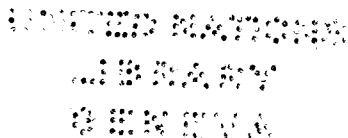


# A HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

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# A HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS



## THE AUTHOR

Born in 1888, Francis Paul Walters was closely connected with the League of Nations throughout its existence. He served under Lord Cecil as a junior member of the League of Nations Section of the British Delegation to the Peace Conference of 1919. He was a member of the Secretariat from 1919 to 1940, first as Personal Assistant to the Secretary-General, member and subsequently at the head of the Political Section (1920-1933), Under Secretary-General (1933-1939) and finally Deputy Secretary-General (1/6/1939-29/5/1940). He died in Paris in 1976.

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## PART I

# THE MAKING OF THE LEAGUE

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## I

### INTRODUCTORY

‘**A**LIVING thing is born.’ With these words Woodrow Wilson laid the first draft of the Covenant before the Paris Conference and the world. Many prophecies, hopeful or hostile, about the future fate of the League were destined to remain unfulfilled: but what Wilson then foretold with the simplicity of genius was to prove true. The League was from the first something more than the moral and political beliefs which the Covenant professed; something more, also, than the great political and legal institutions which the Covenant established. Its purposes and its organs were combined into a living whole by the creative effort of human will. As a living thing it was born; it experienced growth, success, and power; it inspired love and hatred; it met with failure and defeat. The design of this book is to trace the story of its rise and decline through the twenty eventful years in which it carried with it a great part of the hopes and the fortunes of mankind.

Although the League’s span of life was short and troubled, its success transitory, and its end inglorious, it must always hold a place of supreme importance in history. It was the first effective move towards the organization of a world-wide political and social order, in which the common interests of humanity could be seen and served across the barriers of national tradition, racial difference, or geographical separation. It was, in one sense, not revolutionary, since it was based upon ideals towards which many generations of men had slowly been making their way. But it was revolutionary in the sense that it involved a forward leap of unprecedented extent and speed, accompanied by extraordinary changes in the conduct of international relations—changes of principle, changes of method, changes even in the general convictions which form the basis of public opinion. Some of these changes have been so complete that men have already forgotten that no more than a brief generation has passed since they first came about.

Before the League, it was held both in theory and practice that every State was the sole and sovereign judge of its own acts, owing no

allegiance to any higher authority, entitled to resent criticism or even questioning by other States. Such conceptions have disappeared for ever: it is not doubted, and can never again be doubted, that the community of nations has the moral and legal right to discuss and judge the international conduct of each of its members. The belief that aggressive war is a crime against humanity and that it is the interest, the right, and the duty of every State to join in preventing it, is now everywhere taken for granted.

True, the acceptance of that principle is only a first step towards the actual abolition of war; but it brought with it consequences which have deeply and permanently affected the relations of States between themselves and the attitude of individual citizens towards all questions of foreign policy. A new respect for the rights of small nations; a new understanding of the need for co-operation in social and economic affairs; the habit of public debate on even the gravest diplomatic issues; the formation of an international civil service—these are examples of the immense innovations brought about in a period of less than twenty years. They have not yet exhausted their effects. The League, as a working institution, is dead; but the ideals which it sought to promote, the hopes to which it gave rise, the methods it devised, the agencies it created, have become an essential part of the political thinking of the civilized world, and their influence will survive until mankind enjoys a unity transcending the divisions of States and nations.

To the average citizen, the establishment of the League of Nations appeared as a completely new experiment. We shall see that the moral, political, and legal principles on which it was based had been proclaimed by a few pioneers over a period of a hundred years and more; while its constitutional forms were evolved by adapting to the needs of international intercourse the normal organization of a democratic State. Nevertheless, the view of the average citizen was substantially correct. The developments produced by the terrible pressures of the First World War were so deep, wide, rapid, and far-reaching as to constitute what was in all essentials a new departure. The difference between a political conception held by a small group of unofficial persons, and the same conception held by the majority of thinking men and provided with official institutions specially designed to make it effective, is a difference not in degree but in kind. The difference between the conception of international order before 1914 and the conception of international order after the creation of the League was even greater than this, since the Covenant went further in constructive planning than even the most hopeful advocates of internationalism had dared to anticipate. This could be done because, as the result of the war, the



change in public opinion was a matter not so much of intellectual persuasion as of passionate sentiment. In the long run, this fact was a source of weakness as well as of strength. At the same time, it was a source of life, ensuring to the new organization a vitality and resilience that no mere diplomatic contrivance could ever possess.

The history of the League is perhaps more difficult to keep within clearly defined boundaries than that of any other secular institution. Its external forms were complex and changing. It dealt with a bewildering variety of affairs; its activities extended to every continent and touched at innumerable points the interests of every country. It devised new models of international organization, then reshaped or replaced them in the light of experience. With a single exception, every recognized State was at one period or another a Member of the League: the great majority were Members throughout its existence. But in the course of time it was abandoned by some which had been its friends and joined by others which had been hostile. The policies and the sentiments of the Member States were subject to continuous variations, each of which affected in some degree their attitude towards the League, and exercised some influence upon its acts and upon its development. Yet within these fluctuating outlines the central unity and purpose of the League remained constant. The great conceptions on which it was based were often overlaid and forgotten in the press of day-to-day events; but to understand its history the reader must keep in mind the essential fact that it was always, in success or failure alike, the embodiment in constitutional form of mankind's aspirations towards peace and towards a rationally organized world.

## THE ANCESTRY OF THE LEAGUE

*Before 1815: philosophical essays; religious pacifism; international law—  
From 1815 to 1914: practical steps in international organization; the Concert of Europe; international law; pacifism—The Hague Conferences*

**A**T the time of the Armistice of November 1918, the great mass of opinion, in belligerent and neutral countries alike, was passionately convinced that a League of Nations must be set up without delay in order to make war impossible for the future.

The name was already familiar: but it was only a few months or weeks since most men had heard it for the first time, and not one in a thousand could have given any clear account of the principles on which the League might be based, the methods it might follow, or the institutions of which it might be composed. With few exceptions, the responsible leaders in the chief Allied countries had had neither the time nor the inclination to give serious attention to such questions. Yet once hostilities had ceased, things moved with surprising speed. The Peace Conference of Paris did not meet till January 1919. In the following February, Woodrow Wilson was already able to present the first official draft of the Covenant to the assembled delegates; and on April 28th the final text was approved in a plenary meeting of the Conference.

If the men entrusted with the heavy responsibility of drawing up the Covenant were thus able to achieve their historic task in the course of only a few weeks of intensive labour, they owed this possibility to a long line of predecessors—not, like the delegates in Paris, men in high official positions, but for the most part humble and obscure persons, whose exertions had been looked upon, both by governments and by public opinion, with indifference and often with hostility.

The prehistory of the League may conveniently be divided into three periods. The first covers three or more centuries, from the time when Europe, abandoning the forms of unity symbolized by the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church, shaped itself into a number of independent national States, down to the end of the Napoleonic wars. The second covers exactly one century, from the Congress of Vienna to the outbreak of the First World War. The third covers less than five years, from August 1914 to the Conference of Paris.

During the first period, a number of schemes for the prevention of

war between the princes of Europe were published by speculative and philosophical writers. The best known amongst them are those of Sully (1603), Emeric Crucé (1623), William Penn (1694), the Abbé de St Pierre (1713), Rousseau (1761), Bentham (1789), and Kant (1795). Most of these are great names: but their greatness springs from their achievements in other fields. From the point of view of political history their plans are hardly more than literary curiosities or academic essays. We must look elsewhere to find the early growth of those forces which were then slowly gathering the power to move the hearts and minds of men, and which must be counted as the true ancestors of the League of Nations. These forces were religious pacifism on the one hand and international law on the other.

Absolute non-resistance to violence has never, at least since the days of Constantine, been the official doctrine of any major branch of the Christian Church. But many individual teachers have professed it, and they have had followers who were ready to die rather than abandon it. Of such sects, the Society of Friends, founded in the middle of the seventeenth century, has been the most famous and the most enduring. Their numbers have never been great, but their influence has been considerable; it was perhaps at its height during the eighteenth century, and both in Britain and America the strong tinge of pacifism which has distinguished the nonconformist churches is directly traceable to the Quakers. Pacifism, whether religious or secular, has always been disliked by governments. In a world of separate States it must always be a sentiment, never a policy. Its practical effects have been usually impossible to demonstrate in concrete cases; but there can be no doubt that, indirectly and imperceptibly, it has influenced the attitude of millions of persons besides those who consciously profess it.

Just as private law cannot rouse the same devotion as religion or morality, so it is with international law as compared with pacifism. International law inspires no sentiment. Its nature, its very existence, have been matters of dispute. Its favourite subject-matter has been not peace but the laws of war and the relations between belligerents and neutrals. Its professors long maintained the anarchical principle that sovereign States must be considered absolutely free to do exactly as they like in any matter on which they are not actually bound by treaty, and that therefore the question of peace or war was outside its range. Nevertheless, international law is the direct ancestor of the Covenant. This might have been more plain for all to see if the new science had followed more faithfully the direction pointed by its greatest exponent. Grotius, whose book on the Law of War and Peace was published in 1625, is generally considered as the chief name among the founders of

international law; and though Grotius did not deny that war might in certain circumstances be both just and lawful, he did protest against the view that any independent ruler could lawfully go to war whenever he chose to do so. He sought not only to make wars less frequent, but also to establish a distinction between just and unjust wars. This vital distinction was abandoned by later teachers of international law: it was never embodied in the effective law of nations until the signature of the Covenant nearly three hundred years later. In practice, however, the gradual development of international law in other directions was a necessary preparation for the establishment of the League. And in so far as individual genius or power contributed to making the League possible, it may be said that, looking back from the days of Woodrow Wilson, no figure stands out so high as that of Grotius.

But though, in this three-hundred-year period, the first beginnings of a peace movement may thus be traced, those beginnings were faint and weak indeed. They were imperceptible to practical statesmen, and they exercised not the slightest influence upon the actual course of events. Neither the pacifist nor the international lawyer dreamed of being able to speak on equal terms with the diplomatist or the soldier. Europe was devastated by a long series of wars; but none among its ruling princes or ministers had considered the possibility of settling by any other method a difference on which they were unwilling to compromise.

In the second of our three periods,<sup>1</sup> from the close of the Napoleonic wars to the First World War of 1914-18, there came a gradual but important change. The movement against war emerged in various forms on to the field of practical politics. It was always matched against forces stronger than itself. Militarism and nationalism did not cease to hold the levers of power in the democratic as in the autocratic countries of Europe and America. But they were no longer the unchallenged masters of policy. They were compelled to reckon with a growing demand for the creation of an organized system of peaceful settlement whereby the danger of war might be lessened and finally abolished. In spite of the successes which Bismarck achieved by the deliberate use of war as an instrument of policy, the governments themselves were, on a general view, becoming steadily more averse to such acts. They were still determined to keep in their own hands that absolute freedom of choice which they erected into the sacrosanct doctrine of national sovereignty. They disliked, therefore, all proposals for compulsory arbitration of disputes or for the limitation, by agreement, of national

<sup>1</sup> In the following pages I have made much use of the excellent account of pacifist movements in *The History of Peace* by A. C. F. Beales (London, Bell, 1931).

armaments. But such proposals were, by the end of the century, regarded with sympathy by a considerable minority of public opinion in many countries. They could no longer be disregarded or bluntly rejected.

The growth in the nineteenth century of the various efforts to abolish war may be traced along four distinct lines, each of which played its part in the parentage of the League and must therefore be briefly mentioned here. The first was internationalism in the proper sense of the word, a movement, that is to say, concerned not primarily with the maintenance of peace, but with practical co-operation in matters which affect the common interest of all. The second was that practice of consultation between great powers which was known as the Concert of Europe. The other two lines of growth were the continuation of movements which existed in the earlier period, pacifism and international law.

Practical internationalism was a natural consequence of the vast material developments of the nineteenth century. Extraordinary increases in population, the revolutionary effects of the steamship, the railway and the telegraph, the enormous extension of external trade and internal wealth—these and other changes multiplied many times over the fields of contact between nations and between governments. It was slowly realized that if every government continued to follow its own convenience without considering that of its neighbours, the result could only be loss and inconvenience for all. If order was to be substituted for anarchy, means must be found whereby some questions at least could be discussed and decided on an international basis. Accordingly, a number of international organs were established and invested with varying powers of control over the individual national administrations. The first of these was the Danube Commission set up by the Paris Conference of 1856. Nine years later, in 1865, came the International Telegraphic Union; nine years after that, the Universal Postal Union, the most successful, complete, and powerful example of its kind. By 1914 there were over thirty such bodies, of which the most important, besides those already mentioned, were the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome (1905) and the International Health Office in Paris (1907). Meanwhile the Pan American Union, started in 1890 as a means of increasing inter-American commerce, had been slowly expanding, at Conferences held in 1901, 1906, and 1910, into a wider movement, with the general aim of promoting friendship and peace between the American Republics.

In spite of their number, and of the interesting constitutional development which they represented, these organizations possessed no shadow of political influence. They could function effectively only in so far as

individual governments were willing to give up some fraction of their freedom of action; and that freedom, under its mystic name of sovereignty, lost nothing of its sacred character during the nineteenth century. The work of these bureaux was accordingly confined to matters which aroused no national feelings and involved no possible alteration of the strategic, economic, or political situation of any member. Attempts to submit such questions as tariffs, immigration, or labour conditions to any form of international control or even discussion were promptly suppressed. Even those organs which were actually established had in each case been opposed or delayed by one State or another; their powers were strictly limited, and the natural tendency of any live institution to extend its activities was jealously resisted. They performed useful services in their own fields; but from the wider point of view of international unity and of the stabilization of peace they were little more than a symbol of what might have been.

Under this same head of internationalism, mention must also be made of the growth of unofficial international societies—the Interparliamentary Union (1889), the International Federation of Trade Unions (1901), and countless bodies connected with religion, science, literature, sport, and indeed with almost every aspect of human existence. It is surprising that so much enthusiasm and sincerity should have been of so little avail to save the peace of nations. For these societies were a conclusive manifestation of the extent of the common interests of mankind, and of the artificiality of a world in which those interests are cut into separate compartments by national frontiers. If they exercised so little influence on national policy, it was because in those days even men most eminent in other professions believed that the mysteries of diplomacy were too high and too hard for them to understand. None but the expert, it was felt, had the right to an opinion on such matters; and the experts, that is to say the professional diplomatists, had no contribution to make to the growth of internationalism, and mistrusted any intrusion of the uninitiated into their field of action. For the most part, therefore, the international societies remained aloof from all questions relating to foreign policy. Two exceptions deserve to be recorded. The International Law Association and the Interparliamentary Union tried to promote the establishment of a permanent court of arbitration. And from 1900 onwards the Second Socialist International repeatedly urged its adherent parties to speak and vote against all military and naval credits; many of its leaders advocated a joint agreement to declare a general strike, in case of war, in each belligerent country, but they were never able to secure a formal resolution in this sense.

As for the powerful yet ill-defined institution known as the Concert of Europe, not much need here be said. It is a fact that between 1815 and 1914 situations critical for peace led on numerous occasions to meetings of the great powers, and that their deliberations were able, on some of these occasions, to avert the danger. The Concert, however, rested on no formal instrument: its members were not bound to meet, and, when they did meet, their proceedings were governed by no constitutional obligations. Two British Foreign Secretaries made attempts to place it upon a more regular basis: Castlereagh in the first years after the Napoleonic wars, and Edward Grey in the last years before the First World War. Both failed; the desire of the great powers to keep their complete freedom of action was a stronger motive than the practical advantages of an organized system. Nevertheless, the Concert had notable achievements to its credit. It succeeded, on the whole, in controlling the repeated crises which arose throughout the nineteenth century as a result of the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. It was entirely successful in preventing the wars which must otherwise have broken out over the partitioning of Africa. Even in the first years of the twentieth century, when Europe was divided into two camps, heavily armed and still more heavily arming, the Concert did valuable service. But it was fatally handicapped by the absence of any regular constitution. Any State could refuse to come to a meeting: and since the Concert had no powers except those which it conferred upon itself by agreement in each case, the refusal of one member to attend made it impossible to meet at all. No meetings took place before Bismarck's wars against Denmark, Austria, and France, nor before the Russo-Japanese war. And in spite of his utmost efforts Grey could not secure a meeting in 1914.

Of the two older strains of League ancestry, international law and pacifism, the first shows a slow but continuous growth throughout the nineteenth century. In particular, the idea of arbitration acquired immense importance. Between 1815 and 1900, disputes and differences between States were submitted to arbitration on some two hundred occasions; and in the vast majority of these cases the arbitrators' award was duly carried out by both parties. In no case was a question which had been submitted to arbitration later made a cause of war. Naturally, therefore, the advocates of peace were inclined to concentrate their attention upon this method of settlement. The weak point of the situation was that no treaty existed, even between individual powers, whereby the signatory States bound themselves to submit to arbitration all differences between them, or even all differences of a legal or justiciable character. In each of the two hundred cases above referred to, the

first question which the two governments had to settle was whether arbitration should take place at all. In the second place, they had to agree as to who should act as arbitrator; and in the third place, as to the basis on which, once appointed, he should give his decision. Failure to settle one or other of these essential preliminaries meant that there would be no arbitration.

Hence the would-be reformers of the international anarchy devoted their efforts above all to clearing these possible difficulties out of the way. They sought to establish the principle that States should bind themselves by treaty to submit their differences to arbitration. They proposed that a permanent international Court should be set up to give judgement in all cases so submitted. And they tried to extend and codify international law so that the Court might have the widest possible legal basis for its deliberations. In these efforts they came at times very near success. Resolutions in favour of the principle of arbitration were adopted by the national legislatures of Britain, the United States, Italy, and numerous other States. In 1890 a Pan American Treaty of Arbitration was signed by eleven American Republics, including the United States. In 1897 Britain and the United States signed a treaty for the same purpose. But the treaties remained unratified, and the resolutions unfulfilled. The half-hearted results of the Hague Conferences were all that the nineteenth century had to show as regards either the principle of arbitration or the establishment of a permanent international Court. The first decade of the twentieth did indeed witness the conclusion of many arbitration treaties between individual countries; but with few exceptions they excluded all such questions as could possibly endanger peace. As for international law in the strict sense, it fared little better. Its scope was extended by a number of general treaties on subjects of common interest, such as the rules of navigation, or the rights of authors and inventors. But its favourite field was still that of the diplomatic and military relations between States—the nature of diplomatic privileges and immunities, the laws of war, the rights and duties of neutrals.

Meanwhile the pacifists were keeping up to the best of their ability an agitation, not for the organization of peace, but for the abolition of war. The first Peace Society was founded in New York in 1815; next year a similar Society was started in London, and a few years later others were born in Geneva and Paris. Their members for the most part followed the Quaker example and condemned all war, even in self-defence against unprovoked attack. They soon began to correspond among themselves, then to hold meetings together: in the middle of the century they staged a series of international congresses, attended by hundreds of delegates from a dozen different countries. Thus they were



beginning to make something of a noise in the world. They were treated with dislike and ridicule by the press; no echo of their clamour reached the lofty and narrow circles in which foreign policy was decided. But they did begin to affect a section, usually the most radical section, of the parliaments, including those of countries such as Prussia and Austria.

For this result, such as it was, the peace societies were mainly indebted to allies who did not hold their extreme pacifist views, but who advocated peace and co-operation on more practical grounds. Men like Cobden and Bright detested the wastefulness of war and resented the spending of public money on armaments, but they would not have denied the right and duty of self-defence: they were internationalists rather than pacifists. The two movements could work together, and above all they could combine in advocating the development of international law and of arbitration as the means of settling disputes. But the alliance was never perfect. The pacifists of the purer doctrine condemned the compromise with political realities which the internationalists were ready to make. It is probable that in the long run the latter would have done well to maintain a clear separation between their movement and that of the extremists. In a world of armed and independent States those who condemn all resistance even to the most flagrant aggression are only making the organization of peace still more difficult. The result of the alliance was that men who in fact had a perfectly clear and practical programme, and believed in the right of each nation to defend itself if attacked, were judged by public opinion on the same terms as the advocates of non-resistance. There were many who were zealous in spreading the conviction that all who demanded the reduction of armaments, the extension of arbitration, and in general a new organization of international relations, were cranky, sentimental, unrealistic, and unpatriotic persons. Such propaganda, ignorant and insincere as it usually was, was certainly effective. Not only before the war, but even after it, when almost every power was a Member of the League and was officially declaring that the Covenant was henceforward to be the basis of its foreign policy, there was still a solid mass of opinion which refused to consider the activities of the League as serious and practical affairs. Supporters of the League never altogether freed themselves from the charge of being what was known as impractical idealists: and none were more ready to make this charge than those who themselves knew nothing whatever about the organization of the League or the historic development of the international idea. It was reserved for Nazi Germany to make the word 'international' a term of positive abuse; but in some circles of the democratic countries it already

engendered suspicion and dislike. And this disastrous state of things can in large measure be traced back to the manifestations, high-minded and brave as they were in truth, of the religious pacifists, and to the fact that pacifism and internationalism, two completely distinct movements, were not treated as distinct even by their own protagonists.

The effect of all these various efforts towards the elimination of war and its causes was put to the test at the great Hague Conference of 1899. It was in August of the previous year that Tsar Nicholas II of Russia proposed a Conference of all the powers possessing diplomatic representatives in St Petersburg, for the purpose 'of insuring to all peoples the benefit of a real and durable peace, and, above all, of putting an end to the progressive developments of the present armaments'. In words which Cobden before him, or Robert Cecil after him, might have used, he described the unprecedented growth of military forces and the vast and wasteful expenditure which the nations had to bear; and urged that the time had come to ensure that the century which was about to open should see the triumph of universal peace.

Coming from so great a potentate, the proposal for a conference was certain to be received with professions of sympathy and admiration. None of the invited powers rejected it, though Italy declined to attend until it was certain that the Vatican would not be represented. But during the nine months' interval between the invitation and the actual meeting, it was made plain by diplomatic methods that the great powers would not admit any serious discussion on the question of armaments. When the Conference met, a committee of military and naval experts was appointed, but the only result was to produce a number of reasons to prove that any agreed limitation of armaments was impossible. The German delegate took the lead in the demonstration; and it has often been claimed that it was the German opposition which prevented the Conference from achieving any success in this part of its work. But in fact the Kaiser's spokesman only expressed more bluntly the views of all his colleagues: they acquiesced in his arguments and would have themselves taken the same attitude if there had been any necessity to do so.

The Tsar's initiative had been greeted with immense enthusiasm by all the groups and societies which had organized themselves to promote international concord and to struggle against war. They were bitterly disappointed by the total failure of his proposals about armaments. But he had also proposed that the Conference might lead to an acceptance of peaceable methods for the settlement of disputes, either by arbitration or by the mediation of disinterested powers; and in this field they hoped that real progress might still be made. The Inter-

parliamentary **U**nion and the International Law Association submitted carefully drafted plans, aimed above all at the creation of a permanent Court and at the acceptance of obligations to submit to arbitration by that Court all disputes capable of being settled by legal methods. To these subjects the Conference devoted much serious work, and succeeded in drawing up a Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes which was in due course signed and ratified by the invited States. The Convention was considered by diplomatists to go farther than anyone could have reasonably expected; but it fell far short of what internationalists had hoped. Its signatories agreed that, in cases of serious dispute between them, they would, before going to war, invite the mediation of other powers, 'so far as circumstances allow'; and also that it would be expedient that third parties should offer such mediation, again 'so far as circumstances allow'. It suggested that, when a dispute turned on questions of fact, the parties should appoint an international commission of inquiry to investigate and report upon the facts. As regards arbitration, the attempt to establish any obligation in that respect was a failure: and in this case the failure was, in truth, due to German opposition. Other powers were ready to bind themselves to submit to arbitration all disputes on certain classes of difference: these classes were narrowly limited and of no great importance, but even so they were too much for the German government, which refused to circumscribe its freedom of action in the slightest degree. All that could be done, therefore, was to recognize that, in disputes of a legal character, especially those concerning the interpretation of a treaty, arbitration was the most effective and equitable method of settlement. At the same time, the Convention provided for a so-called Permanent Court of Arbitration. This body was in truth neither permanent nor a Court, but simply a list or panel of competent persons on whom States might call, if they decided to submit a question to arbitration, and had no other arbitrators in view. Nevertheless, the Hague Convention proved its value on a number of occasions during the next fifteen years. Besides minor differences, at least three dangerous disputes between great powers were submitted for settlement by arbitrators appointed from the Hague panel.

The second Peace Conference at The Hague was held eight years later. It was again called by the Tsar: it might indeed have been convened earlier but for the Russo-Japanese war. Seventeen Republics of Central and South America, which had not been invited to the first meeting, brought the total membership of the second to forty-four. No attempt was made, on this second occasion, to include the growth of military establishments and budgets in the agenda of the Conference.

The situation in this respect was very much more dangerous than it had been in 1899: but the same fears and ambitions which were leading to an armaments race between the European powers made them doubly unwilling to enter into any discussion on the question. A British resolution, to the effect that military expenditure had much increased since 1899 and that the governments should seriously examine the question, was adopted unanimously, all agreeing that it meant nothing at all.

Once more, and with still more ominous significance, the most sustained exertions of the delegates were devoted to further elaboration of the laws of war. In the development of peaceful institutions, their achievements were hardly perceptible. They tried hard to establish a Permanent Court: but it proved impossible to reach agreement between the great powers and the small on the method of appointing the judges, and the scheme had to be abandoned. Proposals concerning obligatory arbitration came to nothing, again owing to German obstinacy: and the delegates contented themselves with a formula which shows only too clearly the completeness of their failure. The Convention of 1899 had stated, as already recorded, that arbitration was in certain cases the most effective and equitable mode of settlement. To this the Convention of 1907 added this paragraph: 'Consequently, it would be desirable that, in disputes regarding the above-mentioned questions, the Contracting Powers should, if the case arise, have recourse to arbitration, in so far as circumstances permit'.

Though it reached agreed texts on some other matters of less importance, the second Hague Conference was on the whole much less encouraging than the first to those who hoped that the powers might be wise enough to put an end to that international anarchy which could end only in war. Its most significant act was to resolve to meet again in eight years, without waiting to be convoked by the Tsar or by any government: and to set up a preparatory committee two years beforehand, with the mandate of collecting and studying the proposals which would be submitted to the Conference. This decision was deprived of all effect by the outbreak of the First World War. But it was a true international act, indicating that even the dreary diplomatic Conference which had dragged on for over four months at The Hague had developed the first beginnings of a corporate life.

## THE LEAGUE IDEA IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

*The stimulus of war—Movement for a new organization in various countries—The Pope's message—The Fourteen Points—Unofficial and official plans—Position at the Armistice*

(AUGUST 1914—NOVEMBER 1918)

IF we could estimate the progress made in international relations between 1815 and 1914 as an abstract quantity, separating it in our minds from the other developments of that century, it might appear as a not inconsiderable achievement. Numerous international offices had been established to deal with administrative business. Private international societies had arisen in every important field of human interest. The practice of arbitration had become familiar and its advantages were recognized by governments in general. The great powers, though they still refused any obligation to meet for the discussion of critical situations, had on the whole maintained the habit of such meetings. But when we contemplate the enormous changes in other spheres during that hundred-year period, we shall surely be struck, not by the extent of these developments, but by their miserable inadequacy. Scientific and industrial progress had produced the most profound alterations in the conditions of life. The political institutions and the administrative services of nearly all States, the armies and navies of every important State, had kept pace with the new discoveries and the new methods. Only in the field of international relations had there been no corresponding advance. The small group of statesmen and diplomatists, who at the end of the nineteenth century retained the chief responsibility for foreign policy, still held to the doctrines and methods of past generations. They had not learnt to adjust their policies to the growth of democratic institutions and of the sentiment of nationality, nor to adjust their methods to the material conditions of the new age. It was as though the unreformed House of Commons of the eighteen-twenties were attempting to govern the British Empire of the twentieth century.

There were peace-loving Foreign Ministers—Grey, Root, Bethmann Hollweg and many more. There were occasional pronouncements from individual statesmen, such as the Tsar's message of 1898 and Theodore Roosevelt's address to the Nobel Committee of May 5th,

1910,<sup>1</sup> which seemed to show that they had had a flashing vision of the revolution which was needed. But until after the outbreak of the First World War we shall look in vain for the name of any political leader whose efforts were concentrated on the organization of peace.<sup>2</sup> No government, no great party in any country, had adopted such a plan as part of its programme or its policy. Naturally, therefore, the great mass of opinion everywhere was, generally speaking, indifferent or fatalist in regard to the issues of peace and war. That the lives and happiness of all mankind were in danger, that existing methods of dealing with foreign affairs were out of date and inadequate, that the question was not one for experts only but for the common wisdom of the people—such things were said by a few writers and propagandists, rarely or never by the men in high office. Norman Angell's famous work *The Great Illusion* did make a certain impression on public opinion in many countries, as the energy of the militarist reactions showed. But the lesson which he taught was still regarded as a matter of theory. It was nowhere proclaimed as the practical aim of any government. No proposals for a radical reorganization of the whole business of international diplomacy ever entered the domain of practical politics before the outbreak of the First World War.

Four years of war acted as a powerful stimulus to the political conscience of mankind. By the time the Armistice was signed, both governments and peoples of all save the most backward countries had begun to realize that a new international system must be established to guard against the recurrence of so great a disaster. But the time was too short for such a lesson to be fully learnt. It was long enough for all the planning that had to be done; but too short for the general public to rid itself altogether of the fatalism and ignorance which had held it so long, or for professional opinion to abandon its enslavement to the fetish of sovereignty and the free hand. This was the deep and grave weakness of the League of Nations. The experts did not want it. The peoples were enthusiastically behind it: but their convictions had been too quickly formed, their support was based on sentiment rather than on understanding, and their purposes were therefore liable to become uncertain and confused.

When the First World War broke out all talk and thought of peace was silenced and forgotten. The nations of Europe stumbled into war,

<sup>1</sup> 'Finally, it would be a master-stroke if those great powers bent on peace would form a league of peace, not only to keep the peace among themselves, but to prevent, by force if necessary, its being broken by others.'

<sup>2</sup> The one exception was the Frenchman, Léon Bourgeois, who from the first Hague Conference onwards devoted himself to this aim. But though he had been Prime Minister in 1895-6, he did not play any great role in national politics during the twentieth century.

understanding little what they were doing, why they were doing it, or what irreparable destruction and misery awaited them all. Powerful and exciting emotions filled the hearts of the peoples—patriotic fervour, military enthusiasm, the will to conquer or die. The plans for a general strike in Germany and France were swept away as though they had never existed: except for a few extremists, the Socialist parties in every country were as ready to work and fight for victory as any of their fellow citizens. Even the most rigorous upholders of the theories of pacifism were forced to realize that if they attempted to make themselves heard they were merely encouraging the enemy in his hopes of winning. Political leaders on both sides claimed to be fighting for a durable peace. Such words in a Germany now completely controlled by the Army Command could mean nothing except a peace which left Germany supreme in Europe. Coming from Asquith or Viviani, they were sincere, but indefinite. Edward Grey was without doubt the only responsible statesman among the belligerents who, in the first months of the war, had already formed the outlines of a plan for peace.

During the first winter of the war, a slow change of mood came over the scene. Both sides still hoped for victory; few foresaw that there were still four years of fighting ahead; but all visions of swift and splendid triumph had faded away. Month by month it became more and more evident that, even for the winner, the advantages would be less and the cost greater than men had realized at the beginning. Slowly the feeling grew that all this should never have happened and that the nations must find some way to ensure that it should not happen again. Here, then, was the effective spring and motive of the movement which was to bring the League of Nations into existence. It was a movement inspired, indeed, by hatred of war: but it was not a pacifist movement. On the contrary, it was everywhere based on the conviction that any effective system for the prevention of war must be backed by the united force of peace-loving States. Nor was it directly concerned with the problem of bringing the world war to an end, though many of those in Britain and America who joined in promoting it hoped that their proposals might lead public opinion in Germany and Austria to turn against their military rulers.

The new movement arose separately in the United States, Britain, Germany, and the neutral countries of Europe. In each case its beginnings were quiet and private, so that no order of priority could now be established. Nor is there any reason to attempt such a task: the various groups were formed spontaneously and their programmes were in general closely alike. But the influence they could exercise differed widely from one country to another. The German group was proscribed,

its papers were seized, some of its members were arrested. The groups in Holland and the Scandinavian countries were reduced, if not to silence, at least to a discretion which amounted to almost the same thing: small neutral powers, at the mercy of the German army on one side, and of the British navy on the other, were determined to allow no private initiative which might arouse the anger or suspicion of the great belligerents. But in the Anglo-Saxon countries there were leaders whose character and circumstances raised them clear of the inhibitions of the continental governments. Asquith and Grey supported the idea of a League in their public speeches, in their secret dispatches, and by unofficial encouragement to the British 'League of Nations' Society' founded in May 1915. A similar society founded in the United States at about the same time was headed by an ex-President, William Taft.

Here, on neutral ground, free from the sharp suspicion which beset all talk of peace in countries which were straining for victory, the new seed could flourish freely. Branches of the 'League to Enforce Peace' sprang up all over the country. In May 1916 it held a great public meeting in Washington: and the chief speakers were President Wilson, the acknowledged head of the Democratic party, and Henry Cabot Lodge, the leader of the Republican members of the Senate. Three years later, these two men, divided by an implacable hostility, were to be the protagonists in a desperate struggle for and against American membership of the League. But on that day they stood on the same platform and each declared in clear and eloquent language that a new international system must be set up, that peace and justice must be maintained by the use, if necessary, of the armed forces of the chief powers, and that the United States must be a full partner in this future League of Nations. In the election campaign of that summer and autumn both the great parties agreed in advocating the policies thus endorsed by their leaders. But after Wilson's re-election, his position as President of the United States, combined with his own powerful personality, made him appear as the head of the movement not only in America but in the whole civilized world.

In the summer of 1917 Pope Benedict XV addressed a message to all the belligerent powers. His main purpose was to bring about peace negotiations, but his message invited the governments to agree, in the first place, to a simultaneous reduction of their armed forces to the level necessary for maintaining internal order; and then to set up a system of

<sup>1</sup> The name 'League of Nations', unknown in the autumn of 1914, had become current by the spring of 1915; I have not traced its origin with certainty. It may have been adapted from the French term, 'Société des Nations', which had been in use for many years, and was the title of a book published in 1908 by Léon Bourgeois.



compulsory arbitration of all disputes, with sanctions against any State which refused arbitration or failed to carry out the award. The message made no effective impression at the time. It coincided with certain secret moves undertaken by the Austrian and German governments which the Allied governments believed to be no more than a trap; the Pope's suggestions concerning other conditions of peace were considered much too favourable to the Central powers. But in later years it was an encouragement to that section of Catholic opinion which was well disposed towards the League.

After the United States had declared war on Germany (April 1917), Wilson's advocacy took on even higher significance than before. The establishment of the League was no longer merely the hope of the greatest among the neutrals, but the primary war aim of the strongest among the belligerents. Meanwhile, in London, Asquith had fallen and Grey had left the Foreign Office. Lloyd George as Prime Minister cared nothing about the idea of a League; but Arthur Balfour, who succeeded Grey as Foreign Secretary, was determined to do everything possible to maintain friendship with the United States. Still more important was the fact that Lord Robert Cecil continued as Minister of Blockade, which made him a kind of assistant Foreign Secretary under Balfour, as he had been under Grey: and Cecil had already made up his mind that the establishment of the League was the most important task any statesman could undertake. He and Grey had always wished to see the United States take the lead in creating the new institution, since American membership was, in their view, essential for its success. They refrained, therefore, from any sort of public campaign: but Wilson was aware that he could count on the support of the British government.

As the years of war dragged on, and hopes of peace were ever deferred, the vague but passionate aspiration to ensure that this would be the last war grew stronger in every country. 'What has reconciled our Entente peoples to the burdens they were enduring? It was their consciousness of right and their vague hope of a better, fairer world to come which would justify their sacrifices.' These words of General Smuts, written after the Armistice, were true above all of the last months of the war. By the end of 1917 the longing for peace was spreading among the armies as well as in the rear. In Russia the strain was too great to be borne: the Tsarist regime, and the liberal government which succeeded it, were swept away; Lenin and Trotsky proclaimed that peace must be made on a basis of no annexations and no indemnities, and called upon the workers everywhere to refuse to continue the war. The ruthless Treaty of Brest Litovsk showed how little the rulers of Germany heeded such propaganda. But the Allied governments felt

that if their people were to be steeled to face the colossal efforts still needed for victory, they must be told clearly what they were fighting for. It was not enough to repeat the evident truth that no durable peace could be established until Germany had been defeated. People needed also to be convinced that victory would be followed by a sweeping reform of the conditions which had allowed such disasters to fall upon them unawares. Thus alone could their longing for peace help to keep them fighting and working to the bitter end.

Lloyd George and Wilson, at almost the same moment, but unknown to one another, offered their countrymen the assurances for which they were waiting. To a meeting with delegates of the Trades Unions, on January 5th, 1918, the British Prime Minister gave an account of the war aims of his government, which he thus summed up: 'First, the sanctity of treaties must be re-established; secondly, a territorial settlement must be secured, based on the right of self-determination or the consent of the governed; and, lastly, we must seek by the creation of some international organization to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the danger of war.'

Far more important and decisive was Wilson's famous address to Congress of January 8th, 1918, in which he laid down the Fourteen Points which constituted the principal war aims of the United States. The last of these points—placed in that position in order to give it special emphasis—was thus worded: 'A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike.' The first four points were also intimately concerned with plans for the League. They called for open diplomacy; the freedom of the seas, except in so far as they might be closed by League action; the removal of trade barriers; and the reduction of armaments. To these purposes, the President declared, the American people were ready to devote their lives, their honour, and everything they possessed. Nothing, at that time, suggested that Wilson would not be able to carry through the policy to which he thus solemnly committed his country. It was, indeed, a resounding break with traditions of the past. As one of the chief opposition papers<sup>1</sup> wrote the next day: 'In a single speech he [President Wilson] has transformed the whole character and broken with all the tradition of American policy.' But the change was welcomed with enthusiasm from one end of the country to the other; and the paper added, 'To-day, as never before, the whole nation marches with the President, certain alike of the leader and the cause.'

<sup>1</sup> *New York Tribune*, January 9th, 1918, quoted in *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (London, Benn, 1926-8), vol. iii, p. 354.

The Fourteen Points were in due course adopted, with one reservation, as constituting a statement of the war aims of the Allied powers as a whole. They were taken by Austria and Germany in turn as a basis on which to sue for peace. They hold, therefore, an outstanding place in the political history of the war and of the peace. The same is true of their place in the history of the League. All the belligerents, in accepting them, took the definite engagement to establish a League of Nations. Even more important was their effect on public opinion amongst belligerents and neutrals alike. Those vague hopes of a better world, of which Smuts wrote, were brought down to the region of practical politics. They were crystallized henceforth round the words 'League of Nations', and round the person of Woodrow Wilson as the chief protagonist of the League.

Wilson was not in himself a man to appeal greatly to the crowd; nor was he looked upon with complete confidence and approval by the Allied governments. Yet when he visited Britain, France, and Italy before the Peace Conference met in Paris, his reception in every case was one of enthusiasm such as no British, French, or Italian leader could have counted on. Had he visited Vienna or Berlin the scenes would have been the same. All Europe longed for peace, disarmament, security, release from militarism and from fear; and while diplomatists and soldiers were sceptical and cold, the mass of the people looked to Wilson and the future League to fulfil those hopes, and the official policy of their governments was committed to the same purposes.

Meanwhile, in various quarters, schemes for the actual constitution of the League were being prepared. Neither governments nor public opinion had, by the end of the war, gone further than the affirmation of a few general principles. That disputes between States should be settled by arbitration, or by conciliation, or by some other form of peaceful discussion and not by war; that all treaties should be published; that armaments should be reduced and limited; and that any country guilty of attempting to gain its ends by war should be forced to desist by the economic and military action of all the rest—these were the points which reappeared again and again in the speeches of statesmen, and had been widely accepted as a necessary basis for the future organization of the world. They were, indeed, the most obvious lessons to be drawn from the events which preceded the war and from the experience of the war itself. But it was evident that there was much hard thinking to be done before such general principles could be embodied in the form of a treaty which should express, in clear and binding words, the obligations and undertakings of the Members of the League, and at

the same time establish the constitutional forms through which those obligations and undertakings were to be carried out.

It would be quite beyond the scope of this book to discuss, or even to enumerate, the many plans drawn up between 1914 and 1919 for the constitution and functioning of the League. The greatest number were of course those worked out by private groups or individuals. They varied from the merest outline of possible precautions against war, to elaborate essays on the theoretical construction of political institutions. Some of the proposals put forward were merely fresh attempts to cope with the problems which the Hague Conferences had been unable to solve—the establishment of a permanent Court and the acceptance of compulsory arbitration in certain cases of dispute. At the other extreme were schemes for world-wide federation with an international parliament and an international army. Among all the plans drawn up by unofficial persons, two or three stand out by their combination of political vision with administrative common sense. These include the drafts published in the United States by the League to Enforce Peace, and in England by the League of Nations Society. None more deserves to be remembered than that of the Fabian Society—a plan based in great part on the one book which historians of the League will rank with that of Norman Angell, L. S. Woolf's *International Government*. The Fabian Society's draft, which bears little trace of the socialist beliefs of its authors, anticipates and explains practically all the main features which were later embodied in the Covenant.

The general public, however warmly it might have adopted the essential idea of the League, had neither the inclination nor the competence to form opinions on the details of its constitution. All such labours, therefore, could be effective only in so far as they influenced the decisions of those governments which were, in due course, to be responsible for writing the terms of peace. And the governments acted with a caution justified by the novelty, the complexity, and the importance of their task. In the summer of 1917, the United States being now at war, and the demand for a statement of war aims beginning to make itself felt, the French and British governments decided to appoint committees to consider the form which the new institution might take. Each government acted, it appears, without the knowledge of what the other was doing: nor did the two committees exchange views or information with one another. The British Committee, usually known under the name of its Chairman, Lord Phillimore, submitted its report in March 1918; the French Committee, whose chief figure was Léon Bourgeois, three months later. Each was in due course communicated to Washington, not as representing the formal policy of either government, but

with a view to spurring Wilson and his advisers into formulating their own plans.

This Wilson had, of deliberate purpose, refrained from doing. He believed that if detailed proposals were put forward officially before the end of the war, they would lead to keen debate on particular points, and that the effect would be to weaken the united support which the nation was ready to give to the main principles of the League. He therefore refused all suggestions to set up any committee corresponding to those in Paris and London. He did not invite the State Department either to examine the French and British plans, or to elaborate a plan of their own. But he freely discussed the whole question, like all other questions of foreign policy, with Colonel House: and that remarkable man was almost as well informed about the ideas and sentiments of the European capitals as about those of Wilson himself. House looked upon the establishment of the League as by far the most important of all war aims: in his journeys to Europe as Wilson's personal representative, and in his close and confidential discussions with Grey, Balfour, and others, he never lost sight of this ultimate purpose. He was determined that the United States should be the chief architect of the new law of nations and that President Wilson should be the instrument of that great national achievement. To House, therefore, Wilson turned when in July 1918 he judged that the time had come to make the first attempt to embody his own ideas in a definite text. When House had made his draft, Wilson proceeded to make one of his own. But he kept both drafts strictly confidential, not even showing them to his own Secretary of State: and even persuaded the British not to carry out their intention to publish the Phillimore Committee's report, which had been largely used both by House and himself. As for the Bourgeois report, in spite of its interesting qualities, it was neglected in America, considered as of little account in the Foreign Office, and treated with silent indifference by Clemenceau and the French government.

Such, then, was the state of preparation of the three chief Allied governments when the Armistice of November 11th, 1918 put an end to fifty-one months of fighting. No serious preparatory work had been done officially on behalf of any other power. Italy had accepted the League as part of her war aims: but it was not until after the Armistice that any beginning was made in Italy, either privately or on governmental orders, to draft a specific plan. Matters were no further advanced in Berlin. Bethmann Hollweg had affirmed two years earlier that his government had never believed that peace could be maintained through any international organization, but that nevertheless Germany would collaborate in any practical efforts which might be made at the end of the war to

prevent the return of such disasters. But the Army Command had effectively prevented any attempt to discuss the subject; and it was only in the autumn of 1918, when the military situation was seen to be hopeless, that the Wilhelmstrasse hastily set some of its officials to work on drafting a constitution for the League. In the neutral countries of Europe, also, the Allied victory gave the signal for similar initiatives: private groups had already done much preparatory work, but official prudence had prevented any governmental action. During the Peace Conference the neutral States complained that they had not been sufficiently consulted in the drafting of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup> In truth, none of them had fully formulated its own policy with regard to the League at the time the Covenant was finally published.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4.

## THE DRAFTING OF THE COVENANT

*President Wilson's arrival in Europe—Smuts's 'Practical Suggestion'—  
Tasks of the Peace Conference—Wilson insists on beginning with the  
Covenant—The Committee set up to draft the Covenant—Its first draft  
(February 14th)—Second series of meetings and final draft (April 20th)—  
First steps to organize the League*

(DECEMBER 1918—MAY 1919)

AT the very moment when Wilson's definitions of American aims were being formally accepted by the Allied powers, and by the panic-stricken governments in Berlin and Vienna, as the basis for the coming peace, they were beginning for the first time to be seriously questioned in the United States itself. The nation had been united in war: it had seemed to be not less united in its support for the Fourteen Points and in its pride in Wilson's leadership. The Republican party had, indeed, been more inclined by its own traditions towards participation in world affairs than the Democratic party: and the President had often emphasized that the new spirit and the new institutions which he advocated were in essence the extension of American principles to the rest of the world. But in October 1918, when the campaign for the forthcoming partial elections was at its height, victory over the Central Empires was already certain and imminent. Partisan feeling revived; the old hostilities against Wilson broke forth anew; and Wilson himself stirred these emotions to a dangerous height by appealing to the country to return a Democratic majority to Congress and thus enable him to speak with full and undivided authority at the forthcoming peace negotiations. The President's solemn manifesto aroused the violent resentment of his Republican opponents. Even those who, like Taft, agreed with his policy, were indignant that he should seem to use the occasion for party advantage; while other leaders, including Theodore Roosevelt and Lodge, began to pour scorn not only on Wilson himself but also on his plans for the peace. The result of the election was to deprive the Democrats of their previous control of both Houses. The Republicans won a considerable majority in the House of Representatives and the barest possible majority in the Senate. Few, even among the Republicans, either believed or desired that their victory meant that the United States was turning away from the League. But subsequent events were to justify Wilson's fears that his authority in the

Peace Conference might be impaired by the fact that he did not possess the full support of Congress.

