, was it America that caused delay “in seeing the thing through?” Or was it the passionate and selfish greed of European Powers who, dazzled by the enormity of the loot lying before them, refused to make peace with the enemy until they could settle their quarrels among themselves and decide on the distribution of this loot? Who refused to say, as they could have said within the first seven days, “Germany must surrender to the Allied and Associated Powers her battleships and her colonies,” but in their distrust of each other waited until they could decide which Allies could get what proportion of battleships and colonies?

Now, what of the “insisting upon finishing in Berlin”? That suggestion comes late now. There was a time when the Allied Governments could have

insisted on this, had they so desired. When the Government of the United States sent its note of October 23, 1918, saying that,

“The President has, therefore, transmitted his correspondence with the present German authorities to the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated as a belligerent, with the suggestion that, *if those Governments are disposed to effect peace upon the terms and principles indicated, their military advisers and the military advisers of the United States be asked to submit to the Governments associated against Germany the necessary terms of such an armistice as will fully protect the interests of the peoples involved and ensure to the associated Governments the unrestricted power to safeguard and enforce the details of the peace to which the German Government has agreed, provided they deem such an armistice possible from the military point of view,*”

—then was the time for the Allied Governments, or any one of them, to say “No, we are not disposed to effect peace upon the terms and principles indicated” and “we shall not ask our advisers to submit for our approval the necessary terms of such an armistice nor of any armistice.” As a matter of fact, the Allies and Associated Powers immediately consulted their military advisers. These advisers were bound to advise such terms as, in their respective judgments, would not only guarantee against a resumption of hostilities during the peace proceedings but ensure also the successful imposition of the peace terms. Based on their advice, the political representatives drew up the exact terms and by their note of November 4, 1918, the three Prime Ministers informed the Government of the United States that they would discuss peace on the acceptance by Germany of these terms. Does anyone assert that there is a single one of these military terms that was imposed by the United States? Or that the Government suggested the change of an iota after the three Prime Ministers had accepted them? And after that acceptance, on prolonged and detailed scrutiny and discussion, and after that declaration by the three Prime Ministers, can there be anything more silly, groundless and malignant than the allegation that America forced the Allies into making peace at the first opportunity instead of insisting upon finishing in Berlin.

Probably most people believe that the first consideration by the European Allies of armistice terms as preliminary to peace was given after the communication of the United States' note of October 23, 1918. That, however, is not the case; and many citizens of those countries will be interested to know the steps taken to that end by their governments before that of the United States had received the conditions of the armistice agreed upon by them on November 4, 1918.

The first German note to the United States was announced in the Reichstag on October 5th, the note having been sent the night before through Berne and reaching Washington on October 6th. On October 5th the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France and Italy met in Paris. At a

meeting on October 6th they agreed upon certain principles for the basis of an armistice. At nine o'clock on the night of October 7th the American military representative received from them the following document:

The conference of Ministers at a meeting held on 7th October 1918, agreed to refer to the Military Representatives at Versailles, with whom shall be associated representatives of the American, British, French and Italian Navies, the consideration of the terms of an armistice with Germany and Austria, on the basis of the following principles *accepted on the previous day*.

1. Total evacuation, by the enemy, of France, Belgium, Luxemburg and Italy;
2. The Germans to retire behind the Rhine into Germany;
3. Alsace-Lorraine to be evacuated by German troops without occupation by the Allies;
4. The same conditions to apply to the Trentino and Istria;
5. Servia and Montenegro to be evacuated by the enemy;
6. Evacuation of the Caucasus;
7. Immediate steps to be taken for the evacuation of all territory belonging to Russia and Roumania before the war.
8. Immediate cessation of submarine warfare.

Unnumbered Paragraph. (It was also agreed that the Allied blockade should not be raised.)

