

# THE BATTLE OF THE CRUISERS

The American Press Views Britain's Stand from Various Aspects Suggested More by "Paper Policy" Than National Need

## NONE SATISFIED

Cruisers are the core of the problem at Geneva, many observers agree, because it is in this class of war vessel that competitive building between the United States and Great Britain is most probable if the limitation conference fails. And it is right here chiefly that the American and British proposals clash. Administration officials, says a Washington dispatch to the Baltimore Sun, "make no secret of the fact that they regard the cruiser issue as the most difficult one for the Geneva Conference to deal with, or of the further fact that this issue at the moment involves only the United States and Great Britain." Our program would extend to cruisers and other auxiliaries the 5-5-3 ratio that was accepted for capital ships in 1922 by the United States, Great Britain, and Japan. The British plan would place definite limits on the size and armament of cruisers, but would have their number and collective tonnage determined by the nation's need. The present relative cruiser strength of the three Powers, counting "modern" cruisers built, building, authorized and appropriated for, is tabulated as follows by the New York World, from figures supplied by our State Department:

	Number	Tonnage
United States	18	155,000
Britain	64	387,410
Japan	38	247,665

Great Britain's preponderance in the cruiser class is further increased, our spokesmen say, by the fact that she has many swift subsidized passenger liners of 20,000 tons or more with gun mounts built into their framework, which could be converted into commerce destroyers within ten days, while the United States has only a few vessels of this type. Great Britain argues that she needs more light cruisers than we do, because she has to protect the 130,000,000 miles of ocean-trade routes of her far-flung Empire. It is semi-officially intimated that the United States, on the other hand, "can not and will not accept anything short of parity with Great Britain in all classes of ships." Commenting on the resultant situation, the Washington Post remarks:

"The hour is at hand when the British Government will formally agree or refuse to agree that the United States and Great Britain shall have equality of strength upon the seas.

"The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Bridgeman, has advised Ambassador Gibson that while Britain is willing to agree to a parity of strength in 10,000-ton cruisers, it will not commit itself to an agreement for parity in smaller cruisers. The reason given is that protection of Britain's commerce and widely separated possessions warrant and require a larger number of cruisers than is needed by the United States.

"The answer from Washington is that the United States will not and can not accept anything but parity with Great Britain on every class of ships. The British Government is reminded that it agreed at the Washington Conference to the principle of the 5-5-3 ratio on all classes of vessels. There was no intimating whatever, prior to the beginning of the Geneva Conference last week, that Great Britain had changed its position and would now insist upon maintaining greater naval strength than it is willing to concede to the United States.

"By no casuistry and by no attempt to divert the discussion can the British Government hope to avoid making a decision that will have fateful consequences.

"The alternative to Britain's insistence upon cruiser superiority is unlimited increase of naval strength by the United States. There can be no mistaking the temper of the American people on this subject. Refusal by any foreign Power to accept the principle of parity will arouse a furore in this country, and the construction of a navy superior to that of any other Power will result."

In the opinion of this Washington paper, the American proposal of

parity "is fair to both Britain and the United States." Moreover, "it would eliminate competition and remove the danger of suspicion, discord, and war." We read further:

"The day has passed when the United States would be willing to see another Power commanding the seas. It will not now tolerate superiority in any foreign Power. Its commerce, its remote possessions, and its duty in guarding this hemisphere require it to be the equal in naval strength of any other Power." While firmly cherishing friendship with Great Britain, Japan, and all other countries, the United States relies upon its own resources for its own security. In 1921 it abandoned a building program that would have made it stronger upon the seas than any other Power. It proposed parity of naval strength with Great Britain. Great Britain accepted the proposal as to capital ships and aircraft carriers, and approved of the principle as applied to all other vessels."

The Topeka State Journal reminds us that before the war Great Britain tried to regulate the size of her Navy by the "two-Power" standard, which means that the British Navy was supposed to be as powerful as the combined navies of any two other countries; and that in 1916 Woodrow Wilson advanced the theory that the United States, because of its extensive coast line, required "incomparably the most powerful Navy in the world." This Kansas paper goes on to say:

"Britain has abandoned the two-Power standard, and we have abandoned the idea—never widely held—that we require incomparably the strongest navy in the world. In capital ships, the two Powers have agreed on equality, and the United States is now proposing equality as between the two Powers in all classes of ships.