In spite of his defeat, the President lost no time, after the Armistice was signed, in announcing that he would attend the Conference in person. He was firmly resolved that the establishment of the League of Nations should be its first and principal task. In this purpose he still believed that he was expressing the will of the American people as a whole and of the mass of the common people everywhere. He was persuaded, indeed, that at that moment in the world's history he represented, more completely than their own governments, the deepest aspirations of the nations of Europe. There were many men and women in Europe who felt and said the same thing; and the extraordinary reception which Wilson received from the crowds in the great cities of France, Italy, and Britain confirmed the belief with which he had left the United States. The great surge of relief and hope which followed the close of the war was soon to be dissipated in the confusions, quarrels, and disappointments of the Paris Conference. But for a few weeks Wilson did in truth stand upon an unprecedented pinnacle of splendour. Nor, though the popular hopes were exaggerated, can it be said that the popular sentiment was misplaced. Three great ideals filled men's minds at that time. The first was individual freedom through the growth of democratic institutions, to take the place of the personal rule of Tsar or Kaiser. The second was national freedom through the right of self-determination, to take the place of foreign rule such as had been exercised in the Austrian and Turkish Empires. The third was the maintenance of peace through a complete change in the conduct of international affairs. All these ideals were shared to the full by Wilson. He was convinced that they were not only right, but were within the grasp of human achievement; he intended to fight for them to the best of his power.

Landing in Europe on December 13th, 1918, a full month after the Armistice, Wilson found that little progress had been made in the preparation of the Peace Conference. The study of the vast and complex problems which the Conference would have to solve, and even of the procedure which it should adopt, was still in a preliminary stage. It was not decided whether the peace-making should take the form of a preliminary treaty in general terms, to be followed by a series of settlements in detail, or that of a single comprehensive treaty. It was not decided whether the Germans, Austrians, and other defeated powers should be allowed to take part in the Conference. Elections were being held in Britain; and till these were over it could not be known who the



British delegates would be. For all these reasons, more than a month was to elapse between Wilson's arrival and the opening of the Conference. The peoples of Europe were already finding that the cessation of hostilities had by no means put an end to their physical suffering or their national dissensions; and the waste of five precious weeks was a serious loss. They were not altogether wasted, however, so far as preparation for the League was concerned. Two events of great importance in League history occurred at this time: the issue of General Smuts's famous pamphlet *The League of Nations: a Practical Suggestion*, and the appointment of Cecil to take charge, in the British delegation, of questions connected with the League.

Smuts's work was from every point of view the climax of all the thought and labour expended on the League idea before the Paris Conference. The schemes of the Phillimore and Bourgeois Committees, the drafts of Wilson and House, were all still kept secret: and the 'Practical Suggestion' was therefore the first plan put out to the world by one who held a pre-eminent official position,<sup>1</sup> had played a prominent part in the conduct of the war, and possessed unique experience in military and political affairs. But the contents of the pamphlet were even more remarkable than its source. Here at last was a work worthy of the greatness of its subject. Here, in language worthy of Milton or of Burke, were high idealism, acute political insight, a profound understanding of the hopes and sentiments of the rank and file of soldiers and civilians, clear and practical administrative planning. The purpose, and to a great extent the consequence, of Smuts's proposals was to raise the discussion on to a new plane. The League, he wrote, should be thought of 'not only as a possible means of preventing future wars, but much more as a great organ of the ordinary peaceful life of civilization, as the foundation of the new international system which will be erected on the ruins of this war'. 'The greatest opportunity in history would be met by the greatest step forward in the government of man.'

To understand the nature and effect of Smuts's pamphlet it is necessary to go a few months backward and consider briefly the nature of the plans drawn up by the Phillimore and Bourgeois Committees. Each consisted of diplomatists, lawyers, and historians. In the British group the diplomatists were men of exceptional ability and driving power. The result of their labours was a draft treaty of a strictly limited character, aimed at preventing war between the signatories. It provided that disputes should be settled by arbitration, if the parties were willing; that, if one or more refused arbitration, the question should be considered by a

<sup>1</sup> Smuts had just resigned from the British War Cabinet: but he was still Defence Minister of South Africa and one of her delegates to Paris.

conference of the signatory powers; that the signatories should not go to war until after the dispute had been considered either by arbitrators or by the conference, and in any case should not go to war against any signatory which complied with the arbitral award or the conference report. It further provided that if any signatory broke its pledge, the rest should consider themselves at war with it and should not only sever all economic relations but also use such military measures as might be required to put it under restraint. As for disputes with non-signatories, these should be settled by the same methods; but no such automatic sanctions should be applied in case of war, each signatory being free to assist its fellow signatory or not, as it might choose.

The French draft was in general accord with these proposals. In addition, it described in great detail the nature of the various sanctions which should be used against a covenant-breaking State, providing for a Commander-in-Chief with a permanent general staff. It also contained at least the beginnings of a permanent organization. Whereas the British plan did not propose any meeting of the members except when this was necessary to deal with a particular dispute, the French plan called for an annual meeting of all the members and the appointment of a smaller body charged with certain limited secretarial functions.

Smuts did not deny the need for provisions of this nature. He accepted, and incorporated in his own scheme, the whole essence of the Phillimore draft treaty, both as regards the settlement of disputes and as regards the economic and military sanctions to be visited upon an eventual aggressor. But he urged that such provisions, though a necessary part, were only a part of the great changes which must be made. The League must be much more than a mere system of dealing with disputes and preventing aggression. There must be 'an inner transformation of international conditions and institutions'. The League 'must not be something additional, something external, superimposed on the pre-existing structure. It must be an organic change; it must be woven into the very texture of our political system.' The political and social life of the world had been shaken to the core: nothing less than a complete revolution in the whole system of international relations would satisfy its needs, and make it possible to guide and regulate the vast changes and upheavals which were yet to come. The League must therefore be a great central institution, 'an ever visible, living, working organ of the polity of civilization'. Its strong and continuous activity in peace would be the guarantee of its power to prevent war. It must be entrusted with the general control of all international affairs: the Peace Conference itself must regard itself as simply a preliminary meeting of the League. It must guide and control the new States which were arising from the

break-up of the Austrian, Russian, and Turkish Empires. It must be entrusted with the management of all the business hitherto performed by international administrative bodies, and with the far greater problems which would now arise in the fields of international commerce, of air and sea communications, of social, industrial, and labour relations. All these questions were bursting through the national bounds: international control, however difficult, was an absolute necessity. If the League did not undertake such tasks, other machinery would have to be found.

All these multifarious duties, as well as those concerned with the settlement of disputes, would clearly call for strong and elaborate institutions; and on this side also Smuts's plans were more ambitious and more complete than those of any previous writer. He proposed that the League should consist of a regular conference of all its members, which should discuss all general questions and lay down the main lines of policy; of a council of nine members, including all the great powers, which should govern directly all the activities of the whole organization; and of courts of arbitration and conciliation. The council should consist of Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers: if they could not attend all its meetings, there should be at least one annual meeting attended by them all. There should be expert committees for the various subjects dealt with by the League. There should also be a permanent secretariat, maintaining close liaison with the constituent States, and equipped to study and watch all conditions arising anywhere in the world which might call for League action or counsel.

If we have dwelt at some length upon Smuts's 'Practical Suggestion', it is not merely because its proposals were, in due course, incorporated to a large extent in the Covenant of the League, nor because he was the first to see and define clearly the three separate functions of the new institution—to safeguard peace, to organize and regulate the ever-growing network of international business, and to be the great international centre to which every State could repair for counsel and help. For although both in its functions and its machinery the League did, generally speaking, develop along the lines of Smuts's plan, it fell far short of the greatness which he desired for it. It is because his work—the realistic plan of a leader of unequalled experience in war and politics—set the goal at which international planning must aim. The essential substance of the 'Practical Suggestion' will remain true as long as the world is organized into separate and independent States. 'The very foundations have been shaken and loosened', he wrote. 'The tents have been struck, and the great caravan of humanity is once more on the march.' And he marked out the line of advance, showing forth the

League, not as a set of dry legal obligations, nor as a Utopian dream of peace, but as the natural and necessary development of the political institutions of civilized life.

By the middle of January 1919 the peacemakers were assembled in Paris. If ever the task of statesmen deserved to be described as superhuman in its magnitude and in its difficulties, it was that which awaited Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando. From the Channel coast to the Pacific all Europe and Northern Asia was in a state of material ruin or political disintegration. Four great Empires were dissolved in defeat and confusion. The ferment of national sentiment, the ferment of class struggle, were everywhere at work. New States were shaping themselves: peoples that had been for centuries deprived of freedom were fiercely asserting their right to determine their own destinies. And within each national group, whether new or old, ungovernable passions were at work. The new regime in Russia was fighting the White armies on half a dozen fronts and could yet spare the energy to promote violent Communist movements in other countries where defeat and privation offered a favourable soil for extremist doctrines. Other peace conferences had transferred provinces or islands, had redrawn frontiers, had set up or pulled down dynasties; they had never had to cope with a complete break-up of the European system.

Victors and vanquished alike had accepted Wilson's Fourteen Points as the basis of the future peace. But the Fourteen Points were for the most part expressed in general terms; their application left countless decisions still to be taken, not only of detail, but often involving issues of the greatest importance. The Allied powers had still to reach agreement among themselves on many of these: on territorial questions, such as the attribution of Upper Silesia, Danzig, the Saar Basin; on the amount and nature of the reparations which Germany must make; on the disposal of the German colonies; on the limitations to be imposed on German military establishments. The problems involved by the dissolution of the Austrian, Turkish, and Russian Empires were in many ways even more difficult than those connected with Germany. Poland, Roumania, Italy herself, as well as Greece and the other successor States, were seeking to secure for themselves the maximum share of territorial expansion. The treaty-makers were subjected to a continuous stream of harsh and passionate pleading, of claim and counter-claim, of historical, statistical, military, economic, and geographic argument. They had to work fast, knowing that any prolongation of uncertainty as to the future of each disputed area caused untold loss and inconvenience to its inhabitants. And with all these inescapable problems on

their hands, they were also responsible for guiding the policies of their own countries in a time of unprecedented difficulty.

In these circumstances it might well have been expected that the work of drafting the Covenant and setting the League in motion would be left on one side at least until the territorial questions had been decided. Without doubt it would have been so left but for the influence of Wilson and House. But even before the President left for Europe, he made it plain that he was prepared to insist not only on making the League a constituent part of the peace settlements, but also on giving this task priority over all the other business of the Conference. He had strong reasons for this attitude. In the first place, he believed that if the Covenant were not adopted in the early stages of the Conference, but were left to the end, it might never be adopted at all. He foresaw that American influence, overwhelmingly powerful at the moment of the Armistice, would gradually diminish as the hopes of the various delegations were fulfilled or disappointed; and he suspected that none of the European powers cared much about starting the League, so that it could only be brought into existence by strong American pressure. In this suspicion he did injustice to a considerable number of the Allies. Nevertheless, it has been generally admitted that his conclusion was sound, and that whatever their sentiments might have been at the beginning of the Conference, most delegations, after several months of struggle, excitement, and laborious elaboration of compromises that pleased nobody, had lost the interest and energy which were needed to create the League. In the second place, Wilson counted on the League to correct the inevitable imperfections of the Peace Treaties and to facilitate the solution of questions on which agreed decisions proved impossible. In this he was abundantly justified: as the work of peace-making continued, one deadlock after another was resolved by reference to the League. Wilson's third reason arose from the political situation in the United States. He knew that there would be opposition to the Covenant, but he did not expect that the Senate would refuse to ratify the terms of peace with Germany: he determined therefore so to intertwine the Covenant with the rest of the Treaty that it would be impossible to reject the first without destroying the second.

To Wilson's surprise he found no difficulty in inducing the Allied governments to accept his proposal. Cecil was in full agreement with his first two reasons: and Smuts went further, the first recommendation of his 'Practical Suggestion' being 'That in the vast multiplicity of territorial, economic and other problems with which the Conference will find itself confronted it should look upon the setting up of a League of Nations as its primary and basic task, and as supplying the necessary

organ by means of which most of those problems can find their only stable solution. Indeed, the Conference should regard itself as the first or preliminary meeting of the League, intended to work out its organization, functions, and programme.' On Cecil's suggestion, Lloyd George drew up a resolution on the subject and submitted it to one of the first meetings of the Supreme Council, that is to say, the representatives of the United States, France, Britain, Italy, and Japan. This resolution was adopted on January 25th, 1919 by a plenary session of the thirty-two States and Dominions gathered at the Conference. It was as follows:

The Conference, having considered the proposals for the creation of a League of Nations, resolves that:

(1) It is essential to the maintenance of the world settlement which the Associated Nations are now met to establish that a League of Nations be created to promote international co-operation, to ensure the fulfilment of accepted international obligations and to provide safeguards against war.

(2) This League should be created as an integral part of the general Treaty of Peace, and should be open to every civilized nation which can be relied upon to promote its objects.

(3) The members of the League should periodically meet in international conference, and should have a permanent organization and secretariat to carry on the business of the League in the intervals between the conferences.

The Conference therefore appoints a Committee representative of the Associated Governments to work out the details of the constitution and functions of the League.

Both before and after the adoption of this resolution, there was close and continuous consultation between the American and British delegations on the character and organization of the future League. The draft plans of the Phillimore and Bourgeois Committees, of Smuts, of Wilson and House, were compared, discussed, and developed in detail by House and Cecil—two men who combined high ideals with great practical experience of international affairs, and each of whom enjoyed and merited the other's confidence. With the help of two legal advisers of exceptional quality, David Hunter Miller and Sir Cecil Hurst, they drew up a provisional text ready to serve as a basis for the labours of the Committee appointed by the Conference in its resolution of January 25th. The record of these negotiations, as also of the subsequent discussions in the Committee, has been preserved in fullest detail, as indeed befits the historic importance of the occasion; and whoever so desires may follow the changes in the wording of the Covenant as they emerged, day after day, from the meetings.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. H. Miller's masterly work, *The Drafting of the Covenant* (New York, Putnam, 1928), is the indispensable authority.

It was on February 3rd, 1919 that the Covenant-making Committee began that intensive series of meetings in which the many plans for the organization of permanent peace were to be refined into a single instrument—an instrument on which the civilized countries of the world, victors, vanquished, and neutrals alike, were counting for their safety and prosperity. The Committee's membership was not unworthy of a body on which so great an honour and responsibility had been laid.

Its chairman was the President of the United States, by far the most commanding figure in the world at that moment. The other American member was House, Cecil and Smuts represented the British Commonwealth. Léon Bourgeois, a protagonist at both Hague Conferences, and a fighter ever since for a new international spirit, was the chief delegate of France; her greatest international lawyer, Ferdinand Larnaude, was his companion. The Italian members were Orlando, the Prime Minister, a man of great gifts and liberal views, and Vittorio Scialoja, a learned lawyer and a wise diplomatist. The Japanese were Baron Makino and Viscount Chinda, Foreign Minister and Ambassador in London respectively. With these ten spokesmen of the great powers were associated five from the lesser Allies: Paul Hymans, the Belgian Foreign Minister; Epitacio Pessôa of Brazil; Wellington Koo (China); Batalha Reis (Portugal); and Vesnić (Serbia). But at the very first meeting this group protested against the over-representation of the great powers and insisted that four more of the small countries should be included. In spite of American and British opposition, they carried their point. The new members were Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister; Dmowski, head of the Polish National Council; Kramar, the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, and Diamandy, a Roumanian diplomatist.

The Committee worked with exemplary speed and efficiency. Its debates were business-like, informal, and friendly. The keenness of its members was shown by the fact that, during the first and most intensive stage of its work, when it was sitting each evening until midnight, none of them missed a single sitting until on the last day of all Wilson himself was detained by a particularly important discussion in the Supreme Council. Wilson was an admirable chairman, possessing that rare form of authority which keeps the proceedings moving at a steady pace without leaving in the mind of any member the impression that he has not been given the opportunity to explain his views. Above all, time was saved by the existence of a well-thought-out Anglo-American draft; the French and Italians each submitted a draft of their own, but did not seriously oppose Wilson's suggestion that the Anglo-American text should form the basis of the discussion. Further, it was understood that the Committee was not trying to reach a final text at that stage; it

intended to publish its first draft, see how it was received by the other delegations, the neutral States, and the world in general, and then settle down to a second reading. This plan made it possible to leave open some points of difficulty, and on others to adopt a provisional solution, all members being free to suggest changes in the final stages of the work. For all these reasons, the Committee was able, in the incredibly short space of eleven days from its first meeting, to present its Draft Agreement for a League of Nations to a plenary session of the Conference. This is that text of which Wilson said 'a living thing is born'—words premature in one sense, since it was still destined to be altered and amended in many respects; but true in substance, since the fact that all the chief delegations at the Conference had been able to agree on so much in so short a time was almost a guarantee that complete agreement would be reached in due course.

With this thought in mind, the President sailed next day for home, where his enemies were already launching a bitter campaign against the whole idea of a League and in favour of a policy of isolation from the dangers and miseries of Europe. Arriving back in Paris a month later, his confidence in final success was unimpaired. He had indeed been unable to make the least impression on his more extreme opponents: they met his arguments with a mixture of distrust and contempt, and it was already plain that a powerful group, organized and led by Senators Lodge and Borah, would fight with every weapon at their command against any form of League or indeed any policy sponsored by Woodrow Wilson. But Taft and other moderate Republicans had given steadfast support. They demanded certain amendments in the draft, and assured the President that if these were made the Senate could be counted on to ratify the Covenant and the Treaty of Peace. And in spite of the violent language of some isolationist papers, the press in general continued to urge that the League must be established and that the United States must be its leading member.

Meanwhile in Paris the work of the League Committee was being scrutinized by those delegations which had not been represented; Canada and Australia in particular had valuable suggestions to make. There was consultation also with the countries that had been neutral in the war. Governments such as those of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland were by no means pleased to find themselves excluded from the business of planning the League. They believed that they cared more about peace than the belligerents, especially the great powers; they also believed, with good reason, that they were able to take a more dispassionate view of most of the problems which confronted the Conference. They were dissatisfied with the draft Covenant



on three main grounds: that it did not include Germany as a member, that it gave too much influence to the great powers, and that it did not provide for compulsory arbitration of all justiciable disputes. The victorious powers were not willing to allow either the neutrals or the defeated to participate officially in discussing the terms of the Treaty: but a delegation from the League Committee, including Cecil, Bourgeois, and House, was permitted to invite the neutral countries (except Mexico whose government was not recognized by the United States) to present their views at a series of informal meetings. Although this plan did not fully meet their grievances, all accepted; and a number of their proposals were eventually adopted by the Committee.

In addition to these contributions from outside, the chief members of the Committee, and in particular the French, British, and Americans, continued to work on improving the February text. By the time Wilson returned, the stage was set for the further and final acts in the drafting of the Covenant.

The second series of meetings of the League Committee was not distinguished by the harmony of the first days. Two months of intensive negotiations on the countless problems of peace-making and of current policy had done much to undermine the unity of the victorious nations. There were deep divisions over French claims on the western, and Polish claims on the eastern, frontiers of Germany; over Italian claims in the Adriatic and Japanese claims in Shantung. None of these matters was the direct concern of the League Committee: but the change of temper which had affected the whole ambit of the Conference was perceptible there also. The French and the Japanese fought for their particular points of view with greater obstinacy and greater acrimony than at the earlier meetings. The Italians, who had given quiet and steady help, actually quitted the Conference on April 23rd, 1919, as the result of a violent quarrel with Wilson; the full meetings of the Committee had then been concluded, but their absence added to the difficulties of the final decisions which the Conference had to make. Wilson himself showed unmistakable signs of the strain imposed by his long fight on two fronts—a merciless party struggle at home and a series of critical debates in the Supreme Council. The endless jibes of the irresponsible press in the United States, in London, and in Paris had in the course of time affected both his authority and his temper. In the Committee he had now to ask his colleagues to accept amendments designed to disarm the hostility of Republican critics in Washington. They were not unreasonable amendments: on the whole they improved the February draft. But in presenting them Wilson was forced to descend into the arena, which hitherto he had dominated from a higher plane by virtue

not only of his great office but also of his detachment from the disputes of lesser men.

Fortunately the Committee contained one man who could understand and respect the sentiments of European governments and of American senators. If the swift achievement of the February draft had been due above all to the authority of Wilson, the successful issue of the last stages of the work was above all due to the indefatigable efforts of Cecil. To Léon Bourgeois also a tribute must be paid. He was older than most of his colleagues—twenty-three years had passed since he had been Prime Minister of France. He was never entirely reconciled to the fact that the Committee was working throughout on British and American drafts, unfamiliar in language and not always in harmony with the clear-cut legal and military lines of French political thinking. He distrusted any conclusion reached without long discussion and meticulous dissection. He had no firm support from the greatest figures in the French State—Clemenceau, Poincaré, Foch. But he was deeply anxious that the work should reach a successful conclusion and though he grumbled and argued to the limits of Wilson's patience, his final assent was never in doubt.

The last and stormiest meeting of the Committee closed long after midnight on the eleventh of April. In five long meetings, and many discussions outside the actual sittings, it had completed the substance of its work. The main framework of the February draft remained unaltered; but many amendments had been made, including all the important ones proposed from the American side, and a number of others intended to meet the views of the neutral States. It had been decided that the seat of the League should be at Geneva. The French and Belgians pressed strongly that Brussels should be chosen. That city, they argued, offered a central position, good communications, and every material convenience. Further, its selection would be a symbolic act: did not the name of Belgium stand for the battle of right against might? Ought the great honour of being the home of the League to fall to a country which had borne no share in the efforts and sufferings whereby alone the victory of justice had been won for mankind? Was Belgium to be excluded simply because she had been brutally attacked and had defended herself bravely? But Wilson, Cecil, Smuts, together with most of their colleagues, believed that the choice of Brussels would link the new-born League too closely with the memories of war. They had originally suggested that, for the same reason, Geneva should be chosen as the meeting-place of the Peace Conference itself; and they had consistently favoured the choice of that city as the home of the League. The Swiss government was not backward in endorsing the

plan: it sent a special representative to Paris to consult with the League Committee, and gave cordial assent to all requests concerning the facilities which the League would need in establishing its headquarters. Twelve of the nineteen Committee members voted for Geneva: the majority view being ascertained, no vote was taken on Brussels, and the question was settled once and for all.

At its last meeting, the Committee entrusted the Covenant to a drafting committee, with instructions to make no change in substance but to see that the arrangement and form of the document was as perfect as possible. This final polish was an important and valuable piece of work; the text as it emerged from the drafting committee was greatly improved. One example will suffice: the two chief organs of the League had throughout the Committee's work been denominated as the Body of Delegates and the Executive Council, and it was the drafting committee which replaced these clumsy and repellent appellations by the simple names of Assembly and Council. Its duties included also the co-ordination of the French version with the English, which had hitherto been the only authoritative text: henceforward in the Covenant, as in all the other parts of the Treaties of Peace, the French and English versions were to be equal in authority. All this took time: it was not till April 28th that Wilson, in the name of the Committee over which he had presided, laid the final text of the Covenant<sup>1</sup> before a plenary session of the Peace Conference.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time the Conference was asked to take a number of immediate and practical decisions. The first was to approve the list of thirteen neutral States which were to be invited to accede to the Covenant and thereby rank as original Members of the League on equal terms with the Allied powers.<sup>3</sup> This list contained all those which could reasonably be regarded as eligible, with the exception of Mexico and the Dominican Republic: these, like Costa Rica which had declared war on Germany and was therefore counted as a belligerent, were

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> A summary account of the drafting of the Covenant can hardly avoid exaggerating the extent to which the discussion was dominated by the American and British representatives. Wilson and Cecil did in fact exercise a predominant influence. They had thought about the question more, and had reached clearer opinions, than almost any of their colleagues. They were in agreement on nearly all points of importance. Their joint draft was adopted as the basis of discussion, and anyone who has experience of public affairs knows the advantage which this confers. Above all, they represented the two strongest powers in the post-war world: the others needed their help in the present, and knew that their future security depended on American and British policy. Hence they were in a position to say the last word on any point in dispute. All the same, the other members of the Committee played an important part, and the final text of the Covenant would have been in many respects different, and inferior, but for the contributions of Bourgeois, Orlando, Venizelos, Hymans, Vesnić, Wellington Koo, and their colleagues.

<sup>3</sup> For a full list of Members of the League, see Appendix to Chapter 5.

excluded mainly as a result of British or American disapproval of their rulers. The second decision was to nominate Belgium, Brazil, Greece, and Spain as members of the Council until the Assembly had had the opportunity of holding elections in due form. The third was to appoint Sir Eric Drummond as the first Secretary-General. The fourth was to set up an organizing committee to make plans for the establishment of the League at Geneva, and for the holding of the first Assembly, which it was then expected would take place in Washington before the year was out. The committee consisted of representatives from each of the nine States which were to compose the Council, with Drummond as its secretary.

All these proposals, and the Covenant itself, were unanimously approved. But the meeting was very unlike that which had adopted the first draft only ten weeks earlier. The Conference was going through an unhappy, almost a critical, stage. The Germans had been summoned to Versailles in order to be informed of the terms proposed by the Allies. But various new problems had arisen: the terms were still incomplete, and the Germans were still waiting. Meanwhile dissension between the great powers was acute: the Italian delegation had actually withdrawn to Rome after a serious quarrel with the Americans. No one, therefore, was inclined to greet the occasion with such speeches as might otherwise have seemed appropriate. Wilson confined himself to a dry summary of the changes made in the February draft, and to proposing a formal resolution. Neither Cecil nor Smuts spoke. Hymans expressed Belgium's disappointment at not being chosen as the host of the League. Bourgeois explained at great length the French view on the need to provide the League with a permanent organ capable both of planning its military operations and of supervising the armaments of its Members.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese read their proposal on the equality of nations<sup>1</sup> and described the unhappy effect its rejection had exercised upon Japanese opinion. The delegate of Honduras asked that a definition of the Monroe Doctrine should appear in the Covenant. Only from two other Latin American States, Uruguay and Panama, were there words of unreserved welcome. But all who spoke declared that in spite of disappointment on particular points, their countries would be loyal Members of the League and do their best to carry out its purposes.

Since the Covenant was an integral part of the Treaty of Versailles, the League could not begin to function, formally and officially, until that Treaty came into effect. This did not take place until January 10th, 1920: and that date is therefore the official birthday of the League. But

<sup>1</sup> The French and Japanese proposals are described in the last section of Chapter 5.

its career as a living organization had in fact begun on that April afternoon when the Covenant was approved and the Secretary-General appointed. Drummond, like everybody else, expected that the Treaty would be quickly signed and ratified, and that the first meetings of the Council and Assembly would take place that autumn. On that supposition, there was no time to be lost. He set to work without delay to plan the organization of the Secretariat and to recruit his principal assistants. He secured from the Organizing Committee a grant of £100,000. He saw that it was necessary from the start to separate his new institution, promptly and decisively, from the Peace Conference. He therefore moved at once to London; and there the Secretariat, relieved from the conflict and turmoil of Paris, began to plan the future activities of the League.

# 5

## THE COVENANT

*Supreme importance of the Covenant—A summary of its contents—Text of the Covenant, with a few notes on the various Articles—Three rejected proposals: an International Force; a declaration of racial equality; a provision on religious liberty*

*Appendix: List of Members of the League*

NO one can follow, or understand, the history of the League without constant reference to the provisions of the Covenant. There are countries, such as the United States, which possess a Constitution surrounded by such legal guarantees and such traditional loyalties as to give it still a kind of undying power in the State. But the role of the Covenant in the life of the League was far more extensive than that of the Constitution in the life of any nation. It was at the same time the law of its action and the very source of its existence. It established the organs of the League, dictated their composition, defined their competence, and guided their decisions. In the course of twenty years of crowded activity the Council and the Assembly found it necessary to accept functions, and to create subordinate bodies, which had not been definitely foreseen in the Covenant; but this was possible only so far as the Members could be convinced that they were proceeding in accordance with its spirit and not in contravention of its letter. Though they often failed to live up to its principles, the Assembly, the Council and the individual Members of the League were none the less, in small matters as in great, constantly referring to and consulting the Covenant as the supreme authority which governed their international conduct. It is therefore essential, at this stage of our history, to describe, as briefly as the greatness of the subject allows, the nature and contents of this most famous of international agreements.

It is the mark of literary genius to utter words whose meaning is wider and deeper than their author could know: and such pre-eminent achievement has usually been reached, as in the days of the Renaissance or of the French Revolution, under the influence of some great new idea which is spreading through the world. In the same way, political measures inspired by some general movement of opinion may contain possibilities far more extensive than the men who took them could foresee. So it was in the days of Magna Carta and of the Declaration of the Rights of Man: and the making of the Covenant has some claim to be considered among these highest moments of history. No text has ever

been subjected to such intensive scrutiny by international lawyers as this one: but though their ingenuity was able to raise here and there some doubts on points of detail, and at least one serious error,<sup>1</sup> the document taken as a whole remained triumphantly clear and effective. In spite of its brevity, it seemed in practice always to provide both the policy and the procedure which each new situation required, and a firm foundation for every institution which the League found it advisable to create.

We begin then with a summary of its contents, omitting details, avoiding legal niceties, and giving the plain common-sense intention of the various Articles. The summary is followed by the text of the Covenant, with notes on some points of historical interest. Finally, reference must be made to certain provisions which might have been included but were in fact rejected after long discussion.

### *Summary of the Covenant*

The first seven Articles constructed the constitutional framework of the new international system. Article 1 described the conditions of membership, admission, and withdrawal. The right of membership belonged to the thirty-two Allied States or Dominions which signed the Treaty of Versailles, and to thirteen neutral States. Others could be admitted by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly. Any Member could withdraw after giving two years' notice. Articles 2 to 5 laid down the character and powers of the Assembly and the Council. Articles 6 and 7 provided for the appointment of a Secretary-General and his staff, for the establishment of the League's headquarters at Geneva, and for the funds required for its work.

Articles 8 and 9 dealt with disarmament. Members of the League were pledged to reduce their armaments to the lowest possible level, to get rid of the evils of private manufacture of arms, and to exchange full and frank information on the whole subject.

By Article 10 Members of the League promised to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of each of their fellow Members, and to join in protecting them against external aggression.

Article 11 gave each Member the right to call upon the Council and Assembly to discuss any serious difference which might arise between itself and any other, or even a difference between others to which it was not a party but which it considered might become dangerous. Any Member which felt itself to be in danger of attack had the right to insist upon an immediate meeting of the Council.

The next four Articles (12-15) described the various ways in which

<sup>1</sup> See note on Article 5, para. 1, below.

disputes might be settled—by arbitration, by reference to the Court, or by laying them before the Council or Assembly. They contained also the definite pledge not to resort to war until the question at issue had been submitted to one or another of these procedures of peaceful settlement, and then only in certain defined circumstances and after three months' additional delay. (The founders of the League believed that, during this period, public opinion would insist that there should be no war.) One of this group of Articles provided for the establishment of an International Court of Justice: it might more logically have been placed among the earlier group which set up the other organs of the League.

Under Article 16 each Member accepted the obligation to take prompt action against any fellow Member which went to war in violation of the Covenant—to break off all financial and economic relations with it, to prevent others from maintaining such relations, and, if necessary, to use military force against it. Members promised also to help each other to bear the financial loss which they might suffer through carrying out these measures. Finally, this Article gave the Council power to expel a Member which had violated the Covenant.

Article 17 provided each League Member with the same protection against a non-Member State as it enjoyed, under the previous Articles, vis-à-vis its fellow Members.

The next four Articles defined the effect of the Covenant on other treaties. Article 18 required that all future treaties entered into by any Member of the League must be sent to the Secretary-General and published by him. Article 19 gave the Assembly power to propose changes in existing treaties. Article 20 provided that any existing treaty which was inconsistent with the Covenant was to be abrogated without delay. Finally, Article 21 affirmed that the Covenant did not affect the validity of the Monroe Doctrine.

Article 22 instituted the mandates system: it laid upon the League a continuous, if indirect, responsibility for the good government, on the one hand, of Iraq, Transjordan, Palestine, and Syria, just released from Turkish rule but judged incapable as yet of national independence; and on the other hand, of the German possessions in Africa and the Pacific. These territories were to be administered by individual Members of the League, selected for the purpose, not as sovereign rulers but as trustees for the world in general. The powers which those Members were to exercise were to be separately defined in each case; but in all cases the mandatory power was obliged to account to the League each year for the execution of its mandate: and a permanent Mandates Commission was established to advise the Council on the whole subject.

By Article 23 the Members proclaimed their intention to use the



League as a means of coping with the vastly increased complexity of international relations in the normal spheres of peaceful life. Problems of finance and trade, of transport by land, sea, and air, of the prevention of disease and the promotion of health, of social evils such as prostitution or the drug traffic—these and others were breaking across the limits of national frontiers. This Article provided a basis on which new international systems were in due course constructed by the League in all these fields. Similarly, Article 24 was intended to transfer to the League the management of those agencies which had already been established before the war, such as the Universal Postal Union. By Article 25 League Members promised to promote the activities of the national Red Cross organizations.

Finally, Article 26 described the procedure to be followed in order to amend the Covenant.

## THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS<sup>1</sup>

(Adopted April 28th, 1919)

### *Preamble*

THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES,

In order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security

by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war,

by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations,

by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and

by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another,

Agree to this Covenant of the League of Nations.

This text was mainly contributed by President Wilson. A Japanese proposal to add to the Preamble a clause declaring that the Members of the League accepted the principle of the equality of nations, is described in the last section of this chapter.

### *Article 1*

1. The original Members of the League of Nations shall be those of the Signatories which are named in the Annex to this Covenant and also such of those other States named in the Annex as shall accede without reservation to this Covenant. Such accession shall be effected by a Declaration deposited with the Secretariat within two months of the coming into force of the Covenant. Notice thereof shall be sent to all other Members of the League.

2. Any fully self-governing State, Dominion or Colony not named in the

<sup>1</sup> Amendments to the text originally adopted by the Peace Conference are printed in italics.

Annex may become a Member of the League if its admission is agreed to by two-thirds of the Assembly, provided that it shall give effective guarantees of its sincere intention to observe its international obligations, and shall accept such regulations as may be prescribed by the League in regard to its military, naval and air forces and armaments.

3. Any Member of the League may, after two years' notice of its intention so to do, withdraw from the League, provided that all its international obligations and all its obligations under this Covenant shall have been fulfilled at the time of its withdrawal.

*Para. 2.* There are reasons for thinking that in Wilson's mind the word 'self-governing' was intended to mean 'possessing democratic institutions'. It has actually been argued by one of the most eminent judges of the Permanent Court that that was its real meaning.<sup>1</sup> This point was never made clear during the debates of the Committee which drew up the Covenant. In any case, the proper sense of the word 'self-governing', as also of the French translation, 'qui se gouverne librement', is: free to make its own decisions, i.e. not forced to act under the instructions of another State. In practice the word was always understood in this sense. The Assembly did not, and could not, make a democratic Constitution one of the conditions of admission; nor was it ever proposed that any of those Members in which democracy was ousted by some form of despotic rule should on that account be excluded from the League.

*Para. 3.* The provision permitting withdrawal from the League was one of those added in the later stages of drafting to satisfy the demands of American critics.

#### *Article 2*

The action of the League under this Covenant shall be effected through the instrumentality of an Assembly and of a Council, with a permanent Secretariat.

#### *Article 3*

1. The Assembly shall consist of Representatives of the Members of the League.

2. The Assembly shall meet at stated intervals and from time to time as occasion may require at the Seat of the League or at such other place as may be decided upon.

3. The Assembly may deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world.

4. At meetings of the Assembly, each Member of the League shall have one vote, and may have not more than three Representatives.

At the Paris Conference, it was expected that the Assembly would

<sup>1</sup> See Anzilotti's dissenting Opinion in the case of the Free City of Danzig and the International Labour Organization. Permanent Court of International Justice, *Advisory Opinions* (Series B, No. 18), p. 20.

meet every three or four years. But at its first session it decided to meet regularly every autumn.

*Article 4*

1. The Council shall consist of Representatives of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, together with Representatives of four other Members of the League. These four Members of the League shall be selected by the Assembly from time to time in its discretion. Until the appointment of the Representatives of the four Members of the League first selected by the Assembly, Representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Spain and Greece shall be members of the Council.

2. With the approval of the majority of the Assembly, the Council may name additional Members of the League whose Representatives shall always be members of the Council; the Council with like approval may increase the number of Members of the League to be selected by the Assembly for representation on the Council.

*2 bis. The Assembly shall fix by a two-thirds majority the rules dealing with the election of the non-permanent members of the Council, and particularly such regulations as relate to their term of office and the conditions of re-eligibility.*

3. The Council shall meet from time to time as occasion may require, and at least once a year, at the Seat of the League, or at such other place as may be decided upon.

4. The Council may deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world.

5. Any Member of the League not represented on the Council shall be invited to send a Representative to sit as a member at any meeting of the Council during the consideration of matters specially affecting the interests of that Member of the League.

6. At meetings of the Council, each Member of the League represented on the Council shall have one vote, and may have not more than one Representative.

*Para. 1.* In the original text this Article began: 'The Council shall consist of Representatives of the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan.' The phrase 'the Principal Allied and Associated Powers' was substituted at the last moment because the Italian delegation had departed in anger from the Peace Conference and it was not known whether Italy would sign the Treaty. The change proved unnecessary and also unfortunate. It was looked on by Germany as a permanent reminder of the fact that the Covenant was drafted by the victorious powers.

The decision to include in the Council four Members other than the great powers was the subject of very long debate in the League Committee. Cecil and Smuts at that time favoured a Council of the great powers only; but the delegates on the Committee of the lesser powers, with Hymans at their head, offered a heated resistance to this plan, which they declared would be no more than a repetition of the Holy

Alliance of 1815. The neutral countries, also, desired to increase the number, and therefore the influence, of the smaller powers on the Council. Their arguments were based on the idea that there would be a natural cleavage in the Council between the great powers on the one hand and the small powers on the other. Cecil rightly foresaw that divisions in the Council, if they occurred, would take quite other forms. Nevertheless, experience of the working of the League soon convinced him that the presence of small powers on the Council was valuable and indeed necessary.

*Para. 2.* Under the Covenant plan the great powers would have been in a majority. As a result of the absence of the United States the Council, during the first years of the League, consisted of four great and four lesser powers. In 1922 two more small powers were added; from then onwards they were always in a majority.

*Para. 2 bis.* This paragraph was added by the Second Assembly (1921) in order to ensure that the Assembly should enjoy complete control of all questions concerning the election of non-permanent members of the Council. Without this addition, it might have been legally impossible to make a rule preventing the repeated re-election of the same group.

*Para. 5.* The provision that a Member of the League which was not at the time a Member of the Council should always take part in the Council's discussions whenever its direct interests were concerned, and should do so with the full rights of a Member of the Council, proved in practice one of the most important provisions of the Covenant. Its insertion in this clear and uncompromising form was a result of the attitude of the neutral countries. It was a concession to the mistrust felt by the smaller powers for the great; and the fact that it was scrupulously observed throughout the existence of the League did more perhaps than any other single provision of the Covenant to maintain the confidence and loyalty of the smaller powers.

#### *Article 5*

1. Except where otherwise expressly provided in this Covenant or by the terms of the present Treaty, decisions at any meeting of the Assembly or of the Council shall require the agreement of all the Members of the League represented at the meeting.

2. All matters of procedure at meetings of the Assembly or of the Council, including the appointment of Committees to investigate particular matters, shall be regulated by the Assembly or by the Council and may be decided by a majority of the Members of the League represented at the meeting.

3. The first meeting of the Assembly and the first meeting of the Council shall be summoned by the President of the United States of America.

*Para. 1.* Perhaps no provision of the Covenant was the subject of more

discussion and criticism than the rule requiring unanimity for the decisions of the Council and the Assembly. Its inclusion in so definite a form was, in part, intended to forestall opposition in the American Senate; but the drafters of the Covenant were agreed that such a rule was the normal condition of international action, and would in fact be applicable to the action of the League. In the circumstances it was undoubtedly better that it should be clearly stated. Experience was to show that the one grave mistake in the text of the Covenant was that no exception to the unanimity rule was expressly foreseen in connexion with the action of the Assembly or the Council under Article 11.

*Article 6*

1. The permanent Secretariat shall be established at the Seat of the League. The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such secretaries and staff as may be required.

2. The first Secretary-General shall be the person named in the Annex; thereafter the Secretary-General shall be appointed by the Council with the approval of the majority of the Assembly.

3. The secretaries and staff of the Secretariat shall be appointed by the Secretary-General with the approval of the Council.

4. The Secretary-General shall act in that capacity at all meetings of the Assembly and of the Council.

5. *The expenses of the League shall be borne by the Members of the League in the proportion decided by the Assembly.*

*Para. 5.* Under the Covenant as adopted in 1919, the cost of the League was to be divided amongst the Members in the same proportion as the costs of the Universal Postal Union are divided between the members of that body. This arrangement proved to be unfair and unworkable. An amendment was therefore adopted, on October 5th, 1921, by the Second Assembly, the effect of which was to give the Assembly power to establish the schedule of contributions in its complete discretion. It was not until 1924 that this amendment was brought into force.

*Article 7*

1. The Seat of the League is established at Geneva.

2. The Council may at any time decide that the Seat of the League shall be established elsewhere.

3. All positions under or in connexion with the League, including the Secretariat, shall be open equally to men and women.

4. Representatives of the Members of the League and officials of the League when engaged on the business of the League shall enjoy diplomatic privileges and immunities.

5. The buildings and other property occupied by the League or its officials or by Representatives attending its meetings shall be inviolable.

*Article 8*

1. The Members of the League recognize that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations.

2. The Council, taking account of the geographical situation and circumstances of each State, shall formulate plans for such reduction for the consideration and action of the several Governments.

3. Such plans shall be subject to reconsideration and revision at least every ten years.

4. After these plans shall have been adopted by the several Governments, the limits of armaments therein fixed shall not be exceeded without the concurrence of the Council.

5. The Members of the League agree that the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions and implements of war is open to grave objections. The Council shall advise how the evil effects attendant upon such manufacture can be prevented, due regard being had to the necessities of those Members of the League which are not able to manufacture the munitions and implements of war necessary for their safety.

6. The Members of the League undertake to interchange full and frank information as to the scale of their armaments, their military, naval and air programmes and the condition of such of their industries as are adaptable to war-like purposes.

The efforts of the League to carry out this Article will fill a considerable part of the present work.

*Article 9*

A permanent Commission shall be constituted to advise the Council on the execution of the provisions of Articles 1 and 8 and on military, naval and air questions generally.

The French proposals for an international force and an international general staff, which led to the inclusion of this Article, are described in the last section of this chapter.

*Article 10*

The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

This Article was for President Wilson the key Article of the Covenant. In his mind the primary purpose of the League was to give protection and security to the small countries against the ambitions of the great. In January 1916, several months before his first utterance on the subject of a world-wide League of Nations, he had suggested that all the States of the Western Hemisphere should unite in guaranteeing to one another

absolute political independence and territorial integrity; and he always insisted on the inclusion of a similar pledge in the Covenant. Cecil and the British Dominions, particularly Canada, were opposed to this undertaking. But to the French, and to the representatives of the smaller powers, such an engagement on the part of the United States was of priceless value, and they firmly refused to let it fall.

In the end, Cecil accepted the Article but proposed at the same time to complete it by an additional section giving the Assembly power to advise changes in existing treaties (including the Peace Treaties), if for any reason they should be no longer justified. In other words, he proposed to combine the guarantee against external aggression with a system of peaceful change applicable even to the territorial dispositions of the Treaty.

This statesmanlike plan was rejected. A much weaker provision for the reconsideration of existing treaties was inserted in the Covenant; but it was made a separate Article (Article 19) having no connexion with the pledges given by Article 10. The result was that Article 10, the chief of all Wilson's specific contributions to the Covenant, proved to be the greatest obstacle to ratification of the Covenant by the Senate of the United States.

#### Article 11

1. Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. In case any such emergency should arise, the Secretary-General shall on the request of any Member of the League forthwith summon a meeting of the Council.

2. It is also declared to be the friendly right of each Member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.

This Article, which was on many occasions the basis of action by the Council, was proposed by House. The provision for an immediate meeting of the Council in case of emergency was added by the French.

#### Article 12

1. The Members of the League agree that if there should arise between them any dispute likely to lead to a rupture, they will submit the matter either to arbitration or *judicial settlement* or to inquiry by the Council, and they agree in no case to resort to war until three months after the award by the arbitrators or the *judicial decision* or the report by the Council.

2. In any case under this Article the award of the arbitrators or the *judicial*

*decision* shall be made within a reasonable time, and the report of the Council shall be made within six months after the submission of the dispute.

*Article 13*

1. The Members of the League agree that whenever any dispute shall arise between them which they recognize to be suitable for submission to arbitration *or judicial settlement*, and which cannot be satisfactorily settled by diplomacy, they will submit the whole subject-matter to arbitration *or judicial settlement*.

2. Disputes as to the interpretation of a treaty, as to any question of international law, as to the existence of any fact which if established would constitute a breach of any international obligation, or as to the extent and nature of the reparation to be made for any such breach, are declared to be among those which are generally suitable for submission to arbitration *or judicial settlement*.

3. *For the consideration of any such dispute, the court to which the case is referred shall be the Permanent Court of International Justice, established in accordance with Article 14, or any tribunal agreed on by the parties to the dispute or stipulated in any convention existing between them.*

4. The Members of the League agree that they will carry out in full good faith any award *or decision* that may be rendered, and that they will not resort to war against a Member of the League which complies therewith. In the event of any failure to carry out such an award *or decision*, the Council shall propose what steps should be taken to give effect thereto.

*(For Article 14, see p. 53.)*

*Article 15*

1. If there should arise between Members of the League any dispute likely to lead to a rupture, which is not submitted to arbitration *or judicial settlement* in accordance with Article 13, the Members of the League agree that they will submit the matter to the Council. Any party to the dispute may effect such submission by giving notice of the existence of the dispute to the Secretary-General, who will make all necessary arrangements for a full investigation and consideration thereof.

2. For this purpose the parties to the dispute will communicate to the Secretary-General, as promptly as possible, statements of their case with all the relevant facts and papers, and the Council may forthwith direct the publication thereof.

3. The Council shall endeavour to effect a settlement of the dispute, and if such efforts are successful, a statement shall be made public giving such facts and explanations regarding the dispute and the terms of settlement thereof as the Council may deem appropriate.

4. If the dispute is not thus settled, the Council either unanimously or by a majority vote shall make and publish a report containing a statement of the facts of the dispute and the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto.

5. Any Member of the League represented on the Council may make



public a statement of the facts of the dispute and of its conclusions regarding the same.