The foregoing note was accompanied by a request that the military representatives, with the associates indicated in the note, meet for its consideration at 9.15 o'clock on the following morning, October 8th. The American representative at once decided not to participate in the discussion and recommendation of armistice terms thus requested. In the absence of official information he took note of the fact that it was commonly believed in every Allied capital in Europe that a German note on this subject was then pending before the Government at Washington. He could take no part in the discussion of it without specific instructions. He immediately cabled the note of the Ministers to Washington with his proposed action. At the same time he invited attention to par. 2 of the note, under which, if not modified, the Germans could retire to a strong position behind the Rhine with their army, armament and supplies intact. Accordingly, in the action taken at the meeting of military and naval representatives on the morning of October 8th there was no American participation. The following is the document that was then drawn up and submitted to the three Prime Ministers:

The Military Representatives and Naval Representatives meeting together on October 8th, in accordance with the Resolution taken by the Conference of Ministers at their meeting held on 7th October, 1918, are of opinion that the first essential of an armistice is the disarmament of the enemy, under the control of the Allies.

This principle having been established, the conditions specified by the Ministers at their meeting held on 7th October, require from a military point of view to be supplemented as follows:

1. Total and immediate evacuation, by the enemy, of France, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Italy on the following conditions:
  - (a) Immediate re-occupation by Allied troops of the territories so evacuated;
  - (b) Immediate repatriation of the civil population of these regions interned in enemy country;



(c) No "sabotage," looting or fresh requisitions by enemy forces;  
 (d) Surrender of all arms and munitions of war and supplies between the present front and the left bank of the Rhine;

2. Germans to retire behind the Rhine into Germany.

3. Alsace-Lorraine to be evacuated by German troops without occupation by the Allies, with the exception stated in Clause 18 below.

It is understood that the Allies will not evacuate the territory in their occupation.

4. The same conditions apply to the territory included between the Italian frontier and a line passing through the Upper Adige, the Pusterthal as far as Tobloch, the Carnic Alps, the Tarvis and the meridian from Monte Nero, cutting the sea near the mouth of the Voloska (see Map of the Italian Military Geographical Institute 1 over 500,000).

5. Serbia, Montenegro and Albania to be evacuated by the enemy—under similar conditions to those stated in Clause 1.

6. Evacuation of the Caucasus by the troops of Central Powers.

7. Immediate steps to be taken for the evacuation of all territory belonging to Russia and Roumania before the war.

8. Prisoners in enemy hands to be returned to Allied Armies without reciprocity in the shortest possible time. Prisoners taken from the Armies of the Central Powers to be employed for the reparation of the wilful damage done in the occupied areas by the enemy, and for the restoration of the areas.

9. All enemy surface ships (including Monitors, River craft, etc.), to withdraw to Naval Bases specified by the Allies and to remain there during the Armistice.

10. Submarine warfare to cease immediately on the signature of the Armistice. 60 submarines of types to be specified shall proceed at once to specified Allied Ports and stay there during the Armistice. Submarines operating in the North Sea and Atlantic shall not enter the Mediterranean.

11. Enemy Naval air forces to be concentrated in bases specified by the Allies and there remain during the Armistice.

12. Enemy to reveal position of all his mines outside territorial waters. Allies to have the right to sweep such mines at their own convenience.

13. Enemy to evacuate Belgium and Italian coast immediately, leaving behind all Naval war stores and equipment.

14. The Austro-Hungarian Navy to evacuate all ports in the Adriatic occupied by them outside national territory.

15. The Black Sea Ports to be immediately evacuated and warships and material seized in them by the enemy delivered to the allies.

16. No material destruction to be permitted before evacuation.

17. Present blockade conditions to remain unchanged. All enemy merchant ships found at sea remain subject to capture.

18. In stating their terms as above, the Allied Governments can not lose sight of the fact that the Government of Germany is in a position peculiar among the nations of Europe in that its word can not be believed, and that it denies any obligation of honor. It is necessary, therefore, to demand from Germany material guarantees on a scale which will serve the purpose aimed at by a signed agreement in cases amongst ordinary civilized nations. In those circumstances, the Allied Governments demand that: within 48 hours:

1st. The fortresses of Metz, Thionville, Strassburg, Neu Breisach and the town and fortifications of Lille to be surrendered to the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

2nd. The surrender of Heligoland to the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief of the North Sea.

19. All the above measures, with the exception of those specially mentioned in paragraph 18, to be executed in the shortest possible time, which it would appear should not exceed three or four weeks.

This document was at once cabled *in extenso* to Washington. The draft intended for submission to the Prime Ministers was brought to the American military representative with request that he reconsider his decision and sign it. This he declined to do in the absence of instructions from his government. And, to the document intended for these Ministers, he attached a note addressed to them giving his reasons for not signing it. Personally, he had no criticism of the general tenor of the document and he, of course, accepted the establishment of the essential principle of disarmament and the fixing of guarantees.

