

# CHINA AT THE CONFERENCE

## A REPORT

BY

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## PREFACE

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It is a remarkable fact that, with the exception of a part of one session which was devoted to the situation in Siberia, the entire work of the Conference at Washington, so far as it dealt with political questions in the Pacific and Far East, was concerned with the affairs of China.<sup>1</sup> An account, therefore, of China at the Conference will necessarily cover almost the entire proceedings of that body upon its purely political side as distinguished from its deliberations and discussions with reference to the reduction of existing, and the limitation of future, armaments.

The present work is in the nature of a report upon the work of the Chinese Delegation at Washington, but, not being official in character, there will be an opportunity for the author to speak, upon some points at least, rather more fully and frankly than it would be appropriate and expedient for the official representatives of the Chinese Government to do. It is, however, proper to say that the author served as Technical Expert to the Chinese Delegation throughout its work at Washington; that, in that capacity, he had access to all the records of the Conference so far as they related to China; that he was kept currently informed of the proceedings of the Conference and of its com-

<sup>1</sup> The discussion, or rather the statements made, in the conference relating to Siberia, are given in the Appendix.

mittees and subcommittees; and that the Chinese Delegates have made available to him their own confidential records, so that he feels justified in saying that, so far as a knowledge of the facts is concerned, he is in a position to give an adequate and accurate account of China's case at the Conference. Whatever opinions he may state as to the wisdom of the actions taken, whether upon the part of the Chinese Delegation or of the representatives of the other Powers, or whatever estimates he may express as to the general success or failure of the Conference in achieving the work for which it was convened, will necessarily be his own, and their value will be determined by the intelligence with which they have been formed.

Because it is hoped that this volume will serve as an authentic report of the work of the Conference, so far as China was concerned, the method will be followed of reproducing not only the texts of the final agreements reached, but also the carefully formulated statements which, from time to time, the Chinese Delegation made in order that it might not later be argued that, by silence, the representatives of China had given tacit acquiescence to the various treaty limitations upon, or violations of, the sovereignty, territorial integrity and administrative autonomy of China, the freedom or relief from which they were not able to obtain. And, in this connection, the author ventures to say that the reader of this volume will almost inevitably be impressed not only by the vigor with which the Chinese Delegates presented China's case to the Conference, but by the intelligent and

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scrupulous care which they took to avoid any admissions of principles, or unnecessary commitments upon the part of China which would unduly hinder her future freedom of action, or place obstacles in the way of her securing, at some later and more propitious time, action upon the part of the Powers which it was found impossible to obtain at Washington.

In result, it is hoped that this volume will be found to be a convenient supplement to the author's *Foreign Rights and Interests in China*, published in 1920, bringing to date, as it will, many of the statements of that work.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CONVENING OF THE CONFERENCE

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**Equality of the Powers.** As is well known the Washington Conference was called in order that two distinct, but related, purposes might be achieved. The first was that the five Powers, the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan—known during the World War as the Principal Allied and Associated Powers—might take common action with regard to a reduction of existing and a limitation upon future armaments. The second purpose was that existing political conditions in the Pacific and Far East might be so modified that, so far as possible, possibilities or probabilities of international controversies or even of war would be removed. In order that this second end might be obtained, the Governments of Belgium, China, the Netherlands and Portugal were invited to send representatives to the Conference who were to participate in its discussions and determinations insofar as they might relate to Pacific and Far Eastern political questions. Thus, while not invited to participate in the work of the Conference so far as matters of armament might be dealt with, the representatives of these four last named Powers took their seats in the Conference upon a basis of full equality with the representatives of the five



Principal Allied and Associated Powers so far as Pacific and Far Eastern questions were concerned.<sup>1</sup>

**Unanimity of Action Required.** With regard generally to the work of the Conference it is to be remembered that it was a meeting of sovereign Powers, each of which, by attending it, conceded no legal or even moral right upon the part of the other Powers to control its actions or politics by the determinations which they might arrive at. Therefore it was that no definite or treaty results could be expected from the Conference save such as might command the unanimous consent of the Powers concerned. In other words, as soon as the fact developed during the discussions in the Conference or outside of it in the informal conversations or communications between the several delegations, that unshakable objection to a proposition by even a single Power would be made, that proposition was almost always dropped, for its formal presentation to the Conference by the Powers especially interested could serve no other purpose than to place those Powers clearly upon record as to their views in the premises, and to obtain for them such support in the public opinion of the world as they might merit. These facts are to be constantly borne in mind in passing judgment either upon the work of the Conference as a whole or upon the wisdom of the actions of particular Delegations. No argument is needed to show that, as a general proposition, a Delegation would suffer a disadvantage by bringing forward a

<sup>1</sup>There is reason for saying that China would not have been willing to attend the Conference except upon this basis of equality, and that she received assurance that she would enjoy this status.