6. If a report by the Council is unanimously agreed to by the members thereof other than the Representatives of one or more of the parties to the dispute, the Members of the League agree that they will not go to war with any party to the dispute which complies with the recommendations of the report.

7. If the Council fails to reach a report which is unanimously agreed to by the members thereof, other than the Representatives of one or more of the parties to the dispute, the Members of the League reserve to themselves the right to take such action as they shall consider necessary for the maintenance of right and justice.

8. If the dispute between the parties is claimed by one of them, and is found by the Council, to arise out of a matter which by international law is solely within the domestic jurisdiction of that party, the Council shall so report, and shall make no recommendation as to its settlement.

9. The Council may in any case under this Article refer the dispute to the Assembly. The dispute shall be so referred at the request of either party to the dispute, provided that such request be made within fourteen days after the submission of the dispute to the Council.

10. In any case referred to the Assembly, all the provisions of this Article and of Article 12 relating to the action and powers of the Council shall apply to the action and powers of the Assembly, provided that a report made by the Assembly, if concurred in by the Representatives of those Members of the League represented on the Council and of a majority of the other Members of the League, exclusive in each case of the Representatives of the parties to the dispute, shall have the same force as a report by the Council concurred in by all the members thereof other than the Representatives of one or more of the parties to the dispute.

#### Article 16

1. Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

2. It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the Members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League.

3. The Members of the League agree, further, that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which are taken under this Article, in order to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting

from the above measures, and that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the covenant-breaking State, and that they will take the necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the Members of the League which are co-operating to protect the covenants of the League.

4. Any Member of the League which has violated any covenant of the League may be declared to be no longer a Member of the League by a vote of the Council concurred in by the Representatives of all the other Members of the League represented thereon.

Inasmuch as the prevention of war was the primary purpose of the League, these Articles, together with the provisions for disarmament in Article 8, may be described as the hard core of the Covenant. They followed closely the proposals of the Phillimore Committee.

This section of the Covenant prescribed the means by which Members of the League should settle their disputes; contained the specific pledges not to resort to war, which were referred to in general terms in the Preamble; and laid down the nature of the sanctions to be applied against any Member which should go to war in violation of the Covenant, and the methods by which such sanctions should be carried out. It further provided that full publicity should be given to the case put forward by both sides. Even where the Council or Assembly were unable to reach a unanimous conclusion on the merits of the dispute, and where, in consequence, the parties recovered their right to go to war, these Articles imposed a delay of several months; it was believed that, during this period for reflection, public opinion in the countries concerned would insist on a peaceful solution being found.

*Art. 15, Para. 6.* This paragraph contained the principal exception to the rule of unanimity in the Council. It laid down the all-important rule that the vote of the parties to the dispute was not to be counted in reckoning unanimity.

*Art. 15, Para. 7.* This paragraph contained what later became known as 'the gap in the Covenant'. In theory it foresaw a situation in which all Members of the League were entitled to go to war after observing the delay laid down by Article 12, para. 1. No aggressor ever attempted to make use of this so-called gap; to do so would have involved a complicated course of action which might go wrong at any moment; it would also have involved maintaining the will to war of the country concerned over a period of nine months before the first shot was fired. This being so, it might well be argued, and was in fact argued, that the existence of the gap was purely a matter of theory. Nevertheless, it was often quoted as a proof that the Covenant did not provide a complete guarantee against war.

*Art. 15, Para. 8.* This paragraph was inserted at the demand of American critics of the February draft.

*Art. 16.* This famous Article described the action which Members of the League were obliged to take against a Member which went to war in violation of the Covenant. To this action was given the name of 'sanctions'—economic sanctions, military sanctions, and so on. The word is not used in the Covenant. In the French language it describes those pains and penalties which organized justice is empowered to threaten or impose. Its meaning is now well understood, although it had no familiar sound in the ears of the English-speaking peoples until it entered into common use in connexion with the League.

It should be noted that in all preliminary schemes for the constitution of the League, without exception, the provision of sanctions was held to be a necessary part of the system. This was true not only of the British, French, and American plans, but also of those put forward by Italy, Germany, and various committees set up in neutral States. In the last years of the League's history it was often argued that a mistake had been made in thus imposing on Members of the League the duty of using their economic and, if necessary, their military power, to put a stop to unlawful war. When the League was being planned and when the Covenant was being drafted, no such opinion was expressed in any serious quarter. On the other hand, it was frequently suggested that the sanctions provided in the Covenant were not sufficiently drastic and ought to be strengthened.

*Art. 16, Para. 1.* Early drafts provided that a Member of the League which resorted to war in violation of the Covenant should be automatically considered as being in a state of war with the other Members; but it was shown that this would be contrary to that provision in the American Constitution which lays down that only Congress has the right to declare a state of war. The phrase was therefore revised: the Covenant-breaking State was regarded as having committed an act of war against other Members, and the latter could then declare the existence of a state of war, or not, as they chose.

*Art. 16, Para. 4.* Here is another exception to the rule of unanimity in the Council.

#### *Article 14*

The Council shall formulate and submit to the Members of the League for adoption plans for the establishment of a Permanent Court of International Justice. The Court shall be competent to hear and determine any dispute of an international character which the parties thereto submit to it. The Court may also give an advisory opinion upon any dispute or question referred to it by the Council or by the Assembly.

This duty was taken in hand by the Council without delay, and the Court was duly constituted in 1921.

*Article 17*

1. In the event of a dispute between a Member of the League and a State which is not a member of the League, or between States not members of the League, the State or States not members of the League shall be invited to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, upon such conditions as the Council may deem just. If such invitation is accepted, the provisions of Articles 12 to 16 inclusive shall be applied with such modifications as may be deemed necessary by the Council.

2. Upon such invitation being given the Council shall immediately institute an inquiry into the circumstances of the dispute and recommend such action as may seem best and most effectual in the circumstances.

3. If a State so invited shall refuse to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, and shall resort to war against a Member of the League, the provisions of Article 16 shall be applicable as against the State taking such action.

4. If both parties to the dispute when so invited refuse to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, the Council may take such measures and make such recommendations as will prevent hostilities and will result in the settlement of the dispute.

The purpose of this Article was to ensure that a State which, for any reason, was not a Member of the League, should not on that account be more free to commit aggression than if it had belonged to the League. In substance, the Members of the League were bound to apply in such cases the same sanctions as would be applicable against one of their fellow Members.

*Article 18*

Every treaty or international engagement entered into hereafter by any Member of the League shall be forthwith registered with the Secretariat and shall as soon as possible be published by it. No such treaty or international engagement shall be binding until so registered.

This important Article was based on an American proposal and was an effective step towards carrying out the first of Wilson's Fourteen Points—that which called for open diplomacy in the future.

Treaties registered with the Secretariat were published in the League Treaty Series, which filled over 200 volumes and has been continued without a break by the Secretariat of the United Nations.

*Article 19*

The Assembly may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world.

This Article is the emasculated version of Cecil's proposal to balance the guarantee given in Article 10 by effective provision for peaceful change, where change was shown to be necessary.

*Article 20*

1. The Members of the League severally agree that this Covenant is accepted as abrogating all obligations or understandings *inter se* which are inconsistent with the terms thereof, and solemnly undertake that they will not hereafter enter into any engagements inconsistent with the terms thereof.

2. In case any Member of the League shall, before becoming a Member of the League, have undertaken any obligations inconsistent with the terms of this Covenant, it shall be the duty of such Member to take immediate steps to procure its release from such obligations.

*Article 21*

Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements, such as treaties of arbitration or regional understandings like the Monroe doctrine, for securing the maintenance of peace.

This provision is one of those which was inserted to placate the senators in Washington. It had been drafted for that purpose by the British delegation and was put forward by Wilson at the very last meeting of the League Committee. The proposal gave rise to a difficult, almost a critical, situation. The British, French, and Japanese all sought to make Wilson pay for their acceptance. Lloyd George tried to make his consent conditional on agreement being reached between the Americans and British as to their naval programmes; but he did not press the matter very far in face of the strong American resistance. Clemenceau used the occasion more effectively. France was at that time at odds with Britain and the United States over the question of the security of her eastern frontier; she demanded that the German provinces on the left bank of the Rhine should be separated from the rest of the Reich and the Rhine bridges placed under permanent Allied military guard. Both these demands were strenuously opposed by Wilson and Lloyd George. They finally agreed to the military occupation of certain points in Germany for fixed periods; and they gave to Clemenceau what he valued much more, namely a separate treaty formally obliging them to go to the help of France if ever she were again attacked by Germany. For Lloyd George this engagement was not difficult to take; for Wilson it was an immense concession and was given partly to ensure French acquiescence in the addition of Article 21 to the draft Covenant. (The Treaty was not ratified by the Senate and the engagements both of the United States and Britain thus came to nothing.) As for the Japanese, they also used the occasion successfully, in securing Wilson's reluctant

consent to their demands concerning the concessions and rights in Shantung which they had seized from Germany.

In spite of these unpleasant manifestations of diplomatic opportunism, it was not without difficulty that Wilson and Cecil forced acceptance of the Article by the League Committee. Bourgeois put up a strong opposition for unexpected but quite sincere reasons. He feared that the introduction of the Monroe Doctrine might prevent action by non-American Members of the League on the American continent and, still more important, might give the United States a ground for declining to intervene on the European continent, even for the purpose of carrying out the Covenant. Such fears were not without good foundation, at least in theory. Bourgeois in the end was silenced by an impassioned speech from Wilson, who begged his colleagues to show their trust and confidence in the country which had just sent two million soldiers across the Atlantic to fight for liberty on the soil of Europe.

The inclusion in the Covenant of a specific reference to the Monroe Doctrine was disliked by nearly all the Latin American Members of the League. Had others besides Brazil been represented on the Committee which drafted the Covenant, it may well be doubted whether Article 21 would ever have been accepted. Brazil, however, was more ready than most other Latin American States to sympathize with the views of the United States. Pessôa sat in silence throughout the discussion.

#### *Article 22*

1. To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.

2. The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.

3. The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.

4. Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to

stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.

5. Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defence of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League.

6. There are territories, such as South West Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilization, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.

7. In every case of mandate, the Mandatory shall render to the Council an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge.

8. The degree of authority, control, or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory shall, if not previously agreed upon by the Members of the League, be explicitly defined in each case by the Council.

9. A permanent Commission shall be constituted to receive and examine the annual reports of the Mandatories and to advise the Council on all matters relating to the observance of the mandates.

Article 22 is unique in that it was written not by the League Committee but by the Supreme Council; hence the evident difference in style and character between this Article and the rest of the Covenant.

The plan of placing various parts of the world, sovereignty over which was to be changed as a result of the war, under the guidance of individual powers, not as part of their national territory, but as territories to be administered in trust under the supervision of the League, seems to have occurred independently to the Americans and the British. In America it was first suggested by George Louis Beer, the most brilliant member of the group which, under House, prepared preliminary studies for the guidance of the American delegation in Paris. The British Labour party, and the Foreign Office, had hit on the same idea: and their conception was taken up in Smuts's 'Practical Suggestion', though in his mind the mandatory system was suitable for the new and inexperienced nations which were breaking away from the Austrian, Russian, and Turkish Empires, rather than for the German possessions in Africa and the Pacific which, so far as could then be foreseen, would not be capable of becoming independent countries for an indefinite time.

At an early stage of the Conference a serious conflict of opinion developed concerning the overseas possessions of Germany. Wilson and Lloyd George supported Beer's proposal that they should not be annexed by the Allies which had conquered them, but administered as mandated territories under the supervision of the League. They were opposed by Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, which considered it necessary to their future security to annex German New Guinea, Western Samoa, and German South West Africa, respectively. After hot debate, a natural and sensible compromise was reached between the need for strategic security and the moral objection to annexation: the three Dominions agreed that the territories should be placed under mandate, while the Supreme Council agreed to appoint South Africa as mandatory for German South West Africa, Australia for New Guinea, and New Zealand for Western Samoa. The League Committee, perceiving that it would be unwise to run any risk of reopening the difficulties thus painfully solved, adopted the resolution of the Supreme Council, with the important addition of the last two paragraphs.

Paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 describe the three different types of mandate: one type, later known as the 'A' mandates, for the Arab countries which were within sight of fitness for self-government—here the duty of the mandatory power was to give advice and assistance; a second type, the 'B' mandates, for German colonies in Central Africa, which the mandatory power was to administer as separate territories under conditions prescribed in the mandate; and a third type, the 'C' mandates, for South West Africa and the Pacific Islands formerly belonging to Germany, which, subject to various safeguards laid down in the mandate, were to be administered by the mandatory power as integral parts of its own territory.

#### *Article 23*

Subject to and in accordance with the provisions of international conventions existing or hereafter to be agreed upon, the Members of the League:

- (a) will endeavour to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women, and children, both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and industrial relations extend, and for that purpose will establish and maintain the necessary international organizations;
- (b) undertake to secure just treatment of the native inhabitants of territories under their control;
- (c) will entrust the League with the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to the traffic in women and children, and the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs;
- (d) will entrust the League with the general supervision of the trade in



arms and ammunition with the countries in which the control of this traffic is necessary in the common interest;

- (e) will make provision to secure and maintain freedom of communications and of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all Members of the League. In this connexion, the special necessities of the regions devastated during the war of 1914-1918 shall be borne in mind;
- (f) will endeavour to take steps in matters of international concern for the prevention and control of disease.

This Article, together with Articles 22 and 24, was inspired by the purpose to which Smuts had given early expression in his pamphlet:

It is not sufficient for the League merely to be a sort of *deus ex machina*, called in in very grave emergencies when the spectre of war appears; if it is to last, it must be much more. It must become part and parcel of the common international life of States, it must be an ever visible, living, working organ of the polity of civilization. It must function so strongly in the ordinary peaceful intercourse of States that it becomes irresistible in their disputes; its peace activity must be the foundation and guarantee of its war power.

These ideas, and a number of suggestions for carrying them out, had already been put forward in Woolf's *International Government*. They were accepted without difficulty by all the members of the League Committee, and led in due course to the development of the great secondary agencies of the League on a scale which few of its founders then foresaw.

*Para. (a).* This reference to the International Labour Office was inserted at the request of that group of delegates which was drafting the terms of Section XIII of the Treaty. This Section defined the purposes and constitution of the International Labour Organization, just as the Covenant defined the purposes and constitution of the League. But whereas the League Committee occupied a central place in the functioning of the Conference, the Committee which was drafting Section XIII attracted little attention or interest. The work of the former was not only watched with eagerness by the public opinion of the world, but was awaited by the whole Conference for the solution of many difficulties on which agreement would otherwise be impossible. The latter was made up mainly of civil servants and trade union representatives; nor was it entirely clear that the result of its proceedings should properly be included in the Treaty at all. But some of those engaged on this apparently secondary task believed that the problems of social justice had taken on a new international importance as a result of the war and would become more and more interwoven, as time went on, with the main problems of international peace. They believed, therefore, that it was both logical and practical to create a close and continuing connexion between the International Labour Organization and the League;

and that by this means they would endow the Organization with a strength and solidity which, at least in the first years of its existence, it might not enjoy without such support. For these reasons they requested that the Covenant itself should declare the maintenance of the International Labour Organization to be part of the duty of League membership.

*Article 24*

1. There shall be placed under the direction of the League all international bureaux already established by general treaties if the parties to such treaties consent. All such international bureaux and all commissions for the regulation of matters of international interest hereafter constituted shall be placed under the direction of the League.

2. In all matters of international interest which are regulated by general conventions but which are not placed under the control of international bureaux or commissions, the Secretariat of the League shall, subject to the consent of the Council and if desired by the parties, collect and distribute all relevant information and shall render any other assistance which may be necessary or desirable.

3. The Council may include as part of the expenses of the Secretariat the expenses of any bureau or commission which is placed under the direction of the League.

This Article was inserted, on the proposal of the British, in the expectation that the international offices in question, from the Universal Postal Union downwards, would be merged in the organization of the League and managed in future by the League Secretariat. Unfortunately, this expectation, like many others, was disappointed as a consequence of the American defection. Two or three such bureaux, which were established after 1920, chose to place themselves under the direction of the League; but the more important offices which had existed before the war jealously maintained their independence.

*Article 25*

The Members of the League agree to encourage and promote the establishment and co-operation of duly authorized voluntary national Red Cross organizations having as purposes the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world.

This Article was included at the request of the International Committee of Red Cross Societies.

*Article 26*

1. Amendments to this Covenant will take effect when ratified by the Members of the League whose Representatives compose the Council and by a majority of the Members of the League whose Representatives compose the Assembly.

2. No such amendment shall bind any Member of the League which signifies its dissent therefrom, but in that case it shall cease to be a Member of the League.

*Para. 2.* This provision illustrates the extreme anxiety of the founders of the League to avoid anything which might seem to make of the League a super-State. However vague most men's conceptions of sovereignty might be, it was still a word of compelling power. It was evident that by joining the League each Member gave up a great deal of what was ordinarily known as its sovereignty; that is to say, its freedom to decide for itself exactly what it would do in any given circumstances. But it was an invariable principle in the drafting of the Covenant that membership of the League ought not to involve any further sacrifice of sovereignty beyond those which were explicitly laid down in the Covenant itself.

#### PROPOSALS WHICH FAILED TO FIND A PLACE IN THE COVENANT

Of the many proposals put forward by one country or another for inclusion in the Covenant, which in the end failed of acceptance, by far the most important were those which aimed at placing some form of military organization at the service of the League. Their principal sponsors were the French, who never ceased to fear a fresh attack from across the Rhine. Léon Bourgeois was probably far more nearly what is usually described by the word 'pacifist' than any other of the makers of the Covenant. Nevertheless, the draft Covenant drawn up during the war by the Bourgeois Committee prescribed in full detail the military sanctions to be applied against any breaker of the peace. It provided for the establishment either of an international force, or of a force consisting of national contingents held at the disposal of the League. It proposed, further, the creation of a permanent international staff whose duties would be, first, to organize and train the international force or co-ordinate the training of the national contingents; secondly, to prepare and carry out the military action of the League if at any time such action should become necessary.

Official opinion in France continued to uphold the view that the League required to have an international force at its disposal; but neither Clemenceau nor Bourgeois thought it possible to insist on this point at the time of the drafting of the Covenant. They did, however, press very strongly the demand for the establishment of an international staff, and this proposal was skilfully combined with that Article of the Covenant which called for the reduction of the armaments of all League

Members to the lowest possible limit. It would still be necessary, in the French view, to maintain a general staff for the planning of military action by the League; but it was even more necessary to ensure the supervision by a League organ of the armaments of the Member States. How could any country consent of its own free will to reduce its defensive power unless it could be quite certain that its neighbours were carrying out their own pledges with equal good faith? France was not seeking to impose on other countries any obligation which she was not ready to assume for herself. The international general staff would be free to inspect French military and naval establishments and report on their findings to the Council. But unless other countries were ready to accept the same obligation, the public opinion of France would never consent to any great reduction of her fighting services.

During the drafting of the Covenant, these arguments were repeatedly brought up by the French delegation, and the French press refused to believe that the League could ensure the world's peace unless it possessed at least the rudiments of military power. Other European members of the Committee were in agreement with Bourgeois's demands; but they did not take any strong line in subsequent discussion, on account of the immovable opposition of the British and American members. Wilson informed his colleagues that American opinion would absolutely refuse to admit foreign inspection of American armaments; and Cecil took the same line on behalf of Britain.

One factor in the disagreement was undoubtedly the predominant position at that time of the French Army Command and, in particular, of Marshal Foch. Rightly or wrongly, Foch was adorned not only with the aureole of victory, but with the reputation of being the one great soldier whom the vast armies of Britain, America, Italy, and France had produced in the course of four years of war. If any international staff were set up in Paris, it was certain that Foch would be placed at its head. But Foch, like most professional soldiers of that day, was hostile and sceptical towards the League. His fixed idea was to guarantee the security of France through the power and prestige of the French army. Neither the Americans, the British, nor any other of the Allies would have given their full confidence to an international staff of which he was the head. But even without this consideration, they would have rejected the proposal.

In later years, and particularly in the opening stages of the Disarmament Conference, the French reverted to the scheme for placing an international force at the disposal of the Council. But they did so with little conviction, and throughout the history of the League there was never the slightest prospect of the creation of such a force. It was

left to the United Nations to give fresh life to the French plan: and the provisions of the Charter on this subject resemble closely those drawn up by the Bourgeois Committee in 1918.

French persistence did, in the end, leave a certain mark on the institutions of the League. Cecil proposed to give them some satisfaction by the establishment of a permanent commission to advise the Council on military, naval and air questions. This suggestion was accepted by the Committee and embodied in Article 9 of the Covenant.

Another proposal which profoundly shook the harmony of the drafters of the Covenant was put forward by the Japanese, who asked for a sentence in the Preamble stating that the Members of the League endorsed the principle of the equality of nations and the just treatment of their nationals.

It might well seem that this simple proposition could meet with no objection. But amongst the delegations to the Conference were the representatives of at least three countries—the United States, Australia, and New Zealand—which had enacted special laws limiting emigration from East Asia. What, they asked, could be the purpose of Japan in pressing for a general declaration of this kind unless it were that she intended in due course to bring the matter before the League, and to ask the Council or Assembly to decide that limitations aimed at particular countries and not at others were inconsistent with the Covenant and must be repealed. The British and Americans, therefore, met the Japanese request with a negative which they did their best to make friendly but which they refused to withdraw. The rejection of her request, which all the rest of the Committee would have been prepared to grant, was deeply wounding to Japan; and there was even for a time a fear lest she might in consequence refuse to be a Member of the League. But Baron Makino finally contented himself with a declaration on the subject, made at the plenary session of the Conference at which the Covenant was finally adopted.

Wilson himself desired to include in the Covenant an article providing that the Members of the League should not prohibit or interfere with the free exercise of any religious belief so long as this did not conflict with public order or morals, nor persecute any person on account of his religious beliefs. A clause to this effect, known as the religious liberty clause, held its place for some time, but was eliminated just before the first draft of the Covenant was published on February 14th, 1919. It was opposed by the French, not on account of its substance, but because they did not think it a proper subject for inclusion in such a document as the Covenant. They further pointed out that the clause was inspired

by indignation against the religious persecution reported from Russia and that its acceptance would be of little effect, since there was no question of Russia being an original Member of the League. In spite of these arguments, the clause might well have passed if the Japanese delegation had not taken the occasion to suggest adding to it their own proposal about the equality of nations. It was right, said Makino, to proclaim that no man should suffer on account of his religion; it was equally right to proclaim that no man should suffer on account of his race or nationality. The Japanese argument combined disconcertingly, from the British and American point of view, the qualities of being unanswerable and unacceptable. The only course, therefore, was to abandon both suggestions.

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF STATES MEMBERS OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

IN the following list original Members are marked with an asterisk. The date of entry of other Members is shown in the second column.

<i>Member</i>	<i>Date of entry</i>	<i>Notice of withdrawal (effective after two years)</i>
Afghanistan	September 1934	
*Union of South Africa		
Albania	December 1920	(*)
*Argentine Republic		
*Australia		
Austria	December 1920	(†)
*Belgium		
*Bolivia		
*Brazil		June 1926
*United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		
Bulgaria	December 1920	
*Canada		
*Chile		June 1938
*China		
*Colombia		
Costa Rica	December 1920	January 1925
*Cuba		
*Czechoslovakia		
*Denmark		
Dominican Republic	September 1924	
Ecuador	September 1934	
* Annexed by Italy, April 1939.		† Annexed by Germany, March 1938.

<i>Member</i>	<i>Date of entry</i>	<i>Notice of withdrawal (effective after two years)</i>
Egypt	May 1937	
Estonia	September 1921	
Ethiopia	September 1923	
Finland	December 1920	
*France		
Germany	September 1926	October 1933
*Greece		
*Guatemala		May 1936
*Haiti		April 1942
*Honduras		July 1936
Hungary	September 1922	April 1939
*India		
Iraq	October 1932	
Ireland	September 1923	
*Italy		December 1937
*Japan		March 1933
Latvia	September 1921	
*Liberia		
Lithuania	September 1921	
Luxemburg	December 1920	
Mexico	September 1931	
*Netherlands		
*New Zealand		
*Nicaragua		June 1936
*Norway		
*Panama		
*Paraguay		February 1935
*Persia		
*Peru		April 1939
*Poland		
*Portugal		
*Roumania		July 1940
*Salvador		August 1937
*Siam		
*Spain		May 1939
*Sweden		
*Switzerland		
Turkey	July 1932	
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	September 1934	(‡)
*Uruguay		
*Venezuela		July 1938
*Yugoslavia		

‡ Declared to be no longer a Member of the League, by Council Resolution, December 14th, 1939.

## THE UNITED STATES ABANDONS THE LEAGUE

*Seven months of inactivity—Germany demands membership—The struggle in the United States—The isolationist campaign—The votes of November 1919 and March 1920—The consequences for the League*

(MAY 1919—MARCH 1920)

THE adoption of the Covenant on April 28th, 1919 was followed by a period of frustration. Until that moment the work of creating the League had been carried on with unexpected speed and smoothness. Within less than four months the vague and formless aspirations of the war-weary world had been translated into a clear and practical document; and that document had been unanimously approved by the powers, great and small, assembled at Paris. But now, when it might seem that the moment had come for the new institution to enter upon its first practical activities, the forward movement was severely checked.

On the whole the Covenant itself had been well received. There were some advanced thinkers who were disappointed because the new plans did not provide an all-powerful world government, endowed with legal authority to control the policies of every State and with military resources to make that authority effective. There was an influential section of opinion which derided the whole idea of maintaining peace by international agreement, and could still, in face of the disastrous experience of the war, believe that each State must seek its safety in the possession of more powerful armaments and more numerous allies than its possible competitors. The mass of public opinion which had acclaimed Wilson, in his own country and in Europe alike, had lost much of its confidence and enthusiasm. But it still adhered firmly to the general idea of the League and desired to see it set to work with energy and power. Men were realizing that the Peace Conference was less united and less strong than they had supposed, and that the end of the Great War had left the world's affairs in a confused, uncertain, and dangerous condition. They expected that the Council and Assembly of the League would be promptly constituted and that a wider and more impartial authority would begin to take charge of events. But the weeks went by and nothing happened. The Covenant could have no legal force until the Treaty had been signed by Germany, and ratified not



only by Germany but also by three of the five great powers among the victors. Till then, it seemed, the great new institutions must wait in the shadow, planned and formed, but not yet touched with the vital spark.

This unhappy interim period was destined to last for over seven months. No one had anticipated so long a delay; when the Covenant was adopted, it was thought that the first Assembly would meet in Washington that same autumn. The first hitch came with the communication to Germany, on May 7th, of the terms of peace, their publication in Berlin, and the outburst of resentment with which they were received by all shades of opinion in the shaky Weimar Republic. It seemed possible, all of a sudden, that the Germans would refuse to sign and that the Allies would have to choose between modifying their terms and marching on Berlin. The delegation in Versailles, under Brockdorff-Rantzau, poured in a stream of complaints and counter-proposals. The British delegation sympathized with many of its criticisms. Smuts was within an ace of refusing to sign; Lloyd George and his colleagues were ready to press for large concessions. But Clemenceau and Wilson were firm: the former could not for a moment admit that the peace was too severe, the latter hoped that the League and the Reparation Commission would in due course find the path of conciliation by agreement. The Germans had to be content with small gains. Among these were two that were destined to play a part in League history. The first was to substitute a plebiscite in Upper Silesia for the pure and simple annexation to Poland which had first been decreed. The second was to assure the Germans that the limitations of Germany's armaments laid down in the Treaty were not only intended to prevent future aggression on her part, but were 'also the first step towards that general reduction and limitation of armaments . . . which it will be one of the first duties of the League of Nations to promote'.<sup>1</sup> German indignation was as lively as ever: but under threat of the renewal of hostilities the show of resistance collapsed; Scheidemann, the Chancellor, and Brockdorff-Rantzau, the Foreign Minister, resigned to make way for a new Cabinet which was ready, with the authorization of the National Assembly, to take the responsibility of signing the Treaty. On June 28th, 1919, the formal signature took place at Versailles, while the Reich government appealed to the German people to remain calm and united, to bend every effort to fulfil the obligations laid upon them, and to work and hope for eventual revision.

In this first great post-war crisis the question of the League played no important part. The Germans complained that they had had no share in drafting the Covenant. They offered a brief criticism of its substance

<sup>1</sup> Allied reply to German counter-proposals, June 16th, 1919.

and put forward a counter-draft—a document compiled with no long reflection and expressing no sincere conviction. At the same time they demanded that Germany should be from the first a full Member of the League, which otherwise would be no more than a continuance of the hostile coalition against her. Thus was raised, for the first time, the question of German membership of the League, which was to be for the next six years the dominant problem of European politics, both on account of its intrinsic importance, and still more on account of its symbolic character as a test of reconciliation between the hostile camps. Consistently with the whole attitude of the delegation under Brockdorff-Rantzau, the German demand was put forward in a tone which could only arouse the resentment of those who for over four years had suffered the ruthless assaults of German militarism. Nevertheless, the delegations of the British Commonwealth were ready to return a favourable answer. The European neutrals, also, had already shown, so far as they dared, their desire to see Germany admitted as an original Member of the League. But Wilson and Clemenceau considered that Germany must first give proof of a change of heart, by which Wilson meant that she must develop an effective democracy and Clemenceau that she must carry out the stipulations of the Treaty. Lloyd George accepted this view, and the formal reply of the Allied powers was that the Covenant provided the means whereby Germany might be admitted to the League: that they would themselves be prepared to support her candidature so soon as she had given clear proofs of her intention to observe her international obligations; and that there was thus no reason why she should not become a Member of the League in the early future. This reply gave no satisfaction to Germany or to those who believed that she ought to be an original Member. But it represented Wilson's view: and Wilson cared more than any other Allied leader about reconciliation with the defeated enemy. Brockdorff-Rantzau himself showed no sign of desiring such reconciliation or of understanding how it could be promoted. To the Germans, membership was, first, a question of prestige, and, secondly, an opportunity to join on equal terms in the many decisions which the Treaty left to be taken by the League Council.

The treatment of Germany during the next few years by the organs of the League, as well as by the Allied powers, left much to be desired; and her admission to the League was far too long delayed. But it is highly doubtful whether her admission as an original Member would have been either justifiable or desirable.

Even before the answer had been given to the anxious question whether Germany would sign the Treaty, a far more dangerous crisis

had begun in the United States. In the new Senate, as it had emerged from the elections of November 1918, the Republican party held a majority. It was the smallest possible majority, and even so it depended upon a contested election in Michigan; but it was enough to enable Senator Lodge to control the formation of the Foreign Relations Committee, and his choice of the Republican majority on that powerful body proved his intention to offer a determined resistance to Wilson and the Covenant. By the time that Wilson had signed the Treaty and returned to Washington, an anti-League campaign was in full swing.

This is not the place to repeat the details of the fight for the Covenant in the United States. It was a bitter and dramatic story; perhaps no historical event of modern times contains more of the tragic grandeur of Aeschylean drama. The extent of the danger was not at first realized either in Europe or even in the United States. Wilson himself was confident that he could carry the Senate. The best minds among the Republicans—Taft, Hughes, Root, Hoover, Kellogg—were pledged to support the League: the most respected Republican newspapers might attack the President and criticize the Covenant, but they affirmed that there must be a League and that the United States must be in it. The universities, the clergy, teachers, writers, labour spokesmen, were almost unanimous: leaders in business and finance, mainly Republican in sentiment, were with few exceptions on the side of Taft and not of Lodge. If the vote had been taken within a few weeks of Wilson's return, the Treaty would certainly have been ratified. But Lodge, controlling the Foreign Relations Committee, was able to hold it back while the movement for rejection gathered power. The racial sentiments of Irish-Americans and German-Americans, fear of Japan and indignation over the treaty provisions concerning Shantung, Italo-American sympathy with the frustrated hopes of the Italian delegation in Paris—these and other influences began to bring formidable reinforcement to the limited groups of pure isolationists or of irreconcilable party men. Every word of the Covenant was submitted to a microscopic examination. Some concluded that the League would be an impotent debating society; some that if the United States were a Member her soldiers would be ordered off to fight in Ireland or Arabia in defence of the British Empire, her immigration laws would be dictated by Japan, and her tariffs controlled by her competitors.

But in such a situation contrary criticisms did not cancel each other out: whatever their nature, whatever their source or their purpose, all went to swell the cumulative volume of doubt and hostility.

By the end of the summer of 1919 the Senate was divided into four

groups. The irreconcilables, whom no argument and no reservation could persuade to abandon their intention to vote against ratification, were counterbalanced by a somewhat larger group who were in favour of ratification without any question or reservation. Between these extremes were those who were ready to vote for ratification on condition that certain reservations were laid down by the Senate and accepted by the chief Allied powers. They were about equally divided into strong reservationists and mild reservationists; some among the former were at heart anxious only for the defeat of the Covenant, but preferred for tactical reasons to propose a compromise which they felt sure Wilson would reject. Their tactics were completely successful. Wilson would agree to no reservations which required the consent of other signatories. He laboured to win over enough members of the middle groups to provide the necessary majority: having failed in this effort, and seeing the opposition in the Senate growing in numbers and in confidence, he decided to appeal to the people. Although his health was seriously undermined already, and he knew that he was taking a desperate risk, he set out on a speaking tour of the Western States. He met with immense popular enthusiasm, but the physical effort was too great: his last meetings had to be cancelled; he returned to Washington and there, on October 2nd, 1919, he suffered a paralytic stroke. Thereafter he was a sick man, unable to transact more than a small fraction of the duties of his great office, cut off from his friends and advisers, yet insisting on keeping in his own hands the direction of the battle. He could no longer fight: but neither would he compromise. A difficult situation was thus converted into irretrievable defeat.

Meanwhile, on September 10th, the Treaty and the Covenant had been passed on from the Foreign Relations Committee to the Senate, accompanied by a majority report prepared by Lodge in bitter sarcastic terms, in which many formal amendments and reservations were proposed. But the Senate itself was far less hostile than its packed Committee. Every amendment was rejected by a clear majority. Lodge's main strategy, however, was based not on positive amendments, but on the reservations; and he presented the vital question to the Senate in the form of a resolution to ratify the Treaty of Versailles together with a set of fourteen reservations, most of which related to various Articles of the Covenant.

Wilson did not reject all the reservations: but amongst them were several which he considered either as destroying the essence of the Covenant, or as likely to be refused by one or more of the other signatories and therefore to lead to an impossible legal situation. In the first group, the most important was that which struck at Article 10 of the

Covenant, substituting for the general obligation to maintain against external aggression the integrity and independence of all Members, a provision that Congress must consider separately each case that might arise. This Wilson regarded as taking the very heart out of the League system. In the second group were the sixth reservation, withholding assent from the Shantung settlement; the fourteenth, which, in substance, refused to admit the right of the British Dominions to vote as separate Members of the League; and the fifth, which reserved every contingency connected with the application or interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine.

Accordingly, Wilson requested his supporters in the Senate to vote against Lodge's resolution. In the historic vote of November 19th, 1919, ratification was defeated by the most unnatural of unions—a combination of those who were irreconcilably against any Covenant with those who insisted on the Covenant without reservation.

Although the isolationist press now hailed with jubilation the final defeat of the Covenant, the battle was not yet over. The preponderant opinion of the nation was still faithful to the ideal of American membership of the League. Both Wilson and Lodge were blamed for their obdurate partisanship. Some senators who had voted for reservations still believed that the League was the great hope of the world; they were sick at heart when they contemplated the disaster which the Senate had brought about. When the next session opened in January, further attempts at compromise were made on both sides. A number of Republican senators tried to soften down the reservations; while the League to Enforce Peace, that great non-party association in which the League idea had first taken root and flourished, called on all senators to vote for ratification with the reservations, as being the lesser of two evils. All these endeavours proved fruitless. Lodge and his friends would admit no change which could make it easier for Wilson to accept their resolution: and Wilson would not abandon his determined opposition. At the final vote on March 19th, 1920, there was actually a substantial majority in favour of ratification: 49 for to 35 against. But seven more votes were still needed to ensure the two-thirds majority: and the Treaty was thus again rejected. The thirty-five whose vote kept the United States out of the League included twenty-three of its most convinced supporters, acting in loyal obedience to the bidding of their President.

Whether the rest of the world would have agreed to the reservations can never be known. It would have had to choose between accepting them, in the expectation that they would not, in practice, be applied in the spirit in which they had been drafted, or declining to allow the United States to enter the League on terms which in theory at least

might cripple its working. It is not certain, though it is usually taken for granted, that the desire for American membership would have outweighed all lesser considerations. In any case, while the fight in the Senate continued, other governments refrained from making statements which might be used by one side and resented by the other. And, in the end, Wilson—wisely or unwisely, but with unquestionable courage—took upon his own shoulders the responsibility for the choice.

The tactics of Lodge, which were not always approved by the uncompromising isolationists such as Borah, were thus crowned with complete success. He had mastered and driven back the great tide of sentiment which demanded that the United States should take her full share in organizing the world for peace and co-operation. Yet he had made it appear that the main responsibility for this event and all its immeasurable consequences rested, not upon those who had fought against the Covenant by fair means or foul, but upon those who had been steadfast in its cause, and above all on Woodrow Wilson himself. Nor can it be denied that many who passionately desired to see their country take its place in the League believed, both then and later, that Wilson ought, at the last moment, to have given way and allowed ratification to take place, however unacceptable the reservations might be.

The abandonment of the League by the United States was a blow whose effects can hardly be over-estimated. That country had seemed to be marked by circumstances and by character for moral and political leadership. First in power, she was also unique in her freedom from ancient feuds, from present embarrassments, and from fears of the future. She had no desire for military glory or for territorial expansion. Doubtless she owed a part at least of these advantages to her detachment from the quarrels of other States. But the wisest of her statesmen and writers, regardless of party, were convinced that such detachment would never again be possible in the close-knit world of the twentieth century, and that only by membership of a general League could America safeguard her own peace. There, with the support of the British Commonwealth, she would have pointed the way to reconciliation. There her immense constructive energies would have found their natural course. In Wilson's plan, the League would be the place to which more than any other the rest of the world would look when it needed the advice and co-operation of the United States. Now, it seemed, it was to be the one place from which the United States was completely absent.

The immediate loss in the power and influence of the Council and

Assembly, due to the absence of the United States, was great; it was destined to show itself in a hundred ways as the years went by. The indirect effects were no less calamitous. Within each Member-State the anti-League elements were encouraged. Had they not said all along that Wilson was an unpractical idealist? What aggressor would fear the economic sanctions of the League when the world's greatest markets were open to him? What League Member could dare use its fleet to close the seas to trade between such an aggressor and the United States? Again, with the United States outside the League, any dissatisfied Member could henceforth make effective use of the threat to withdraw. To leave the League was not to isolate oneself, but to follow an illustrious example. The neutral countries, especially, had counted on American leadership. They looked on Wilson as the protagonist of reconciliation with the defeated powers. Though all proceeded to join the League, they did so with anxiety, not with enthusiasm, fearing lest it might now be little more than a confederation of the victors. In Germany the desire for League membership declined, while opposition to the Treaty increased. Small wonder that militarists in Berlin, Paris, London, and Tokyo were delighted by the action of the Senate, and that many exponents of the old diplomacy rejoiced in the set-back administered to the new.

Nor was it only on the political powers of the League, its capacity to protect its Members from the danger of war, that the absence of the United States produced such grave effects. In the social and economic fields also it became far more difficult than it would otherwise have been to build up the strong international organizations which were so desperately needed. In later years the American government joined fully and generously in the League's social and economic undertakings; but in the formative period there was not merely refusal to co-operate, but actual opposition. Such an attitude from the country which controlled so great a share of the material resources of the world left a permanent mark upon the development of the newly founded institutions.

In the circumstances it might well have been expected that other powers would at least have seriously considered abandoning the great experiment. It does not seem, however, that there was ever any danger of such a measure. One reason for this was the belief that the American decision was not irrevocable. Another was that the execution of the Peace Treaties had been made to depend in many respects upon action by the Council of the League. If the Council did not function, fresh proposals would have to be made, and Germany would have to be invited to assent to them. The Allied powers naturally shrank from disturbing the

settlements on which they had themselves agreed with so much difficulty, and which Germany had formally accepted. A third reason was that loyalty to the idea of the League was still strong in many countries: any government which proposed to abandon it at that stage would have met with violent opposition at home. The general sentiment of the European press was that, in spite of the heavy blow which Congress had dealt to the new institution, it could still prove effective and valuable, and ought to be given a trial. For all these reasons the Allied governments, with France and Britain at their head, decided that the League must be maintained. The events of the next years were destined to prove the full justification of this decision.



## THE SECRETARIAT

*Drummond decides on an international Secretariat—Organization and membership of the new service—The first International Labour Conference*

(MAY—DECEMBER 1919)

THE principal delegations in Paris had agreed to offer the post of Secretary-General in the first place to Sir Maurice Hankey, who had built up the War Cabinet secretariat in London and who by sheer administrative efficiency had become in fact, though not in name, the Secretary-General of the Peace Conference. Hankey went so far as to draw up a masterly document setting forth his conception of the duties of the office and of the organization which would be required to fulfil them. But in the end he declined the invitation, and the post was offered to, and accepted by, Sir Eric Drummond. Drummond, though only just over forty, had been for nineteen years an official of the Foreign Office and was already one of its principal figures. Some authors have related that his appointment was hardly more than a matter of chance, suggested by Clemenceau with no knowledge of the character or competence of the nominee. In sober fact Drummond, who was not only the assistant but the personal friend of Grey, Balfour, and Cecil, had won the confidence also of House and of the American delegation in general. His great abilities were well known in the inner circles of the Conference. Unlike most professional diplomatists, he was keenly interested in the idea of the League; and he had himself suggested that he would like to be considered for the office of Secretary-General.

From the very first Drummond made up his mind to form his Secretariat as a strictly international body. There was no real precedent for such a plan. The secretariats of the pre-war international offices were either supplied by the country in which they were established or consisted of national officials temporarily lent for a special purpose. During the war a number of inter-Allied organs had been set up to deal with common problems of transport or supply. These bodies acquired a certain *esprit de corps* and their traditions were carried on into the creative stage of the League: but they consisted of national representatives, each accompanied by experts and secretaries: if, in one or two cases, a non-national secretariat was evolved, it was concerned only with affairs of a routine character. Nothing like an international civil service had ever existed; and amongst those who claimed authority in administrative

problems it was taken for granted that such a body could never be united, loyal, and efficient. Hankey, for example, had proposed that the work should be entrusted, under the supervision of the Secretary-General, to nine National Secretaries, one from each Council State, who would have their own staffs and would perform in turn the office of Secretary to the Council. Drummond's decision, later regarded as natural and easy, was therefore in truth a difficult and courageous act.

The creation of a secretariat international alike in its structure, its spirit, and its personnel, was without doubt one of the most important events in the history of international politics—important not only in itself, but as the indisputable proof of possibilities which had hitherto been confidently denied. No human organization can be perfect. The official representatives of governments often complained that the Secretariat had too much influence and showed too much initiative. By the unofficial supporters of the League it was often blamed for exactly opposite reasons, as being too ready to hide behind the formal responsibility of the Council or Assembly, even where those bodies were failing to carry out the prescriptions of the Covenant. But throughout the existence of the League the Secretariat was held, by universal consent, to be an instrument of the highest efficiency. Taken as a whole, its members, drawn from over thirty countries, differing in language, religion, and training, worked together in a spirit of friendship and devotion. They developed a corporate sense, a pride in the record and reputation of their service, not inferior to any that can be found in the best of national institutions. Never again can it be maintained that an international civil service is bound to be a failure. Yet the very arguments which were once used to support that view have also served to condemn proposals for other yet untried forms of international collaboration, and particularly those concerned with the creation of an international force.

If the new service was to be truly international, it was necessary that its members should receive their appointments not from their own governments but from the international authority. Drummond had been warned that each of the great powers would expect to see one of its nationals appointed in the rank immediately below himself. To this extent his hands were already tied, though it is probable that he would in any case have taken this course in order to ensure easy intercourse between the Secretariat and the countries whose co-operation with the League was of special importance. For the rest, he set himself firmly against all pressure from official sources seeking to impose particular candidates: he consulted the various governments whenever necessary, but retained the choice in his own hands and did his best to ensure that all those he appointed should be not only well qualified for the special

work they would have to do, but also devoted to the purposes of the League. Even with these limitations his field of choice was wide. To join the Secretariat at that time was, indeed, something of an adventure. All nominations had, under the terms of the Covenant, to be approved by the Council; while salaries and conditions of appointment were necessarily subject to the budgetary control of the Council or the Assembly. No one could say when these bodies would meet, nor what their decisions would be. The future of the League itself was beginning to look doubtful. But the desire to work for it was strong in many hearts. The Secretary-General had few refusals from those whom he invited to join his staff, even on terms which for some of them represented a considerable material sacrifice.

Drummond was by temperament a man of prudence; the financial resources placed at his disposal by the Organizing Committee were by no means lavish, and it might not be easy to renew them. He was thus doubly inclined to conduct his organization on economical lines, appointing no more than the minimum staff required to prepare the tasks imposed upon the League by the Covenant and by other parts of the Treaty of Versailles. He set himself, therefore, in company with his American and French Under-Secretaries, to make an intensive study of the Treaty and to draw up a schedule of the work to be done and of the sections of which the Secretariat would accordingly need to be composed. Within forty-eight hours they had completed their plan—a plan which remained substantially unchanged until the outbreak of the Second World War. It provided for from two to four Deputy or Assistant Secretaries-General, and for a number of Sections, each with a Director at its head. Some of these would be concerned with the special tasks laid upon the League by the Covenant. There was to be a Mandates Section; an Economic and Financial Section; a Section for Transit and Communications; a Section for social problems such as the drug traffic and the traffic in women; a Political Section to assist the Council in dealing with disputes, frontier questions, and the like; a Legal Section to prepare the establishment of the Court, register and publish all treaties, and in general advise the League on matters of international law; an International Bureaux Section to take charge of relations with the many existing international bodies which were expected to affiliate themselves with the League. Under other parts of the Treaty the League was to appoint a Commission of Government in the Saar Basin and a High Commissioner in Danzig; these would certainly bring much work to the Council, and an Administrative Commissions Section was planned to prepare it. It was known, too, that the Peace Conference intended to draw up provisions for the protection of minorities in Central and

Eastern Europe, and to place them under the guarantee of the League: a Minorities Section was therefore needed. There must be a Treasurer, a Librarian, a Registrar in charge of the archives. There must be a service of translators and interpreters, since it was understood from the first that the League would work always in two official languages, and that all records and documents would have to be issued in both English and French. And since public opinion was the breath of life to the League, there must be an efficient Information Section to ensure good relations with the press. All these were planned in embryo by Drummond at the very beginning: all still existed in 1939. One Section which he started in 1919, to follow the work of the International Labour Organization, proved superfluous and was dropped. Two others, a Disarmament Section and a Health Section, were added to his original scheme. But these were no more than the normal developments which any living organization must undergo. The framework erected in the first days proved strong enough and flexible enough to bear the strain of all the vast expansion of work which the League undertook as the years went by.