This document of October 8, 1918, undoubtedly represented the then Allied military and naval view and that of the great majority of their political men. What caused its preparation? The invariable rule of procedure of the Supreme War Council was that no military measure (and an armistice is essentially such) would be considered by it unless the four military representatives were unanimous in recommending it. If they were unanimous, the measure was submitted to the heads of the four governments. If any one of the latter did not concur it failed. Therefore, the action of October 7th and 8th was not that of the Supreme War Council but that of the three Prime Ministers. What was the motive for the proceedings of those two days? This can only be inferred, because no further action was then taken; but it would seem that one or both of only two reasons can be assigned. One is this: it was known that the question was then pending in some form in Washington; it was not known what attitude towards it would be there taken; it was apprehended that some committal might be made adverse to Allied wishes or interests. If this were the reason, the Allies, who knew that this action would be immediately cabled in full to Washington, would also know that in this indirect way Washington would be made aware that they had views of their own on the subject of an armistice. The other reason may be that the Allies wished to be tentatively prepared by studies of their own in case notes should be addressed to them by Germany as had been done to the United States.

The essential fact to note is that the document of October 8th presented the Allied view, in the preparation of which no American military or naval or political representative had any part whatever.

From October 8th events, military and political, moved rapidly. The German notes of October 8th, 12th and 20th, and the American notes of October 8th, 14th and 23rd, were exchanged. This latter note of October 23rd is the one which placed, without limitation, the decision of the question whether there should, or should not, be an armistice in the discretion and judgment of the *Allied Powers in Europe*.

They having decided in favor of an armistice, the political representatives of the three principal European Allies, associated with that of the United States, began the study of armistice terms on October 26th. A reasonable construction of the words of the President's letter which read



“that, if those [Allied] Governments are disposed to effect peace upon the terms and principles indicated, their military advisers and the military advisers of the United States be asked to submit to the Governments associated against Germany the necessary terms of such an armistice as will,” etc.,

would have suggested the formation of a military committee (including, of course, naval representatives) to prepare a joint draft for submission to the political representatives of the four governments concerned. This would have resulted in full and frank discussion of the varying views of the military and naval advisers and, as in countless previous cases, would undoubtedly have resulted in prompt and harmonious agreement. But the course was followed of calling upon these advisers individually and singly for their views. There was no opportunity for discussion among themselves, such as would have had to be the case were they required to draw up a joint draft, scrutinizing and discussing every word and punctuation point before agreement.

When the American military representative with the Supreme War Council was requested to submit his views in writing to the Council of Ministers he did so guided by the following facts:

1. The unanimous recommendation of the Allied military and naval representatives in their document of October 8th in which they accepted disarmament as the first essential of the armistice;
2. His answer to cabled instructions from Washington dated October 21st for his views, in which he stated his belief that the armistice terms should be limited, as nearly as could be, to the complete disarmament and demobilization of all enemy forces on land and sea, in the belief that peace terms would be immediately thereafter imposed.
3. His unofficial knowledge of a document embodying proposed armistice terms which had already been submitted to the Council and which was commonly supposed to be receiving favorable consideration.
4. His unofficial knowledge of the proposed term in the Austrian armistice, hereinbefore quoted.

As to the first consideration above, he was surprised to find a disposition to depart from the former Allied belief that general disarmament of the enemy was an essential condition.

As to the third consideration above, relating to the document supposed to be viewed with favor by the Council of Ministers, he noted that it was proposed to take from the Germans, as a condition for granting them an armistice, approximately one-half of their machine-guns, one-half of their artillery, and other articles of fighting equipment in varying proportions to an assumed total. What would be the result? Consider the Western Front alone:

1. It left the *organization* of von Hindenburg's army of 4,500,000 men absolutely intact from its commander-in-chief to the private in the ranks.