"It is hard to fix a standard by which the 'needs' of a country in the way of armament can be determined. If war were immediately certain with another naval Power, we would obviously need all the naval strength we could assemble for the occasion. If international peace forever and forever were absolutely certain, a fleet of revenue cutters would suffice us. In a world of uncertainties, our naval needs are hard to define.

"It is obvious that the various nations interpret their needs with some consideration to what they can afford. If they could afford to maintain it, it is doubtful whether Britain would have abandoned the two-Power standard. If 'need' is determined by extent of and distance from colonial possessions, Britain's need would appear considerably greater than our own. If need is determined by dependence of the home population on ocean commerce for food and other necessities in time of war, British need and Japanese need would both appear greater than ours. The fact that we can better afford a bigger navy than Britain is what justifies our pretensions to equality with Britain. Whether we need it or not, Britain knows that we could, if we wanted it, actually possess the incomparably superior navy that Wilson once advocated."

When Great Britain pleads the need to "protect" her ocean-trade routes, what she really means is "dominate," argues the Chicago Tribune:

"There is little need for protecting most of the routes in time of peace that cannot be met by a forty-year-old gunboat. Piracy is virtually extinct everywhere in the world except off the China coast and along our various run rows. If we take our responsibilities in the Philippines seriously, even in the eastern Pacific, Great Britain has little need for other or greater naval armament than we have.

"The situation in war time is, of course, different. Then, we are constantly reminded, Britain must be assured of unbroken communication with the world for food and raw materials. Some of the colonies might withstand blockade for a long time, but the mother country can be starved into submission in a few months. In contrast the United States could hold out much longer without supplies from abroad.

"The argument is disingenuous. British naval action in all her later wars has been to blockade her enemy. 'Contraband' is what Great Britain wishes to declare. The guarding of imperial communications in fact has meant an interference with neutral commerce whenever it suited British interests to interfere. This has worked a serious injury to American commerce in the past and may do so again as long as the protection of trade routes is allowed to remain a British monopoly.

Our interest in foreign trade, while not yet so large as Britain's, is increasing far more rapidly. It is probable, if not certain, that before many years our foreign trade will exceed that of the British Isles. The increase of our trade with foreign countries is largely in manufactured goods, a field in which our superiority to the British is only beginning to show itself. The trend is nowhere clearer than in the British dominions. British exports to Australia in 1924 were some \$20,000,000 less than in 1923; in the same year American exports to Australia increased \$45,000,000, a jump of 40 per cent.

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"America is beginning to outsell Britain in her own dominions, bound together in a tariff union. Elsewhere in the world we should be able to go ahead even faster. At the same time our dependence on the raw materials of industry which are not found in our country is becoming greater with advances in technology. We must buy such vital materials as manganese and rubber from overseas. They may not be so essential to our life as imported wheat and meat is to Britain's, but the difference is not so great as might at first be imagined. Without some of the raw materials which we draw from the outside world, our industrial system must stagnate. If not our lives, then our prosperity and our standard of living will be imperiled by cutting us off from the world. Britain's interest in protecting trade routes to-day is not much greater than ours, and we can anticipate the time when we shall be fully as dependent on sea communications as are the British. Even now we are giving hostages to fortune in permitting any other nation to dominate our communications."

And in the Minneapolis Journal we read:  
"Smaller and hence less expensive cruisers would serve Great Britain well, equipped as she is with plenty of naval bases. Six-inch guns for cruisers, instead of eight-inch, would enable her to arm as auxiliary cruisers for 663 merchant vessels of from 6,000 to 25,000 tons. Against this number the United States has only ninety-eight such vessels."

Explaining why the United States does not welcome Britain's proposal to limit the size of cruisers to 7,500 tons, the Detroit Free Press says:

"The phenomenal extension of our trade routes southward and across the Pacific, especially the latter, is a factor that American naval authorities are compelled to take into account in determining any maximum tonnage limitation on cruisers—and this applies to other types of auxiliary vessels suitable for the task of protecting trade. With cruisers held down to 7,500 tons, and having a restricted cruising radius, the United States would be virtually shut out of the western Pacific and Asia. Our naval bases on this ocean are separated by thousands of miles—distances which the small cruisers would be unable to make.