The next step was to choose the men. Five years of unprecedented difficulty and urgency had forced to the front a number of young and energetic officials, some belonging to the regular services of their respective countries, others brought in from the universities or from business life to meet the abnormal requirements of war, or to help in drawing up the conditions of peace. From among these men, whose names meant little to the public, but much to the inner councils of the Allies, Drummond drew the nucleus of his organization. Raymond Fosdick, who at thirty-five had been the chief civilian adviser of the American Commander-in-Chief in France, and Jean Monnet, who at thirty was the head of the French supply organization in London, were given the rank of Assistant Secretary-General and were closely associated with Drummond himself in the general direction of the Secretariat. Nominally equal with them were Dionisio Anzilotti, an Italian, and Inazo Nitobe from Japan. Anzilotti was an eminent international lawyer, who became later the President of the Hague Court; while Nitobe was well known as an educational leader, and a courageous spokesman of the liberal movement in Japan.

Next in rank came the Section Directors. George Louis Beer, the first proposer of the mandates system, was appointed head of the Mandates Section.<sup>1</sup> Arthur Salter, the brightest star of the British civil service, took charge of the Economic and Financial Section. Bernardo Attolico,

<sup>1</sup> Beer was prevented by ill health from taking up his post and was replaced by William Rappard, a Swiss, eminent in many fields.

chief of the Italian food, shipping, and raw materials organization in London, was head of the Section on Communications. The Administrative Commissions Section, which would deal with business of special and direct interest to Germany, was entrusted to Erik Colban of the Norwegian foreign service: he was responsible too for all questions concerned with the protection of minorities. A Dutch jurist, Joost van Hamel, was head of the Legal Section. The director of the Press and Information Section was a brilliant French journalist, Pierre Comert; another Frenchman, Paul Mantoux, was director of the Political Section. Mantoux was a learned historian; he had also, as interpreter in all the most secret meetings of the Supreme Allied Council, acquired a knowledge of many things which could not be found in the records. The Section of Social Affairs was placed under Dame Rachel Crowdy, whose work behind the front in France and Belgium during the war had been outstanding. Although the Covenant, in this as in so many things in the forefront of progress, laid down that all positions under the League were to be open equally to women as to men, Dame Rachel Crowdy was in fact the only woman who ever held a post of high responsibility in the Secretariat; and though she discharged her functions with conspicuous ability, she was never given directorial rank. Finally, Sir Herbert Ames, a Canadian Member of Parliament and man of affairs, came from Montreal to face, as Treasurer, the difficult and thankless task of administering the meagre finances of the League.

In the summer of 1919 these men, with a small number of officials of lesser rank, settled down in London to prepare the future organization. Their headquarters was Sunderland House—a pretentious, ugly, uncomfortable, and inconvenient mansion. They worked at first under a sense of urgent pressure, believing that it was a matter of only a few weeks before the Council and Assembly would meet. But the weeks went by, and the Allied powers, embarrassed by the prospect of having to embark unaided on the many tasks which they had planned to carry out with American co-operation, refrained from taking the last steps to bring the Treaty into force. By the autumn, all was ready to start, so far as the Secretariat was concerned. It had even considered chartering a special steamer to take European delegations and League staff across the Atlantic to the first Assembly. But with the growing intensity and success of the isolationist campaign, all such plans began to look unwise and premature. The Secretariat could do nothing to shorten the prolonged delay, though it knew that public confidence was being weakened by the inactivity of the League in the face of the many troubles which threatened the peace of Europe and of Asia. It saw with envy the International Labour Organization press forward with its plans for holding

its Conference in Washington—thus inaugurating the public work of the new international system.

It would be hard to conceive a more rash and unreasonable step than the holding of that Conference. Like the League, the Labour Organization was still awaiting the acts which would bring it formally into existence. Its Conference had to take place in Washington during the climax of the Senate fight over membership of the League, which meant also over membership of the Labour Organization. It did not know which States should be invited, nor which would accept the invitation if they received one. Some workers' organizations, including those of France, were refusing to attend unless the Germans were present; but to send an invitation to Germany before the Conference met was constitutionally and politically impossible. It was certain, in any case, that the United States government would hold aloof. The arrival of dozens of foreign delegates enraged the opponents of the Organization and embarrassed its friends. It had no international staff except what the Secretariat could lend: it had no money except what the Secretariat could advance to it, and the Secretariat itself was existing on a bank overdraft.

But where everything pointed to failure, the Conference turned out to be an almost complete success. It drew up six important Conventions, all of which were ratified in due course by a large number of countries. It advanced far towards agreement on many other subjects. It decided to admit Germany and Austria as equal members of the Organization, the first great act of reconciliation between victors and vanquished. It appointed the Governing Body of the Office and set on foot, under the dynamic direction of Albert Thomas, the organization which has been at work ever since. Such was the unexpected power of the new international spirit when given a specific task to perform even under the most unfavourable circumstances.

## PART II

# THE YEARS OF GROWTH

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## 8

### THE WORLD AFTER THE PEACE CONFERENCE

*The world still unsettled—Political disputes, economic difficulties, internal  
dissensions*

THE coming into force of the Treaty of Versailles on January 10th, 1920 was the signal for the official beginning of the life and activities of the League.

The Covenant provided that the first meetings of the Council and of the Assembly should be summoned by the President of the United States: and Wilson accordingly called upon the Council to convene in Paris on January 16th. Such an event might well have seized upon the imagination of mankind. In fact, however, it aroused but little interest and no enthusiasm. Doubt and disillusion had utterly obscured the bright prospects of a year before. Then, the Peace Conference was gathering in Paris, under the sign of victory and reconstruction. In spite of all the loss and suffering of the war, men's minds turned hopefully towards the future. It was easy to imagine that in a few months the new Europe would be beginning to arise and that a sadder, but a wiser, world would be handed over to the guidance of the League. But the first year of peace, that year to which all had been looking forward with passionate eagerness, had proved to be a time of trouble and disappointment. The prestige of the great war leaders had swiftly faded. Wilson lay, helpless and defeated, on his sick-bed in the White House. Orlando had been driven from power. Lloyd George and Clemenceau, though still in office, had lost much of their old popularity. In Tokyo the delegates returning from Paris had to be protected by the police from the anger of the populace.

Both then, and since, the heavy disappointments of the first year of peace were laid to the account of the Supreme Council in Paris. Certainly the record proves that they were not able to overcome all the monstrous difficulties which they had to face. Certainly they made grave

mistakes. Yet judging their work as a whole, and remembering the conflicting interests and passions which surged around them, the historian may be more ready to admire their achievements than to dwell on their errors. After twelve months of incessant labour the Conference had nearly reached the end of its task. Peace had been signed with Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria; the Treaty with Hungary was nearly ready for signature. Six States—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania—had been added or restored to the map of Europe; the frontiers of many others had been re-drawn in order to bring them into closer harmony with the national consciousness of the inhabitants. In this great constructive work the final decision on every point had lain with the Supreme Council; and taken as a whole its decisions were inspired with a genuine desire to give effect to the principles of national and individual liberty. At the same time the Conference had created a machinery which, if wisely used, could have corrected most of the inevitable imperfections of the Treaties. The Reparation Commission had power to decide upon the extent and nature of the payments to be made by Germany. Above all, the League of Nations offered almost unlimited prospects of a new spirit and new methods. The defeated countries could hope, in the not distant future, to see their disarmament followed by a massive reduction of the armaments of the victors; they could even hope to use the provisions of the Covenant to secure, in due course, the reconsideration of the Peace Treaties themselves. Meanwhile the mere existence of the League had already modified the severity of some of the terms which had been at first contemplated.

The Saar Basin, instead of being incorporated in France, had been placed under the authority of the League for fifteen years with the prospect of freely deciding its own future at the end of that period. Danzig, instead of being incorporated in Poland, had been constituted a Free City under the guarantee of the League. The German colonies, instead of being annexed, had been placed under trustees responsible to the League. The minorities of race, language, or religion which the newly drawn frontiers left under alien rule—immensely fewer than those who had been so ruled before the war—were assured of protection by the League against discriminatory treatment. The International Labour Organization and the other agencies foreseen in the Covenant held the promise of a new advance towards social justice and economic prosperity. It was in weighing these creative acts against the faults and mistakes of the Conference that men who, like Smuts, were shocked at the severity of some parts of the Treaty of Versailles could find ground for consolation and hope. Signing the Treaty under protest, he declared



that its shortcomings were counterbalanced by two essential achievements—the destruction of Prussian militarism and the institution of the League of Nations.

No doubt the Treaties drawn up in Paris show at many points the traces of the less noble among human emotions—of fear, greed, revengefulness. But even if the Allied leaders had been free from all such faults, their work could not have been so perfect as to stand unchanged for an indefinite future; nor did they themselves so regard it at the time. The great misfortune of the following years was that the Versailles Treaty came to be looked upon by France and the important group of European States who followed her lead as a document of sacrosanct character. The test of international honesty for Poincaré was the execution of the Treaty. If Britain wanted to modify some clauses, if Germany wanted to be freed from some compulsions, these suggestions could not be considered as matters to be judged on their merits; even to put them forward was regarded as an act of bad faith. This attitude was disliked by Britain and Italy, as it would have been disliked still more by the United States; but their dislike being based on no clear principle, they usually ended by giving way. The condemnation meted out to the makers of the Treaty might more justly have been applied to those who, through short-sightedness or weakness, attempted to execute it with unreasonable rigidity, and placed this policy under the undeserved label of international honour and respect for the plighted word.

But the making of the Peace Treaties represents only a part of the world situation at the beginning of 1920. If in a general way the new shape of things was beginning to become stabilized, there were many areas in which, neglecting or defying the views of the statesmen in Paris, contending parties sought to impose their own decisions on the spot. The extinction of the chief theatres of war had not put an end to many of the lesser conflicts which must historically be regarded as part of the main conflagration. In the north, Estonia and Latvia were still at war with Soviet Russia. As for Lithuania, the city of Vilna, which she claimed as her capital, changed hands no fewer than five times in the course of the year 1920. Along the undetermined frontier between Poland and Russia each country was feverishly preparing for a decisive campaign in the coming spring. In Asia Minor the Greek army held the Aegean coast, while in the interior Mustafa Kemal was slowly gathering the forces which, after two years of preparation and more than one defeat, restored the authority and sovereignty of Turkey over the whole peninsula. In the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian, three small Republics—Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan—had declared

their independence. In the year 1920 they still enjoyed the moral support of the Allies and the United States. But moral support without material assistance could avail them nothing. The growing power of Soviet Russia and of nationalist Turkey, and the dissensions of the three States both internally and between themselves, foreshadowed clearly enough the imminent collapse of their hopes. There was sporadic fighting along the frontier between Persia and Russia. In the Far East, Japan was in occupation of the Russian Maritime Provinces, and had by no means given up the hope of adding them to her Empire. The position which the Treaty of Versailles assigned to Japan in the Shantung Peninsula was hotly contested by the Chinese who, unable to defend their cause by arms, were finding in the use of the boycott a not ineffective substitute.

Even within the area of Central Europe, where the Peace Conference still held the real power, there were serious disputes and disorders. There was dangerous tension between Hungary and Roumania. In Upper Silesia, ill feeling between Poles and Germans ran so high that the plebiscite which was to decide the future of the province could not be held until the spring of 1921. At Teschen the Poles and Czechs were ready to spring at one another's throats, while their quarrel smouldered along the rest of their common frontier. In Fiume, the rival claims of Italy and Yugoslavia defied all attempts at settlement for another four years.

While the world war was thus being prolonged on the political and military plane, its economic and social consequences were also making themselves felt, above all in Europe. Enormous debts, internal and external, weighed upon the finances of the belligerent powers; at the same time there was unprecedented need for government expenditure on reconstruction in every form. The problem of reparation—how much could Germany pay, how much should be demanded of her—was beginning to exercise its paralysing influence on European recovery, though the worst was still to come. The old channels of commerce had been choked by the war; the task of reopening them was complicated by the new frontiers along which the States concerned hastened to erect new customs barriers, at once the proof of their sovereignty and the chief source of their revenue. The Russian economy had disappeared, engulfing with it the immense capital which the Western Powers had invested in that country. In other continents whose financial position had apparently been greatly improved by the war, conditions were rendered difficult by high prices and the loss of a large part of their European markets.

Meanwhile the same countries which had to face increased needs with

lessened resources, had to face also a new and formidable internal tension at a time when their social structure had been rent asunder by defeat or, at best, strained to near the breaking-point by the hardship of war. The old ruling classes, the aristocracy, the army, the rich men of affairs, had lost their secular authority. Had it not been for the Russian revolution, power would have fallen naturally into the hands of the constitutional left-wing parties—the Liberals and Socialists who had struggled for liberty and democracy in Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary throughout the nineteenth century. But the Socialist movement itself was now divided into two hostile sections. Under the example and the exhortations of Moscow, the left-wing Socialists everywhere allied themselves with the Communists; contemptuously throwing over their old leaders, they sought to seize power by violence and maintain it by terror. And just as militarism and reaction had sowed the seed of revolution, so revolutionary excesses swelled the ranks of the reactionaries at the cost of the moderate conservative or liberal elements. Nothing perhaps contributed so heavily to the subsequent breakdown of the European system as this fatal weakening of the parliamentary parties and, above all, of those old-established Socialist parties which had contained so many of the noblest spirits of the time.

Such was the general situation at the moment when the Council of the League held its first meeting on January 16th, 1920, six days after the Treaty of Versailles, and with it the Covenant, had come into force. The picture is dark enough; but it would be a mistake to regard it as one of unrelieved tragedy. In many parts of the world men were again settling down to the prospect of peaceful and useful lives. In others they were becoming conscious of new possibilities of national and individual freedom, and followed where they led, through pain and error, often with violence and exaggeration. Much that was being swept away had outlived its time of service, and was only a check on progress to better things. In the lives of men and of nations, as in the processes of nature, death is bound up with birth, destruction with renovation. We are still too near to all these great events to recognize with certainty one from the other.

## FIRST SESSIONS OF THE COUNCIL

*The first formal session—Work of the second session—The rapporteur system—Plans for the International Court and other League institutions—The Saar and Danzig—Minorities protection—Swiss neutrality—Proposal for a Commission of Inquiry in Russia*

(JANUARY—MAY 1920)

THE Council assembled in the famous Clock Room of the Quai d'Orsay. Bourgeois was naturally invited to preside. The British member was Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, who chanced to be in Paris on inter-Allied affairs. Hymans was there for Belgium, and Venizelos for Greece. The other delegates were diplomatists whose names meant nothing to the general public.

It was inevitable that the first meeting should give rise to some display of speech-making, and Bourgeois, Curzon, Maggiorino Ferraris of Italy, and Gastão da Cunha of Brazil, took the floor in turn. A pleasant incident interrupted the formality of the proceedings: hearing that Edward Grey had come to witness the first meeting of the organization which he had done so much to create, Bourgeois invited him to sit with the Council. As for actual business, only a single item appeared upon the agenda—the appointment of three members of a Commission to delimit on the spot the frontier between the Saar Territory and Germany. The Secretariat had toiled for many hours over the preparation of this simple act. A printed document set forth the circumstances for the enlightenment of the Council in language of which every comma had been carefully considered. No one knew what the attitude of its members would be towards this unknown phenomenon; and there were, in fact, some among them who seemed surprised and doubtful when Bourgeois motioned the Secretary-General to take a seat, not among the experts and secretaries, but at the Council table itself. In due course his industry and prudence so won the trust of the Council members that each of them would consult with him as freely as with his own staff. But such confidence could only grow gradually. At the early sessions he was actually excluded when individual appointments were under discussion.

This first formal meeting in Paris was followed by a second session which opened in London on February 11th, 1920. After so many months

of heart-breaking inaction, some part of the serious business of the League was at last taken in hand. During the interval, the French had put forward a suggestion whereby much of the embarrassment and uncertainty which still existed as between the Council and Secretariat was effectively dispelled. The proposal was that henceforth every question on the agenda of the Council should be presented to it in two stages. The Secretariat should submit a note setting forth the facts and reproducing whatever actual documents—extracts from treaties, letters from governments, and so forth—might be needed in order to understand the question. But this note should be strictly confined to a statement of the case, making no suggestion concerning the action which the Council should take. That function properly belonged to the members of the Council: and, adopting the procedure of the French parliament, it was proposed that for each question one member should be chosen to study the problem, to listen to the observations of his colleagues, to take charge of any negotiation that might be necessary, and in due course to lay formal proposals for action before the Council. This system of 'rapporteurs' was formally proposed by Arthur Balfour at the second meeting of the Council and accepted without comment. In due course it was adopted by the Assembly also.

It has often been said, more by theoretical writers than by those who actually took part in the work, that the rapporteurs were merely a cover for the Secretariat; but this was not the case. No doubt on small questions of routine a rapporteur could readily accept any draft submitted to him by the Secretariat. It might happen also, on occasions, that even in more important matters, an idle or indifferent rapporteur might simply give his name to a report without having shared in its preparation. But in the majority of cases rapporteurs took their work seriously and conscientiously. Furthermore, since they usually dealt with the same group of questions for several years together, they and their staff acquired such knowledge and experience as would enable them to impose strict limits on the contribution of the Secretariat, if they wished to do so. That the system functioned well is sufficiently proved by the fact that throughout the life of the Council and Assembly it was never once suggested that a better plan could be found. Some delegates complained that they had too much work to do, others that they had too little; but no general criticism was ever put forward.

At the suggestion of the Secretariat, the session began and ended in public. The public meetings were, from one point of view, of a purely formal character. In the first, the press was informed of the list of questions to be dealt with; in the second, the reports and resolutions were read out and adopted. All debate and discussion took place in private:

when the names of candidates for posts other than those on the Secretariat were considered, the Secretary-General himself was excluded. It was understood, however, that no decision was valid until it had been announced at a public meeting. Although, therefore, the press was not yet able to follow the process of argument by which agreement was reached, it was assured that no effective action of the Council was withheld from public knowledge. As time went by, the journalists steadily pressed for more publicity; the Council slowly and reluctantly gave way. But even from the first its methods showed a very great advance as compared with the secrecy observed by other international bodies and notably by the Supreme Council.

In this first working session of the Council, the rapporteurs were content to endorse the proposals put forward by the Secretariat. In this way, and thanks to the efficient chairmanship of Balfour, the Council got through much business in less than three days. For the next three years Balfour was the regular representative of Britain both in the Council and the Assembly. At seventy-one he was beginning the last and happiest period of his long career; and his influence, especially in the Council, was such that his name must always be counted amongst the greatest in League history. Balfour was strongly attached to the League and sincerely anxious that it should survive and develop. He disliked the vague enthusiasm and easy rhetoric of too many of its supporters: but he disliked still more the superficial scepticism of many of its opponents. 'I am not prepared', he said, 'to discuss seriously with any man what the future of international relations should be unless he is prepared either to accept the League of Nations in some form, or to tell me what substitute he proposes for it.'<sup>1</sup> Under Balfour's guidance the Council developed realistic and business-like methods of work; speech-making was reduced to the minimum consistent with the courtesies of debate.

During the next twenty years, the Council met on over a hundred occasions, with a programme which was, in most cases, more extensive and more important than that of its second session. This session, however, possesses the historical interest which must always attach to the first beginnings of any great institution. Its proceedings are therefore described here in more detail than would be possible or desirable in the case of those which succeeded it.

Much of its work consisted, as might be expected, of planning for the future. Expert committees were appointed to draw up plans for three of the special institutions which were to play an important part in the future achievements of the League—the Permanent Court of Inter-

<sup>1</sup> Speech of November 11th, 1919.

national Justice, the Health Organization, and the Organization for Communications and Transit. It was evidently necessary to prepare also for a League organization to deal with economic and financial affairs. But in this field more was required than preparation. The Allied powers had devoted far too little attention to the economic rebuilding of Europe; and when the effects of their negligence began to be too serious to be ignored, they had still postponed action in the hope that the United States would resume her co-operation in economic, if not in political, affairs. The financial situation was by now disastrous and economic recovery was hampered by unprecedented difficulties of currency and of exchange. The Council decided, therefore, to convoke a world-wide conference on international financial questions, and instructed the Secretariat to undertake the necessary arrangements: these, in fact, under the strong direction of Salter and Monnet, were already well advanced. It was understood that the new economic and financial organization of the League would be evolved in connexion with the conference. In this field, therefore, the League organs were not only building up their own structures for the future, but getting ready to cope with the actual problems of the time.

The Council then turned to two questions not directly connected with the Covenant, in which the Peace Treaty had laid serious responsibilities upon the League—the question of the Saar and the question of Danzig.

In the Saar Basin the League was now responsible for the actual government of an industrial area nearly two thousand square miles in extent, with a German population of nearly three-quarters of a million. The Saar coal-mines had been placed in French ownership as a partial compensation for the deliberate destruction wreaked by the German army upon the coal-mines in northern France. The French had demanded that the territory itself should be annexed to France. For this suggestion they put forward a weak historical, but a strong practical, case: how could they be assured that the benefits of ownership would not be nullified by sabotage or ill will on the German side? Wilson and Lloyd George refused to agree to annexation; and in the end it was decided, on an American proposal, that the territory should be included in the French customs area; that it should be governed for fifteen years by a Commission appointed by the League; and that after fifteen years the Saarlanders should decide for themselves whether the Saar should return to Germany, or be transferred to France, or continue to be governed by the League.

The regime of the Saar was destined to occupy a good deal of the time and attention of the Council during the next few years. At this

session, however, all it had to do was to nominate the members, a Frenchman, a Saarlander, and three of other nationalities, appoint one of them as chairman, and fix their salaries. And here it made its first controversial decision in giving the chairmanship to the French member, Victor Rault. The French argued, and the Council accepted their argument, that in view of the close economic relationship between the Saar and France, the new government would have, especially during the early stages of its rule, to deal with numerous questions which could only be settled in agreement with the French authorities concerned. For the Saar's own sake, therefore, it was necessary that the head of its government should be a man whose past experience would enable him to move with speed and assurance through the complexities of the French administrative machine. The Germans, on the other hand, protested that it was unfair to put the chief power in the hands of one whose interest and duty alike would incline him always to favour the French point of view. Neutral and liberal opinion agreed with the Germans; it was already beginning to blame the French on the ground that their uncompromising attitude towards a defeated Germany was holding back the process of reconciliation and reconstruction.

The second question arising from the Treaty was the appointment of a High Commissioner in Danzig. If the functions assigned to the League in the Saar were onerous, those assigned to it in Danzig were doubly so. Here also a compromise had been made between the Polish demand for annexation, and the anxiety of the Americans and British to avoid placing purely German territories under alien rule. But the solution found for Danzig was very different from that for the Saar. The port, with a few miles of the neighbouring country-side, was definitely separated from Germany, and established as an autonomous State under the name of the Free City of Danzig. The Free City was to be included in the Polish customs regime and to be subordinate to Poland in respect of its relations with other States including Germany, while remaining independent in regard to its internal affairs. This arrangement was intended to be not temporary, like that of the Saar, but permanent. The Free City was placed under the protection of the League, and the Council was to appoint a resident High Commissioner to assist in drawing up a new Constitution, and to act as a mediator between Danzig and Poland.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is often asserted that direct government by an international organ is bound to be a failure, and the cases of Tangier and of Danzig are quoted as proofs. Neither of them was, or is, an example of international government. The regime of Tangier has never been international in any real sense, nor can it properly be described as a government, since the great majority of the population is still under the direct authority of the Sultan of Morocco. In Danzig the High Commissioner was indeed an international official, responsible to an international organ; but he possessed no single attribute of government. The only important



The Council then took the first step in accepting yet another function which was to provide it with much difficult work during the next fifteen years—that of protecting the rights of racial, religious, and linguistic minorities in Eastern and Central Europe. In many areas of mixed population a complete reversal had been effected by the Peace Treaties: the ruling power had passed from the races hitherto dominant—Germans, Austrians, Hungarians—to those hitherto largely treated as subject peoples—Poles, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Czechs, Roumanians. No human skill could draw frontiers which would not leave considerable minorities on either side: and in those days the expedient of transferring populations *en masse* from one country to another would have been regarded as inhuman and unjust. The new masters had had, in many cases, to bear much tyranny and wrong from those who were now their subjects. If they were tempted to pay off old scores, their action would be easy to understand: but its political dangers would be great. The Peace Conference had therefore devised a new form of treaty by which each new, or newly enlarged, State pledged itself to grant fair and equal treatment to the minorities within its frontiers, and agreed that the execution of its pledges should be treated as a matter of international concern and placed under the guarantee of the League. The defeated countries, except Germany, were made to undertake the same engagements; and the system was later extended by the Assembly to Finland, Albania, the Baltic States, and Iraq on the occasion of their admission to the League.

Such obligations were disagreeable to the *amour-propre* of the States concerned: and whatever some of them may have lacked in material resources, none was lacking in *amour-propre*. But their resistance was firmly borne down by the Supreme Council, rightly considering that, if injustice were done to a racial minority, the cause would have to be taken up either by the League or by the country whose people belonged to the same race as the minority in question. International protection, if effectively and justly applied, should make it impossible to use the situation of any minority as an excuse for intervention by individual States in the affairs of their neighbours. The countries, therefore, which were made to sign minorities treaties were thereby helping to safeguard their own peace and the peace of the world. Further, in words to which later they often referred in bitterness of spirit, Wilson pointed out that, since the new territorial settlements would be guaranteed by the great powers, the latter had the right to ensure, so far as they could, that all elements of future trouble should be eliminated.

example of international government in the history of the League is that of the Saar Territory; and this, in spite of early difficulties and mistakes, was remarkably successful.

In February 1920, the Polish Minorities Treaty was the only one which had been ratified and brought into force. The treaty had been drafted without consultation with the organs of the League; and it would therefore have been possible, at least in theory, for the Council to decline the responsibilities thus thrust upon it. Needless to say, no such suggestion was made either in regard to the treaty with Poland or in regard to the various similar treaties which followed it. But in insisting that its formal consent was necessary, the Council made it plain that it would not be prepared in future to accept without question any function which two or more powers might choose to entrust to it by a treaty between themselves.

The Council then considered a request from Switzerland to be permitted to maintain neutrality in regard to any military action by the League, and nevertheless to be accepted as a Member. Like other neutrals, Switzerland was called upon to declare within two months of the coming into force of the Covenant whether she chose to be an original Member of the League or not. Under the Swiss Constitution, a question of such importance could only be settled after holding a national referendum. The government was solidly for joining: there was a large majority on the same side in the Federal Parliament, but in the country itself there was strong opposition. If entry into the League meant the total abandonment of the neutrality which had for centuries been the established tradition of Switzerland, the government itself would be against it, and, in any case, the popular vote would register an overwhelming negative. In these circumstances Switzerland proposed, first to the Allied Council in Paris, and then to the Council of the League, that she should join on the express understanding that if ever the League were compelled to use coercion against a State guilty of aggression, she should not be expected either to participate in any military action, or to allow the passage of troops across her territory; but that she would take her full part in the economic and financial sanctions which the Covenant in such a case made obligatory for all Members. The Swiss proposal was accepted by the Council; three months later, on May 16th, 1920, the referendum was duly held, and the Swiss people decided by a narrow majority to join the League. This result was achieved only after a hard-fought political campaign, in which several cantons were induced by their pro-German sentiment to vote against joining, while both the extreme left and the extreme right put up a bitter opposition to the policy of the Federal Government.

No other country ever gave such thorough consideration to the question of entering the League; nor has any people or government a higher standard of integrity than those of Switzerland. Yet when the test came

some fifteen years later, the Swiss government repudiated the promise they had given in London; and Switzerland, almost alone among League Members, declined to share in the economic sanctions which aimed at preventing Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia.

The catalogue of acts of the second session of the Council is not negligible or unimportant in itself: but it shows as insignificant against the background of the urgent difficulties that called for settlement. The Council members had worked harmoniously and sensibly: they had contributed to laying the foundation for the future growth of the League; but they had held aloof from all controversial questions. This, on the part of Balfour at least, was the result of deliberate policy. The League, in his view, had not been designed to bring order into a world still shaking with the last convulsions of the war. Its real task would only begin when international life had been restored to normal and settled conditions. It must build up its institutions, establish its methods, learn the extent and limits of its power, before it could attempt to deal with dangerous political problems. No member of the Council had any other view. But a section of public opinion began to demand that the Council should show more courage and more enterprise. It had the right under the Covenant to deal with any question affecting the peace of the world. Did not the growing difficulties between Germany and the Allied powers constitute such a question? And was this not still more evidently true of the situation between Soviet Russia and the rest of the world? Why should not the Assembly be convened, Germany admitted as a Member, and the whole business of reparation, intergovernmental debts, relief, and reconstruction lifted out of its present deadlock and handed over to a body that could act without partiality or passion? Why should not the Council intervene to bring some order into the fantastic chaos of Western relations with Soviet Russia, and to put an end to the Polish-Russian war?

Although those who held these opinions, and notably the Socialist and trade union leaders, directed their reproaches chiefly at the League itself, it was clear that no such bold and comprehensive policies could be attempted without the full co-operation of the governments concerned. As for Germany, the Weimar government naturally asked nothing better than to submit its controversies to the League: it could thereby lose nothing and might gain much. But the Allied powers had already barred and bolted the door. They had adopted as a guiding principle that all questions arising from the execution or even the interpretation of the Peace Treaties should be kept outside the sphere of action of the Council and Assembly, unless the Treaties themselves

made this impossible. The Supreme Council continued to meet at frequent intervals throughout the years from 1920 to 1923. At the same time, it had set up a standing organization in Paris, consisting of the Ambassadors of Britain, Italy, Japan, and the United States, with the French Foreign Minister as chairman; and to this Conference of Ambassadors was submitted all business which could be brought within the above definition, unless it was so important as to call for a special meeting of the heads of governments. From a strictly national point of view, this body was far preferable to the Council of the League. It was small; it was secret; it gave the opportunity to discuss with the United States, even though the American member was soon instructed to sit only as an observer. It had no rules except the Treaties, and was not forced to listen to the views of small or neutral powers. So far therefore from acquiescing in any suggestion to permit the Council of the League to take up problems arising from the Peace Treaties, the French, British, and Italian governments did their best at this time to enlarge the competence, and extend the activities, of the Conference of Ambassadors.<sup>1</sup> In the same way they insisted on keeping all decisions concerning reparation in their own hands, through the Reparation Commission, regardless of the fact that their disagreements on the subject were injuring many other States as well as themselves.

For the time being, therefore, there was no possibility for the League to concern itself with the vital problems of Germany. As for the not less vital problems of Russia, the situation was different. Throughout the Peace Conference the chief Allies, above all Britain and France, had poured out money and materials to support the counter-revolutionary operations of Kolchak, Denikin, and Yudenich, and had maintained a blockade against the areas controlled by Moscow. The Bolshevik government had replied with a stream of violent criticism of everything that was being done in Paris, and in their universal condemnation the Covenant was, of course, included. The League was a sham, intended only to preserve the capitalist system, and to muster all the imperialist powers, including Germany, in an unholy alliance against the Soviet regime. All Socialists were advised to have nothing to do with the League.<sup>2</sup> The International Labour Organization was only meant to rivet their chains more firmly upon the workers.

<sup>1</sup> The Allied powers actually proposed to ask the League Council to submit its views on the question of Swiss neutrality within the League to the Conference of Ambassadors; this suggestion was only abandoned on receipt of a strong protest from Drummond.

<sup>2</sup> The Socialist movement was as usual split into sections, a left wing accepting all that came from Moscow, and a right wing which still held to constitutional methods. In the neutral countries where a parliamentary or popular vote had to be taken concerning the question of entry into the League, the extreme left joined with the extreme right in voting to stay out. Except in Switzerland, both groups were well aware that their vote could have no effect.

However, by February 1920, a change had come over the scene. The defeat of the White armies was complete, and the attempt to bolster them up was now relinquished. The blockade could serve no further purpose and suggestions to re-start trade were beginning to be put forward. The verbal warfare on both sides was still as fierce as ever; but it had a hollow sound, as though it now represented no longer a policy, but only a sentiment. But though repression might be abandoned, no more positive policy was yet possible; the French government, in particular, was as strongly anti-Soviet as ever. In these circumstances, it seemed for a moment as though the League might offer a solution of the deadlock. In January the Governing Body of the International Labour Office had debated the possibility of sending a Commission of Inquiry to Russia to report on industrial conditions there. The idea was taken up by the heads of the Allied governments, then conferring in London, and passed on by them to the Council of the League. It was one which certain members of the Secretariat, as well as Cecil, had been advocating for some months. On March 12th, 1920, the Council held a special meeting in Paris, and promptly dispatched a telegram to the Soviet authorities, in which it announced its decision to constitute a Commission for the purpose of obtaining full and impartial information as to the conditions prevailing in Russia, and asked for an assurance that the Commission would be given the necessary facilities and protection. The telegram was doubtless less amiable in tone than it would have been if intended for any other government; and indeed it avoided the use of the word government, since no Council Member had yet given any recognition to the Soviet regime. Nevertheless, it was far nearer to the level of international courtesy than the messages which Moscow had been accustomed to receive or to send. Much more important, it was in substance a serious step towards the recognition of the Soviet government as the actual government of Russia, and towards the gradual establishment of reasonable relations between it and the rest of the world. As such, the action of the Council was execrated in those influential circles which regretted the cessation of positive hostile action by the Western powers, encouraged Poland to push forward into the Ukraine, and believed that the revolutionary regime was on the point of collapse.

All this might well have led the Bolsheviks to return a favourable answer; and interviews given by Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and by Litvinov, his chief assistant, seemed to foreshadow that they would in fact do so. But the weeks passed and no answer came. The members of the League Commission were nominated; the services of experts in economic affairs and in questions of transport

(Russia's greatest need) were secured; and the Secretariat made elaborate arrangements for their journey and their sustenance.

In the meantime the Polish troops, having beaten off an attempted Soviet offensive, had begun what seemed to be a victorious advance deep into Russian territory. By the time the Central Executive Committee in Moscow was ready to give its answer to the Council, the Poles had entered Kiev and proclaimed an independent Ukraine under Polish protection. The Russian answer, sent on May 5th, began by welcoming the Council's proposal as a sign that some Members of the League were renouncing their hostility to the Russian people. The Soviet Government consented in principle to admit the Commission and give it the opportunity of studying the situation. But the proper moment for its visit had not yet arrived. Further, some League Members were helping the Polish invaders: and the Commission would not be admitted if it included any nationals of such countries.

This telegram reached the Council in Rome where it was holding its fifth session; and no one doubted that its effect must be to put an end to the proposed Commission. For the sake of form, an answer was sent pointing out that the Russian conditions practically amounted to a refusal; that the League Commissioners would represent the League and not their individual countries; and that the Council still hoped that their proposal of March might be accepted. This message drew a sarcastic answer from Chicherin, and the Council made no further effort. A few weeks later when the Red Army was victoriously overrunning Poland, the British government offered its mediation. The Soviets refused; and although it had not been suggested that the League should play any part, their refusal contained a long and violent denunciation of the League for seeking to intervene.

The first attempt to establish a relation of tolerance between the League and Soviet Russia thus ended in weakness and failure. Each side had shown itself more concerned with maintaining its diplomatic dignity than with arriving at an effective result. The position of the League was logically and legally indefensible. Since the principal Members were still completely unable to make up their own minds as regards the Polish-Russian war, the Council was not only prevented from attempting to bring the fighting to an end, but was forced to ignore its very existence. Nevertheless, from the practical point of view the Soviet government was missing a unique opportunity. The arrival in Russia of fifty or more commissioners, experts and secretaries, followed by an almost equally large group sent by the International Labour Office, could well have brought about a great and beneficial change in the whole situation. They could hardly have failed to make proposals for

stopping the war, though that was no part of their formal purpose. Apart from this the Russians needed to re-establish something like normal relations with the capitalist world. Rejecting the opportunity of using the League as a bridge, they had to fall back on negotiations with individual States, which usually led to nothing but disagreement and ill will.

## COUNCIL SESSIONS BEFORE THE FIRST ASSEMBLY

*The Elder Statesmen—The rescue of war prisoners (1920–1921)—The fight against epidemics (1920–1922)—Political questions: Enzeli; the Aaland Islands (June 1920–June 1921); The Polish–Lithuanian dispute; Armenia—The summoning of the First Assembly*

(APRIL–NOVEMBER 1920)

**D**URING the ten months which separated the coming into force of the Covenant from the first meeting of the Assembly, the Council held ten separate sessions, four in Paris, three in London, and one each in Rome, San Sebastian, and Brussels. For the time being its members accepted without question the limitative theory of its functions. They allowed the Supreme Council to wrestle with the most urgent and dangerous legacies of the war, and confined their own efforts to preparation for the future and to dealing with such immediate problems as were submitted to them to be settled in accordance with the Covenant. Even within these limits there was no lack of questions to be decided: but they were not such as to endanger the harmony of the Council. Meeting at intervals of less than a month, and finding themselves able time after time, under the cheerful and sensible leadership of Balfour and Bourgeois, to reach unanimous conclusions, its members began to feel confidence in one another and in the Council as an institution. From May 1920 onwards Italy contributed, in the person of Tommaso Tittoni, a representative of the same calibre as those of France and Britain; if he did not inspire the same trust, he matched them in age, experience, and intellectual power, and his presence added to the dignity and authority of the Council. In October 1920 Viscount Ishii began to be the delegate of Japan. He possessed the personal courtesy and modesty that distinguished all Japanese statesmen in those days, combined with both courage and wisdom. He had been a distinguished Foreign Minister and in Tokyo his reputation stood high; but being Ambassador in Paris as well as delegate to the Council, he could not enjoy the same independence as the representatives of the other great powers. Most regular of all in his attendance was Quiñones de León of Spain. Like the Brazilian member, Gastão da Cunha, he was his country's Ambassador in Paris. He was generally looked upon as being inclined to support the French point of view; and this was



unfortunate, since Spain was the only Council Member which had been neutral in the war, and might have been expected to uphold the special viewpoint of the other European neutrals, which was that the difference between victors and vanquished should be obliterated without delay. He was, indeed, neither a national figure at home nor a man of outstanding political quality, but he played his part with unflinching good humour and good manners.

There were moments in this early stage of the existence of the League when the Council began to consider itself as a single united body, responsible to the world as a whole, and capable of speaking and acting independently of the attitude or policy of the individual governments of which it was composed. Thus in April 1920 a proposal put forward by Curzon on behalf of the Supreme Council was firmly rejected by Balfour on behalf of the Council of the League; and in the next years more than one severe dispute among the great powers was settled by agreement between the representatives of those same powers at a Geneva session. The world, said Tittoni,<sup>1</sup> must look upon us as independent magistrates, not as puppets of which the governments hold the strings. From such heights the Council was recalled by Balfour, who reminded it that it had no executive powers of its own, no armed forces, no finances except such as the governments were ready to place at its disposal: only through their consent and co-operation could its decisions be effectively carried out. Nevertheless, Balfour, Bourgeois, and Tittoni were all in a position to show a certain independence of their own governments: and the picture of the Council as a gathering of Elder Statesmen, aloof from the quarrels of parliaments and chanceries, guided only by the spirit of the Covenant and seeking the general good of all nations alike, was not altogether a false one.

It was indeed in this high capacity that the Council received certain despairing appeals from the men of good will who were trying, with little or no official support, to cope with the gigantic sufferings of Eastern Europe; and that, having received them, it responded with unexpected success. The first of these concerned the situation of the prisoners captured by the Russian armies in the first years of the war. Many were dead, but hundreds of thousands still precariously survived, dispersed in the immense disorganization of Russia and Siberia; no longer treated as captives, but without the means of subsistence or of rejoining, or even communicating with, their homes. The problem was beyond the scope of the national and international Red Cross societies

<sup>1</sup> See Council Minutes for May 15th, 1920.

which were gallantly attempting to solve it. They appealed to the Council, and the Council was inspired to appeal to Fridtjof Nansen. Thus began, in April 1920, the close connexion with the League of the noblest citizen of post-war Europe, a connexion which was only broken by his death.

Nansen was not asked in the first place to do more than investigate the problem and report on the measures needed for dealing with it. But he had his own way of interpreting such a commission; and within a few weeks he had started a regular movement of shipping from the Baltic ports. The Council gave him all the support they could: but none of the governments concerned was in a position to provide the funds which seemed necessary for operations on so great a scale. Space forbids a description of how Nansen and his helpers overcame obstacles which no other man could have surmounted—how he used such official and private contributions as he could raise to organize the movement of prisoners in both directions, by land across Poland and the Baltic States, by sea not only across the Baltic and the Black Sea, but even across the Pacific from Vladivostok; how he contrived actually to make profits on some voyages and so to keep the ships in service; how he persuaded the Soviet, Polish, and German governments to co-operate. Within two years from first undertaking his inquiry Nansen, with his Red Cross and other assistants, had restored more than 425,000 men to their homes. His achievement was above all a great work of humanity. At the same time, the fact that he performed it by the authority of the League did something to counteract the discontent felt in Germany in regard to the political acts of the Council. If it could have no such effect in Russia, this was because the Soviet government, in this and other matters, while facilitating the actual work to the best of its ability, took precautions to ensure that the name of the League should never be mentioned.

From early days also the Council began to receive desperate appeals for help from the Red Cross societies who were helping the Polish government to fight epidemics of typhus, cholera, dysentery, and other diseases. The chief sources of infection were in Russia: but in the chaotic conditions of the whole frontier area the epidemics, especially typhus, had already established a strong hold in eastern Poland and were spreading westward. While most reasonable people rejected Poland's plea that in fighting the Russians she was protecting the world against Bolshevism, it was undeniable that in her battle against typhus and cholera she was of necessity the advance-guard of Europe. If her struggling health services broke down, her western neighbours would at once be in grave danger.

The League had not yet established its special organization for health questions: and indeed all the plans made for that purpose by the Secretariat and the national experts were long delayed, and seriously prejudiced, by American obstruction. The Council, however, having first secured expert advice as to the measures required, issued, on May 19th, 1920, an appeal to the Members of the League to subscribe £2 million, which the experts declared to be the minimum needed to cope with the crisis. Unfortunately, though the Council repeated its appeal, and the delegates to the Assembly made moving speeches on the subject, the national treasuries were unmoved; and the Epidemics Commission which the Council had sent to Poland had to do its best with funds amounting to about one-twentieth of the amount required. In consequence, though valuable help was given to the Polish administration, and though a temporary improvement was achieved, the situation again deteriorated, and by the end of 1921 was more menacing than ever. But by that time a new approach, in which the Russians were invited to join, had been planned. The Health Organization of the League had at length come into existence: and Ludwik Rajchman, a Polish doctor, had been transferred from the Epidemics Commission to be the Secretary of the new Organization and the chief medical official of the Secretariat. For the next years Rajchman's active and brilliant mind was to render extraordinary services to the League. His arrival led at once to a new and favourable development in the campaign against epidemics.

Rajchman was convinced that a purely defensive attitude against the onset of disease was doomed to failure. The invisible army had in many places broken through the sanitary cordon along the Polish-Russian borderland; and while the Poles and Roumanians vainly tried to close their frontiers against infection from Russia, Germany and Czechoslovakia were doing the same against Poland. Each was working in its own interest and hindering rather than helping the others. Rajchman saw that the danger must be tackled at its source. In September 1921 he went to Moscow in company with Dr Norman White, the head of the Epidemics Commission; it took them a few days to overcome the suspicions and hostility of the Soviet Health Ministry, but in the end they succeeded completely. Their report, contrasting with the partisan character of almost all the information concerning Russia which was then available, must increase the historian's regret over the rejection, a year before, of the proposals for expert inquiry under the auspices of the Council and the International Labour Office. It did not hide the miserable conditions of life in Russia, the prevalence of famine in certain provinces, the monstrous extent of the epidemics of typhus, cholera, and typhoid, the unreliability of Soviet statistics; but it showed also the

magnificent courage of doctors and nurses, and the efficiency and honesty of the health administration within the limits of its means.

From that time onward effective collaboration with Russia was established and the whole aspect of the anti-epidemic campaign was changed. The idea of a sanitary cordon between Russia and the rest of Europe was abandoned, and the expression itself, with its wounding implications, was dropped. Though Chicherin did not cease to insult and thwart the Council in its political action, the Moscow government began to supply regular intelligence to the Health Organization of the League,<sup>1</sup> and to take part in many of its activities. And the League, in its turn, did what was in its power to assist the Russians in their fight against epidemics. A sanitary convention was negotiated, under pressure from Rajchman, between Poland and Russia. At the same time the Polish government was requested by the Council to call a European Conference on the whole question; and this Conference, held in Warsaw in March 1922, drew up a comprehensive plan, covering both the defensive and offensive campaigns which were needed for the preservation of Europe from the Volga to the Rhine. Although this was essentially a League Conference, organized and managed by the Secretariat, Germany, Russia, and the Soviet Ukraine took a full and equal part in its work. The last two did not venture to agree to the decision, accepted by Germany and all the rest, to entrust the execution of the whole plan to the Health Organization of the League; but everyone knew that their opposition was no more than a form and that they agreed in fact though not in words.

By the end of 1923 the danger-point in Eastern Europe was passed, and the Epidemics Commission was able to close its activities in Poland and Russia.

During this formative period which preceded the First Assembly, the Council was called upon to deal with four questions which, in some degree, involved a danger of war. These were, first, a protest from Persia against the occupation by Soviet forces of the Persian port of Enzeli; second, a dispute between Finland and Sweden concerning the destiny of the Aaland Islands; third, a conflict between Poland and Lithuania over the possession of Vilna and its province; and, fourth, the question

<sup>1</sup> The first adequate report on epidemics in Russia was submitted by the eminent Russian professor, L. Tarassevich. (*Epidemiological Bulletin* of the League, No. 2, March 1922.) I quote the last words of his introductory note as illustrating the spirit of the Russian doctors: 'I have looked upon it as a duty, and a great honour, to contribute to this documentation. That is why I accept the invitation to do so, in spite of all the general and personal difficulties involved. I have done it not only with zeal, but with deep gratitude, in the hope of reinforcing our struggle against epidemics, which has been so painful and, alas, so inefficacious, in spite of all the efforts we have made.'

of the protection of the new State of Armenia. It was no mere coincidence that each of these disputes arose on the fringes of the Russian Empire. The victorious Allies had been able, generally speaking, to decide effectively the future of territories detached from Germany or set free from Austro-Hungarian rule. They were in uncontested control of all the fragments of the Ottoman Empire except Asia Minor. But in regard to the territorial problems arising from the collapse of Russia, they were unable to impose their own settlements. In these regions they enjoyed neither legal authority nor military predominance. Not only Soviet Russia, but the new Turkish government of Mustafa Kemal, the militaristic regime of Pilsudski in Poland, and even so small and weak a State as the new-born Lithuania, could defy them with impunity. As for the League, since it possessed no material powers whatever, it could only rely on its legal and moral authority; and these were rejected both by Moscow and Ankara. If its intervention was in some cases effective, this was due to the fact that all the other border States were either already Members or had requested the Assembly to admit them: and they were sensitive in some degree to the general opinion of the world as expressed by the Council or the Assembly.