2. It left the infantry organization and *armament*, including reserve arms and munitions absolutely intact.
3. It left them, admittedly, with some half of their artillery and one-half of their machine guns. And other fighting appliances in similar proportion.
4. It permitted von Hindenburg to withdraw his army of, perhaps, 4,500,000 to a selected strategic point, provided only that this point should be from thirty to forty kilometers east of the Rhine.
5. There was the possibility in unknown degree that this army might promptly re-equip itself with the lost material taken from it by the armistice.
6. And what was true of von Hindenburg's army was true, to a greater or less degree, of the German armies in other theatres of the war.
7. In short, the proposed terms not merely permitted but required Germany to concentrate *all* her forces of possibly 8,000,000 thoroughly trained soldiers—trained in the best of all schools, war itself—within her own territory in selected positions for national defense. Instead of taking advantage of the depressed morale of these men who knew that they were defeated on foreign soil, it was proposed to encourage a revival of their morale by the consciousness that they were concentrated in their own country where they would fight not for aggression but for home defense.

On consulting officials who had prepared these terms, the American military representative at Versailles was informed that there was at that time known with accuracy the numbers of weapons of all kinds then in the hands of German troops and in reserve and that, with the surrender of what was demanded of them, they could not re-equip themselves. This the American representative denied. He denied that they knew with sufficient accuracy the amount of captured material which the Germans could use in last resort though they, like the Allies, made no use of it as long as they had enough of their own equipment. He denied that they sufficiently knew the capacity of German plants to produce new material, such as machine guns and field artillery, even if the armistice was of relatively short duration. He denied that they knew whether, for example, even if they were certain the 30,000 machine guns was one-half of the German total, the loss of them would reduce the German total one-half below that of the Allies.

He, therefore, in compliance with the request of the Council of Ministers, submitted a memorandum. In this the opinion was stated that there should be three phases in the procedure to be followed,

“At the end of a great world-war like the present one, in which it may be assumed that one party is completely beaten, and which will be followed by radical changes in world-conditions:

“a) A *complete surrender* of the beaten party under such armistice conditions as will guarantee against any possible resumption of hostilities by it;

“b) A conference to determine and enforce the conditions of peace with the beaten party; and

“c) A conference (perhaps the same as above) to determine and enforce such changes in world-conditions,—incidental to the war but not necessarily forming part of the terms of peace,—as are agreed upon as vital for the orderly progress of civilization and the continued peace of the world.”

After giving reasons for the belief that certain of the proposed conditions were not sufficient, the following propositions were submitted:

“First, that the associated powers demand complete military disarmament and demobilization of the active land and naval forces of the enemy, leaving only such interior guards as the associated powers agree upon as necessary for the preservation of order in the home territory of the enemy. This of itself means the evacuation by disarmed and not by armed or partly armed men. The army thus disarmed cannot fight, and demobilized can not be reassembled for the purposes of this war.

“Second, that the associated powers notify the enemy that there will be no relaxation in their war aims but that these will be subject to full and reasonable discussion between the nations associated in the war; and that, even though the enemy himself may be heard on some of these matters he must submit to whatever the associated powers finally agree upon as being proper to demand for the present and for the future peace of the world.”

It was, of course, intended that, should these principles be accepted as the basis of an armistice, a military and naval committee would prepare the exact details. However, these principles were not accepted. The terms already before them were, with more or less modification, accepted in the draft prepared by the Ministers.

The drafts thus prepared were submitted to the Allied Council and considered at its meetings from October 31st to November 4th. It is repeated that these drafts were not prepared by the Ministers after discussion solely among themselves and unaided. They called, from time to time, for such assistance and advice as they desired, from military, naval and civilian advisers. The drafts were, however, in no sense the result of the efforts of any duly appointed body of military or naval experts. In the discussions of the Allied Council practically no change was made in the original purely military and naval terms, except to correct a few obvious and inadvertent omissions. The military men had already had their day in court and there was no further consideration given to basic principles. They were approved on November 4, 1918, and transmitted to Washington with the following declaration of the Prime Ministers:

“The Allied Governments [which do not include the United States] have given careful consideration to the correspondence which has passed

between the President of the United States and the German Government. Subject to the qualifications which follow they *declare their willingness to make peace* with the government of Germany," etc., etc.

The qualifications relate to a reservation which they made as to the interpretation to be put on the meaning of the phrase "the freedom of the seas" when that subject should be discussed in a peace conference; and on the meaning of the phrase "invaded territories must be restored as well as evacuated and freed." This was communicated to Germany on November 5th; the terms were accepted; the document was signed by both parties on November 11th; and the armistice became a closed incident save in so far as relates to its practical application.