"Our nearest naval base is 3,400 miles from Japan. Britain has naval bases and fueling stations all over the world, and along the 10,000 miles between England and Japan the average distance from station to station is only 1,650 miles."

The British attitude at Geneva, according to a dispatch from Harold E.

Scarborough to the New York Herald Tribune, "is something like this":

"We do not admit that we accepted in February of the America invitation partly for auxiliaries at Washington. We do not admit that our acceptance to this conference, in the terms in which it was couched, committed us to the 5-5-3 ratio for light craft. It is true that the American invitation said that 'the United States is disposed to accept the 5-5-3 ratio with regard to those vessels not covered by the Washington Treaty, but it is likewise true that the same paragraph mentioned 'hesitation to put out rigid proposals at this time.' If the American attitude now is to be 'We can not and will not accept anything less than parity,' that seems to us extremely rigid.

"Of course, nobody will attempt to restrain the United States from building to a parity with Britain, but for our part we should be disposed to refuse giving our sanction to such a process under the name of limitation."—Literary Digest.

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## CREDIT CRISIS FACES WORLD

Sir George Paish Foresees Complete Breakdown of Credit

The world is in danger of impaired credit, even of a complete breakdown of credit, writes Sir George Paish, British financier, in the current issue of "Barron's Financial Weekly."

After pointing out the necessity of credit for the well-being of the world, Sir George Paish comments, "Since the credit system was introduced a condition of complete distrust and an entire absence of credit has never been experienced, and, therefore, no one is able to visualize what would be the effect upon demand, production and prosperity of a complete credit breakdown. It is because the world is in danger of impaired credit, and even of a complete breakdown of credit, that so much anxiety is felt in all countries about the future. Some of the greatest authorities are convinced that such a breakdown is inevitable, and all are agreed that unless far-reaching measures are taken forthwith to strengthen the credit situation conditions will become extremely dangerous."

The United States is the savior, continues the article which reads, "That America is still granting credit so freely is a most favorable circumstance. Indeed, so long as she continues able and willing to grant it as freely as she is now doing, the danger of breakdown may be averted. But with this willingness on the part of America to grant credit the volume of credit is rapidly increasing without any corresponding expansion in the power of borrowers to redeem the temporary credit already obtained or to meet the service of the permanent obligations they have incurred.

"This dangerous situation has not caused by any lack of productive capacity, for the available evidence indicates that the world's power to produce foodstuffs, raw materials, and manufactured goods has not only recovered to the pre-war level but now exceeds it. Nor is it due to any unwillingness to work and to produce. If it were, the nations would not create so many obstacles to the distribution of existing products. It arises from various causes, the chief of which is psychological. After the unexampled courage displayed by all nations during the war, the world has reacted to a condition of extreme fearfulness which has thrown it out of balance and unable to understand or to realize the consequences of its actions."

The article concludes, "In consequence both of the war and of the policies pursued since the war the world has now to face a situation in which the amount of credit in existence is fabulous, when the duties of making payment are insurmountable, and when a general breakdown of credit is prevented only by the creation of still more credit."

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## On Taxes

"I stopped my horse lately where a great number of people were collected at a vendue of merchant's goods. The hour of sale not being come they were conversing on the badness of the times; and one of the company called to a plain, clean old man with white locks, 'Pray, Father Abraham, what think you of the times? Won't these heavy taxes quite ruin the country? How shall we ever be able to pay them? What would you advise us to?' Father Abraham stood up and replied: 'If you would have my advice, I will give it to you in short: for a word to the wise is enough and many words won't fill a bushel, as Poor Richard says.' They all joined desiring him to speak his mind, and gathering round him, he proceeded as follows:

"Friends," says he, "and neighbors, the taxes are indeed very heavy, and I those laid on by the government were the only ones we had to pay, we might the more easily discharge them; but we have many others and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our pride, and four times as much by our folly, and from these the town men cannot ease or deliver us, by allowing an abatement. However, let us hearken to good advice and something may be done for us. God helps them that helps themselves, as Poor Richard says in the Almanac of 1733."—From "Poor Richard's Almanac of 1757," by Benjamin Franklin.

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