The affair of Enzeli hardly deserves mention except as being the first case submitted to the Council by any Member State. The Soviet fleet in the Caspian Sea had bombarded the port and landed troops, who occupied the town and advanced some way beyond it. The appeal for the help of the League came from the Persian Foreign Minister, Prince Firuz, who carried on his functions from the Carlton Hotel in London—a circumstance which could not add to his authority in the eyes of most members of the Council. And though he was, in fact, acting on instructions from Teheran, his government was simultaneously carrying on amiable negotiations with Moscow. Perceiving this, the Council told Firuz that it would take no action until the result of those negotiations was known: its conclusions were politely expressed, but most members believed that the appeal had been no more than a manoeuvre in the contest between London and Moscow for the controlling influence in Persia.

The second case, which concerned the sovereignty over the Aaland Islands in the Baltic, was a far more serious affair. The Islands had been part of the Grand Duchy of Finland during the period when Finland had been included in the Russian Empire. She had now achieved her own liberation: though still nominally at war with Russia, the Helsingfors government was in effective control of the whole country, including

the Aaland Islands. But the Islanders were Swedish in speech, blood, and affections: they begged the Swedish government to accept them as part of Sweden, and Swedish opinion was strongly in favour of granting this request. Feeling on both sides ran high; in Sweden particularly there was talk of settling the question by force. At this point the British government called on the Council to take up the question, and, on June 19th, 1920, a special meeting was held in London, which the two States were invited to attend. This was the first occasion when two countries came together to argue their claims before the Council. The Swedish case was presented by Hjalmar Branting, their great Socialist Prime Minister, with the support of two delegates from the Islands, whose homely speech and look made a pleasant effect against the magnificence of St James's Palace. They asked for a plebiscite to settle the question. But the Finns declared that the League had no competence to intervene; the Aalanders were citizens of Finland and the status of the Islands was a purely internal affair. Such a protest could not be simply disregarded. If the Court had then existed, the Council would doubtless have asked its advice: as it was, it invited three eminent lawyers to report on the objection. The delay was regrettable, but from the moment that the dispute had been laid before the League, it was evident that the danger of war had receded. The Finns also hastened to appease the sentiments both of the Council and of Sweden by releasing certain Aalanders who had been arrested as leaders of the separatist movement.

Two months later the jurists reported that the question was not a purely Finnish affair; on the contrary, besides the particular claim of Sweden, there was a specific Russian interest in the decision, and indeed the Russians, while still trying to treat the League sometimes as non-existent and sometimes as an imperialist conspiracy, had issued statements to the effect that no settlement could be valid without their agreement. Further, a Swedish-Russian-British treaty, signed in 1856, had stipulated that the Islands were not to be fortified or used for military purposes; and this treaty was still valid. The Council accepted the jurists' opinion and resolved to send a neutral Commission to the Baltic and to await its advice before taking a formal decision.

The First Assembly had long passed, and the League had settled down in Geneva, before the Commissioners returned with their report; but when it came, the advice was clear and definite. They admitted that the desire of the Aalanders for union with Sweden was sincere and universal. But they accepted Finland's claim to the possession of sovereignty over the Islands; and they urged that this must be the decisive consideration. A minority had the right to fair and just treatment

within the State: but it could not be permitted to separate itself from the country of which it was a part, and incorporate itself within some other State, simply because it desired to do so. Such a doctrine would lead to international anarchy. Territorial separation was an extreme measure which could only be justified by grave and persistent denial of justice to the minority concerned. The Islands, therefore, should continue to be a part of Finland; but the League should ensure that the rights and interests of the inhabitants should be neither damaged nor threatened. It should also negotiate a new convention, providing that the Islands should not be fortified or used as a naval base.

In June 1921 this verdict was endorsed by the Council in spite of strong opposition from Sweden. Branting refused to admit that Finnish sovereignty had been proved, and protested that it was unjust to subordinate the wishes of a whole population to an uncertain interpretation of their legal position. The Finns, too, were far from pleased at having to accept the control of the League over their treatment of a national minority, to which they had already made the most liberal promises. But having accepted the decision, both governments conformed to it with Scandinavian honesty; and life in the Aaland Islands was happy and peaceful until the menace of the Second World War began to throw its ominous shadows over the Baltic.<sup>1</sup>

It was in September 1920 that the Council first found itself involved in a bitter and irreconcilable feud between Poles and Lithuanians over the possession of Vilna. This famous and beautiful city had been the capital of Lithuania both in its days of national greatness and in its later period of federation as a junior, but autonomous, partner with Poland. The partition of Poland had subjected both peoples to servitude: and Vilna had been part of the Russian Empire for a hundred and fifty years. The Lithuanians, forbidden to use their language, deprived of civic rights, reduced with few exceptions to the status of peasants and serfs, had with heroic obstinacy held fast to their national consciousness; and when the Tsarist Empire broke down, they, like their neighbours of Latvia and Estonia, proclaimed their independence. The reborn State always regarded Vilna as its capital in spite of two awkward facts—first, that it was not able to occupy the city, which was claimed by both Russians and Poles and held alternately by the one or the other; and secondly, that the Lithuanian element was only a negligible percentage of the urban population, which consisted almost entirely of Jews, Poles, and Russians. However, the Soviet forces having, in the summer of 1920, recaptured Vilna once again from the Polish occupants,

<sup>1</sup> For the reopening of the Aaland question see Chapter 65.

a formal Treaty of Peace between Russia and Lithuania was signed in Moscow, on July 12th, by which the Soviet government recognized the independence of Lithuania, and the frontier between the two countries was defined in such a way as to leave the whole province of Vilna within the Lithuanian boundaries.

A few weeks later the Russian army was in full flight and the pursuing Poles once more approached the disputed areas. Poland refused to be bound by the frontiers laid down in the Treaty of Moscow; and she accused Lithuania of unneutral conduct in allowing the Russians to operate on her territory. This accusation was true: the Lithuanians could not, in fact, have prevented the Russians from doing so; but they had actually engaged themselves, by a protocol to the Moscow Treaty, to allow the Russian troops, on grounds of strategic necessity, to cross their frontiers and occupy part of their territories. At the same time they offered strong resistance to the left wing of the Polish advance as soon as it tried to cross the line which they claimed as their frontier. This action added considerably to the difficulties of the Polish Command; and on September 5th the Warsaw government, which had long been at war with Russia without making any move to invite the intervention of the Council, now called upon the latter to restrain the warlike spirit of the Lithuanians and so to prevent the outbreak of actual war between the two countries.

The Council was due to meet in Paris on September 16th; its members, and the Secretariat also, shrank from the difficulty of trying to put the date forward, and thus ten days were lost before it began to consider this new danger, the most serious political problem to which it had yet set its hand. The Poles were represented by Paderewski, a citizen of the world as much as of Poland, and the very flower of Western civilization; the Lithuanians by Voldemaras, a professor turned politician, slow, obstinate, suspicious, shrewd, and courageous—such a type as had enabled the peasant stock of Lithuania to hold together through generations of oppression. Voldemaras knew that French policy and French opinion alike were completely on the side of Poland. His natural distrustfulness was increased by the fact that the Council invited Bourgeois, as its President, to take charge of the question, with the help of Matsui of Japan and Quiñones de León of Spain, both of whom were Ambassadors accredited to the French government. But after a difficult start the discussion made unexpectedly favourable progress. In four days a complete agreement was reached. Lithuania promised to give no help to the Russians. Poland promised to abstain from attacking the Lithuanians. A line of demarcation between the two armies was laid down, and both governments promised to respect it; while the Council



was to send out a Military Commission to guard against violation of the line and to ensure that each side carried out its engagements. On September 20th the agreement was announced at a public meeting. Paderewski and Voldemaras sealed it with declarations of national good will and shook hands amidst the applause of the spectators.

The next step was to form and dispatch the League Commission; and here both the Council and the Secretariat showed their inexperience. No names were ready, no preparations made. The French, British, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish members of the Council nominated one officer each—a process which not only involved loss of time but resulted in a Commission whose members knew nothing about the League, and were prevented by difficulties of language from forming any direct judgement on the local situation, or even understanding one another. The only exception was the French member, Colonel Chardigny, who through French pressure, as also by virtue of his energy, intelligence, and linguistic attainments, was appointed President of the Commission, though such an appointment was bound to lessen Lithuanian confidence in the impartiality of its acts. Chardigny and his colleagues reached the demarcation line at Suwalki on October 5th. Neither side had completely observed the truce; but each had sent plenipotentiaries to Suwalki, and with the help of the League Commission a formal agreement was signed on October 7th, providing for total cessation of all hostilities and defining the line of demarcation in its full length. Each side bound itself to maintain the agreement until all questions at issue between them should be finally settled. This clause was directed principally to the question of Vilna.

That city had been for the last few weeks the seat of the Lithuanian government, which had moved in as the retreating Russians moved out. It lay a hundred miles or more on the Lithuanian side of the line of demarcation. But the Suwalki agreement clearly stipulated that that line did not in any way prejudice the territorial claims of the two countries. The frontier was a matter for future settlement; and the Poles had what impartial judges might well consider the better claim to the final verdict. Pilsudski, however, was not willing to wait. Within a few hours of the signature of the agreement, the Commission and the Council learnt with consternation that a Polish army, commanded by General Zeligowski, had disregarded the demarcation line and was marching on Vilna. The Lithuanian government withdrew in haste to its usual home at Kovno; its forces made little resistance; and Zeligowski occupied the town almost without firing a shot. The Polish government assured the Council that the general was acting on his own initiative, and indeed in disobedience to the orders of the High Command. He

was no better than a rebel: but since Polish public opinion regarded him as a national hero, it was impossible for the Polish army to use force against him, or to allow any outside power to drive him from Vilna. The government considered the protests of Bourgeois, on behalf of the Council, as entirely justified: but what could it do? And, after all, the inhabitants of Vilna had welcomed Zeligowski with joy: he himself and his men belonged to that province; was not this a further proof that Poland had the moral right to sovereignty over the disputed area?

In subsequent negotiations the Poles gradually abandoned the pretence that they were not supporting Zeligowski; the flow of men and munitions into Vilna could not be concealed. They continued, however, to affirm that he had acted independently and against their will. The Council, having no definite information to the contrary, did not formally refuse to believe them, though Balfour did not leave much doubt as to his own opinion. In fact, as has since been made known, Zeligowski's march had been planned and executed under the direct orders of Pilsudski, head of the State and Commander-in-Chief of the army. The whole plot was an unscrupulous violation of the pledges given to the Council in Paris and to the Lithuanians at Suwalki. It is likely that the first surprise expressed by the civilian members of the government, including Prince Sapieha, the Foreign Minister, was genuine. Thereafter their defence of an act of bad faith enveloped themselves and the Council in a web of falsehood. Poland's reputation was heavily damaged, particularly in Britain. And this for a result which might well have been achieved without recourse to dishonourable means, with all the disadvantages involved for Poland herself.

Lithuania demanded the immediate intervention of the Council, but Bourgeois, while calling upon the Polish government to put an end to the breach of its engagements to the League, decided to await the meeting already fixed for October 20th at Brussels. In the meantime the Polish-Russian war had at last come to an end. Preliminaries of peace were signed at Riga on October 12th, 1920. The frontier between the two States was fixed far to the east of Vilna; and the Russians, in disregard of their treaty signed with Lithuania in July, declared that the future frontier between Lithuania and Poland was a matter to be decided between those countries alone. At the Brussels meeting Poland was represented by Simon Askenazy, who, unlike Paderewski, showed himself deliberately defiant towards the Council and malevolent towards the Lithuanians. Nevertheless, after heated debate, the Council proposed that the inhabitants of Vilna and its province should themselves decide whether to belong to Poland or Lithuania. The vote was to be organized by the League, and Zeligowski's troops were to be

replaced by an international contingent acting under the orders of the Council. This plan was accepted by both sides. Thus at the moment when the Assembly met, and the activities of the Council were transferred to Geneva, the latter was busily engaged in planning the arrangements for a popular vote and in forming the proposed international force, to which some eight or ten Members of the League were invited to contribute a company apiece. We shall return to the story of Vilna after the close of the First Assembly.

The short-lived Republic of Armenia (Erivan) had carved itself out of the frontier districts between Turkey and Russia at the time when neither of those powers was in a position to maintain its rule over the outlying fringes of its territory. The Armenians could justly claim the sympathy of the Allied powers in virtue both of their unspeakable sufferings under Turkish rule, and of the assistance which they had rendered in the last stages of the Turkish war. The Allies therefore gave them some material help and advice; promised to define their frontiers; recognized the independence of the new State; and permitted an Armenian delegation to sign the Treaty of Sèvres—that still-born treaty which was not destined, and did not deserve, ever to be brought into force.

But both Turkey and Russia had found new sources of vitality and recovered with astonishing speed: if they could spare only a fraction of their strength to reduce the Armenians to subjection once again, that fraction was more than the frail Republic could withstand. The Allies were far away: they could not protect Armenia without making a military effort which was far beyond their will; yet they could not openly abandon her to her fate. In this dilemma the Supreme Council hit on the idea of treating her as a mandated territory and asking the League to act as trustee. But the Council was far too prudent to fall into such a trap. In a reply drafted by Balfour himself, it answered (April 11th, 1920) that under the mandate system the responsibility of trusteeship was accepted by individual States, not by the League as such; and that a direct League trusteeship could not be considered until the Allies had announced what military and financial resources they would provide for the purpose, since of itself the League possessed neither. The Council suggested that no country could carry out the task so well as the United States; and the Supreme Council promptly submitted the suggestion to the American government. Wilson did not shrink from the burden: but the request which, on June 1st, he laid before Congress was rejected by a large majority in each House. Meanwhile the situation in Armenia grew steadily more critical. The Allied governments and the Council

of the League saw with anxiety how the most unfortunate of nations was once more threatened by the Turks on one side, the Russians on the other, and by its own weakness and disunity; but made no move to intervene.

Through this summer and autumn the Council continued, in co-operation with the Secretariat, to build up the general structure of the League. In May it decided that the Assembly should meet before the end of the year: and since the Covenant prescribed that the first meeting must be called by the President of the United States, it requested him to summon that body to meet in Brussels during the first half of November. The proposal to hold the meeting in Brussels was made as a compensation for the disappointment which all Belgians felt that their capital had not been chosen as the seat of the League. It was not, as some thought, an attempt to move the seat from Geneva to Brussels; and once reassured on this point the Swiss themselves reluctantly gave their approval to the Council's suggestion. But Wilson was immovable: in spite of a succession of telegrams from the Council, he insisted on calling the meeting for Geneva. He doubtless suspected that there was, in fact, a scheme to reopen the question which had been settled by his influence at the Peace Conference. In this he erred. But there can be no doubt that on every other ground he was right and the Council was wrong. The First Assembly was destined to be an event of great importance in the history of the League: and it could not have achieved the same results if it had taken place in a capital where no one could for a moment forget the bitterness of the war.

This point being settled, the Council authorized the Secretary-General to organize the Assembly at Geneva, to acquire the requisite office space, and in general to take all necessary measures to establish the League, in due course, in its permanent headquarters. It gave its approval to all his administrative acts; strongly endorsed the principle that the Secretariat should be a strictly international body; and confirmed all the appointments which he had made. It passed his budget—£550,000 for the expenses of the League and of the International Labour Office for the period May 1919–December 31st, 1920—and requested all Members to pay their share without delay.

As the date of the Assembly drew near, the Council began to show some anxiety as to how its record would be judged. For ten months, though representing only eight of the forty-two Members, it had been the directing organ of the League. It was urged that the rank and file of the League ought to have been allowed much sooner to join in preparing the common tasks: that the four lesser Council powers had shown

themselves over-ready to acquiesce in the leadership of the great, and that holding their seats not through election by the Assembly but through nomination by the Peace Conference they could not be, in the proper sense, representative of the general mass of Members. The Council took, therefore, two precautions to guard itself against the possible hostility of the Assembly. In the first place, it set on foot a sort of constitutional study concerning the relations between the two bodies, with the intention of ensuring that there should be no disputes as to the competence of each and also that the Assembly should not attempt to claim a general authority over fields where the responsibility lay with the Council. In the second place, it gave orders that a full report of all its doings should be prepared and laid before the Assembly.

In this report the Council showed that it had effectively carried out its duties concerning Danzig and the Saar Territory. It described the great humanitarian tasks which it had shouldered, and how far it had hitherto succeeded or failed in performing them. It gave an account of the political problems with which it had dealt or was still dealing. It pointed with pride to the great Financial Conference in Brussels, attended by experts from every country; and announced that a Conference on as large a scale was to be held in Barcelona in the spring to consider questions of international transport. And it submitted for approval the many projects which it had caused to be drawn up for the future institutions of the League, asking the Assembly to take the final and effective decisions concerning the League's Court of Justice, the League's Economic and Financial committees, the Organization for Transport and Communications, the Health Organization, the system for registering and publishing all treaties entered into by Members of the League, and other lesser creations.

The record of the Council's work seemed to its Members respectable both in quantity and quality. But to many other Members, and also to a wide section of public opinion within the Council States themselves, it appeared sadly inadequate. The Council had made no attempt to impose itself as the supreme guardian of peace and promoter of reconciliation. It had allowed the Polish-Russian war to take its course. It was no more than a spectator of the fighting in Armenia and of the still more dangerous situation which was developing in Anatolia. It had done little to relieve the bitter hatreds which still divided the victors and the vanquished of the world war. It had been entrusted by the Covenant with making plans for disarmament and with setting on foot the system of mandates; and on each of these great questions it had made no progress whatever. The principal powers had for their own reasons preferred that nothing should be done: and the Council had acquiesced

without a struggle. The Financial Conference at Brussels had no doubt laid down with great authority the general principles which governments must follow if they were to lead their countries back to prosperity. But its chance to achieve definite results had been minimized from the first because the great powers had refused to allow it to discuss the vital questions of German reparation and inter-Allied debts. While the Council busied itself with secondary affairs, the League had lost its hold on the confidence and imagination of the common man. To those who remembered the aspirations of the war years and the hopes with which the first League plans had been constructed, it was no satisfaction to be told that the Council was proving itself a useful auxiliary in the conduct of international affairs.

To such criticisms the Council replied, with suitable diplomatic circumlocution, that the absence of the United States had made it impossible for the League to play the part which the founders had intended. Its weakness was due, not to the inactivity of the Council, but to the political and moral loss inflicted upon it by the American Senate. It was a tender plant, and the first duty of the Council was to give it the chance to live and grow. This duty had been well performed. The Council itself had grown in cohesion and efficiency. The organs for the various activities of the League had been carefully planned. The neutral States which had been invited to be Members had all, without exception, accepted the invitation. World opinion could not be so disappointed as was asserted, since fourteen others not included among the original Members had applied to the Assembly to admit them.

There was substance in the arguments of both sides. It was true that the Council had done a great deal of valuable constructive work; but it was true also that during its stewardship the flame of hope and enthusiasm had fallen low and was in danger of extinction.

The First Assembly had no time to reach final conclusions on the many subjects which it debated. But it went far to revive the dying flame, and for that reason must be counted as one of the turning-points in the history of the League. It put an end to the steady decline which had followed the signature of the Treaty of Versailles. At the end of five weeks of continuous discussion, often confused and sometimes acrimonious, it had not merely breathed new life into the institutions of the League, but had also brought about a notable change in public opinion. Men of good will in every country began once again to fix their hopes on Geneva in the belief that if there were still a chance to establish peace and prosperity in the world, it could best be done—perhaps even could only be done—through the new spirit, the new law, and the new institutions which the Covenant had brought into being.

## II

### GENEVA: THE FIRST ASSEMBLY

*The League's new home—The opening of the Assembly—Some leading delegates—Methods of work—The general debate—Armenia, disarmament, mandates—Six new Members admitted—Argentina quits the Assembly—New bodies created—How the First Assembly revived the League*

(NOVEMBER—DECEMBER 1920)

IN the spacious days of the Paris Conference, some members of the League Commission indulged in agreeable visions of a future world capital. Colonel House, in particular, pictured the growth of an international centre on the shores of Lake Geneva, with buildings adequate for meetings on a world-wide scale, with homes for delegates and for the Secretariat, with its own railway station, its own airport and aerodrome, its own telegraphic and wireless communications. The delegation sent to Paris by the Swiss government, without making any strict engagements, assured the representatives of the Commission that Switzerland would provide all the ground that might be required. House reported that the Swiss government was prepared to spend very large sums for the purpose. But he did not think it fair to accept such a sacrifice from a country whose resources were but small: the Members of the League would surely be glad to share in building for it a home corresponding to the hopes which they placed in its future development.

It was not till a year later, after the question of Swiss membership had been decided, that any practical step could be taken to establish the seat of the League. By that time the whole position had changed. American abstention meant a heavy cut in the resources actually available to the Secretary-General, and still more in his expectations for the future. Governments everywhere were in financial straits; trade was slumping; there was a general demand for less taxation and less expenditure. It was no moment to propose ambitious plans for the housing of a new institution which the official world regarded with suspicion and the nationalist press with hostility. Swiss enthusiasm had faded in the heat of a bitter campaign, which had left the German-speaking cantons still unfriendly to the League. When, in August 1920, the Secretary-General paid an advance visit to Geneva, caution was the order of the day on both sides. The federal and cantonal authorities were ready to give all administrative facilities; but it was clear from the first that no new construction would be proposed. A hall was offered for

the Assembly meeting. For the rest, the Secretariat would have to content itself with taking the best accommodation it could find within the limited possibilities which already existed; and for this it would have to negotiate on a strictly commercial basis.

Drummond soon saw that there was one and only one building which could possibly serve his purpose. This was the Hotel National, the largest in the town; it was then empty, undergoing a much-needed process of modernization. It contained about 200 rooms, including two or three large public rooms which could be adapted for meetings. It stood on the northern edge of the town, facing Mont Blanc across two miles of lake. Such a headquarters was very far from the palaces of which some ardent spirits had dreamt. But it was not, in fact, a bad place to work in; and experience showed that an hotel with its many small rooms had some practical advantage for the staff over the dignified nineteenth-century mansions which housed the government departments of many Member States. An official can work far better in the smallest of rooms by himself than in the noblest apartment shared with three or four colleagues. In any case, no other accommodation which could possibly serve the purpose appeared to be available. The League representatives, having secured a reduction of 1 million francs in the price proposed, contracted to buy it for 5½ million; and as soon as the Council had approved the deal, the necessary conversion was put in hand. The Geneva authorities did their best to help it forward. On November 1st, 1920, the Secretary-General and his staff took possession of their new headquarters. The sound of hammers and the smell of paint pervaded its rooms and corridors. The Secretariat had to move into offices which were far from ready to receive it, and at the same time to complete the preparations for the Assembly. In less than a fortnight the delegations of forty-two nations would begin to arrive, expecting to find all arrangements made to facilitate their labours and to ensure their comfort and convenience. It was necessary to work day and night, under difficult conditions. But the spirit of the staff was high, and they were anxious to show that an international service could rise to an emergency. By November 15th all was ready for the opening of the Assembly.

The city of Geneva had volunteered to provide a hall for the Assembly's meetings. The authorities had done their best: but the city's resources were small, and the best they could offer was a building known as the Salle de la Réformation—a bare and badly lit hall of unimpressive proportions, but just large enough to provide seating-room on the floor for all delegations, a gallery for the press and another gallery on a higher level for the public. It possessed none of the additional facilities which are usually considered essential for important



conferences, such as a foyer where delegates and journalists can meet and talk, small rooms where the chairman and secretaries can work and receive visitors, larger rooms for committee meetings and the like. It was half-an-hour's walk or more from the offices of the Secretariat. However, with all its drawbacks, the Salle de la Réformation continued to be the meeting-hall of the Assembly for the next nine years. It witnessed many of the greatest moments in the history of the League. And since human nature does not love perfection, there were many delegates who, returning to it year after year, grew to like it in spite of its many inconveniences, and sturdily opposed all suggestions to change to a more spacious meeting-place.

Visitors to Geneva nowadays are apt to be struck by its air of brightness and self-confidence. Busy factories, crowded streets, long files of automobiles, suggest a wealth and prosperity in contrast with the penury of more famous European centres. In 1920 they found a quiet provincial city, modest and colourless. Its shops and streets were old-fashioned; its citizens sober, careful, and retiring. Communications with the outside world were few and slow; the tourist traffic had departed; and Geneva lived, for the most part, morally upon the memories, and materially upon the savings, of its more illustrious past.

To greet the Assembly the grey little town broke out into unaccustomed colour. Flags flew from every tower and hung from every window. The sun shone as it rarely shines in a Genevese November; the lake sparkled, calm and blue, merging by degrees into the brilliant emerald of the Rhône. Special services were held in the churches, as indeed they were held in countless churches throughout the world. The whole Swiss government marched in procession to the Salle de la Réformation, accompanied by the City Councillors and a military escort; while the population lined the streets to cheer their own chiefs and to watch the comings and goings of the more famous among the delegates.

But whatever efforts might be made to mark the first meeting of the Assembly as an occasion of historic importance, whatever heights of rhetoric might be reached by preachers and politicians, the prevailing sentiment in the delegations and the Secretariat was one of doubt and uncertainty. The American elections had just resulted in the overwhelming victory of Harding; and though his supporters had been assured that the best way to ensure American entry into the League was by voting for the Republican candidate, it was plain, as soon as the figures were known, that the isolationist section of the party was in complete control. Harding announced that the League was dead; and

the numerous American correspondents who came to the Assembly made no secret of their expectation that the verdict was about to be confirmed. The British government was indifferent; a foreign policy based on the Covenant might appeal to the nation, but it had no charms for the sentimental adventurousness of Lloyd George or the old-fashioned imperialism of Curzon. The French were above all concerned lest the League should interfere with the strict fulfilment by Germany of the Treaty of Versailles. It was announced in Paris that if Germany were admitted to the League, France would at once withdraw. Only Italy and Japan among the great powers looked upon the meeting as an occasion of practical importance. Italy saw an opportunity to compensate her economic inferiority by organizing an international control of raw materials. Japan appreciated the fact that at Geneva she stood on an equal footing with the leading States of Europe and could watch and, if she chose, share in, the management of international affairs. The Japanese delegation was so numerous that a ship had to be specially chartered to bring it to Europe. Nevertheless, it was not from Italy or Japan, but from the small powers, that the impulses arose which were to determine the fate of the Assembly.

Many among the smaller Members had thought it wise to send their best-known statesmen to Geneva. Notable among these were Hymans of Belgium; van Karnebeek, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands; Giuseppe Motta, who at that moment was President of the Swiss Confederation and who was in charge of the foreign relations of Switzerland without a break from 1920 to 1937; Eduard Beneš from Czechoslovakia, the cleverest, the best-informed, and for many years the most successful of European ministers. From Norway came Nansen, and from Sweden Branting, the pre-eminent figures of each nation, though the former had for years refused to take office, and the latter had just resigned. From the Balkans came two men of outstanding intellectual power. Nicolas Titulescu was then the Finance Minister of Roumania; a few years later he became Foreign Minister, and from then till his fall in 1936 he exercised almost as great an influence in Europe as his friend and ally Beneš. Nicolas Politis, then Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, was never in himself an influence on policy, but he possessed a logical clarity which could only be described as genius, and was invaluable as chairman or rapporteur for any League body which had to deal with some particularly complex task.

Of the fifteen delegations from Latin American Republics those of Argentina and Brazil were specially distinguished. No member of the Assembly was more admired than Raul Fernandes, the famous Brazilian jurist, who had played a notable part in drawing up the Statute of the

Court. The Chinese were led by Wellington Koo, one of the most skilful diplomatists of the post-war years. The voice of India came, then and for too many years thereafter, not from the vast spaces of the sub-continent but from a dusty corridor in Whitehall. The Canadian delegation was one of special eminence, though it set itself to play in many ways a discouraging role. Smuts had sent Cecil to be a member of the South African delegation, thereby contributing greatly to the eventual success of the Assembly.

Finally, mention must be made of the secondary delegates of the Council powers—René Viviani, who had been French Prime Minister at the beginning of the First World War, and Gabriel Hanotaux, a former Foreign Minister and a famous historian; Carlo Schanzer, an admirable example of that Italian liberalism which was one of Europe's clearest lights till Mussolini extinguished it; Herbert Fisher, one of the few Liberal ministers in Lloyd George's coalition Cabinet. George Barnes in the British delegation, and the old fighter for peace Lafontaine among the Belgians, were a new phenomenon in international conference, since each, in home politics, was in opposition to the government which sent him. Barnes in particular gave many unpleasant shocks to his own delegation by his blunt criticisms of the League Council and of the Allied powers—so much so that the British government never again repeated the experiment, to the great loss of future Assemblies.

The first business of the Assembly was to elect its President; and the choice, in accordance with an agreement reached among the delegations before the session began, fell upon Hymans. It was no easy task to direct the proceedings of a body which, meeting for the first time, had not only to get through a crowded agenda, but to decide countless questions concerning its own organization and its own procedure. Hymans performed his part admirably, and the plans of the Secretariat, evolved by the organizing skill of Jean Monnet, proved to be sound and workmanlike. The programme of the Assembly was divided under six main headings: (1) General organization; (2) Economic, Social, and Technical work; (3) the establishment of the Permanent Court; (4) Budget and staff; (5) Admission of new Members; (6) Mandates and Disarmament. Each group of subjects was assigned to a Committee, but these six Committees were not, as in previous general conferences, made up of the representatives of States specially concerned with the matters to be discussed or so powerful that they could not be left out. The great innovation of the Secretariat plan was to provide that every delegation should have the right to sit on each main Committee. It was further proposed that a Committee should be set up to

assist the President, consisting of the Chairmen of the six main Committees together with six Vice-Presidents elected by the whole Assembly. This body, known as the Bureau, had its finger on the pulse both of the main body of delegates and of each Committee, and was therefore well placed to see how the proceedings could be kept moving with speed and efficiency.

The framework thus devised was justified by its results. In particular the relation between the main Committees and the plenary Assembly turned out to be exactly what was hoped. Critics of the scheme had argued that since the same States were represented on each, the proceedings in the Assembly would be a mere repetition of those in the Committees. But the latter, meeting in private, at once developed relatively informal and businesslike methods, leaving formal speech-making to the plenary sessions. In subsequent Assemblies the Committee meetings also were open to the press; but by then the tradition of frank and informal discussion had become well established. In later years it was the general view that the Assembly was at once the most original and the most satisfactory of all the institutions of the League. This was due above all to its unique character as the parliament of the nations, in which each member possessed the same rights and obeyed the same rules. But some credit must also go to those who first planned its organization on lines so sound that with but minor adjustments they remained unchanged from the first Assembly to the last.

In one important respect, however, the Assembly forthwith reversed completely the arrangements foreseen by the Secretariat. The President having been elected, the agenda adopted, the methods of work approved, it was expected that the Committees would at once settle down to deal with the various questions allotted to them. But the delegates were by no means inclined to limit themselves by any such restricted programme. For most of them this was the first opportunity of proclaiming their general views concerning the League, and there was much that they wished to say. Some wanted to assure their fellow Members that their country intended to be a loyal Member of the League and to play a full part in its activities. Some desired to propose amendments to the Covenant which they had had no chance to put forward in Paris. Others had particular tasks which they wished to see undertaken by the economic and social organizations. Others again were waiting for the moment to criticize the Council for its excessive prudence, and to urge it to take a bolder and more active part in the vital problems of the time.

By a happy chance, the Assembly had been provided with exactly the occasion which it required to start a debate on the widest possible lines. The report of the Council had been submitted to it with no such

purpose in mind; indeed, its object was not only to give information, but also to point out to the Assembly that certain questions were being dealt with by the Council and might therefore well be omitted from its programme. The Assembly, however, was determined to assert its complete freedom; and it hit upon the ingenious expedient of treating the Council's report as having been laid before it for consideration and even for approval. On this basis every delegate acquired the greatest possible freedom of discussion. If the subject which he wished to raise was dealt with in the Council's report, he could take that reference as his text; if not, he could ask why it had been left aside. The Council was by no means pleased at this development; for a few days its members showed their dissatisfaction by declining to take part in the debate. But it soon appeared necessary for them to explain and defend their work. Before the end, all the principal members of the Council had spoken, partly on behalf of their own body, partly in order to set forth the policy of their individual governments.

Accordingly, the first week of the session was devoted to speeches on every aspect of League affairs; and this innovation, unpremeditated and unforeseen as it was, proved to be an event of great historical importance. The precedent thus set was followed every year. The Secretary-General was ordered to lay before each Assembly a full report on all the work of the League since the close of its last meeting; and each new session began with a debate, loosely based on that report, but ranging over every question of international concern which any Member might wish to raise. This general debate, as it came to be known, was in a sense the annual climax of the activities of the League. One after another the delegates of the great powers or small, of Europe, Asia, and America, came forward to give their country's views concerning what the League had done and what it might do. On that annual occasion no distinction was made between the special responsibilities of the Council and those of the Assembly: all found their place in the yearly report, and all were open for discussion in the general debate. The small powers did not fear to criticize the great, and the great powers did not disdain to explain and defend their policy. It was an extraordinary and unprecedented inrush of democracy and publicity into the world of international affairs. But it may be added that such frankness was possible only because the Assembly maintained a firm tradition of moderation and courtesy.

The Assembly lasted for full five weeks: its proceedings were extensive and varied and only a brief and general account of its principal acts can be here attempted. While insisting on its right to discuss any

question that fell within the sphere of action of the League, it refrained for the most part from intervention in any specific political question with which the Council was dealing. The one exception was in regard to Armenia. Early in the session it was known that a Turkish army had entered the country and that the Armenians could make little resistance: it was reported that the Turkish advance was accompanied by terrible atrocities. A wave of sympathy swept through the Assembly. Regardless of practical and material difficulties the delegates demanded that the Council should at once take steps to rescue the martyred nation. British and French warnings, that this could be done only by a military expedition on a great scale and of indefinite duration, were condemned as cowardice or indifference. But when the Assembly in its turn came to consider what positive action could be taken, it, too, was forced to understand the limitations of its power and to reduce its aims to the modest objective of putting an end, by persuasion, to the actual fighting between Armenians and Turks. As the result of a voluminous exchange of telegrams, this task was entrusted to and accepted by President Wilson, in partnership with the Brazilian and Spanish governments; but before this strange combination was able to move, the whole situation had completely changed and the Erivan Republic had ceased to exist.

The Assembly's action on Armenia was in truth more creditable to its heart than to its head. But the experience in common of a strong and generous emotion did much to quicken its consciousness of itself as a corporate body having a life and unity of its own, and not a mere conference of individual States. A further consequence was that the Assembly began to acquire a better understanding of the practical difficulties which the Council had to face, and to realize that its failure to take strong measures was not necessarily due to inertia or indifference.

Every Assembly, from this first session until the Disarmament Conference met in 1932, devoted much time to the question of the reduction of armaments. In 1920, the nature of the problem and the policies of the great powers were still not clearly defined. It was realized, of course, that there were political difficulties to be overcome, and technical complexities to be worked out, before the Council could complete the general plan which it was charged by the Covenant to submit to its fellow Members. But at that time the memory of the war, and the well-founded belief that competition in armaments between the great powers had been one of the chief causes of the catastrophe, were still uppermost in men's minds. The poverty of the European nations made their military and naval budgets appear ruinous as well as dangerous; and the financial experts in Brussels had warned the world that armaments

were still imposing a crushing burden upon the impoverished peoples, and preventing their recovery from the losses and destruction of the war. In these circumstances the lesser powers were discontented with the inaction of the Council. They admitted that a general plan could not be completed without some months at least of complicated study. But was this not all the more reason to lose no time in setting to work? Why had the Council taken no steps of any kind in that direction?

The Covenant decreed that the League should possess a special Commission to advise the Council on military affairs. This body had been duly constituted, and consisted of high officers from the fighting services of each Member of the Council. It had been consulted about the armed forces of the States which were applying for admission to the League. It had been entrusted with the organization of the mixed force which the Council intended to send to Vilna. In these and other technical problems it was an adequate instrument. But the Assembly took strong objection to the fact that the Council intended to make this body its adviser on the general question of armaments reduction. Disarmament was above all a question of high politics; it was in part also a question of finance; it was a matter of vital concern to small powers as well as great ones. How could it be entrusted to a body of staff officers, who would refuse to discuss policy, who knew nothing of finance or economics, who were drawn only from the States which were Members of the Council? Further, though such things could not be said in public, a Commission of staff officers could not at that time fail to be profoundly under the influence of Foch and Weygand; nor could it at any time be expected to share the popular desire that military budgets might be reduced and military secrecy abandoned. The Assembly therefore asked the Council to set up a new body, of a very different character, to prepare a plan for general reduction.<sup>1</sup>

The small powers then proposed, as a political measure, that all Members of the League should agree to make no increase in their military budgets for a period of two years. This proposal could not be carried: it met with a doubtful reception from the British and a clear refusal from France, Belgium, Poland, and a few others.

Another source of disagreement between Council and Assembly was the question of mandates. The territorial division between the various mandatory powers had been made either in Paris in May 1919 or at San Remo in April 1920.<sup>2</sup> The territories concerned had all been for months or years in the effective occupation of the mandatory. But the actual terms of the mandates had not yet been proclaimed.

The League, though already morally responsible in the eyes of the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 18.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 16.

world, had no legal right even to inquire as to what might be passing in these lands whose government was declared by the Covenant to be a sacred trust of civilization. Nor had the Council yet set up the Permanent Mandates Commission, which under the Covenant was to advise it on all matters connected with the observance of the mandates. Some delegates even urged the Assembly to assume charge of the whole subject and to take upon itself the drafting of the mandates, and the appointment of the Commission; and their arguments received support from an embarrassing quarter, for the German government submitted an elaborate memorandum to the same effect. The Council, however, put up a firm and convincing defence. It showed that the delay in drafting the mandates was due to the procrastination of the Allied powers, against which it had strongly protested.<sup>1</sup> It rightly affirmed that the duty to execute the mandates provisions of the Covenant belonged to itself alone. The Council would listen with respect to all that the Assembly wished to say on the subject: but it would retain the responsibility for final decisions.

The quarrel over the respective competence of the two main organs of the League in regard to the mandates system was thus settled. It had not been a very serious one; nor was it ever repeated on that or any other question. The two bodies agreed that each should always be free to discuss any subject which came within the sphere of action of the League, although the power of decision was in many cases definitely entrusted to the one or the other by the Covenant itself. In practice, both then and later, things worked out differently; the Assembly regularly discussed matters in which the Council had the power of decision, such as the working of the mandates system and the preparation of a general plan of disarmament, whereas the Council did not venture to touch on those in which the Assembly was supreme, such as the admission of new Members or the management of the League's finances.

The whole time of one of the Assembly's main committees was spent in considering the thirteen<sup>2</sup> applications for membership. Some of these could be settled without difficulty. All were ready to welcome Finland, Costa Rica, Luxemburg, which formally declared that she waived her traditional neutrality in order to accept the obligations of the Covenant, and Austria, which, shorn of the power and glory of her past, was now

<sup>1</sup> One of the chief causes of delay was the uncooperative attitude of the United States. But though some at least of the Council powers must have known this, no hint of it was given to the Assembly. They appear to have chosen to bear more blame from the Assembly than they deserved, rather than risk offending the State Department.

<sup>2</sup> An application from Montenegro was never considered, the Allied powers having accepted the merging of that State into Yugoslavia.



also freed from the resentment of the nations she had ruled or menaced. All agreed in rejecting the applications of Azerbaijan and the Ukraine, both of which had already been reabsorbed into the Russian Empire. All except Switzerland agreed that Lichtenstein, with but a few thousand inhabitants, was too small to be a Member of the League. More doubtful were the cases of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Georgia, and Armenia. These also had set themselves up as independent States as a result of the break-up of Russia. They had been recognized as such by the Soviet government; but if it chose to reconquer them, the League could not prevent it; and the Assembly hesitated to extend to them the promise of Article 10 of the Covenant, whereby Members of the League pledged themselves to maintain one another's political independence against external aggression. These applicants, therefore, were bidden to wait for another year: meanwhile, as a measure of encouragement and recognition, they were to be allowed to take part in the social and economic activities of the League. This prudent attitude was swiftly justified. Georgia succumbed to Bolshevism a few months later. As for Armenia, the same fate overtook her still more quickly. At the very moment when the Assembly was considering the question, the news arrived that a Communist *coup d'état* had taken place; the government which had applied for admission had been replaced by one which in fact was in full subjection to Soviet Russia, and would neither wish, nor be allowed, to join the League.

Two States, Bulgaria and Albania, were admitted only after much discussion. The neighbours of Bulgaria had been twice at war with her within the previous seven years, and could not easily bring themselves to agree that she now fulfilled the condition of the Covenant which required that candidates for League membership must 'give effective guarantees of their sincere intention to observe their international obligations'. In the end, however, through the determined advocacy of Cecil, armed with a mildly favourable report from the Allied Military Mission concerning her execution of the conditions of peace, they not only relented but themselves claimed the right to propose a resolution in her favour. This generous act on the part of Greece, Roumania, and Yugoslavia deserves to be recorded, both as a witness to the results of the atmosphere of the Assembly, and as one of the first indications of the remarkable change which—thanks in great part to the influence of the League—the next years were to bring among the Balkan States, so long regarded as the home of strife and unreason. As for Albania, her frontiers were still undefined and her government was not recognized by that of any other country. Her admission, which again was mainly the work of Cecil, was in essence a notification by the League to the Supreme

Council to hasten its decisions concerning her frontiers, and to her neighbours not to try and appropriate part of her territory in the meantime.

Germany made no move towards membership: yet the question of German membership was never far from men's thoughts and on two occasions it broke the surface. Motta, in welcoming the vote in favour of Austria, spoke of his hope that Germany would soon be included. He drew from Viviani a stormy rejoinder reminding the Assembly of the losses that France and her Allies had suffered in defeating German aggression; losses which were the price of liberty not only for France but for all Europe, the price also of the very existence of the League. With these things in mind France demanded the proof of Germany's good faith before she could accept her as a fellow Member. Viviani's speech remained as the oratorical masterpiece in the Assembly's history until that of Briand on the day, six years later, when Germany came to take her seat in the Salle de la Réformation. Empty rhetoric, some thought it afterwards: and nothing can be more clear than that French resistance to German membership, and all the changes of attitude which that must imply, was maintained far beyond the limit of political wisdom. But in truth the hatreds born of war were kept alive even more strongly in defeated Germany than in victorious France, and her deep-rooted militarism, which had been without doubt the greatest single cause of the war, was still powerful. Viviani's warning contained a truth which did not deserve to be forgotten.

The second, and this time quite unforeseen, emergence of the German question was when the Argentine delegation, led by the Foreign Minister, Honorio Pueyrredón, proposed an amendment to the Covenant by which any State might decide for itself whether to enter the League. This was by no means an idea to be lightly dismissed. But the Assembly had already decided that it was too soon to start making changes in the Covenant, and that all proposals for amendment should be referred to a special committee and taken up again the following year. It is hard to believe that the Argentines can have expected that an exception would be made in favour of a proposal which would profoundly change the constitutional basis of the League, which involved the most controversial question of the time, and which was only put forward when the Assembly was half-way through its programme. But when their draft amendment, like the many others already submitted, was set aside for future consideration, they announced that their mission was at an end and departed from Geneva. It was many years before the Argentine Republic began once more to take part in the work of the League, though it did not withdraw from membership.

The debates of the Assembly ranged over so many great questions that in regard to most of them there could evidently be no time to reach definite conclusions. It was proposed, therefore, that these questions should be thoroughly gone into after it separated, so that it could take them up again at its next session. The result was a formidable list of special committees to be appointed and set to work in a brief space of time. Besides the new Disarmament Commission, there was to be a committee on amendments to the Covenant; another on the application of economic sanctions; another on the organization of the Secretariat; yet another on the registration and publication of treaties as required by Article 18 of the Covenant. All of these were to be temporary bodies set up with a defined object. The Assembly made certain additions also to the group of permanent agencies which the Council had already begun to build up. The Covenant provided that the League should, in due course, take over the control of the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs; and also the task of putting an end to the traffic (much revived as a result of the war) in women and children for purposes of prostitution. The Assembly decided that these duties should be undertaken, and the necessary permanent agencies established, without delay.

But by far the greatest creative act of the First Assembly was to decide the final text of the Statute of the Court. The Jurists' Committee set up by the Council had worked during the summer of 1920 with intense industry, and the ten famous lawyers of which it was composed had, in the end, reached agreement on every point. They had solved the difficulties which had frustrated the two Hague Conferences; in particular, the obstinate rivalry between the great and small powers in the nomination of judges had been conciliated by laying down that the latter should be elected by the simultaneous and separate vote of the Assembly and the Council. In adopting, with no other significant change, the draft made by the jurists, the Assembly added an invention of its own, the famous Optional Clause. The draft provided that in all cases of a legal character the Court should have compulsory jurisdiction, that is to say that if one Member of the League chose to submit to it a dispute with another Member, the latter was bound to agree to this procedure. The great powers were by tradition hostile to any such provision; and Balfour persuaded the Council that the jurists had gone too far and that the Court ought only to be called upon when all the parties concerned consented to do so. In the Assembly, the Latin American States, and many others, endeavoured to restore the original proposal. Failing in this, they added a new clause whereby any State could accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court on the basis of

reciprocity. A good many of the lesser Members of the League promptly availed themselves of this plan; and some years later all the great powers of Europe had also signed the Clause, and accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court in cases of a justiciable nature.

It could not be doubted that the Assembly had revived the interest and the hopes which had illuminated the earlier visions of the League. It had shown, imperfectly indeed, but in practical and visible form, the outlines of an organized world. It had proved that men from five continents and forty countries could quickly and naturally develop a common sentiment and a pride in their corporate institutions. The small powers had been able, at Geneva, to speak freely and boldly and to take, for the first time in history, a real part in world politics. At the same time, the Assembly had begun the process of pulling the League away from the centripetal force of the Treaty of Versailles and all it stood for—the bitter memories of the war, the hegemony of a group of countries based not on their powers and merits but on their status as victors. It was neither possible nor necessary to break the connexions between the League and the Treaty. But it was necessary to remember and affirm that the real nature of the League was not limited by the conditions of its actual beginnings. Its origins were rooted in universal aspirations that went back far beyond the war; its present purposes and its future developments extended far beyond the purview even of so great a gathering as the Peace Conference of Paris.