The official records do not show that any one knew who was the author of any proposition, except the emendations or the non-military clauses that were introduced during the discussion of the Allied Council from October 31st to November 4th. Of course the Ministers knew, but they have left no records of their deliberations. With the exception of them, no one could say "This or that military or naval clause was introduced on the advice of this or that adviser." When dissatisfaction began to be felt in any quarter with the terms of the armistice or with the fact that there was any armistice at all, various persons have attempted to fix the author. Just now we are not concerned in showing who made the armistice—the fact and the terms of the fact—but in showing who did not make it.

The origin of the armistice is thus perfectly plain. The first German note was received at the Legation of Switzerland in Washington "late this afternoon," as the Chargé d'Affaires of that legation says in his letter of transmittal dated October 6th. On the same day, in Paris, the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France and Germany drew up their principles to form the basis of an armistice with Germany and Austria,—almost certainly before any member of the Government at Washington could have broken the seal of the Swiss Legation on the first German note. On the morning of October 8th, the military and naval representatives of the three European Allies formulated the details of armistice terms on the basis laid down by their Prime Ministers. On October 23rd the American Government informed those three European Governments that it felt that it "could not decline to take up with the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated the question of an armistice." The note added the "*suggestion* that, if those Governments are disposed to effect peace" then the proper advisers of all four governments prepare and submit the terms of an armistice for their consideration. If those governments were not disposed to effect peace, or to have an armistice as the first step thereto, it was in their power to say so. That they were so disposed, is evident from the immediate steps taken to formulate the armistice. Finally, in their official note of November 4th, the three Prime Ministers "declare their willingness to make peace."

M. Mermeix declares positively (p. 280) that "Wilson had nothing to do

with the determination of the terms of the armistice.”<sup>4</sup> He claims that the military terms were practically entirely French, and the comparison which he makes between the original French draft and the one finally accepted justifies his conclusion.

Now as to the operation of the armistice and its results. There are, apparently, a good many unthinking people abroad who are inclined to lay the blame for a large part of their troubles, during the last three years or more, upon the armistice. They seem to think that were it not for that and had the Allies marched to Berlin, the situation now would be better. It accounts for their perpetual hunting for a scape-goat upon which to throw the blame. They are right in blaming the armistice; but the trouble is not due to the fact that an armistice was made, but to the kind of armistice.

An armistice is, or should be, purely a military measure. It is a cessation of arms for the sole purpose of enabling warring nations to agree on terms of peace. Its sole conditions, therefore, should be such as will absolutely guarantee against the resumption of hostilities to interrupt the men who are determining the terms of peace. The military conditions imposed on either side are the more rigorous, to the possible limit of absolute surrender, according as the other side is the more powerful when the armistice is asked for by its enemy. The President of the United States clearly understood this when, in his note of October 14th, he informed the German Government that “it must be clearly understood that the process of evacuation and the conditions of an armistice are matters which must be left to the judgment and advice of the military advisers of the Government of the United States and the Allied Governments;” and when, in his note of October 23rd, he said that if the Allied Governments were willing to make peace, the military advisers should prepare the terms of an armistice for submission to those governments and that of the United States.

A military armistice contemplates that steps will very promptly follow for the establishment of peace. It is based on the assumption that peace is the only possible condition for prosperity and that delay in its resumption may be disastrous. But an armistice which is based upon the indefinite continuance of military control and which perhaps embodies terms of indefinite execution, only invites delay.

The one great error in the armistice, as now admitted by thinking men generally in Europe, was in the failure to demand complete surrender with resulting disarmament and demobilization. The situation would have compelled acceptance of this condition by the Germans. On the west they were confronted by a superior force of British, French and Americans, and on the south the map and the situation showed the impending attack from Italy and General Franchet d’Espèray’s Army of the East.

Such an armistice could have been followed in a few days by the preliminary treaty of peace imposing the military, naval and air terms. Immediately the Allied commissions could have set to work dismantling fortifica-

<sup>4</sup> *Wilson re fut pour rien dous la fixation des termes de l’Armistice.*



tions, abolishing the military system, closing arms factories and, in fact, doing all the things that more than a year later they had to do under circumstances of far greater difficulty. And above all, the remaining peace terms, relating largely to world-conditions for generations to come, could have been more calmly discussed without the fear of a suddenly revived military Germany which haunted the daily proceedings of the actual Peace Conference.