Although, therefore, the League was, in the legal sense, brought into being by the Peace Conference, it was doubly in conflict with the powerful organs that still existed to carry out, and often supplement, the decisions of that body. In the first place, the Supreme Council, the Conference of Ambassadors, the Reparation Commission, were organs created by the victorious powers in order to enforce their will upon their defeated enemies: and this was still true whether that will were weak or powerful, and whether it aimed at reconciliation or at punishment. In the second place, those organs were temporary: their function was to execute the Treaties and they would have no constitutional basis once that task had been completed or abandoned. The Covenant, on the other hand, made no distinction between victors and vanquished; and the institutions of the League were intended to live and grow, to change their form and extend their functions in harmony with the political development of the world.

In so far, therefore, as the attitude of the small powers at the Assembly was critical and mistrustful, this was not due to any fundamental antagonism between the Council and the Assembly, nor even between

the small and great powers as such, but to the fact that the one group was represented only in the League, while the other took part at the same time in the work of the League and in the work, so different in its nature, its purpose, and its spirit, of the organs which were heirs of the Paris Conference. Most of the small powers wanted to obliterate as soon as possible the memories of the war and the division of Europe between those who had won and those who had lost. They believed that the League offered the best hope of bringing about this change; they believed also that, unless it could do so, the League itself would perish. Naturally, therefore, they were anxious lest the great powers should force the Council into the orbit of the Supreme Council or of the Conference of Ambassadors. As the days went by, they found that the Council, too, was conscious of its responsibilities towards the League as a whole, and that its members were capable of opposing and criticizing the action or inaction of the Supreme Council. In the closing stages of the session, the Assembly showed its friendly sentiments towards the Council, not only by the warm reception it gave the speeches of Balfour and Bourgeois, but also by electing three out of the four temporary Members for a further term of office. Greece, where Venizelos had been eclipsed through the return of King Constantine, was replaced by China. But Spain, Brazil, and Belgium were elected by very large majorities.

Such a body as the Assembly, a new and strange institution, without traditions or rules, most of whose members had never set eyes on one another before the opening meeting, could only have developed the sense of common purpose through the existence of some opposition to master or some obstacles to overcome. It found these, almost unconsciously, in a revolt against the assumption by the great powers of the right to direct the affairs of the world, whether on the ground of their superior strength as in the days of the Concert of Europe, or by virtue of the provisions of the Peace Treaties. The result was that the smaller powers did, in truth, thenceforward look upon the Assembly as enabling them, for the first time, to make their voices heard, to stand up for their own rights or interests, and to proclaim their views on the policies of their mighty neighbours. But the Council, too, was henceforth more conscious than before of the opinions of its fellow Members and of the ever present background of the Covenant. It did not forget that every twelve months its record would be frankly and fully debated by the rest of the forty-eight members.

Thus in a single session the Assembly had definitely constituted itself as the central organ of the League. Nothing could more clearly illustrate this fact than its decision concerning its future sessions. At Paris it had

been expected to meet no more than once in every third or fourth year. Men remembered how the second Hague Conference had seemed to take a step of extreme boldness in planning to reassemble seven years later, without awaiting a third imperial invitation. But having once discovered its own virtues, and begun to take an interest in its own powers, the Assembly considered it necessary to meet every year. Only Japan was doubtful, not out of opposition to the desires of the rest, but because the distance between Tokyo and Geneva would make it impossible to send a delegation from home each year. But in this, as in all else, the Japanese bowed to the majority view, and the decision was taken unanimously.

The Assembly was, even more than the other institutions of the League, a new phenomenon in the world. It was new in its constitutional nature, since never before had a full-scale international conference convened to discuss, not a specific problem or group of problems, but the whole field of international affairs. It was no less new in its spirit and its method, having gone far from the first (it was to go still farther in later years) to discard the formality of a diplomatic gathering in favour of the frank and direct procedures of a parliament. That all delegates should consider it both necessary and natural to hold such sessions every year in future, showed how the League idea, reinforced from sources which had been hardly perceptible in Paris, was already growing out in ways which its founders could not then foresee.

## LEAGUE FINANCES

*Attack on the League budget—Its damaging effects—Rules laid down by the Assembly—The problem of allocation*

WHILE the general result of the First Assembly was to revive and strengthen the League, in one single respect it inflicted a wound the effect of which was both lasting and profound. It met at a time of economic stress, when governments were trying with no great success to cut down their war-inflated budgets. The press was insistent upon more economy, and was filled with stories of official mismanagement and waste. Some popular organs in London and Paris, which had from the first adopted an attitude of hostility to Woodrow Wilson and all his works, began an agitation against the extravagant costs of the international organizations. The cry was taken up by a few delegates to the Assembly, with Australia and India's British spokesmen in the lead; and other delegations, though they were not in fact dissatisfied, were naturally not inclined to risk being accused at home of indifference to the burdens of their own taxpayers. The only defenders of the budget of the League and the International Labour Office were Drummond and Thomas—officials, that is to say, who were thereby of necessity defending their own actions and their own interests as well as those of the organizations which they served.

The total expenditure of the two institutions from their inception in May 1919 to the end of 1920 was £550,000.<sup>1</sup> The amount asked for for 1921 was £1,060,000. The largest amount any Member had to pay was £42,000 for the first of these periods and £52,000 for the second. The average share, taking the Members as a whole, was £14,000 for the first and £22,000 for the second. These payments covered not only the salaries of the staffs of each institution and the expenses of all meetings, conferences, and commissions, but also considerable sums for the acquisition of offices, together with the cost of furniture, books, office equipment, and the like. It may well seem strange that figures such as these should have been the subject of attacks against the two administrations, not indeed on their good faith and financial integrity, which were

<sup>1</sup> All figures given in this chapter are approximate. The League budget, from July 1920 onwards, was expressed in gold francs—an imaginary currency which was in fact identical with the Swiss franc until 1935. I have reckoned 5 gold francs to the dollar and 20 to the pound sterling. The actual exchange rates were sometimes higher and sometimes lower than these. But the total difference is small, and the figures given in this chapter may be taken as substantially accurate for practical purposes.

never called in question, but on the ground of reckless extravagance. Yet the attacks were bitter, obstinate, and highly effective.

The campaign carried on with success at the First Assembly was repeated at intervals throughout the life of the League. The isolationist press built up the triple legend that the financial affairs of the League were extravagantly managed; that membership involved a heavy financial sacrifice; and that the whole burden was borne by a few Members, in particular by those of the British Commonwealth. All these stories were utterly false. The investigations undertaken from time to time by outside experts invariably resulted in the verdict that the Secretariat funds were prudently administered; and even if the Treasurers<sup>1</sup> had been less competent than they were, their operations were hedged in by such close supervision and such precise rules that they could hardly have made any serious mistake. The average annual cost of the League, the International Labour Office, and the Permanent Court, from 1920 to 1939, including the cost of building the immense Palais des Nations, amounted to about 27 million gold francs, or about \$5,400,000. Of this Britain paid about 11 per cent, or under £150,000 per year; while Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India, and Ireland paid between them about 15 per cent, or under £200,000 per year. The great majority of the Members paid their share regularly and punctually. A minority paid irregularly and unpunctually, but in full. Only three or four were obstinate non-payers: and of these all but one were very small States whose joint contribution was less than 1 per cent of the budget. The single exception was China, whose public finances were totally disorganized in the years following the war, so that she defaulted on all her external obligations.

But though the triple legend was demonstrably false in every particular, its effect was great. Throughout its existence the League suffered from a stupid and unnecessary penury. A great proportion of the Secretary-General's time was spent in trying to reduce present expenditure or to pare down his budget for the coming year. Members of the service were reasonably paid and fairly treated. But in every other respect the activity and initiative not only of the Secretariat but of all the economic and social organizations of the League were hampered and constricted. Staffs were kept low; travelling was not encouraged; documents and minutes could not always be printed. It was important both for the League and for its overseas Members that the strongest possible network of connexions should be built up between the distant capitals and the new international centre. That this was never adequately achieved was above all due to the unrelaxing demand for

<sup>1</sup> Sir H. Ames (Canadian) 1919-26; Mr S. Jacklin (South African) 1926-46.



economy. Over a quarter of the Members were never able to have the satisfaction of seeing a single one of their nationals appointed to a post in the Secretariat. Committee members or experts could be brought over from distant countries only after careful computation of the travelling expenses involved; and preference was perforce given, in many instances, to a European expert. Countries which wished to profit from their membership of the League by securing disinterested advice on problems of public finance, or health, or education, were requested to pay the costs. It was often, and truly, pointed out that such work was a reinforcement of the influence of the League as well as a direct contribution to world prosperity and peace. Yet the Assembly was never willing to encourage and extend it by paying for it out of the common budget. The same parsimony was shown in regard to the holding of meetings outside Geneva. Certainly it was right that meetings should as a general rule take place at headquarters. But occasional sessions in various national centres were of great value in many ways. After the first years they became rare, because the Assembly insisted that a country which invited any League Committee or Conference to meet in its capital must first promise to pay all the extra cost.

Even in the fulfilment of the essential aims of the Covenant the same disastrous insistence on economy was shown. It was to the interest of the whole world that the League should try to put an end to the Sino-Japanese conflict in Manchuria or to the Chaco war between Paraguay and Bolivia. Yet the great commissions sent out by the Council for this purpose could not be constituted until the parties had agreed to pay their expenses—an arrangement which was undignified for the League and tended to lessen the prestige, and, therefore, the effective influence of the commissions themselves. Similarly, it was not until 1937 that the League became responsible for the salary and expenses of the High Commissioner in Danzig. Until then they had been shared between Danzig and Poland, so that the representative of the Council was exposed to humiliating attacks from the parties whose quarrels it was his function to settle.

The immediate consequence of the debates in the First Assembly was the appointment of a committee of investigation into the management of the Secretariat and the International Labour Office. This decision was at first resented by both; it seemed at once a reflection upon their efficiency and a useless waste of their time. But they soon perceived, as more experienced administrations would have perceived from the beginning, that if they were in truth established on sound lines and working with proper economy, they had everything to gain from a

thorough and impartial inquiry. When the report of the investigation committee was laid before the Second Assembly, it proved to be an emphatic vindication of the administrative record of both institutions. At the same time it made various suggestions with the purpose of giving some degree of security of tenure to the staff and of allowing them to hope that in future years a system of pensions would be started for the benefit of those who should remain a long time in the international service. The Noblemaire Report—it was known thereafter by the name of the French politician who had been chairman of the committee—was approved by the Second Assembly; and was thenceforth regarded as a kind of basic charter of the budgetary and administrative organization of the League. In due course, an elaborate system of financial regulations and staff regulations was built up by later Assemblies. These expanded, defined, and, where necessary, amended the recommendations of the Noblemaire Report: they preserved its main substance, just as the Report itself had preserved the main lines of the organization as Drummond had planned and built it.

From its first session onwards the Assembly asserted and maintained, as against the Council, its right to control the finances of the League. All Members were called upon to contribute to its expenses; all, therefore, were entitled to discuss and vote upon every proposal for future expenditure, and to verify the proper management of the amounts granted in previous years. The Assembly soon began to resent any suggestion that expenditure might be authorized by the Council. To some extent indeed the ill humour of the Commonwealth representatives at the early sessions of the Assembly was thus explained: their powerful tradition of parliamentary government was offended at hearing the Council claim the right to approve the budget, or the Secretary-General defend his disbursements on the ground that he had acted with the Council's consent. It was the custom of the Assembly to appropriate each year a sum of half a million francs under the heading 'Unforeseen expenses of the Council', so as to enable that body to appoint commissions of inquiry, to call for expert advice, and take such other measures involving expense as it might think necessary in connexion with any political dispute submitted to it. This was the only money which the Council had at its disposal: and even this could be used only in accordance with the rigid prescriptions of the Financial Regulations. All other expenditure was subject to the previous approval of the Assembly. Hence, while the social or technical agencies of the League were, in the terms of their constitution, directed by the Council alone, the Assembly, holding the power of the purse, was their real master.

The Noblemaire Report proposed that the estimates drawn up each

year by the Secretary-General should be submitted in the first place to a small body of independent advisers, who would investigate the possibility of reducing them. They would then be sent out to the Member States accompanied by the criticism, or the endorsement, of the independent experts. This plan was duly carried out by the Assembly. Strangely enough, the new organ of control, which was later known as the Supervisory Commission, was at first appointed by the Council, and its reports, like the draft budgets themselves, were in form addressed to that body. But the Council took care to send on all such documents to the Member States without any comment of its own. In 1929 the Assembly abolished the last vestige of the Council's authority in regard to the budget by resolving thenceforth to appoint the Supervisory Commission itself. From the beginning, the Supervisory Commission was the trusted adviser of the Members and of the Assembly in the exercise of their financial powers; and actually wielded a part of those powers during the interval between Assembly sessions, since the Secretary-General knew by experience that the Assembly would be almost sure to grant expenditure approved by the Commission and to refuse any vote to which the Commission raised objections.

The budget of the League was thus subjected to a series of controls for which it would be hard to find a parallel. It was prepared by the Secretary-General in the spring of each year, that is to say some eight or nine months before it was to come into effect; and in so doing he was obliged to respect the Financial Regulations, which were drawn up to prevent any possibility of extravagance. It was then carefully examined by the Supervisory Commission, which made the utmost effort to reduce the Secretary-General's estimates. Next, it was submitted to the governments of the Members of the League and studied by the critical eyes of over fifty national Treasuries. Finally, it was debated point by point in the Finance Committee of the Assembly, on which every delegation was entitled to sit, and which took a pride in scrutinizing even the smallest items. When the Finance Committee had finished its work, the budget was laid before the Assembly to be formally adopted. Even at this last stage there were occasional disputes on individual estimates; there were even, once or twice, threats to vote against the budget as a whole unless some particular item were reduced. It was never, fortunately, necessary to decide what the legal effect of such a vote would have been. It was the usual practice in the Assembly that decisions adopted in committee after a division were allowed to pass by unanimity when submitted to the plenary meeting: the minority either voted with the majority or abstained from voting. This custom was always respected in matters of finance. Neither the Secretariat, nor

any Member, ever chose to take the risk of inviting a legal decision as to whether the unanimity rule must apply when the budget was adopted. If so, it would in theory have been possible for any Member to bring the whole activity of the League to an end by a single negative vote.

It might at least have been hoped that, after these stringent limitations on expenditure had been imposed and protected by a triple system of supervision, an end might have been put to the accusations that the League demanded great sums from its Members and spent them extravagantly. But the legend was far too useful to be allowed to die. It was kept alive, not by politicians and newspapers of isolationist convictions alone; nor only by those governments which might, for any reason, be passing through a stage of hostility to the League, like that of France during the occupation of the Ruhr; but also by frequent warnings from the spokesmen of governments which desired to support the League on condition that it kept its proper place. The moderate language of the latter probably did more to confirm belief in the high cost of the League than the exaggerations of the former. Who would suppose, hearing Austen Chamberlain solemnly inform the Council of his government's concern at the rapid growth in the expenditure of the Health Organization, that the increase complained of represented, for the British Treasury, a sum of less than £1,500?<sup>1</sup>

The Assembly was forced to take up one other subject in connexion with the budget, that of the proportion in which the Members should be asked to contribute. On this point the drafters of the Covenant had made their only careless mistake. They had provided that the cost of the League should be borne by its Members in the same proportion as that of the Universal Postal Union; and had not stopped to reflect that the allocation in force for the Union contained many anomalies, which were of no importance in the case of a budget of 300,000 francs a year, but could not be tolerated when the amount was eighty or a hundred times larger. It was necessary, therefore, to draw up a new schedule of allocation; and at the same time to amend the Covenant. Neither process was altogether free from obstacles. Many Members considered that the new schedule raised their proportionate contribution by too much, or lowered it by too little, as compared with that of the Universal Postal Union. Meanwhile, although the requisite amendment of the Covenant was adopted by the Assembly in 1921, its ratification was held up and it did not actually come into force until 1924. There was therefore a period of confusion, since, even after a generally approved

<sup>1</sup> See Council Minutes, June 8th, 1925.

allocation had been worked out, the Covenant rule was still legally valid. Thus a Member whose share was reduced by the revised schedule could claim in justice to pay on the new basis, while a Member whose share was raised could claim in law to pay on the old one. Fortunately, very few took advantage of the dilemma: even so, this additional difficulty added perceptibly to the financial embarrassments of the Secretariat in its early years.

## THE SECOND YEAR

*The weakness of the Council—Hostility in Washington—The Council's work—The Vilna dispute—The Communications and Transit Conference in Barcelona—A sudden change—The Second Assembly*

(JANUARY—SEPTEMBER 1921)

THROUGH the Assembly the League had re-discovered its links with the past and had begun to establish a steady foundation for its future expansion. But its position in regard to the problems of the moment was little changed. The spring and summer of 1921 were indeed the gloomiest period in the early history of the League. The Allied powers showed no intention to resign any part of their responsibilities into its hands. Their weakness and disunity were only too evident; they possessed no firm principle of policy and no organized method of discussion. Their delays and disagreements were holding up the recovery of Europe; and without the recovery of Europe the world as a whole could not hope for peace and prosperity. But none among them was inclined to abandon the combination of leisurely diplomatic exchanges with hasty political conferences, in favour of a more open and rational system. Other States followed their example in clinging to the pre-war idea that it was undignified to submit their differences to international decision, even when the attempt to settle them by diplomacy had completely failed. France and Switzerland were quarrelling over their respective rights in the frontier zones of Savoy and the Jura; Holland and Belgium over the control of the Scheldt. There was ill temper on both sides in both cases, and no agreement was in sight. But they could not as yet bring themselves to lay such problems before the League.

The weakness of the Council in the presence of critical events in Europe was painfully manifested in March 1921. In that month the Allied powers occupied Duisburg, Ruhrort, Dusseldorf, and other towns in order to force the German government to adopt a more submissive attitude over reparation. This action was legally unjustifiable as well as politically unwise. Germany appealed to Geneva, claiming that the Allied advance was a threat to peace, and that the Covenant did not confine the action of the League to disputes between Members but provided that disputes with non-Members should also be brought before it: she was prepared to accept beforehand all the obligations of League

membership so far as this question was concerned. Drummond sent the German note round to the Council and indeed to all Members of the League: but he waited in vain for any reply or comment. Some members of the Secretariat, and many organs of the press, thought that he should formally place the question on the Council's agenda and ask for a special meeting to consider it. But unlike his successor of the United Nations, he had no power to take such a step; and he knew very well that if he went beyond his competence in this matter the resentment of the French would be such as to make his position untenable. Only a few days earlier, while the Council was meeting in Paris, he had called its attention to a dispute between Panama and Costa Rica which looked as though it might lead to fighting: and even for this he had been exposed to violent criticism by isolationist senators in Washington, who claimed that the Monroe Doctrine was endangered by the improper act of an official of a moribund organization.

The German protest could therefore be taken up by the Council only on the proposal of some Member of the League: and the great powers were unwilling, and the small powers afraid, to make any such proposal. The Council remained completely passive; the Allied powers did not lay before their colleagues the reasons for their advance into German territory, or even explain why they objected to the question being considered by the League. The inaction of the Council and the Secretariat was a disappointment to the German government, and popular sentiment in Germany became more hostile than ever towards the League. There was much criticism also among the neutral countries and from Liberal and Socialist opinion everywhere. Was the League, in spite of the Assembly, no more than a tool of the Allied powers, unable to do anything to save the world from the fatal effects of French intransigence and British opportunism?

The discomfiture of the League was increased at the same moment by a new attack from Washington. For some months now the State Department, in abject fear of Senator Borah and his isolationist friends, had held aloof from all connexion with the League: but it had not refused to recognize the League's existence, nor had it shown any active hostility. When Harding's Administration took charge in March 1921, League supporters drew some consolation from the fact that the new Secretary of State was Charles Evans Hughes, a Republican of the school of Taft and Root. Yet the change from aloofness to hostility was immediate and unmistakable. Colonel Harvey, the most unscrupulous of all those who had campaigned against the Covenant, was sent as Ambassador to London. The President and the Ambassador each took

the first occasion to declare in public that the world must abandon all hope that the United States would ever enter the League, and did so in language which showed that they had transferred much of their hatred for Wilson to the institutions of which he was the chief founder. For the next months the American government took every opportunity of thwarting the League. It refused to acknowledge or reply to letters, not only from the Secretary-General but even from the President of the Council. It vetoed the plan by which the International Health Office in Paris was about to become part of the Health Organization of the League. It declined to recognize the transfer of all business connected with the international control of the drug traffic from the Netherlands government to the League; and for years after all other governments were sending their reports or proposals to Geneva, the United States continued solemnly to address itself to the Foreign Office at The Hague. It held up the institution of the mandates system until it had secured its interests in the oil of Mesopotamia and the cable station of Yap, not by the quick and easy method of consultation with the Council, but by individual correspondence with each of the principal Allied powers. It blocked for twelve disastrous months the efforts of the League to save Austria from financial and economic ruin. It discouraged American citizens from accepting membership of any League committee, even in their private capacity. It intervened to prevent the American members of the old Hague Tribunal from nominating candidates for the new Court of Justice. American diplomatists were credibly reported to be trying to disparage the League and to persuade the Latin American Republics to abandon their membership.

On May 1st, 1921, the Senate declared a state of peace with Germany, on the convenient terms that while the United States was not bound by any of the obligations of the Versailles Treaty, she was entitled to all rights and advantages which might accrue to her under that Treaty. Harding had delighted the Germans by criticizing the League as a mere machine for carrying out the Treaty of Versailles: he now pleased the Allies by announcing that the United States would resume membership of the organs which they had set up for exactly that purpose—the Supreme Council, the Conference of Ambassadors, and the Reparation Commission. The moral effect of all this was profound. It was increased by repeated announcements that Harding intended to propose a new form of association of nations, cleansed from the imperfections of the Covenant, and a new international tribunal which would be an improvement on the Court. It was said that Root would head a special commission to discuss details in the chief European capitals. It was even said that the French government had sent a high official to Geneva to advise



the Secretary-General to abstain from all unnecessary activity until the new developments were known. Meanwhile the reactionary press in Berlin, Paris, and London proclaimed once more the final demise of the League and urged that the costly farce should be wound up without further delay.

Within the Secretariat there was much discouragement, especially over the fact that no notice was taken of the German appeal. Some members urged Drummond to issue a public statement attacking the policy of the Allied powers and calling for an immediate meeting of the Council or the Assembly. Such an act would be unconstitutional: it might lead to a reaction which would be fatal to the Secretariat and even to the League itself; but was it not better than to allow the League to perish from inertia and timidity?

Certainly the Council provided but little comfort; never had it shown less to its advantage than at this time of depression. Unlike the Assembly, it had not yet fixed the dates of its regular sessions; and for years longer the Secretariat had to face endless difficulties in finding a date acceptable to eight representatives, some of whom were capable of asking for a postponement on the ground of their personal convenience. Meetings in Geneva had no such incidental attractions as those of the year before in Paris, Rome, or San Sebastian. The Geneva winter is long and sunless; and having experienced it for the first time from mid-November till near Christmas, many delegates had acquired an even blacker view of its character than it really deserved. Bourgeois felt unable to face it in February and the Council's next session was once more held in Paris. It met again in Geneva in June: and, except for a formal one-day session in August, these two meetings were all that it held between the First and Second Assemblies—a notable contrast with the previous year, when it had met every month. Neither Bourgeois nor Balfour attended the June session. Tittoni had already resigned; and Italy was now represented by the Marquis Imperiali, a retired diplomatist, who never appeared to take any serious interest in the work of the Council unless his own country were directly concerned.

Each session lasted nearly a fortnight and dealt with a long list of questions of secondary importance. Much time was spent nominating the various committees and commissions asked for by the Assembly and, in general, in building up the technical, economic, and social organs of the League. By the end of the year this task had, in the main, been completed and at that point it will be necessary to invite the reader to take a general view of the whole structure.<sup>1</sup> Such business attracted no

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 16.

public attention: and indeed the Council at this time could give little satisfaction either to those whose interest in international affairs was roused only by scenes of conflict, or to those who hoped to see it acting with high authority. Yet in one respect a prophetic eye might have perceived the beginning of the future development of Geneva as an international centre. In spite of the unexciting character of its agenda, the Council of June 1921 brought together, for one question or another, delegations not only from its own eight Members but also from Finland, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Albania, Austria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Greece, and Danzig, besides a number of chairmen of committees, League officials from Danzig and the Saar, and other experts. The new system was just beginning to exercise some gravitational force. A few governments were already setting up small offices in Geneva in order to maintain touch with the Secretariat and keep themselves informed on the activities of the League.<sup>1</sup>

No new political question of any moment arose during these sessions. The affair of the Aaland Islands was settled in June. Long days were spent over disputes between Poland and Danzig. But the Council had found an ideal candidate for the uncomfortable post of High Commissioner in General Sir Richard Haking, who proved capable of deciding the questions at issue with impartial common sense, and also of speaking to Poles and Danzigers alike with complete frankness and yet without lasting offence—an astounding feat in view of the extreme sensitiveness of both parties. They continued to quarrel over numerous points of detail and to bring their quarrels before the Council: but thanks to the influence of Haking and of Colban, and to the evident fact that each depended on the other for its prosperity, the Council was always able to bring about agreement. Meanwhile the trade passing through Danzig was reaching figures far beyond those of her best pre-war days. The big commercial houses who were the real rulers of the city regarded with incredulous amusement the Polish scheme to construct a new port at Gdynia, a wind-swept and sandy spot on the few miles of coastline which the Peace Treaty had assigned to them for their own.

The most serious affair was still the Vilna conflict. Since the end of the Assembly things had gone from bad to worse. The Council's plan for taking a popular vote in the disputed province had been in theory accepted by both sides. Even with their co-operation its execution would have been no easy task; and such co-operation was entirely lacking. The Poles under Zeligowski, not content with controlling Vilna and its province, attempted to extend their conquest over Kovno and the rest of the country. Throughout November 1920 there was fighting on a

<sup>1</sup> See, on the 'permanent delegations', Chapter 16.

considerable scale: but neither side was able to claim much success, and the League Commission finally persuaded them to agree to an armistice and established a neutral zone between them. The Commission was now responsible for the maintenance of two neutral zones: the first, 100 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide, between the Lithuanians and the official Polish army; the second, 250 kilometres by 15, between the Lithuanians and the unofficial Polish army under Zeligowski. Within these two considerable areas no civil or military authority existed.

It was clear that no plebiscite could take place while fighting was still going on; and equally clear that Voldemaras was right in maintaining that it could not fairly take place while Zeligowski and his army were in control of the area. Yet there could be no question of trying to expel him by force. The Council, therefore, while completing its plans for the plebiscite, warned the Polish government that nothing could be done until Zeligowski was withdrawn. For the moment, the arrangements were going forward with no other hitch. Contingents were promised by France, Britain, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Greece, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The staff work was taken in hand by Foch and Weygand and all details of movement, accommodation, supply, and medical services, were worked out in detail. A civilian commission was sent to the area to prepare the actual voting. Meanwhile the attitude of the Poles underwent a remarkable change. They began to think that the plebiscite gave them the best hope of securing an undisputed title to Vilna. Early in February 1921 they formally assured Bourgeois that all Zeligowski's troops would be withdrawn as soon as the international force arrived in the area.

But as the Polish policy became more co-operative, that of Lithuania became steadily more obstructive, and Voldemaras began to beg the Council to postpone the plebiscite for an indefinite period. He could urge, with justice, that while Zeligowski had been in control of Vilna, the Poles had been able to use every sort of pressure and propaganda to ensure a favourable vote. He suggested that Lithuania had agreed to a plebiscite in areas which she considered as the subject of contestation, but not in Vilna itself, her own capital city. He argued that the vote could not be fair until Lithuania had been recognized *de jure* by the Allied powers and admitted to membership of the League. To all these arguments some substance was given by the original treachery of the Poles, which hung like a millstone round the neck of the Council. But they could only lead to endless deadlock; and the Council would doubtless have overruled them had they not been suddenly reinforced by a more formidable threat. The Soviet government was quite unwilling to see the Vilna dispute settled through the agency of the League.

Chicherin addressed a threatening note to Kovno, declaring that, until the question had been settled by direct agreement between Lithuania and Poland, Russia considered Vilna to be a part of Lithuania. It was the duty, therefore, of that country to restore order in Vilna and get rid of Zeligowski and other disturbing elements. As for the so-called League of Nations, any troops sent by it to Vilna would constitute a danger to the security of Russia, and if Lithuania permitted them to enter, she would be regarded by Russia as committing an unfriendly act.

This Russian protest was justified neither in law nor in substance. The Russian-Polish frontier, as laid down at Riga, lay far to the east of Vilna, and the plebiscite area did not touch the Russian frontier at any point. Nor could a force consisting of some 1,500 men drawn from nine different countries involve the slightest shadow of risk for Russian security. But in the light of Chicherin's threats the Lithuanian demands for postponement acquired a new weight. The international force would have to spend eight months or more in a place where communications with the west were slow and precarious. The bare possibility that it might at some time find itself in difficulties suggested a risk which few governments were willing to face. The plebiscite could not be carried out without such protection. The Poles declared that Moscow's threat was no more than a bluff, and that there was no reason not to proceed with the plan. Some impartial judges held the same view. But the Council, rightly or wrongly, resolved, on March 13th, 1921, to give up the plebiscite and try to find by negotiation a settlement acceptable to both parties. For the next ten months the search for a compromise went on. Hymans, as rapporteur, held a long succession of conferences and conversations with the representatives of the two countries. It is not necessary to describe the ingenious and complicated schemes which he and the Secretariat drew up to meet the demands of one or the other: the fundamental difference could not be bridged, and in January 1922 Hymans and the Council decided to abandon the attempt.

Meanwhile the Poles, in the person of Zeligowski, remained in undisturbed possession of the prize. War had been averted; the neutral zones were still in being; the Military Commission remained to watch them. But the breach could not be repaired. The Lithuanian government stubbornly maintained its claim, and regarded itself as in a state of war with Poland. Year after year the quarrel continued; fresh complaints were brought before the Council now by one side, now by the other. Even after Vilna had been granted to Poland by a formal decision of the Conference of Ambassadors—a decision of doubtful legality—Lithuania refused to accept the *fait accompli*. It was not till several years later, in December 1927, that the Council finally succeeded in putting

an end to the state of war; and even then the bitter enmity remained, a heavy drag upon both countries. The broken faith of Poland and the unreasoning obstinacy of Lithuania had involved a serious failure for the League. But even more serious and enduring was the cost to each of their unreconcilable quarrel.

Outside the field of politics the League had one truly encouraging achievement to show. The Conference on Communications, which the Assembly had convoked at Barcelona, was an unqualified success. Forty-four States, including Germany, were represented. The United States declined and Russia was not invited: but their absence in this case was not a serious handicap, since neither was much concerned with the transit of goods or passengers across its territory. When the Conference opened, it was generally expected that it would not be able to do more than agree, as the Financial Conference of Brussels had agreed, on a number of general principles and recommendations, leaving it to the various governments to carry them out. But these modest hopes were far exceeded, and the Barcelona meeting made important and effective additions to the public law of the world. It drew up two great treaties—a Convention on Freedom of Transit, and a Convention on the Regime of International Waterways—both of which remained in force until 1939 and contributed much to the general reorganization of Europe. Further, it prepared the way for similar conventions on the international regime of railways and of ports: and it set up a permanent organization to deal with all questions of communications and transit.<sup>1</sup> Space forbids any attempt even to summarize the actual substance of the agreements made at Barcelona. But the Conference was a proof of the growing technical efficiency of the League organization and confirmed the belief that the system of open conference, properly used, was by far the most effective method of conducting affairs of general concern.

The general gloom of the League's second summer was broken by two unexpected events. The first was the American proposal to hold a Disarmament Conference in Washington. The second was the decision of the Allied powers to submit the question of Upper Silesia to the Council of the League.

The effort of the First Assembly to start a movement towards general disarmament had led to nothing. France at this time was resolved to prevent all international action in that sense. She was still obsessed by the danger of a renewed German attack. The Republican government in Berlin might be peaceably inclined: the war material at its disposal

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 16.

might have been effectively destroyed. But the spirit of Prussian militarism was still alive: it filled the pages of the nationalist press; it inspired the crowds who, outside the court-room of Leipzig, cheered the submarine officers whom their own compatriots had condemned for deliberately sinking boat-loads of nurses and wounded men. If the parties of the right should come into power in Germany, they would find millions of men already trained to war, and an industry capable of turning out war material in unlimited quantities. In this situation France was resolved to hold the advantages she possessed—the strongest army and air force in the world, and the political and military leadership of the new States in Eastern Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Roumania. And being the only Member of the Council with a clear policy on the subject, she was easily able to impose her will and to insist upon a prudence which was another name for doing nothing at all.

The Assembly had called for the establishment of a special Commission to begin planning a general reduction of armaments. It was to include men of political experience, as well as economists, financiers, and representatives of employers and of labour. The Council, in defiance of the Assembly's wishes, added a number of professional officers. It also chose Viviani to be chairman of the new body. Between the Council's lethargy in completing the Commission, and Viviani's procrastination in convoking it, its first meeting was delayed until July 16th, and all it could submit to the Assembly was an incomplete, preliminary, and mainly negative report.

Meanwhile, on July 7th, 1921, the world had been surprised and cheered by the announcement that the President of the United States was in consultation with the governments of Britain, France, Italy, and Japan with a view to holding a conference in Washington, whose primary purpose was to be disarmament; it would also discuss the political settlement of the Pacific and the Far East, and for this part of its work China also was to be invited. The proposal was enthusiastically welcomed in London and in Rome: more cautiously in Paris and Tokyo. But all accepted it; and the popular sentiment in all countries, including those which were not invited, was one of high hope and confidence. An agreement on disarmament would not only reduce the fear of war, but also ease the severe economic difficulties of the time. But the chief reason for joy was that the American action seemed to show that the policy of isolation was being modified or abandoned. The public did not know that the invited governments were formally warned by Washington that the United States 'could enter into no alliance or make any commitment . . . which would impose any sort of obligation as to its decisions

in future contingencies'—as clear and good a definition of isolationism as could possibly be composed.

In Geneva the American initiative could not but create a certain misgiving. Disarmament, whether looked upon as the consequence or as the cause of a general condition of peace and security, was deeply bound up with the Covenant system. If the League had hitherto made no progress towards carrying out its own purposes in this field, its failure was due in great part to the refusal of the United States to co-operate with the other signatories of the Covenant. It seemed unfair that the credit for bringing armaments reduction into the realm of practical politics should go to the very country which had made disarmament through the League impossible. If such a thought were unworthy, it was still true that in the long run disarmament could only come through the establishment of a strong system of political security; and a partial success in the first field might be dearly bought if it weakened the collective effort of the League. Yet, on the whole, the prevailing sentiment in Geneva, as elsewhere, was satisfaction at the apparent change in the general attitude of the American government. The small powers especially rejoiced, since they still hoped that the United States would give that disinterested leadership of which the British and French governments had so far proved incapable.

It was on August 11th, 1921, that formal invitations to the Conference were issued in Washington. The very next day, the Council suddenly found itself called upon to deal with the most important and the most contentious problem of the time—the question where the German-Polish frontier was to be drawn in Upper Silesia. All the other frontiers of Germany had now been settled; but the future of Upper Silesia, a region of over 4,000 square miles, with two and a quarter million inhabitants and enormous mineral and industrial wealth, was still a matter of bitter dispute. The claims of Poland were upheld by France, those of Germany by Britain and Italy. Neither side would give way. Public opinion in the Allied countries strongly supported the attitude of their respective governments. In Germany and Poland passions had long reached a dangerous height. There had been serious disorders and much loss of life in the area itself. The presence of a considerable Allied army, mostly French and under French command, had prevented the outbreak of hostilities on a great scale. But the situation could not be prolonged, the more so since not only the Germans, but also the British and Italians on the spot, accused the French commander and his staff of complicity with the Poles. The position was more grave than at any time since the Armistice; and the members of the Supreme Council, having reached a complete deadlock, agreed to submit the problem to

the Council of the League. At the same time, they pledged themselves to accept the Council's decision, whatever it might be.

This event was a red-letter day in League history. The Council, suddenly invested with authority over that self-named Supreme Council by whose proceedings its own had hitherto been completely eclipsed, found its prestige raised from the lowest to the highest point which it had yet reached. When the journalists, waiting outside the Quai d'Orsay in the expectation of some dramatic break between France and Britain, were told that Briand and Lloyd George had agreed to appeal to the League, they broke into incredulous laughter. They did not at first believe that the story was true; and when they realized that it was, they did not believe that the Council could possibly succeed where its four chief Members had so dangerously failed. The Council members themselves were by no means overjoyed at the task. But the small powers, and the pro-League press, which had been demanding for months that authority and responsibility should be transferred from the Allied organs to those of the League, were immensely encouraged. And nationalist opinion, though it prophesied the complete failure of the Council, could no longer treat that body as negligible and useless.

When the Second Assembly met in September 1921, the Upper Silesian settlement and the Washington Conference were still matters of the future. But the fact that they were in preparation exercised an unmistakable influence. The delegates were, with few exceptions, the same as those who had separated nine months earlier. Once more they had before them a full report on the work done during the past year; and they could not but see that little or no progress had been made on the questions which they had then declared to be of vital importance to the League. Disarmament had been deliberately neglected. The mandates system had hardly begun to function. The most burning problems of Europe had still been left to the Allied powers. Not a word had been said about the Greco-Turkish war, now reaching a new intensity as the Greek armies struggled to drive through to Ankara. Once more the effective work of the League had been confined to economic, social, or technical affairs, and to political affairs of secondary importance.

Two months earlier the spokesmen of the lesser delegations would without doubt have come to Geneva intending to make a serious attack on the Council. But the great powers now had their answers ready. They had submitted to the League the most dangerous and acute of all the difficulties which were holding up the recovery of Europe. They could show that it was not they, but the United States, which was delaying the institution of the mandates. And they were about to meet



in order to discuss disarmament under conditions more hopeful than any which Geneva could offer.

In these conditions the Assembly proved to be an occasion for encouragement and consolidation rather than for criticism and reproach. It showed a steadiness which had been lacking in its first session—a sense that the League had come to stay, that there was no need to be impatient, no need to expect immediate results or to demand immediate changes. Cecil, Branting, and Nansen formed what might be called a left-wing group, their general thesis being that the Council should show a higher degree of initiative, should be less dominated by the great powers, and should pay more attention to public opinion, in particular by admitting the press to a much greater proportion of its meetings. The opposite tendency was maintained, as before, by Balfour and Bourgeois. It is only by slow growth, they argued, that any institution can become strong. The League was not yet able to do all that its founders and that the peoples of the world had hoped and intended. But that day would come. Meantime, the chief danger to its progress arose not from its enemies but from those who expected it to do more than its strength and resources permitted, and whose criticism of the Council undermined public faith in the League as a whole.

The opposition between these two points of view had already appeared in the previous year and was to reappear continuously throughout the history of the League. At this stage it represented no clash of national interests but rather a difference of judgement between two groups which shared a common purpose and could understand each other's reasons. Frankly debated, it strengthened rather than weakened the sense of unity which had grown during the First Assembly and was confirmed by the Second.

The prevailing mood of the session was shown by its attitude on the question of amending the Covenant. A year before, many governments and delegations had believed that they could see ways of improving the system established by the Covenant and a large number of amendments had been proposed. But experience had already begun to prove that Woodrow Wilson and his colleagues had been wiser than their critics, and that their simple and flexible wording left room for almost all the changes and developments which the actual working of the League showed to be necessary. The Second Assembly adopted one change of great importance. It corrected two definite errors which were causing practical inconvenience. But except for these, and for some minor drafting changes, it rejected or postponed all the amendments which had been put forward.

The important change which the Assembly was in a hurry to carry

through concerned the system of economic sanctions which was to many the very keystone of the Covenant. A strict engagement by all Members to prevent all normal relations with an aggressor State was included, often in most elaborate terms, in every plan submitted to the Peace Conference, whether British, American, French, Italian, or German. To all in Paris this provision had seemed to be the ideal way of ensuring that no aggression would occur, and of repressing it, if ever it did occur, with the maximum of effectiveness and the minimum of risk. All this was changed by the absence of the United States. The effect was no longer certain if the Covenant-breaker could still trade with America. Yet to interfere with a trade which the United States would claim to be lawful and legitimate would involve unknown dangers: and these dangers would fall on the few League Members who could exercise sea power, and above all upon Britain. There was therefore a strong and successful movement in the direction of relaxing the rigid and urgent obligations of the Covenant. It was proposed that sanctions should be applied, not with violent and immediate completeness, but gradually and partially: and that all decisions on the subject should be entrusted to the Council. Formal amendments to the Covenant in this sense were voted by the Assembly, which also laid down that, pending ratification of the amendments, the Council should be guided by their substance. Although these amendments never acquired legal force,<sup>1</sup> their adoption by the Assembly was an event of great importance: for in 1935 they were taken as guiding directives in the application of the economic sanctions of the Covenant against Italy—the one occasion in the history of the League, and indeed of the world, when the nations made a joint attempt to repress a war in which they were not directly concerned.

The two mistakes which clearly required correction related, the first, to the method by which the expenses of the League were to be shared among its Members, the second, to the election of the non-permanent Members of the Council. In each of these cases the drafters of the Covenant had deserted their usual principle of flexibility; they had laid down definite rules, and the Members of the League were forced to follow procedures which they found unjust or inconvenient. They therefore adopted amendments which empowered the Assembly to make its own division of the cost and to draw up its own regulations governing the election of the Council. Amendments to the Covenant could not come into force until formally ratified by all the countries which had been Members of the Council when they were voted, as well as by a majority

<sup>1</sup> They did not come into force because France refused to ratify them, fearing to weaken the security which she herself hoped to derive from the Covenant. But in 1935 the French were foremost in insisting that they should guide the actions of the League.

of the other Members of the League. The process could, with good will, have been carried through in a few months. But France and Spain saw some diplomatic advantage in holding up their ratification of these two amendments, although their action caused the utmost inconvenience to the League. The first was not made effective until 1924; the second not till 1926.

One attempt to weaken the Covenant was defeated at the last moment. This was a proposal to admit certain exceptions to the rule laid down by Article 18 that all international engagements entered into by any Member of the League must be registered with, and published by, the Secretariat. Such a rule was disliked by many Foreign Ministries; it had already once been defied by France and Belgium, who refused to publish the text of their Military Agreement of September 7th, 1920; and the diplomatic services were anxious to loosen the rigid bonds of the uncompromising Article. They had successfully carried proposals to this effect through a jurists' committee and through the First Committee of the Assembly: but when the Assembly was about to endorse them, Cecil unexpectedly suggested that it would be wiser to wait. The Assembly agreed, and the subject was never raised again.<sup>1</sup>

This was a success for the left-wing group. Another, of a positive character, was gained in their battle for publicity. All the six main committees of the Assembly decided to hold their meetings in public, and the results of this silent revolution having proved entirely favourable, it became the accepted rule for all future Assemblies.

One resounding controversy was raised in the Assembly by Nansen, who tried to force it to decide on sending help on an adequate scale to the famine-stricken areas of Russia. Under the Tsars, Russia had held high place among exporters of food and importers of industrial goods; and until recently it had been widely believed that this trade could be restarted with great advantage to both parties. In fact, the Russian economy, utterly shattered by war, revolution, and civil war, required a long period of recovery before it could even provide the first necessities for its own people. And in 1921 a vast area on both sides of the Volga had been smitten by a drought of unprecedented severity. For hundreds of miles the earth was parched and millions were faced with death. Private organizations were giving generous help: but Nansen had been in Russia on their behalf, and came back convinced that the catastrophe was far too great for private charity, and could be met only with government subsidies. He called on the delegates to demand thirty million

<sup>1</sup> It is of interest to note that no similar provision was written into the Charter of the United Nations as drafted by a Conference of officials at Dumbarton Oaks. It was, however, added at the San Francisco Conference.

pounds from the governments which they represented. But the governments declared that they were themselves in great financial difficulties and hardly able to provide for the needs of their own people. Many expressed doubt whether the help given would reach those for whom it was intended; others feared to strengthen the Soviet regime, though there was general disapproval when the Yugoslav delegate protested against any charity being shown towards a country under Communist rule. It is hard to say how Nansen could have overcome such obstacles in a straight fight, though he was not without supporters, and a telegram from the Pope urged that the governments should act at once. In any case, he was outmanœuvred. The Supreme Council had set up an organization to study the question: it called a conference to meet in Brussels in October, and invited both the United States and Germany to attend. Thus it became possible to argue that the League should leave the question to the Brussels Conference, and Nansen's demands could be side-tracked without being directly rejected. Nansen protested, prophesying that at Brussels nothing would be done. So it proved: but meanwhile his attempt to move the Assembly was successfully frustrated. And in that frustration the incorrigibly bitter tongue of Chicherin played its part, as well as the prudence or poverty of the Western countries.

The membership of the League was brought this year to fifty-one States by the admission of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Hungary had applied for admission: but her government, reactionary at home, was on bad terms with most of her neighbours, especially with Austria, her late partner and ally; and, foreseeing that its application might be the subject of a debate that would wound its pride, it preferred to wait another year. On Germany little was said; within the Reich itself there was less sign of wishing to join than had been visible a year before. Extreme right and extreme left were as hostile as ever. An inexperienced administration resigned the conduct of foreign affairs to the professionals of the Wilhelmstrasse. These were divided: some looked to America to help them, some to Russia: they saw no help in Geneva, nor had they the least sympathy with the principles of the Covenant. German journalists were present in strength, but they spent their time trying to pick up fragments of information on the progress of the Council's work on Upper Silesia, and showed little interest in the activities of the Assembly. The small group which formed the Liga für Völkerbund had enjoyed a moment of encouragement during the summer, when the Union<sup>1</sup> of League of Nations Societies had, on the proposal of the French

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 16, last section.

Society and by acclamation, admitted it to membership. The group had found a respectable if uninspiring leader in Count Bernstorff, who had been Ambassador in Washington during the war, had refused to succeed Brockdorff Rantzau as Foreign Minister, and had been elected to the Reichstag as a member of the Democratic party. But Bernstorff's efforts to persuade his government to apply for admission to the League were coldly rejected.