This defective armistice was signed on November 11th. The nations seemed indifferent about making peace, trusting to the huge Allied armies then in France to control Germany. But the great expense of their maintenance and the absence of millions of men from their homes, cheerfully borne in war, became very irksome to the peoples in peace, and these armies began rapidly to diminish. The 11th of December came, with no Peace Conference in sight, and the armistice had to be renewed. Allied military men began to feel grave apprehension when they thought of the millions of trained soldiers in Germany whom they themselves had left with an unknown but large equipment of arms, politically demoralized, to be sure, and for the time sick of war; yet there was always the possibility that the right leader might yet arise with the right war-cry to bring them to their feet again. So, further security was attempted by additional terms to the renewed armistice. The 11th of January, 1919, came with the Peace Conference just getting to work, and the same course was followed in the second renewal of the armistice.

When the time for the third renewal of the armistice—February 11th—approached, the situation had grown more serious. The Allied armies were greatly reduced and the process of reduction was rapidly continuing. Notwithstanding the fact that the arms called for by the terms of the armistice had been surrendered and that the Germans had abandoned on the field still more of many important articles of equipment than they had surrendered under the armistice, there was a growing fear in certain quarters that there was still a great accumulation of arms in Germany and that their manufacturing plants were still producing them in quantities. When we consider the total demoralization of Germany at that time, it is difficult to believe that there was much ground for this apprehension. Nevertheless, the fear existed. It made itself evident in the still more drastic terms that were proposed to be imposed in this renewal of the armistice. As there was considerable difference of opinion as to the wisdom of this course, an Allied committee of civil and military representatives was appointed to prepare a memorandum and recommendation on this subject for consideration by the heads of the four governments.

When this committee met and the course which it was inclined to take became evident, the American representative expressed the following opinion: that the Allies had every reason for supporting the then existing government in Germany; that this government was as nearly a democratic one as could be expected at that time and under the circumstances; that the continual pin-thrusts being made by the Allies were playing into the hands of



the opponents in Germany of this government; that, if another revolution came, this government would probably be succeeded either by an imperialistic military one, or by a bolshevist one; and that, finally, instead of these continual additions of new terms to the armistice, there should be drawn up at once the final military peace terms which, being imposed upon Germany without further delay, would relieve the Allies of all further apprehension. The committee, however, accepted the other proposed terms for the renewal of the armistice and made its report. The council of the heads of governments, however, decided upon the other course. It adopted a resolution to the effect that a renewal of the armistice would no longer be granted for a fixed time, but only for a short period during which the final military, naval and air terms of peace would be drafted and after approval would be at once submitted to the Germans for acceptance as a preliminary treaty,—and that the Germans should be at once so informed.

The Germans were at once so informed, and it is much to be regretted that the course that had been contemplated was not followed to a conclusion. A military and naval committee was at once appointed to prepare the draft of these final peace terms. In a few days it had completed its work and submitted its recommendations. In these recommendations there was only one point in regard to which there was any material difference of opinion among the heads of the governments. Had they desired, they could have settled this difference of opinion within twenty-four hours and these final military terms could have been, and undoubtedly would have been, immediately imposed upon Germany. Unfortunately, the President of the United States, who had supported this course, had been obliged to return to Washington. During his absence it was decided to revert to the former method of procedure and to combine all of the other terms of the treaty with the military terms. The result was that what would otherwise have been the real treaty of peace had to wait until the Powers had settled their differences of opinion about matters which were, largely, only incidental to a treaty of peace. And so, the preliminary treaty,—which involved the military, naval and air terms, and which was all that was necessary in order to bring a feeling of real security to Europe and to enormously reduce wasteful expenditures,—had to wait until the general treaty was signed on June 28, 1919. This treaty did not go into effect until the specified number of Allied Powers had ratified it. The result was that measures which could have been and should have been begun the better part of a year before were not undertaken until the beginning of the year 1920.

All of this was due, not to the fact of the armistice but to the form of it.

The armistice was made because all the Allied world wanted it, and for no other reason. But its defective form, for which America was in no way whatever responsible, invited and permitted in a considerable degree the delays which proved the bane of the Peace Conference and which prevented the more prompt reestablishment of the peace of the world.