Two new figures of note appeared at the Second Assembly. One was Srinivasa Sastri. The able speech and proud bearing of the Indian statesman were a surprise to many delegates from the small countries of Europe, whose knowledge and interests had been confined to the narrow horizons of their local affairs. But while Sastri spoke of what the League ought to mean to India and the world, the voting power of India was still held by her chief delegate, Sir Willfam Meyer, whose only aim was to cut down to the lowest possible figure the funds available for the League's work. The other was Stanley Bruce of Australia. He was sent to Geneva only as an afterthought. Hughes, the Prime Minister, an open enemy of the League from Paris onwards, had nominated, as Australia's only representative, a member of the High Commissioner's office in London. To his surprise, Australian opinion rose in indignation against this gesture of contempt. It was too late to send a delegation from Australia: but Bruce, a young Member of Parliament, with a fine record in the war, happened to be in Europe and was asked to go to Geneva. Bruce was later, after holding the highest office at home, to play a notable part in the development of the League. At the Second Assembly he already made his mark by a speech in which he proclaimed that the desire for disarmament was not confined to theorists and pacifists, but was strongest among the fighting men who had had direct experience of war.

## UPPER SILESIA AND ALBANIA

*A burning problem—The Council's plan—German indignation—The Geneva Convention on Upper Silesia (September 1921—June 1922)—Albania and her neighbours—Lloyd George's appeal to the Council (April—November, 1921)*

IN spite of all the prophecies of failure, the Council succeeded in arriving at an agreed settlement for Upper Silesia, without any serious hitch, and within the brief period of about six weeks. This result was unique in the Council's history, then or later, so far as major disputes were concerned. It was due, first and foremost, to the unique circumstance that the two States directly and intimately affected by its action were not, legally speaking, parties in the case. The Council was not compelled to hear the arguments of either Germany or Poland, still less to find a solution which both could accept. The Allied governments possessed the legal right to decide the frontier and the material power to enforce their decision; and for once they had placed their rights and powers unreservedly in the hands of the League. The second determining factor was the character and position of Bourgeois and Balfour. Both men were determined that the Council should emerge with credit from the greatest test it had so far undergone; both were ready to shoulder responsibility, to disregard newspaper attacks, and to look beyond the arguments of their professional advisers.

The plebiscite of March 1921 had given a result favourable to Germany in the proportion, taken by individual votes, of six to four; taken by communes, of five to four. These figures were, without doubt, unduly favourable to Germany.<sup>1</sup> Even taken at their face value, they clearly suggested that the plebiscite area should in justice be divided between the two, as indeed the Peace Treaty had anticipated. But where and how could the frontier line be drawn? The pro-German communes and the pro-Polish communes were inextricably confused; and the famous Industrial Triangle, in whose crowded cities the German vote had been strongest, lay along the eastern edge of the area, nearest to what was already Poland and farthest from what was still Germany. Most judges

<sup>1</sup> 180,000 German votes out of 707,000, against 10,000 out of 479,000 Polish votes, were cast by 'outvoters', i.e. persons no longer resident in Upper Silesia. Further, 90,000 German votes, against 5,000 Polish votes, were cast in two districts which did not properly belong to Upper Silesia and ought not to have been included in the plebiscite area.

took it for granted that it was impossible to divide the Triangle, where railways and canals, power lines, gas-mains and water-mains, foundries and factories, had grown into a single vast unit, constructed round the coal, iron, lead, and zinc mines which were the basis of the whole industrial network. Seizing on this point, the German government confidently demanded that the whole Triangle, and with it the whole plebiscite area, should return to German sovereignty; it further pointed out that the amount of reparation which Germany could pay would be profoundly affected by the loss or retention of the second industrial area in Europe. Soon, in their characteristic way, the whole German nation had convinced themselves that every legal, moral, and economic principle was favourable to their claim and that the cession of any part of the area would be a tyrannical violation of the laws of both God and man. The British and Italian governments proposed to give the whole of the Triangle to Germany, and to Poland certain country districts which could be cut off from the rest without making the frontier completely unworkable. The French insisted that the whole Triangle, and about three-fifths of the rest, should go to Poland. The Poles themselves claimed a still more extensive share than that which the French proposed for them, and, in May 1921, attempted to occupy it by force; it was not till after weeks of disorder, in which not only many Poles and Germans, but also a number of Italian soldiers, lost their lives, that the Allied forces regained control of the area.

No member of the Council could be expected to accept the task of acting as rapporteur for so explosive a question. The Council therefore hit upon the plan of forming a rapporteurs' committee of those four members whose countries had hitherto had no part in the dispute—Hymans, da Cunha, Wellington Koo, and Quiñones de León. These men worked in great secrecy throughout the Assembly, in company with a selected group of members of the Secretariat and two outside advisers, a Czechoslovak industrial leader and a Swiss railway expert. They decided to take the plebiscite returns as the chief basis of their proposals. It was at once clear that, on that basis, the whole of the northern and western sectors of the plebiscite area must go to Germany, and the smaller south-eastern sector to Poland. The fundamental problem was the Industrial Triangle in the east and the belt of country which separated it from the areas of German majority in the west. In this sector the great towns were predominantly German, the smaller towns and the country-side predominantly Polish. And to give the Industrial Triangle as an undivided whole to one side or the other would be to disregard completely the results of the plebiscite, since Germany or Poland, as the case might be, would thus receive a share of the population

out of all proportion to the total of those who had voted in her favour. After seeking vainly for some expedient by which this injustice could be avoided, the four rapporteurs began to consider a solution which had hitherto been rejected as impossible. If it were practicable to draw the frontier line right through the Industrial Triangle, the area might be so divided as to allot to each country a population equivalent in number to those that had voted for it, and at the same time to reduce the minorities left on either side of the frontier to the lowest figures which then were possible in view of the inextricable commingling of Germans and Poles.

The expert advisers were able to lay down a number of conditions whose fulfilment might bring such a scheme within the region of practical possibilities. They called in for consultation, not the diplomatic agents of the contesting States, but industrial and trade-union leaders of both nationalities. Already, by their voluminous arguments against dividing the Triangle, the German propagandists had in one sense facilitated the task:<sup>1</sup> they had shown exactly what disadvantages must be foreseen and guarded against. One section of the League Secretariat was by now well able to advise on the means by which the minorities on either side might be protected from injustice. Another had recently held a successful conference on the question of passports and visas. These men, with the experts already called on by the rapporteurs' committee, were able to draw up a plan which, if accepted and carried out by the German and Polish governments, would enable the Triangle to carry on as an industrial and trading unit even after it had been politically cut in two. The plan included provisions intended to maintain the existing flow of raw materials to the factories, of half-finished goods to the finishing establishments, and of finished goods to their markets; to prevent interruption of railway traffic, power, light, and water; to enable individuals to cross the frontier without difficulty; to preserve the trade-union rights of workers and the rights of property-owners. And besides these and similar precautions, it laid down the guarantees which each side must offer to the nationals of the other who would now become its subjects. The details of this special regime were to be negotiated by Germany and Poland with the help of the League, and embodied in a formal treaty between them; and neither was to enter into possession of the sector assigned to it until the treaty was concluded. The regime was to last for fifteen years. During that period the two parties would maintain in Upper Silesia a joint Commission to which Upper Silesians on either side of the frontier could submit their

<sup>1</sup> This is pointed out by Georges Kaeckenbeeck, *The International Experiment of Upper Silesia* (London, Oxford University Press for Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1942), p. 9.



grievances, and a joint tribunal to settle legal disputes, each organ having a neutral chairman.

There can be no doubt that, before deciding to submit their plan to the Council, the committee of four ascertained that Bourgeois and Balfour would not reject it: and the latter may well have been influenced by Beneš, who had been discreetly advocating the division of the Triangle and pointing out that similar methods were working satisfactorily in the Teschen district. In any case, the full Council met on October 12th, 1921, accepted it without discussion, and forwarded it forthwith to the Supreme Council. All this was done in secret, not at the wish of the League organs, but on the request of the Allies. In Upper Silesia an uneasy calm had reigned since the question of its fate had been laid before the League; and the Allies feared a recrudescence of disorder if the verdict were known before they were ready to endorse and apply it. And, indeed, the question had no sooner returned from the League to the Allies than a new and dangerous dispute arose. The Council had put forward its plan as a single whole, the drawing of the frontier line being, in its mind, absolutely dependent upon the establishment of the economic and other safeguards. This condition was disliked by the French on the ground that it curtailed Poland's sovereignty in her new territories, and did not sufficiently weaken Germany's industrial strength. The Quai d'Orsay appeared to be quite ready to throw over the agreement which Bourgeois had made, accepting only the Council's frontier line but leaving each side free to act as it pleased in its own sector. Happily Briand was persuaded not to persist in this discreditable proposal, and on October 19th, 1921, the Supreme Council formally endorsed the verdict of the League.

The Council decision produced in Germany a wave of consternation and rage corresponding to the ill-founded expectations deliberately aroused by the government and the press. To give all to Germany and nothing to Poland would have been a violation of the Treaty, a denial of justice, and a defiance of common sense. But, having falsely claimed that the popular vote was a decisive victory for their cause, the Germans had ever since been waiting in feverish excitement to hear that the whole province was still to be theirs. Their hopes had been fanned by the open support of the British press, which urged that, for the sake of European prosperity, the enormous resources of Upper Silesia should be controlled by the same strong hands which had developed them, rather than be transferred to an inexperienced and unbusinesslike nation. And now the League frontier left almost all the mineral wealth of Upper Silesia, and many of the greatest industrial establishments, on the Polish side. This had not been the deliberate purpose of the

committee of rapporteurs. But since the mines lay close along the eastern edge of the Industrial Triangle, it necessarily followed that if the Triangle were divided at all, they must inevitably fall to Poland.

In their anger and disappointment the Germans could hardly find words bitter enough to describe the weakness and wickedness of the League. It was forgotten that the original intention of the Peace Treaty had been to transfer Upper Silesia to Poland without further discussion; and that 40 per cent of the voters, and nearly 50 per cent of the actual residents, had voted for Poland. The fact that Germany was to keep two-thirds of the area and three-fifths of the population was taken for granted: the many conditions laid down to alleviate the loss to German trade were dismissed as completely unworkable. The German government under Wirth offered its resignation: it had taken office with a programme of treaty-fulfilment, but Wirth declared that fulfilment was no longer possible after the loss of so great a part of the resources of the Reich. President Ebert, however, persuaded Wirth to remain in office; and in spite of all recriminations the execution of the League plan went steadily forward.

In November a German-Polish Conference opened at Geneva, organized by the Secretariat and presided over by a nominee of the Council. This arduous duty was accepted by Felix Calonder, a former President of the Swiss Confederation. As Chairman of the Conference, Calonder had power to decide all points on which the two delegations were unable to agree; but though he was forced on one occasion at least to threaten to use this power, the Germans and Poles actually succeeded in coming to direct understanding on every point. The hostility between the two countries was unconcealed: but the business community on each side was anxious to get everything settled, and their representatives showed an unexpected readiness to compromise. It was indeed astonishing to observe how, as the weeks of conference went by, the two intensely nationalistic delegations became inspired with a common desire to reach agreed conclusions. On May 15th, 1922, was signed the famous Geneva Convention on Upper Silesia—a document unique in international history as providing for the maintenance of economic unity across a political frontier. Its 606 articles laid down in the most elaborate detail the arrangements to be followed to ensure the various safeguards which the Council had demanded. It was promptly ratified by both States; the Reichstag was draped in black, the speeches proclaimed that the wrong done to Germany could never be forgotten, but all except the extreme right and the Communists voted for ratification. In June 1922 the Allied representatives left Upper Silesia and the German and Polish authorities took possession of their respective sectors.

In spite of the Reichstag demonstration, the emotions of the German people had cooled down during the negotiation of the Convention. The delegation had been surprised to meet, at the headquarters of the League, nothing of the prejudice and hostility which they had been led to expect. They found, for example, that the German journalists in Geneva were for the most part convinced that the Council had tried to deal fairly with Germany: their dispatches had taken a contrary line only because they were compelled to write what editors wished to print and subscribers wished to read. The impression left on Germans and Poles alike by their six months in Geneva was shown by the fact that they addressed a joint letter to the Council asking that Calonder might be appointed as President of the Mixed Commission in Upper Silesia, and Georges Kaeckenbeeck, a member of the Secretariat who had been put in charge of legal questions arising at the Conference, as President of the Mixed Tribunal.

For fifteen years Upper Silesia continued to be administered in accordance with the regime devised by the Council and embodied in the Geneva Convention. At the end of that period, with a Nazi government in Germany, and a Polish government concerned more with prestige than with peace, there could be no question of renewing any part of the Convention. It lapsed, without ceremony and almost unnoticed. Both parties were only anxious to forget that their sovereignty had in any way been limited by the decisions of the League.

On the economic and commercial side, its complicated provisions had worked without serious inconvenience or difficulty. The mines and industries of the Industrial Triangle quickly recovered from the shock of the frontier decision. Most of them remained under German management and the Poles proved perfectly capable of taking charge of the rest. Upper Silesia fully shared in the general prosperity of the nineteen-twenties, and was less affected than most industrial areas by the depression of the nineteen-thirties. Far less satisfactory was the record in the matter of minorities protection. Calonder's Mixed Commission, and the League Council itself, were inundated year after year by scores of petitions and complaints; and the grievances of the Germans in Poland and of the Poles in Germany did much to maintain the secular hostility between the two nations. As will be seen, this was due in part to the deliberate policy of the Berlin government. It is possible that, if they had been left alone, the Germans in Polish Upper Silesia could have settled down well enough as citizens of Poland. But the German Republic was resolved to keep its grievances alive and never allow the eastern frontier to become a settled and accepted fact: and though Stresemann would have disapproved, he nevertheless did in truth prepare, the use

which Hitler made of German minorities. The Poles on their side gave their German subjects only too many opportunities to stand before the world as victims of injustice. All this the League plan had tried to forestall; but though it could mitigate, it proved powerless to prevent, the abuses and dangers resulting from the intermingling of two masterful and intemperate races.

No sooner had the Council completed its work on the Upper Silesian problem than it was called upon to occupy itself with a grave threat to peace which had flared up on the frontiers of Albania. In the former case, it had not acted on the specific basis of any Article of the Covenant, but had been requested, in its general role as the highest international authority, to settle a dispute which otherwise appeared insoluble. In the latter case, on the other hand, it was in virtue of their powers and duties under the Covenant that the Assembly and the Council intervened, with a large measure of success, on behalf of a weak Member of the League against the attempts of its neighbours to disregard its rights.

Albania had existed as an independent State only since 1913, and her frontiers had then been settled by the six great powers which formed the Concert of Europe. The new State was no artificial creation. Its people possessed, indeed, neither the cohesion which comes from a firm administrative structure, nor the unity inspired by a common religion. Politically and culturally they were the most backward in Europe; and while a majority professed the Moslem faith, there was an important Christian minority, divided in its turn between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. But they were conjoined by a national consciousness, springing from racial affinity and long tradition, which was strong enough to override all internal divisions and to present a united front to the pressure of their greedy neighbours. Their will to national survival was put to severe tests. Not only during the war but, far less excusably, during the peace negotiations, the treatment of Albania was a picture of diplomacy in its worst and most cynical forms. Italy wished to annex her coast. Greece coveted the whole southern section of the country. Yugoslavia, more wisely and more honourably, asked that Albania should be restored to independence within the frontiers of 1913; but demanded that, if partition did take place, she should have her share in the north, where Yugoslav troops were in occupation of about one-sixth of the national territory. It would be tedious to describe the various bargains which were proposed, or made, between these claimants and the chief Allied powers. They came to nothing, partly through mutual jealousy, partly through American hesitations, chiefly through the courageous attitude of the Albanians themselves. But they had at least

the effect of invalidating the frontier lines laid down in 1913, and of making it necessary that Albania's frontiers should be decided anew. This task was assumed by the Supreme Council, with the agreement of Yugoslavia and Greece. It need not be said that in all these transactions the countries concerned did not cease to proclaim their care for the independence and prosperity of Albania. But the Albanians themselves were never consulted. They continued to demand the frontier of 1913 and refused to recognize the right of the Supreme Council to change it without their consent.

The dangers of such a situation were evident. Throughout 1920 there was unrest and skirmishing between the Albanians and the Yugoslav, Greek, and Italian troops. It was in these circumstances that the First Assembly admitted Albania as a Member of the League. Without saying so in clear terms, the Assembly accepted the claim of the Allied powers to settle her frontiers. But it expected, and had every right to expect, that since those very powers had voted for her admission to the League, they would carry out their self-appointed task without further delay and so put an end to a standing threat to peace in the Balkans. Instead of this, the question was left in the hands of the Conference of Ambassadors: and, whatever further processes of bargaining may have been the cause of its inaction, that body did not take it into consideration at all until another six months had passed. In June 1921 it appointed a sub-committee to prepare its decision. But when the Second Assembly met in September nothing more had been done.

Meanwhile the Italian detachments had been withdrawn from the mainland of Albania; but there were still Greek troops in the south, and in the north a strong Yugoslav force held a line far within the frontier of 1913. On this front the situation grew steadily more threatening. Local skirmishes became more frequent, the loss of life more serious; the number of homeless refugees was large and increasing. In April 1921 and again in June the Albanian government appealed to the Council to settle its frontiers and to free its territory from foreign occupation. But the Greek and Yugoslav representatives asserted that only the Conference of Ambassadors could decide the territorial question: and, to the great indignation of the Albanians, the great powers on the Council prevailed upon their colleagues to accept this view. The Council did at least urge the Ambassadors to act without delay. But its exhortations seemed only to deepen the torpor of the diplomatists in Paris.

Albania now brought her grievances before the Assembly, and in that body there was a strong current of resentment against the Ambassadors for their procrastination and against the Council for tamely allowing so dangerous a situation to continue. The debate was repeatedly postponed

on assurances given by the British, French, and Italian delegations that the frontier decision was about to be announced. These powers still wished to leave everything to the Ambassadors. They appeared to attach no great importance to the reports of intensified Yugoslav pressure which the Albanian delegation laid almost daily before the Assembly. Incidents, said H. A. L. Fisher, were bound to happen: the figures of dead and wounded were doubtless exaggerated. But Cecil elicited the fact that the Ambassadors were not even present in Paris: like most of the Assembly he was indignant at their conduct; and he expressed the common sentiment with vehemence. Such delays were really criminal. Men and women were being killed and the peace of Europe was put in jeopardy. 'We have no right to play with the lives and happiness of the peoples in order to serve the methods of old-world diplomacy.' Yet even now the Assembly, though its temper was thoroughly aroused, avoided a direct conflict with the Allied powers. It accepted the pledge that their decision was on the point of completion, and successfully pressed the Albanians to promise to conform thereto. At the same time it asked the Council to send a Commission of Inquiry to Albania to report on the execution of the decision by all concerned, and on any troubles that might arise. And the Council, meeting a few days later, did as it was asked.

More than a month was still to pass before, on November 9th, 1921, the Conference of Ambassadors finally announced that the Albanian frontiers would be those already settled in 1913, with three minor rectifications in favour of Yugoslavia. Meanwhile the British government's view of the situation had undergone a remarkable change. They now gave complete credence to the Albanian warnings which, in the Assembly, they had treated so lightly. Indeed, they became so convinced that there was imminent danger of war, that on November 8th, 1921, the Secretary-General was startled to receive a telegram from Lloyd George himself, demanding that the Council should be immediately summoned and should decide that, if Yugoslavia did not carry out forthwith her obligations under the Covenant, she should be forced to do so by the application of economic sanctions. The Council was still a slow-moving machine: even on so vehement a summons it took ten days to get it together. But this delay, discreditable as it was on general grounds, was in this particular case conducive to a peaceful issue. The Yugoslav government, after a brief period of hesitation, announced that in order to avoid the dangers threatened by Lloyd George's telegram, it would accept the Ambassadors' decision and withdraw its troops to the frontier therein laid down. In consequence, when the Council did meet, its task was simple. The danger of war was over; and

the Council could content itself with giving good advice to all concerned, and instructing its Commission, which at that moment was arriving at Scutari, to see to it that Yugoslav evacuation and Albanian re-occupation were carried out peaceably and in order.

There can be little doubt that Albania owed her survival as an independent State to the action of the League—first and foremost, to her admission as a Member by the First Assembly, but also to the support given by the Second Assembly and to the threat of sanctions so unexpectedly sounded forth from London. This last was, indeed, of doubtful legality: but it was completely effective in preventing any attempt by the Yugoslav government to emulate the adventures of d'Annunzio in Fiume or of Zeligowski in Vilna. For the next few years the Council continued to enjoy unquestioned authority in Albania and the presence of League representatives helped the country through its internal difficulties. In all this the League had displayed towards the Conference of Ambassadors a courteous and conciliatory attitude which that body was far from reciprocating. Simultaneously with their decision on the frontiers, the Ambassadors issued a formal statement which in effect granted to Italy the right to make herself responsible for protecting the territorial and economic independence of Albania. This act was clearly contrary to the obligations of their countries as Members of the League. Its value to Albania can be judged from the fact that from 1926 onward the Italians gradually acquired a complete control over her economic resources, until in 1939 they annexed the country by typical Fascist methods of treachery and violence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Anyone who thinks these words too strong should refer to Ciano's diary for March and April 1939.

## WASHINGTON AND GENOA

*Achievements and effects of the Washington Conference—The Genoa Conference—Importance for the League—The Rapallo Treaty—Eclipse of the Supreme Council*

(NOVEMBER 1921—JUNE 1922)

WHILE the Council was holding its special session and bringing peace to a small corner of the Balkan Peninsula, the Washington Conference was assembling to establish the peace of the Pacific Ocean and to put an end to competition between the three great naval powers. Before the Washington Conference was ended, plans for an equally ambitious European meeting at Genoa were already far advanced. For nearly a year the whole stage of international affairs was occupied by these two great conferences. The Council, the Secretariat, and the regular organs of the League, continuing to transact their ordinary unspectacular business, watched with a mixture of hope, anxiety, and jealousy the efforts of the powers to carry out the purposes of the Covenant without accepting its principles or using its institutions.

The Washington Conference lasted from November 1921 to February 1922. Besides a number of secondary agreements, it produced three treaties of major importance. Its first and greatest achievement was the Five-Power Treaty for the limitation of naval armaments, whereby the United States, the British Empire, Japan, France, and Italy bound themselves not to exceed certain fixed maxima in regard to the total tonnage and in regard to the individual size and fighting power of their battleships, battle-cruisers, and aircraft carriers; while the first three also bound themselves to establish no new fortifications or naval bases in the islands of the Pacific. Its second achievement was the Four-Power Treaty whereby the four first-named countries agreed to respect one another's insular possessions and dominions in the Pacific, to confer together if controversy should arise between them on that subject, and to support one another if their rights were threatened by any other power. Its third achievement was the Nine-Power Treaty—a mutual obligation to respect the independence and integrity of China and to maintain the principle of the Open Door, that is to say, of equal opportunities for trade and investment. The Treaty provided that, if any contracting party thought that these engagements were being violated, there should be full and frank communication between all the



signatories. These included Holland, Portugal, Belgium, and China herself, besides the five great powers: it was also open to adherence by other recognized governments.

In themselves, these treaties fell far short of the hopes with which the Conference had met. The fundamental problems of disarmament remained unsolved. Land armaments and air armaments had not been touched. It had proved impossible to agree on the limitation of cruisers, destroyers, or submarines; and for the great ships the limit had been set at a regrettably high figure. The pledge to create no new bases in the Pacific left Japan in full control of the coast of China. The Four-Power Treaty was no more than a weakened form of Article 10 of the Covenant. The Nine-Power Treaty contained no effective provision for deciding whether it was being honestly carried out. But these shortcomings could not alter the fact that the Conference had proved a powerful and beneficent influence on international relations in general. The atmosphere had throughout been hopeful and co-operative: difficulties were solved by compromise or thrust out of sight before they could lead to deadlock. Americans were proud to see their government taking the lead; there was a new readiness to understand that the problems of Europe were not due only to perversity and greed; men began once more to think with respect of Wilson and all that he had tried and failed to do. They appreciated the fact that the British delegation, under Balfour's brilliant leadership, had co-operated at every point in making the Conference a success. The same was true of the Italians led by Schanzer. The Japanese, too, had been as conciliatory as they dared: their chief civilian delegate was Shidehara, the most consistent liberal among Japanese statesmen; and, while emerging from the Conference with more success than any other participant, they also went far to appease the rooted hostility of American opinion. The French, on the contrary, by the insensate demands of their naval staff and their generally obstructive attitude, did much to destroy the traditional sympathy of America for their country. It seemed that they had no desire to see the United States re-occupy its due place in world affairs, or at any rate in the affairs of Europe. And so far as such imponderable matters can be judged, they did in fact discourage the new tendency of American opinion and reduce its driving power.

Nevertheless, in spite of this blunder, the balance-sheet of Washington was heavily on the right side, and a great contribution had been made towards the pacification of a troubled world. The general relaxation of American stiffness in international affairs was extended also to relations with the League. All talk of a new association of nations and a new world court was dropped. The State Department began to admit the

possibility of corresponding, with infinite precaution, with the Secretary-General. In May 1922 an American official was permitted to accept nomination as a member of the Health Committee. And while official connexions were slowly and timidly developed, public opinion changed more rapidly. Few spoke any longer of American entry into the League: but active hostility had practically disappeared and there was a general wish to support its work so long as this could be done without any political commitment.

Lloyd George had claimed to be the true begetter of the Washington Conference. The brilliant success of the first weeks of that gathering may well have persuaded him that the time had come to hold a similar Conference in Europe. He had become convinced that European reconstruction could never be achieved until normal relations had been re-established with Germany, and Russia had been brought back into the general community of European nations. It might well seem that these wise purposes could best be fulfilled by securing the admission first of Germany, and then of Russia, into the League. As Members of the Council, and of all the wide-ranging social, economic, and financial organs of the League, they would be restored by a regular and constitutional process to full partnership in international life. As regards Germany, the operation would not even have been particularly difficult. The Members of the League were willing and even eager to receive her. Only the French government would resist: but in France itself there was a strong movement in favour of German admission, and it was unlikely that France would have stood out single-handed against the whole Assembly. The entry of Russia would doubtless have met with greater obstacles. Not necessarily from Russia herself: there were clear signs that beneath a parade of hostility she was in fact anxious to be admitted. But other governments had still many claims against her: and it would not be easy to overcome the anxieties of her neighbours, their fear of Communism, their resentment of the internal tyranny and external mischief-making which characterized the unprecedented regime of Moscow. All these difficulties would, however, have to be faced in any case if political and commercial connexions with the Russians were to be restarted. They would be diminished rather than increased by using the machinery of the League, as had been already shown in the understanding established between the Health Committee and the Soviet authorities. And once Germany was in the League, the Soviet government would feel all the more strongly the need to make concessions.

It is improbable that these considerations occurred to Lloyd George, or were put before him, until after he had announced his plan for a new

European Conference. When they were urged upon him after the plan was known, he rejected them with impatience. He delighted in improvisation; he believed in personal and dramatic action; and he enjoyed conferences. He saw himself once more the centre of the international stage, leading a grateful continent on the path of peace and prosperity; and he threw all his energy into the realization of his vision.

But the Genoa Conference, unlike that of Washington, was born under unlucky stars. No sooner had Briand given his consent to the plan than he was thrown out of office and succeeded as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister by Poincaré, who disagreed with Lloyd George's purposes and detested his methods. The invitations to Genoa had already been issued in the name of the Allied powers and France was thus committed to take part: but Poincaré made it plain that he neither expected nor desired its success. He refused to attend in person, and sent only a single Minister, Louis Barthou. Twelve years later Barthou was destined, as French Foreign Minister, to play the leading part in bringing Russia into the League. At Genoa, under Poincaré's orders, his role was to limit and obstruct all new approaches to Russia and to Germany alike. Yet, in the event, it was not Poincaré but Germany and Russia themselves who brought about the total and disastrous failure of the Conference.

The Assembly had never seen anything to compare with the delegations which met at Genoa on April 10th, 1922. Except for France, almost every European country was represented by its Prime Minister. The German Chancellor brought so many members of his government that Germany was said to be ruled for the time being from Genoa and not from Berlin. The same was literally true of Italy. Lloyd George brought his Foreign Secretary, his War Secretary, and his Chancellor of the Exchequer. Moscow was represented by Chicherin, Krassin, Litvinov, and a host of experts. The world looked with hope and excitement to see what such a gathering might bring forth. And then, in less than a week from the opening session, the German and Russian delegations met secretly at the neighbouring resort of Rapallo and signed a treaty providing for the resumption of diplomatic relations and for the regulation and encouragement of trade between the two countries. This act, and the method by which it was performed, completely took the heart out of the Conference, as some members of both delegations must have foreseen and intended. For another month Lloyd George, with admirable courage and resolution, held it together and struggled to build up a general economic agreement with the Russians. But on May 19th the Conference broke up after approving a number of vague resolutions which could do little to disguise its failure.

The specific business of restoring commercial relations with Russia was referred to a later meeting at The Hague, which in its turn separated without achieving any agreement. For the rest, the resolutions adopted at Genoa were largely a repetition of those of the Brussels and Barcelona Conferences. Their execution, so far as they contained anything which called for immediate action, was handed over to the technical organizations of the League.

From the time when the Genoa Conference was first proposed, its possible consequences for the League, for good or evil, were seen to be important. At first there seemed to be a possibility that the management of the Conference might be entrusted to the Secretariat: the economic experts of the Allies so recommended: but Lloyd George would not agree, and even rejected the suggestion that technical experts from the Secretariat should take charge of its work on their particular subject. The Italians, therefore, had to be responsible for these tasks; and help from Geneva was confined to lending some members of that group of interpreters and translators who had already won a great reputation and who were thenceforward an indispensable part of every international conference. But though the Secretariat would have been glad to prove its capabilities on so great an occasion, Drummond's main preoccupations were of a much more serious character. He wished to ensure, first, that the Conference should not create new organs which could overlap the technical organizations of the League, but should entrust to these whatever further action in the social and economic fields might be decided upon; and secondly, that the effect of the Conference should be to bring Germany and Russia into closer contact with the League, and if possible into actual membership. For these purposes he did his best, contrary to his usual practice, to influence the attitude of the principal governments in their own capitals, and sent a group of the ablest members of the Secretariat to follow the proceedings of the Conference itself.

His first purpose, as has already been shown, was fully achieved. In this he received support from Poincaré, who, for very different reasons, made a formal announcement that France would insist on confiding to the organs of the League any work arising from the Conference which fell within its competence. At Genoa, the Secretariat delegates spent long hours discussing the question with the representatives of Germany and of Russia. The Germans had already taken part in a number of League meetings: they were in full agreement with the Secretariat, but, since German public opinion had been taught that Geneva was merely a camouflage for imposing the will of the victorious powers, they shrank from saying so in public. However, they were ready in the end

to agree that the continuation of the technical work should be left to the League on the understanding that Germany should participate on equal terms. And the Russians behind the scenes agreed cheerfully to the same formula, though Chicherin insisted on making the usual reservations in public session.

As for the much greater question of League membership, the prospects did not, at first, appear unfavourable. Chicherin, at the opening session, announced that Russia was willing to join a reformed League; and it seemed that this meant, in substance, a League in which Germany was also a member. Of the Germans, Wirth, the Chancellor, and Hermes, the Finance Minister, needed no persuasion; their economic and financial advisers were of the same mind. Rathenau, the Foreign Minister, was unconvinced. Like Lloyd George, he preferred his own imaginative plans to the prosaic realities of Geneva. But the real opposition came from the ever-powerful officials of the Wilhelmstrasse whose governing conception was to be the first to establish close relations with Russia and use her as a ladder whereby Germany could climb back to greatness and power. This policy involved keeping open the gulf between Germany and the Western powers, and still more the gulf between those powers and Russia. Its leading exponents were Brockdorff Rantzau, then Ambassador in Moscow, and Baron von Maltzan, the head of the Wilhelmstrasse: and the Rapallo Treaty was their triumph. It not only shattered any prospect that the Genoa Conference might rebuild the bridges between East and West, but also raised new psychological difficulties across the road of *rapprochement* through the League. When Stresemann, three years later, followed that road, he had to overcome bitter opposition from the same men who had blocked it at Genoa.

The breakdown of the Genoa Conference, followed soon after by the fall of Lloyd George, had important consequences on the international situation. It brought to an end the active existence of the Supreme Council. Britain and France had now spent the last reserves of the authority derived from victory and of the power derived from unity. Supporters of the League, and especially the lesser countries of Europe, had long complained of the way in which they had dissipated that authority and power, without steadiness in either purpose or method. Peace, disarmament, economic revival were the common interests of all and called for consultation and co-operation on the widest possible scale. But France and Britain had been too arrogant or too impatient to place themselves on the same footing as the rest of the world. Their Prime Ministers and their Foreign Ministers had held repeated meetings

among themselves: they could not find time to visit Geneva or to attend the Council or the Assembly of the League. Lloyd George had, with every justification, poured scorn upon the critics who grumbled about the cost of the Genoa Conference; but he had allowed British delegations to obstruct the development of the League in order to economize a few hundred pounds. The indifference of the chief Allied powers had discouraged and weakened the Council and the Assembly, so that the Supreme Council had in fact been a rival and an obstacle to the League.

The obstacle had now ceased to exist. The way was clear for a new development of the institutions established by the Covenant. And these were in many respects ready and competent to face new and greater responsibilities. All over the world, opinion was more favourable to the League than at any moment since the Peace Conference. American hostility had disappeared. The small powers which had not been invited to Washington or Genoa, or which, having been invited, had found themselves excluded from all real consultation, were increasingly anxious to see Geneva become the centre of international action. The machinery of the League was now fully organized: the special agencies and the Secretariat had gained a solid reputation for efficiency and impartiality.

Unhappily, a further period of disorder was still to elapse before full use began to be made of these possibilities. France and Britain no longer tried to direct the destinies of Europe through the Supreme Council; but, bitterly disagreeing between themselves, they did not bring any fresh reinforcement to the authority of the League. Poincaré tried obstinately to impose his will on Germany by force, while the successors of Lloyd George would neither join in the French action nor produce an effective alternative. Germany had still darker hours to live through than any since the Armistice. The failure of Genoa had not brought her any nearer to the League; on the contrary, those elements in German life which opposed any reconciliation with the Western powers had been strengthened and encouraged. For the next two years all her energies were devoted to resisting Poincaré's pressure and averting a complete economic breakdown. And for two more years the League was still the forum for secondary powers and secondary problems, slowly gaining in favour, but still denied that full and free growth which it needed if it were to fulfil its main purpose.

## GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEAGUE

*I. Political and legal institutions: the Permanent Court of International Justice; the Permanent Advisory Commission on Military Questions and the Commission for the Reduction of Armaments; the Permanent Mandates Commission; the Minorities Committees.*

*II. Economic and social institutions: their general importance; the Economic and Financial Organization; the Communications and Transit Organization; the Health Organization; the Committee on Traffic in Opium and Dangerous Drugs; the Committees on Traffic in Women and on Child Welfare; the Organization for Refugees; the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation.*

*III. The International Labour Organization.*

*IV. The Permanent Delegations.*

*V. The League of Nations Societies.*

IN its third year the League of Nations already presented a complete structure, whose main outlines were destined to remain unaltered till the end. Enough has already been said about the Assembly, the Council, and the Secretariat. But it will make for clearness if we here briefly describe the various institutions which had been created to assist and advise them, and in general to carry on the many forms of international action enjoined by the Covenant or by special treaties, or accepted by the Council in fulfilment of its general role as a world authority. These institutions were of two kinds, corresponding to the chief purposes of the League: those of a legal and political character, intended to help the Council in the prevention or settlement of disputes; and those of a social or economic character, whose function was to facilitate and extend the habit of practical co-operation in the ordinary conduct of international affairs.

The principal bodies in the first group were the International Court; the two Commissions concerned with military affairs and with plans for disarmament; the Mandates Commission; and the Minorities Committees of the Council.

The principal bodies in the second group were the International Labour Organization; the Economic and Financial Organization; the Organization for Communications and Transit; the Health Organization. Within this group also may be placed the institutions set up by the League for more strictly humanitarian purposes—the Committee on the

Drug Traffic; the Committee on the Traffic in Women; the Committee on the Protection of Children; the Committee on Slavery. Closely akin to this type of work was that organized for the benefit of refugees—a humanitarian service which was expected to be temporary but which had to be indefinitely extended.

Finally, one organization of the League stands outside even these loose and general categories—the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation.

All these bodies, with the exception of the Slavery Committee, were already in existence by the summer of 1922, although none had yet reached their full growth, and some were only starting to build up their organization.

#### I. POLITICAL AND LEGAL INSTITUTIONS

Within the first or political group of institutions, the *Permanent Court of International Justice* must have pride of place. It was not until January 30th, 1922, that the nine Judges and the four Deputy-Judges elected during the Second Assembly convened for the first time in the Peace Palace at The Hague, which had been chosen as the headquarters of the Court. Thenceforward, the Council and the Assembly were able to refer to a body of the highest competence for any legal advice which they might require. The Court was busily occupied from the first, either in giving advisory opinions to the Council, or in deciding cases submitted to it by individual governments. Its reputation and authority grew steadily as the years went by. The legal learning of the Judges was never questioned: and only on one or two occasions was doubt cast upon their independence or impartiality. No case is on record in which the judgement of the Court was not carried out. When its work came to an end in 1939, nearly 600 different international agreements contained a clause conferring jurisdiction, in one form or another, upon the Permanent Court.

The First Assembly, by deciding that the legal instrument establishing the Court should be a separate international convention, had given it an independent existence. It owed no obedience to the Council or the Assembly. It decided its own rules and appointed its own staff. But it remained in all essentials a part of the League. The Assembly and the Council jointly elected the Judges. The Assembly voted its budget and supervised its organization. Even apart from such close administrative connexions, its existence was inseparably bound up with that of its parent. When the German invasion of May 1940 drove the Judges in flight from their peaceful headquarters, the Court, like the League, was in all essentials already dead. But the new International Court set up by



the United Nations is almost an exact reproduction of the Permanent Court set up by the League.

The *Permanent Advisory Commission on Military, Naval, and Air Questions* (P.A.C.) was the first of the auxiliary institutions of the League to be set up in its definite form: and it bore more than any other the marks of the transition from war to peace. Each State on the Council had the right to appoint three members, experts respectively in military, naval, and air questions; they met either in full committee or in military, naval, or air sub-committees. Dominated by the General Staffs of the great powers, the Committee could be of little service to the League, except when what was needed was a strictly technical report. Unlike all other League bodies, its secretaries were not regular members of the Secretariat, but serving officers seconded for three-year periods from the French army, the British navy, and the Italian air force.

The *Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments* (T.M.C.) was called into being by the First Assembly in order to supplement the inadequacy of the P.A.C. It consisted of men of political eminence, together with experts taken from the Economic Committee, the Financial Committee, the Employers' and Workers' groups in the International Labour Organization, and the P.A.C.—all except the last-named being appointed, not as government representatives, but in their personal capacity. This Commission, as will hereafter appear, played a notable part in the history of the League. It prepared the plans for disarmament and security which led in due course to the Geneva Protocol of 1924 and to the Locarno Treaties of 1925. Thereafter it was replaced by the *Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*—a body consisting of official delegates each representing his government.

The function of the *Permanent Mandates Commission* was to study the annual reports from the mandated territories and to advise the Council whether the conditions of each mandate were being strictly observed. This duty could not be loyally carried out unless every member were free to question and criticize the proceedings of any mandatory power. The members of the Mandates Commission were therefore nominated not by their governments but by the Council; and no one who was in any way dependent on his government was eligible for nomination. A majority of its members was drawn from States which did not hold any mandate. It included also an assessor from the International Labour Office, which was directly interested in the conditions of labour in the mandated territories.

The Permanent Mandates Commission was formally constituted in February 1921, and held its first session in October of that year. But it was not in the full swing of its work until many months later. The

Supreme Council had long since completed its distribution of the territories concerned<sup>1</sup> and had prepared drafts of the mandates themselves for submission to the Council. The terms of the 'C' mandates, which were the first to be laid before the Council, were approved and put into effect on December 17th, 1920. On the 'B' and 'A' mandates, however, decision was held up by a succession of postponements, for which the intervention of the United States was chiefly responsible. The 'B' mandates were finally approved, and entered into force, in July 1922; the 'A' mandates were approved at the same time but, though American agreement had now been given, a difference between Italy and France had still to be smoothed out, and they did not actually enter into force until September 29th, 1923.

In the simple classification adopted in the present chapter, the Mandates Commission has of necessity been counted as a political agency. The gradual progress towards statehood of the Arab countries, Iraq, Syria, the Lebanon, and Transjordan, the irreconcilable conflicts in Palestine between Arab and Jew, were matters of a pre-eminently political character: and these matters were the most difficult and the most publicized of all with which it had to deal. But the activities for which it cared most, and in regard to which its work must be considered as of primary historic importance, were concerned with what the Covenant described as a sacred trust of civilization, that is to say with the well-being and development of the backward peoples of the African and Pacific mandated territories. The conception of a sacred trust was not new: and no one had done so much to teach it and to practise it as the man who was for many years the greatest figure in the Mandates

<sup>1</sup> Territories subject to an 'A' mandate:

The Lebanon	}	under the mandate of France.
Syria		
Iraq	}	under the mandate of Britain.
Palestine		
Transjordan		

Territories subject to a 'B' mandate:

Togoland	}	under the mandate of Britain.
The Cameroons		
Tanganyika		
Togoland	}	under the mandate of France.
The Cameroons		
Ruanda-Urundi: under the mandate of Belgium.		

Territories subject to a 'C' mandate:

South West Africa: under the mandate of the Union of South Africa.  
 The Marianas, Caroline, and Marshall Islands: under the mandate of Japan.  
 New Guinea (north-eastern part), New Ireland, New Britain, and the Solomon Isles, } under the mandate of Australia.  
 Nauru: under the mandate of the British Empire exercised through Australia.  
 Western Samoa: under the mandate of New Zealand.

Commission, Lord Lugard. But its adoption as a principle by the community of civilized nations was new: and still more so was the open rendering of accounts to an international body.

The Mandates Commission left behind it a record as satisfactory as that of any of the institutions created by the League. It was a hard-worked body, holding two long sessions every year and having many reports to study between sessions. The Governors or other high officials of the various territories came before it, and supplemented their annual reports by answering the questions put by individual members. The Commission devised a skilful method of publicity: its actual proceedings took place in private, but the full text of question and answer was immediately published. In its first years the mandatory powers regarded it as an unfriendly intruder. They sincerely intended to carry out their engagements:<sup>1</sup> but they preferred to do so in their own way. They alleged that criticism made their task more difficult. They jealously watched lest the Commission should step outside its strict duty by giving advice, or even asking for information, on any subject which did not directly arise from the terms of the mandates. But as time went on its reputation for competence and fairness continued to grow. The mandatories themselves gradually discovered that if on the one hand the reprimands of the Commission were painful, on the other hand its suggestions were helpful and its commendations were a valuable encouragement to the administration in the field. In its last years the Commission was consulted and trusted by mandatory and non-mandatory powers alike.

The Mandates Commission has been replaced in the structure of the United Nations by the Trusteeship Council—a body composed, not of free and independent members, but of government representatives. The Trusteeship Council possesses, at least in theory, wider competence and more direct authority than its predecessor. Its field of action, however, is much smaller, since all the countries which were under 'A' mandates have successively won their way to recognition as sovereign States.

The responsibilities accepted by the Council for the *Protection of Minorities* were in some ways parallel to those arising out of the mandates system. In each case the Council had to concern itself with the administrative acts of particular States; to ask questions which governments disliked having to answer; to steer between two dangers, the danger of permitting injustice on the one hand and the danger of encouraging

<sup>1</sup> The one clear exception was the action of Japan in converting the Pacific Islands into a strategic area.

discontent and disloyalty on the other. In each case the League could, in practice, do little more than exert a moral pressure, relying on the unwillingness of governments to be held up, in the Council or the Assembly, as having failed to carry out their treaty obligations. The minorities themselves often urged that the Council should establish an independent and permanent Minorities Commission with the same function as that of the Mandates Commission. But the powers of the Council in regard to minorities were based on formal treaties. It could add nothing to those treaties without the consent of the signatories: and the signatories were unalterably opposed to the creation of a permanent commission.

However, the members of the Council had decided, when they first accepted the embarrassing task laid upon them by the minorities treaties, that they would receive and consider petitions on the subject, whether from persons belonging to the minorities or from other sources, subject to various reasonable conditions. It was evident that such petitions must be studied under some form or another of committee procedure. It was therefore proposed, and in due course the suggestion was approved by all the governments concerned, that every petition which was accepted by the Secretariat as fulfilling the stated conditions should be examined by a committee of three Council members. The number of petitions, and consequently the number of committees of three, was large; thirty or forty such committees might exist at the same time; and though each was dissolved when it had finished its work on the particular petition which it had been formed to examine, the minorities committees taken together represented a standing and continuous institution. Invitations to serve were rarely, if ever, declined, although they involved for Council members a sacrifice of time and trouble of which the outside world had no knowledge. The committees acted in secret, on the principle that a government, accused of injustice to certain of its own subjects, was much more likely to admit itself in the wrong, and to promise reparation, in the course of confidential discussion than if it were forced to defend itself in public debate. If a committee was satisfied that the accused government intended to do what was right, it closed its proceedings and no more was heard of that particular question; if not, it could lay the question before the Council, which meant that the whole case was made public.

By the summer of 1922 the system of minorities protection was beginning to function in a regular manner. Twelve countries had already bound themselves to accept the Council as the guarantor of the rights of the minorities among their subjects.<sup>1</sup> On its side the Council had

<sup>1</sup> Poland, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania, Austria, Hungary,

already established its procedure. The first committee of three began to work in the spring of 1921. In March 1922 a minorities complaint was for the first time included in the agenda of the Council.

The system thus set up was greatly disliked by the governments concerned, which accused the Council of interfering with their internal affairs. It was under continuous attack from the minorities themselves and from certain governments which espoused their cause, in particular Germany, Hungary, and Canada, on the ground that it did not give the minorities an equal chance with their governments to maintain their case, and did not ensure a sufficient degree of publicity.<sup>1</sup> In truth, the effectiveness of the Council's action depended not upon procedure but upon the prestige and influence of the Council itself. During the years when that prestige and influence stood high, the minorities were protected from the graver forms of injustice; as they declined, so did the Council's power to insist upon the honest execution of the minorities treaties. At best it was a difficult and invidious task.

Neglect, exploitation, oppression, and deportation have been the lot of the minorities of Europe in the years when the League was dying and in the war years when it was dead. No attempt has since been made to revive the obligations of the minorities treaties. The minorities committees of the Council are perhaps the only institution of the League of which no trace appears in the structure of the United Nations.

## II. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

In nothing did the historical development of the League differ more widely from the League as it was foreseen in Paris than in the creation and growth of its social and economic institutions. Though, in the view of the Secretariat, these were far from being what an economy-loving delegate from Australia described as a 'stupendous structure', they went far beyond anything that had been imagined before or during the war. They covered every aspect of international relations: as time went on, they were concerned more and more intimately with the ordinary problems of the life of individuals as well as of nations—with health, housing, nutrition, wages, taxation, emigration, education, and other matters in which the action of one State might affect the situation of others, or the experience of one serve to guide the efforts of another. The lights which guide ships up to the quays of Hamburg or Buenos Aires; the signs which warn the motorist on the roads of Italy or Sweden; the standards which allow doctors in Sydney or in Cairo to use the medical

Bulgaria, Lithuania, Finland in respect of the Aaland Islands, Germany in respect of Upper Silesia. Similar obligations were later accepted by Latvia, Estonia, Turkey, and Iraq.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 34.

experience of Paris or New York—a thousand such practical details were planned and executed by the technical agencies of the League. These manifold activities, though falling far short of what they might have been, frustrated by the selfishness of individual countries, or handicapped by the penuriousness of the Assembly, yet represented in the aggregate an immense contribution to human welfare and a necessary element in the complex life of the modern world. In reference to these, an American Secretary of State could declare, in the last months of the League's existence, that it had been responsible for the development of mutual exchange and discussion of ideas and methods to a greater extent and in more fields of humanitarian and scientific endeavour than any other organization in history. A still more convincing tribute is the fact that each of the special organizations set up by the League and extinguished by its death has been re-established by the United Nations.

Taken as a whole their existence and their achievements form an important element in the history of the League. Their work was often such as to make a greater appeal to public opinion than the controversial business of the Council was likely to do. They formed, also, an important network of connexions between the League and the administrative departments of Members and non-Members alike. Their close alliance with certain ministries, in particular those of public health and of social welfare, contrasted with the detached attitude of the diplomatic services: and when in its last years the League was condemned to political impotence by fear of Hitler and Mussolini, the administrative departments of the Member States were almost its last official strongholds. Conversely, the economic and social organs derived their strength from their connexion with the League. The world's best experts were ready to serve on these bodies, not only for the sake of the work itself but still more in the conviction that thereby they were helping the cause of peace and international co-operation.

It is not possible within the scope of this history to give any adequate account of their accomplishment. Each requires, and deserves, to be separately recorded: and indeed an extensive literature has already grown up for that purpose. Side by side with the main political developments of the League, the labours of these special organizations were steadily and continuously carried on. From time to time one or another might emerge into the limelight. Conferences such as those of Brussels, Barcelona, or Warsaw might bring special attention to the plans of the Financial Organization, of the Transit Organization, of the Health Organization. The schemes of the Financial Committee for the rescue of Austria from financial ruin were to be the principal action of the

League in the autumn of 1922, and their success was destined to inspire and guide the new effort to settle the problems of reparation and of the collapse of the mark. These and other acts of special interest have been, or will be, briefly described in their place and order. But apart from these more notable events, there was always going on a great volume of patient and continuous work, the details of which cannot be recounted here. The reader is asked to bear in mind that the more conspicuous events of League history took place against the background of a broad and complex system of international co-operation in economic, social, and humanitarian activities, functioning under the general authority of the Assembly and the Council.

The *Economic and Financial Organization* of the League would without doubt have developed, in the course of time, into a separate body comparable in size and importance to the International Labour Organization, possessing a constitution of its own and capable of acting independently of the Council and the Assembly. But it was not until 1939 that definite steps were taken in that direction;<sup>1</sup> and before the new system could be made effective the Second World War put an end to political and economic action alike. Throughout its twenty years of existence, the Organization consisted of two main committees, the Financial Committee and the Economic Committee. In 1922 the Financial Committee consisted of twelve members, about equally divided between high officials of the national services, directors of national banks, and directors of private banks; while of the twelve members of the Economic Committee a considerable majority were officials. The members of both Committees were appointed by the Council, not as government representatives, but as individual experts. They could therefore speak with a certain freedom, and yet in most cases with intimate knowledge of the views of their respective governments. This plan represented a compromise between a body made up strictly of private experts, as in the case of the Mandates Commission, and a body made up strictly of government representatives, as in the case of the Transit Committee.

The Financial and Economic Committees were pre-eminent in the ability and authority of their members and of their secretary, Sir Arthur Salter. They warned the governments and the peoples of the dangers which awaited them and showed, not in vague generalities but in clear and practical terms, exactly how these dangers could be overcome. Under their auspices, the experts of the Secretariat established a world-wide economic intelligence service and thereby placed at the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 60.

disposal of the smallest State (and indeed of every individual, since all its work was published) a mass of information far superior to that which even the greatest could have acquired for itself. The Committees possessed the confidence both of governments and of the business world. The former could count on them for disinterested advice, and felt no loss of dignity in calling for the assistance of bodies which they had themselves joined in setting up. The latter was ready to subscribe scores of millions of pounds to loans organized with the approval of the Financial Committee. Besides these activities of a directly practical nature, both Committees, working through expert sub-committees or individual specialists, carried out special investigations on commercial policy, tariffs, raw materials, exchange control, clearing agreements, agricultural production, double taxation, and many other problems connected with the economic aspects of international relations. They thus built up a great body of doctrine to serve as a guide to individual governments and to the international organizations of the future.

Yet all this work, remarkable as it was both in quantity and in quality as compared with anything that had existed before the days of the League, failed to achieve its main object. It did not break down the intense nationalism of the Treasuries and the Ministries of Commerce. It did not teach the world that prosperity is indivisible, and that selfish and short-sighted economic policies are dangerous to peace. It made no appeal to public opinion: its principles and purposes were unknown to the average consumer and the average worker. In later years the Assembly and the Secretariat became increasingly conscious of this weakness, and turned the economic work of the League more and more in the direction of immediate practical questions, such as housing and food. They realized also that a far greater appeal must be made to public knowledge and public opinion: and that this could only be done by liberating the economic and social services of the League from the control of the Council and making them responsible to some great international body comparable in prestige to the Assembly itself. Their plans, frustrated by the Second World War, were embodied, in form at least, in the Charter of the United Nations.

The *Communications and Transit Organization* was the most complete in form of all the auxiliary agencies of the League, with the exception of the International Labour Organization. Its constitution, originally planned by the Secretariat, was formally adopted by the forty-four States represented at the Barcelona Conference and subsequently approved by the Assembly. This provided for the holding of a general conference at least every four years and the establishment of an Advisory and Technical



Committee (usually known as the Transit Committee) by which the day-to-day work of the Organization should be carried on and that of the next conference prepared. The cost of the Organization was part of the regular League budget; its work was subject to discussion by the Assembly. Its secretariat, directed by Robert Haas, a Frenchman of constructive ability not inferior to that of Salter and of Rajchman, was a section of the Secretariat of the League. In some respects, however, it enjoyed an autonomy which its sister organizations did not possess. Its constitution made it possible for States which were not Members of the League to be members of the Transit Organization: this was, for instance, the case with Germany before her admission to, and with Brazil after her withdrawal from, the parent institution. The general conferences, being composed of delegates empowered to commit their respective governments, could conclude conventions without submitting them to the approval of the Council or the Assembly; and the Transit Committee itself was appointed by the Conference and not, as were all similar committees, by the Council. The Committee in turn set up a number of subordinate committees, each highly competent in its own field. They dealt with rail transport, inland navigation, ports and maritime navigation, road traffic, and power transmission.

In the plans drawn up by the Secretariat before the First Assembly, it was foreseen that each of the main organizations should possess a constitution of this kind, enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy within their own spheres of action, yet remaining integral parts of the League. This intention was fully carried out only in the case of the Transit Organization. Experience, however, showed that it had been rightly conceived: and the system was about to be extended to the other social and economic agencies when the Second World War put an end to planning.

The Transit Organization started its career with remarkable vigour; and deservedly earned, in the first years of its existence, a greater reputation for effective achievement than any other of the auxiliary agencies. The success of its first general Conference at Barcelona was repeated at Geneva in 1923. Here, as at Barcelona, two great general conventions were concluded, one on the International Regime of Maritime Ports and the other on the International Regime of Railways. Thereafter, however, the pace slackened. These two conferences had been able to codify and complete a mass of work which had already been started before the war and during the Peace Conference. The problems of railways, ports, and rivers, might be difficult and complicated, but they had long been familiar. When they had been satisfactorily cleared up, there remained two great subjects, those of international air traffic and

of radio communications. On neither was the Transit Organization able to do very much. On these questions nothing less than world-wide agreement could be of much use; and in such agreement the United States, Russia, and Germany were all unwilling to join. All took some part in the work of the Organization: but each had its own reasons for holding aloof from common action.

Although the Transit Committee and the Transit Conferences were frustrated in regard to these two great questions, they continued to produce useful results in matters of secondary importance. They brought about a notable simplification of the business of passports and visas whereby the world was plagued in the years following the First World War. They drew up conventions for regulating the passage of commercial and touring motor-cars, the transmission of electric power across national frontiers, the development of water-power where this affected the interests of more than one State. These conventions were accepted and put into force, not universally but by a considerable number of countries. At the same time the Committee was often called upon to advise the Council on questions of communications arising out of its political decisions. It acted also on occasion as adviser or arbitrator in intergovernmental disputes concerning rights of navigation or trans-frontier railway traffic. It provided help to individual governments who needed expert advice in organizing their internal system of communications; in particular, it played a considerable part in the technical help given by the League to the National government of China.

A famous story of Kipling depicts the world of the future united under a single authority. The need for swift and safe transportation has led to the setting up of a single council to control the traffic over the whole face of the planet, and the nations have found peace and prosperity by submitting all their quarrels to decision by the World Transportation Board. The experience of the Transit Organization of the League contains little encouragement for any such great design. It was a highly efficient system of technical co-operation, capable of embracing all questions of transport, but prevented by its lack of universality from becoming a world authority even within strictly technical limits.

The work of the Transit Organization has been continued by the Transport and Communications Commission of the United Nations, which functions, however, under the authority of the Economic and Social Council and not of a separate Conference.

The *Health Organization* was by general consent the most successful of the auxiliary organizations, although it was the only one whose creation had met with serious difficulties.

There existed already an International Health Office, set up in Paris in 1908, of which, in 1919, thirty-one States were members. The functions of this Office were limited to collecting and distributing information received from the Health Departments of the member States. It could undertake no action of its own. But it held a general meeting every year; and in the original plan for the League Health Organization, it was proposed that the Office should be taken over by the League and should play a role analogous to that of the annual conferences in the International Labour Organization or of the general conferences in the Transit Organization. In addition, it was intended to create a Health Committee, smaller in size and possessing new powers of initiative and of action. This plan was drawn up with the unofficial agreement of the Office itself. It was duly approved by the First Assembly. But when the Office was asked to give its formal consent, the American member refused to agree. The health authorities in Washington were still entirely favourable: but the State Department dared not risk isolationist criticism, and political prejudice proved, as usual, more powerful than social progress.

Meanwhile, the experience of the Epidemics Commission in Poland had demonstrated afresh the need for creating a new and active international health organization. The Council therefore was persuaded by the Secretary-General to go ahead with the nomination of a League Health Committee. This action was violently attacked by a small section of delegates to the Second Assembly, notably by Sir William Meyer, the principal delegate of India, supported by Portugal, Australia, and New Zealand. Meyer rebuked the Council for having exceeded its powers and denounced the extravagance of spending twenty thousand pounds on creating a new institution for public health. The champions of the Health Committee were forced to agree that it should be considered as only temporary, and that the next Assembly should be free to abolish it.

However, neither the Committee nor the Secretariat showed any misgiving as to what the next Assembly would decide. As has been already recorded, Ludwik Rajchman was appointed Director of the Health Section of the Secretariat and Secretary of the Committee. The members were full of zeal, and a heavy programme of work was started, in which the United States, Germany, and Russia agreed to take part. As a result of the Warsaw Health Conference of March 1922, the fight against epidemics was extended beyond the Russian frontier. A mission was sent to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Constantinople and plans were made to reorganize epidemic control in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Preparatory work was undertaken, at the

request of Japan, for the dispatch of a similar mission to the Far East, and also for a study of tropical diseases in Africa. Whatever the doubts of the Foreign Offices might be, the Health Ministries everywhere showed themselves eager to contribute to, and benefit by, the new possibilities of progress presented by the Health Committee. Even the financial handicaps imposed by the parsimony of the Assembly were in part overcome through the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation. When the Third Assembly met in September 1922, no one further questioned the need to maintain the Health Committee. During 1923 it patched up a working arrangement with the International Health Office in Paris, which in the end did not greatly differ from the original plan drawn up in London four years before, save that the Office remained completely autonomous instead of coming under the general authority of the League. But the spirit of cordial collaboration which had then inspired the plan had been destroyed by the intervening difficulties and delays. For the most part, the Committee and the Secretariat developed the future activities of the League in the field of public health on their own initiative, looking to the Assembly rather than to the International Health Office for the general directives which they needed.

The energy of the Health Committee did not diminish as the years went by. Its operations expanded in many directions. Its membership, increasing by degrees from twelve to twenty, included many of the highest authorities of Europe, America, and Asia. The leading scientific institutes, and countless individual experts, gave their knowledge, their time, and their trouble freely to its service; the total output of work under its auspices was quite out of proportion to its financial resources, even though the Assembly gradually increased its budget, and the Rockefeller Foundation continued to make it large grants for special purposes.

The Health Organization was world-wide in its scope and in its membership. The United States, after one brief but damaging moment of opposition, changed its attitude to one of unstinted support. Germany and Russia worked with it even before they joined the League. Brazil, after leaving the League, established and maintained a Leprosy Institute under the authority and control of the Health Committee. It possessed in Rajchman a Secretary of extraordinary intelligence, energy, and organizing ability, looked upon with misgiving by some who thought him inclined to go too far and too fast, yet usually winning them also to his side in the end. Thanks to his enterprise and to the outstanding technical quality of its work, the Health Committee made the League a reality in places where it was otherwise no more than a name. When the social and economic institutions of the League turned their energies

to new and vast fields of activity, and brought their stores of knowledge and experience to bear on the daily problems of individual life, it was the Health Organization which showed the way.

The Health Organization of the League has been transformed into the World Health Organization of the United Nations. The new agency is endowed with material resources which were denied to its predecessor. If, as may be confidently expected, it shows the same spirit, there is no limit to the benefits which it may confer upon mankind.

The *Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and other Dangerous Drugs*<sup>1</sup> was set up by a decision of the First Assembly, in pursuance of the clause in the Covenant by which the Members of the League agreed 'to entrust the League with the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to . . . the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs'. It was usually known by the convenient though misleading title of the Opium Committee.

The only agreement which existed on the question was the Hague Convention of 1912. This instrument, drawn up under pressure from philanthropic public opinion backed by the government of the United States, had not yet come into force when the world war broke out in 1914. It finally did so in 1920 as the result of a special article of the Treaty of Versailles. In effect, therefore, the League was in charge of the question from the moment when international action began to be possible. There had been, in the years before the war, a great amount of agitation and discussion. But no control could be effective until two conditions had been fulfilled. The first was that the Hague Convention should become formally binding upon a large number, if not all, of the States concerned in the traffic. The second was that some international body should have the duty and the power to watch over the execution of the Convention, and should be able to report its findings and its proposals to some higher instance. The first requirement had been met by Article 295 of the Treaty of Versailles. The second was now filled by the Opium Committee and the Council of the League.

In its earlier years the Committee was far from giving satisfaction to those who had hoped that, these conditions having been at last fulfilled, the many scandals of the drug traffic would be speedily cleaned up. Their ambition, briefly stated, was to limit the use of all narcotics to medical and scientific purposes in the strict sense. This principle should apply to raw opium (used by opium-eaters or drinkers), prepared opium

<sup>1</sup> The account given here of the organizations dealing with Opium, &c., with Refugees, and with Intellectual Co-operation, to which little or no further reference will be found in other chapters, is for that reason proportionately longer than the account of the Economic, Transit, and Health Organizations.

(used by opium-smokers), as well as to morphine, heroin, cocaine, and the other deadly habit-forming drugs. It could, in their view, be ensured only through two great systems of limitation and control. As regards raw and prepared opium, there must be control at the source, by limiting the cultivation of the poppy to scientific and medical needs. As regards commercial drugs, there must be control at the factory, and no more must be manufactured than medical and scientific needs required. In each case actual production would be cut down by more than 90 per cent. These demands, put forward with missionary zeal by the enthusiasts who had first taken up the fight in the years before the war, were backed by some governments, notably the United States, Italy, and China.

Such demands, however, went far beyond the Hague Convention. As regards the limitation of production, the wording of that document was indecisive. It aimed above all at preventing illicit distribution by obliging the signatory governments to exercise a strict control over exports and imports of opium and of narcotic drugs. And those countries which had possessions in the Far East were unwilling to accept the more radical proposals about opium. India, the Dutch East Indies, the Malay States, and other British, French, and Portuguese possessions, all drew a proportion—often a very large proportion—of their revenue from the opium trade, though they denied that this fact had any effect on their policy. As for limitation of drug manufacture, this was opposed by a number of countries possessing powerful chemical industries: Switzerland, for example, did not even adhere to the Hague Convention until 1925.

The Opium Committee was a novel blend of the official and the unofficial world. The Council decided what States should be included: the representatives of these States were chosen, and their expenses were borne, by their governments. But to this rigidly official membership was added a group of three assessors, nominated by the Council and having their expenses paid by the League. The assessors had no voting power, but were otherwise on exactly the same footing as the other members. They were the spokesmen of the reform movement: and they could speak, if with less authority, with greater frankness than their colleagues.

The States appointed to the Committee were originally those directly concerned with opium—India, China, Japan, Siam, and the four European countries having colonial possessions in the Far East. Germany, a great manufacturing centre, and Yugoslavia, where the poppy was extensively grown, were added after the first session. In spite of the assessors, the Committee in its earlier years earned the reputation of

paying far too much attention to the material interests of these governments and too little to the social and moral aspects of the problem. The party of reform, in its generous indignation at the villainies and scandals of the drug traffic, was by no means moderate in the accusations it levelled against all those who appeared to oppose its demands. The governments resented the attacks against their honour, and accused the reformers of disregarding the many administrative difficulties which abolition would involve. The proceedings of the Opium Committee, and still more of the conferences which it organized, were the scene of violent language and hasty action to a degree unknown among other organs of the League. Painful as it was, this conflict brought the question prominently before public opinion: and the fight against the drug traffic was always the subject of a publicity quite out of proportion to its real importance in the history of the League.

It was not long before the Opium Committee, and the Section of the Secretariat, directed by Dame Rachel Crowdy, which served it, became the very advance guard of reform. From the first they set themselves to organize the collection of information on the nature and extent of the traffic and on the measures taken to execute the Hague Convention. They did not receive the help of all governments in this difficult task. But they amassed, nevertheless, a fund of knowledge which showed that the situation was far more serious than any government had been ready to admit, and that it was becoming rapidly worse; that, under the stimulus of fantastic profits, enormous quantities of drugs were being manufactured; and that the efforts of the police in each country to control the traffic were completely ineffective. These discoveries could not but affect the attitude of the Committee. Whatever defence might be put up for delaying the abolition of opium-eating or opium-smoking, there could be none for the European and Japanese traffickers in morphia, heroin, and cocaine. The Committee's energies were stimulated from its third year onwards by the presence of a ruthlessly energetic American delegation; later, an Italian member was added and took up a strongly reforming attitude.

The result of all this was the holding of new conferences and the adoption of new Conventions. The Geneva Convention of February 19th, 1925, strengthened in various ways the provisions of the original Hague Convention of 1912. The Geneva Convention of 1931 provided, at last, for the limitation of manufacture of narcotic drugs to the actual medical and scientific needs of the world. Two new bodies, the Permanent Central Board and the Supervisory Body, were set up with power to consider and criticize the quantities of such drugs which each signatory State proposed to manufacture or import, and even to suspend exports

to a country whose imports were exceeding the estimates it had submitted—an extraordinary innovation, since it gave to a small international body direct authority over the actions of more than sixty States, including the United States and Russia. Thus was achieved the first of the two great measures which the reforming party had always declared to be essential.

The second measure, the limitation and control of the cultivation of the poppy, was still a matter of dispute when war broke out in 1939. For years the Committee and the Secretariat had slowly hammered out the complicated provisions which producing, exporting, and importing countries must accept if such limitation were to be effective. By 1939 their work, though still incomplete, had gone far enough to make it possible to call a general conference; and this would probably have been held in 1940 or 1941, if the world had been still at peace.

The powers of the League under the Opium Conventions have been transferred to the United Nations. The Central Board and the Supervisory Body continue as before: the Advisory Committee, now known as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, has changed its name but not its functions.

The *Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children*, like the Opium Committee, was set up to carry out Article 23(c) of the Covenant. It was soon divided into two separate Committees, one dealing mainly with the prevention of the traffic and the protection of young women, the other with all the international aspects of child welfare. Each was composed on the same lines as the Opium Committee: they included some twelve official delegates (the same for each Committee) together with a considerable number of assessors. These latter—six for the Traffic in Women Committee and thirteen for the Child Welfare Committee—represented the chief private organizations which were already attempting to cope with these problems, and also the Health Organization of the League and the International Labour Office. Later, the two Committees were once more united under the general name of the Advisory Committee on Social Questions.

These Committees formed a minor element in the structure of the League and their work had no great influence on the general course of international affairs. Some of their undertakings, particularly those connected with child welfare, were international only in the general sense that social advance in any country is beneficial to the rest, while evil social conditions in any country may hamper the advance of others. Foreign ministers and diplomatists were apt to regard them with distrust: Sir Austen Chamberlain not infrequently suggested that they



should guard against interfering in the internal affairs of Member States. Nevertheless, the general historian will find in their records much that is of interest. To have raised the age of consent in many countries and the age of marriage in some; to have brought about the total abolition of the licensed brothel in nearly every country where it still existed; to have traced the devious routes and methods whereby unhappy, reckless, and ignorant girls were conveyed from Europe to South America, North Africa, or even the ports of the Far East; to have brought fifty countries to accept the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child—such acts may continue to produce their effects long after many a frontier dispute has been forgotten.

The *Refugee Organization*<sup>1</sup> of the League was first set on foot in the summer of 1921; and in September of that year Nansen accepted the post of High Commissioner, after Gustave Ador, the head of the International Red Cross, had declined. By the following year the work was already in full swing. In any description of the structure and activities of the League drawn up at that time the Refugee Organization was counted as a purely temporary affair, like those set up to organize the repatriation of prisoners or the fight against epidemics in Eastern Europe. But this hopeful view was doomed to disappointment. The business of refugee settlement was never finished, and the last normal session of the Assembly in 1938 was still quarrelling over the future of the organization which Nansen had left behind him.

The first and greatest task of the Refugee Organization was a consequence of revolution and civil war in Russia. About two million Russians had left their country, and of these three-quarters at least were huddled in Eastern and Central Europe, without resources, without work, thrown on the charity of countries which were themselves struggling with difficulties of every sort. Neither the governments of these countries, nor the private organizations which had tried to help, could see a solution; and all turned to the League. Certainly there was nothing in the Covenant, nor in the general scheme of the League's field of action as foreseen in Paris, which obliged its Members to accept any such responsibilities. But the Council had already shown itself ready to listen to appeals made to it in virtue not of its legal powers and duties but of its position as the visible and tangible symbol of international unity. It did not reject the call: but, warned by the small success which had attended its previous efforts to raise money, it declared (June 27th, 1921) that it could accept no responsibility for the relief, maintenance, or settlement of the refugees. In spite of this warning, the Council or the

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 183.

Assembly were, on more than one occasion, impelled by their impetuous High Commissioner to appeal for funds to save some group of refugees from complete disaster. The distinction, however, was on the whole firmly maintained, and the official action of the High Commissioner was confined within the strictly administrative limits imposed by a budget of no more than ten to fifteen thousand pounds a year.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Nansen's personal reputation, some additional funds were placed under his control from time to time, partly raised by the refugees themselves and partly contributed by governments or by private philanthropy; never enough to do more than touch the fringe of the problem.

The Council had no choice but to adopt an attitude of the strictest official prudence, since the Members of the League were not prepared to undertake any large financial burden for the sake of the refugees. But refugee settlement cannot be carried on without heavy expenditure: and the League's endeavours were therefore condemned to be always a palliative, never a cure. The greatest benefit it bestowed was to provide them with legal protection, above all through the invention of the Nansen passport—a certificate delivered by national authorities on the recommendation of the High Commissioner or his authorized representatives, which was accepted as the equivalent of a passport by more than fifty countries. Refugees and their families had hitherto been unable to travel, even to places where work was awaiting them or friends were ready to receive them. The question of passports was clearly connected with those of emigration and employment; and, once it had been solved, the Refugee Organization, with the help of the International Labour Office, was able to give very substantial assistance in these respects.

The Organization was always regarded as temporary, and the Assembly did not fail to remind it each year that it had only a few more years to live. It was an unpopular institution. The refugees themselves were naturally conscious above all of its limitations. Britain, the Dominions, and overseas countries in general were apprehensive of being asked to contribute to the solution of a problem for which they admitted no responsibility. Most European countries blamed the Organization for giving them less help than they felt entitled to expect. Italy, after Mussolini took power, was consistently hostile, fearing lest protection might be extended to those who had fled from Fascist persecution; Germany after 1933 and Russia after her entry into the League tried to put an end to it for similar reasons. The United States, then taking special measures to restrict immigration, refused to participate in its work. Its only warm support came from France, the one country which

<sup>1</sup> Nansen himself never accepted any payment for his services to the League.

offered welcome and fair treatment to immigrants, and from the Scandinavian countries, for Nansen's sake. In these circumstances it was not surprising that no efficient and well-defined organization was ever built up. The High Commissioner had a small staff in Geneva, first attached to the League Secretariat, then transferred to the International Labour Office, and later brought back to the Secretariat. He appointed representatives in about fifteen European capitals: these men were usually government officials and only in a secondary degree agents of the League. He convoked a number of conferences in the hope of securing a common policy on the subject: but, with the important exception of the general introduction of the Nansen passport, the results were small. For the most part his action was carried on by direct negotiation with individual governments. Each year he demanded and received the approbation of the Assembly, and the funds to keep his staff in being: he never received from the League any greater support than this.

In the autumn of 1922 came a second wave of refugees in flight from the victorious army of Mustafa Kemal. The great majority were Greeks and their settlement in Greece was a problem of vast magnitude indeed, but different in kind from that of foreign refugees: the League played a major part in its solution, but after the first weeks of wild confusion were over, the work was entrusted to a special organization and not to the High Commissioner. The latter, however, was asked to add to his responsibilities that of helping the Armenians and the Assyrians who fled from Turkey then or later, and a number of Turkish refugees also.

After Nansen's death in 1930 the High Commissariat was transformed into a separate organization under the title of the Nansen Office for Refugees. At that period the problem was less acute: most of the refugees were either self-supporting, naturalized in their country of residence, repatriated to Russia, or dead. Later still, refugees began once more to pour out of Nazi Germany, and in due course from the Saar, from Austria, and from Czechoslovakia. For these new tragedies a new High Commissariat was planned; but each High Commissioner in turn found himself thwarted by financial constriction, by divided competence, and incomplete organization. Nevertheless the High Commission continued its work throughout the Second World War and its functions were in due course merged into the International Refugee Organization set up by the United Nations. The refugee problem which faced that body in 1945 was still more extensive than any with which the League attempted to cope. Fortunately the new Organization was endowed with resources incomparably greater than those of the Nansen Office, and was thus in a position to deal effectively with difficulties in regard to which the League's record was regrettably inadequate and confused.

The *Committee on Intellectual Co-operation*<sup>1</sup> was the last-born of the permanent organizations of the League. Created amidst scepticism, hindered in its natural growth by lack of funds, it was never able to perform more than a fraction of the vast services which, with better fortune and better management, it might have rendered to the world.

Hymans had moved in Paris to add to the Covenant an article providing for the establishment of a Committee on Intellectual Relations. The proposal was rejected by the founders: and though Belgium and France continued, both in the Council and the Assembly, to renew the suggestion, it made but slow progress. However, the Committee was finally appointed by the Council in May 1922 and held its first meeting in August of that year.

The Organization was intended to serve three main purposes. The first was to improve the material condition of intellectual workers, which had greatly deteriorated, especially in Europe, as a consequence of the war. The powerful French Federation of Intellectual Workers had a vision of a new organization at Geneva which should do for the liberal professions what the International Labour Office was intended to do for industrial workers; and the zeal of successive French delegations on behalf of the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation was in part due to their desire to support this object.

The second purpose was to build up international relations and contacts between teachers, artists, scientists, authors, and members of other intellectual professions. Such men need more than others to be able to follow and discuss work that is being done abroad. There were already before the war not a few international societies intended to fill that need. But the war had brought their activities to an end; their resources were small and their recovery would be slow at best unless some powerful help could arrive from outside. Two gallant Belgians, Henri Lafontaine and Paul Otlet—names that hold an honoured place in international history—had both before and since the First World War been exerting themselves in this cause. They had founded and maintained in Brussels a Union of International Associations; more than two hundred such associations were affiliated to the Union, which assisted and encouraged them in various ways, in particular by collecting and publishing information about their meetings and their actions. On the international centre thus created they had grafted the beginnings of an international university and of other extensive cultural undertakings. But the scale of their plans was such as only a world-wide power could carry through to success. They therefore, both directly and through the Belgian government, persisted in the demand that the

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 183.

League should set up an organization to bring together the scholars and artists of the world.

The third purpose was to strengthen the League's influence for peace. Intellectual workers, and especially the teachers in schools and universities, constituted from the point of view of international policy a vast and almost untapped reservoir. If they could be inspired and encouraged to use their influence in support of the cause of international co-operation, the effect might be very great. Hitherto they had for the most part been spectators rather than actors where foreign policy was concerned. Politicians, diplomatists, soldiers, and officials held all the controls. If they ever made use of scientists or historians it was always in some subordinate role; if they called upon authors, or even poets, it was as instruments of propaganda.

Each of these three purposes was a matter of first-rate importance; each was within the compass of human effort. But each required to be planned and organized on a scale corresponding to the greatness of the subject. This condition being unfulfilled, the Organization not only failed to achieve the ambitions of those who first conceived it, but seemed, in some of its undertakings, to be fanciful and impractical. In many others it produced results which were useful, but which fell so far below its real potentialities that these were soon forgotten by all but a few.

The Committee itself consisted in 1922 of twelve members: later the number was raised to fifteen. All were scholars of eminence, some of supreme eminence, in various branches of learning; and the first occasion when Bergson, Einstein,<sup>1</sup> Lorentz, Madame Curie, Gilbert Murray, Jagadis Bose, and their colleagues gathered round their table in the offices of the League might well seem likely to be a notable date in history. With Bergson as President, they began to survey the limitless possibilities and the countless problems of their field of action, forcing themselves to a severely practical attitude which in some cases must have been foreign to their nature. They submitted to the Assembly a programme for the first stage of their future work—an inquiry into the desperate conditions of intellectual workers in Central and Eastern Europe; studies on bibliography and the international exchange of scientific publications; co-operation in scientific research and the constitution of an international fund for this purpose: the regulation of archaeological exploration; the promotion of co-operation between universities by exchange of professors and of students, by setting up a centre of university information and in various other ways; protection

<sup>1</sup> Einstein did not, in fact, take part in the Committee's meetings until 1924, though he accepted nomination in 1922.

of copyright and of scientific proprietary rights. Their report ended on a note ominous to modern ears. They had been asked to suggest means to ensure the publicity of scientific discoveries relating to gas and chemical warfare. They answered that they could see no way to give effect to such a proposal.

The Committee's programme was modest enough: but it received short shrift from the Assembly. For all the tasks it proposed to undertake, it was granted a budget of less than five thousand pounds: and this only after an unusually acrimonious debate, in which the members of the British Commonwealth (with the honourable exception of India) were outvoted by the European and South American delegations. Two years later, Bergson, despairing of receiving adequate means of action from the Assembly, appealed direct to the governments. On July 24th, 1924, the French responded by offering to establish in Paris an International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation under the orders of the Committee. Many delegations, and the Secretariat also, believed that the Institute would work better, and be more international in spirit, if it were set up in Geneva. But since the Assembly refused to meet the expense, it could not alter the plan. The Institute took some years to become efficient, owing in part to an unhappy choice of its first Director. After 1930, under the direction of Henri Bonnet, it worked admirably, so far as its limited budget would allow. In its last years it was receiving financial contributions from most Members of the League (though not from Britain); certain American Foundations also gave substantial support. In both periods it was, contrary to what had been feared, free from any nationalist pressure on the part of France.

Thus supplied with an executive organization, the Committee was able to enter more actively on a part at least of its field of action. Its Permanent Committee on Arts and Letters was equal in the fame of its members to the main Committee itself. Other committees dealt with university co-operation, with museums, with education. One group undertook the reform of historical text-books, which in most European countries were concerned less with historical truth than with convincing the young generation of the virtues of its own nation and the villainy of its neighbours. Conferences were held on many different subjects and in many different cities. The Italian government set up an International Institute dealing with the educational aspects and possibilities of the cinema, placing it, like the Paris Institute, under the control of the League.

Besides the Institutes of Paris and Rome, the Organization of Intellectual Co-operation devised another novel system. Each country was invited to form a National Committee of Intellectual Co-operation. By

1939 more than forty such bodies were at work. They acted as links between the International Committee and the various scientific and cultural institutions in their own country. Thus the national and international groups were able to exchange proposals and opinions. The network was strengthened by the holding, every three or four years, of a conference of representatives of the national committees.

When the Organization first began its work in 1922, the intellectual world was still deeply divided by the memories of the war and the severities of the peace. It was not possible at that time to bring French and Belgian university teachers into friendly contact with those of Germany; and Einstein was the object of vile attack in the German nationalist press for having consented to join the Committee. Later, the wound was healed for a time; German scholars shared in the work of the Organization; German and French teachers of history even formed a joint committee to revise the history text-books used in their respective schools. All this was quickly ended when Nazism broke violently away from the community of European civilization. Nor did the Committee ever make much progress in bridging the gulf between Russia and the West, though a Russian professor was a member for two or three years after the Soviet entry into the League.

In sum, although the Intellectual Co-operation Committee rendered many useful services to intellectual workers—services of which it is impossible to give any description in this place—it failed completely to bring them into a common front against the dangers of national hatreds and national ambitions. It was much less able to establish a united purpose among teachers, scholars, and artists than other organizations of the League among economists and doctors. The task was difficult; it was undertaken at a difficult time; yet it was neither utopian nor impossible. But it was certainly impossible without far greater financial resources than the Members of the League were willing to devote to such a purpose. The Committee was never able to carry out more than a small proportion of its plans, nor to establish the multiple and continuous connexions which were indispensable to its success. Hence it was often making beginnings which could not be fully developed, and its prestige suffered in consequence.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization has taken up the task which the League Committee was forced to abandon on the outbreak of war. Its Constitution sets forth in eloquent language the principles and purposes which were those of the earlier body, though never expressed with the same authority. Like the League Committee, it began its life in a world of bitter divisions. Its clear statement of aims, and its great material resources—equal to those of

the League and all its subordinate agencies together—are two reasons for hoping that it may succeed in its endeavours, on which the future of the human race in great part depends.

### III. THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

It is not possible in this short history to make any attempt to include the record of the International Labour Organization. Its field of action was, by its own will, kept separate, and its general development drew gradually farther away, from those of the League. But it was in fact a part of the League, and in taking a general view of the League's structure the Labour Organization must be briefly described.

The Organization was established by the Treaty of Versailles. Like the Covenant, its constitution formed a special section of the Treaty; and Part XIII, like Part I, was repeated without alteration in each of the peace treaties drawn up in Paris. It was thus brought into existence by the direct action of the Peace Conference, and not by that of the Council or the Assembly of the League. Indeed, while the League could take no official action until the entry into force of the Versailles Treaty, the practical foresight of the Labour Commission in Paris enabled the first Labour Conference to be held in Washington several weeks before that date.

The central structure of the Organization comprised an annual Conference, a Governing Body, and an International Labour Office. The Conference consisted of four delegates from each Member State, of whom two represented the government, one the employers and one the workers. The Governing Body was composed of twenty-four persons, of whom twelve were representatives of governments, six of the employers, and six of the workers. The Labour Office was a body of international officials providing the executive and preparatory services required by the Governing Body and by the Conference.

The founders of the Labour Organization had thus provided it not only with an independent legal basis in Part XIII of the Versailles Treaty, but with a working system which was in many respects autonomous and self-sufficient. The membership of the Governing Body was decided by the Conference; the Director of the Labour Office was appointed by the Governing Body; the staff of the Office by the Director. The Organization was entirely free to decide for itself how it would carry out its great task of ensuring just and humane conditions of labour and the well-being, physical, moral, and intellectual, of industrial wage-earners. It selected the subjects to be dealt with by each Conference, and drew up of its own competence conventions on each subject so selected,



which the Member States were bound to submit to their constitutional authorities to be ratified or rejected. 'Nevertheless, the founders had always intended that the Organization should be closely combined with the League, and they had resolved that the International Labour Office itself should 'be established at the seat of the League of Nations as part of the organization of the League'. They had provided that all Members of the League should be Members of the Labour Organization, and that the function of that Organization should be to guide the policy of the League in its own particular sphere. They had entrusted numerous duties in connexion with its work to the Council, the Permanent Court, and the Secretary-General. And they had laid down that its expenses should be met from the general funds of the League, and that the Director of the Labour Office should be responsible to the Secretary-General for their proper expenditure.

The International Labour Organization may therefore be defined as a branch organization of the League, but possessing a greater degree of autonomy than any other such organization; subordinate to the League in respect of its administration, but independent in respect of its external action. For various reasons the historical evolution of the Organization tended in the direction of increasing independence rather than increasing unity. The subjects with which it dealt, though of the highest importance from the point of view of the internal policies of its Members, were remote from the normal problems of international relations. It drew its vitality above all from the support of organized labour and in particular from the Trade Unions. In their attitude on foreign policy, the representatives of organized labour were in general convinced supporters of the League. But in the Labour Organization, and there alone, they could stand on an equal footing both with employers and with government officials; and they naturally believed that their interests could be better served by maintaining a clear-cut division between the competence of the Labour Organization and that of the other sections of the League.

The tendency to autonomy was reinforced by the character of the Director of the International Labour Office. Albert Thomas was a fighting Socialist politician: at 41 he had already behind him many years of political conflict, had held important cabinet office during the war, and was looked upon by many as a future Prime Minister of France and the true successor of Jaurès himself. He possessed every endowment for such a career—fierce energy, intellectual power, eloquence and debating skill, and a passionate devotion to the cause of social justice. In the light of the ineffectual record of the French Socialist party during the fifteen years which followed the war, it may

well be a matter for regret that Thomas chose to sacrifice his political career. In any case it was certain that such a man would not be content with any position which did not leave him wide powers of initiative and leadership. He tried to deny the Assembly's right to do any more than vote the budget which the Governing Body had approved. He was compelled, after hard fighting, to admit its control over the expenditure, and therefore over the administrative machinery, of his Office. But he successfully prevented it from intervening in the policy or actions of the Organization as a whole.

The diametrically opposite conception of their functions held by Drummond as head of the Secretariat, and by Thomas as head of the Labour Office did not, as might have been expected, lead to serious difficulties between the two. Thomas's method, in fact, suited Drummond well enough. Where Thomas imposed on his staff a strictly centralized system, supervising and often re-writing every document or letter, Drummond gave the widest possible initiative to the departmental heads of the Secretariat. He fully subscribed to the view that labour problems were best treated in abstraction from other international questions, and asked nothing better than to exclude them entirely from the responsibilities of the Secretariat. He was therefore much more ready to encourage than to oppose Thomas's wish to have the right to appear in person before the Council or the Court when questions concerning the Labour Organization were under consideration, and to send members of his staff to co-operate on an independent footing with the various subordinate organs of the League. On his side Thomas, while insisting on autonomy, insisted even more upon the constitutional and moral unity of the two bodies. 'The Labour Office', he wrote, 'is flesh of the League's flesh, bound thereto by all the fibres of its being.'<sup>1</sup> During its first years, indeed, the Organization grew up in shelter, protected by the influence of the League from political attacks which might have threatened its survival, and saved from financial shipwreck by the fact that its expenses were an integral part of the League budget. It shared in the growth of the League's power and prestige which marked the years following Locarno. Thereafter the separation became wider, and the Labour Organization remained in most respects aloof from the political convulsions by which the League was shaken and finally destroyed. Brazil and Japan continued to be Members of the Organization even after withdrawal from the League. And in the last years before 1939, when the central institutions of the League were becoming more and more powerless, the Labour Organization was raised to new strength by the adhesion of the United States. American

<sup>1</sup> *Europe Nouvelle*, September 22nd, 1923.

membership not merely reinforced the Organization, but also shielded it to a great extent from the impact of the Second World War.

In 1940 the Labour Office moved its headquarters from Geneva to Montreal, and was able during the years that followed to maintain its regular activities with less interruption and less reduction than might have been expected. It was recognized in due course as a specialized agency of the United Nations. Its constitution and its field of action are still, in essentials, the same as those enacted in the Treaty of Versailles.

#### IV. THE PERMANENT DELEGATIONS

We have now completed the outlines of the structure of the League as it stood in its third year of life, and as it was to stand, with little outward change, until the end. It remains to describe two institutions whose existence was directly dependent on the League, although they were no part of its official organization. These were the Permanent Delegations and the League of Nations Societies.

From the first days in London, the Secretariat had been exercised about the system of communications between itself and the governments of the Member States. If it were forced to use none but the diplomatic channel, its messages would be subject to delay, to needless formality and occasionally to personal caprice. On the other hand, if each Section began to correspond with a different set of government departments, the result would be confusion. An attempt was therefore made to persuade each government to set up a special office for this purpose, which would be in touch with each of the many departments concerned with the business of the League—with foreign ministries, service departments, ministries of health, finance, commerce, communications, and the rest. To such an office could be sent all the papers and letters issued by the Secretariat, with the knowledge that they would promptly reach the right destination. Its officials would maintain personal relations on the one hand with the Secretariat, and on the other hand with their national representatives in the Council, the Assembly, and other League organs; and would themselves form part of the delegation to the Assembly.

The proposals of the Secretariat met with very little success. Some ten or twelve governments started an office on the lines suggested; but with one exception these offices soon lost their separate character and became indistinguishable from other sections of the respective foreign ministries. Only one Member gave full effect to the Secretariat plan. The results were quickly seen. Delegates from other countries were often heard to complain of the undue influence of the French representatives on the various organs of the League. They did not realize how much of

this influence was due to the superior preparation and teamwork ensured by the Service français de la Société des Nations.

A number of States did, however, begin to set up offices in Geneva in order to keep themselves in touch with all that was passing at the seat of the League. These offices constituted in fact, though not in name, a diplomatic corps accredited to the League. Their chiefs were usually members of the national diplomatic services, and their function of sending information home was soon extended to include that of informing the Secretariat of the views of their governments. The Permanent Delegates, as they came to be called, were not at first greatly welcomed by the Secretariat, which much preferred its own plan, recognizing the danger that the League, established in a quiet and sheltered spot, might lose touch with the vigorous political life of the great capitals, and fearing lest the Permanent Delegations might interpose an unnecessary obstacle between itself and the national administrations. They were frowned upon by the Swiss government in Berne; that government was compelled by the Covenant to grant them diplomatic privileges, but disliked the presence of a second and much more active diplomatic corps in a provincial city. Nevertheless, their number increased, slowly at first, more rapidly as the League itself grew in dignity and power. Half a dozen such offices had been opened in Geneva before the League had been there as many months; in later years there were forty or more, including certain consulates, such as those of the United States and Germany, whose functions, though not their title, were the same as those of the regular delegations.

The Permanent Delegations followed no fixed pattern. Some possessed a considerable staff, others consisted of a single official. Their chiefs varied in rank from ambassador to secretary. Their status was anomalous from the point of view of international law and diplomatic practice. In consequence, although their duties were much the same in all cases, it was years before they succeeded in recognizing themselves as a collective group. In 1932 or 1933 they began to describe themselves formally as a diplomatic corps, elected a Doyen and requested the Secretary-General to receive them at regular intervals as a corporate body. Hitherto, they had called on him only as individual representatives to discuss questions affecting their own countries.

The Secretariat derived some satisfaction from the growth in number and in size of the Permanent Delegations as a tribute to the importance of its own work. It was tempting to see in them one element in the building-up of the League as a central world authority. In truth, however, far from developing in such a sense, they held to their essential diplomatic nature and their influence tended, accordingly, to individual-

ism and separation rather than to the recognition of common purposes or to the reinforcement of international institutions.

A few among the Permanent Delegates stayed many years in Geneva, became strong supporters of the League, and did their best to keep their governments interested in its work. But, in spite of the good services thus rendered by some individuals, the system of Permanent Delegations was of no serious significance in League history.

#### V. THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS SOCIETIES

During the war unofficial associations had grown up in a number of countries, both belligerent and neutral, to promote the formation of a League of Nations. When the Covenant had been completed and embodied in the Treaty of Versailles, their usefulness might seem to have come to an end. But in the wave of lassitude and reaction which engulfed the later stages of the Peace Conference, the old guards of the League idea found that they still had an important part to play. They realized that without popular support the League would be quite unable to fulfil its purposes. It was no longer necessary to work for its creation: it was now necessary to work for its success. A small minority of extreme pacifists, disappointed in a Covenant which relied upon the threat of collective force as the basic safeguard against war, broke away from the ranks. The rest decided to keep their associations in being, with the object of mobilizing public opinion in favour of the League, spreading information about its acts and its principles, and persuading their respective governments to carry out in the letter and the spirit the engagements to which they had set their hand.

It is beyond dispute that they were right in judging that the League needed a far greater volume of popular support than it then possessed. The difficulty of their task lay in its vague and general character. A few of the associations concerned had their own clearly defined battles to fight. In the United States, the League to Enforce Peace did its best to secure the ratification of the Peace Treaty and, failing that, the separate acceptance of the Covenant. In Switzerland, the Swiss National Association for the League of Nations was naturally in the forefront of that fierce campaign which preceded the referendum of May 1920. In Germany the Liga für Völkerbund raised a weak and hesitating voice to persuade their compatriots that it was in Germany's interest to become a Member of the League. But for the most part no such clear objective was presented. And since it is impossible to arouse popular interest in purely abstract principles of political conduct, it was natural that each Association should tend to select that particular aspect of the Covenant which might appeal to the temperament, or serve the needs, of its own

people. While the French Associations called upon all Frenchmen to support the institution which would make France secure from invasion, the British League of Nations Union emphasized that the Covenant provided for disarmament and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Not less naturally, the various Associations did their best to ensure that the proceedings of the League itself should justify the claims which they made on its behalf. They thus became instruments of pressure not only on their own governments but also upon the organs of the League. In some cases indeed they so far lost their original character and purpose as to be little more than subsidized agencies of their governments.

These, however, were minor exceptions; and they did not seriously detract from the important fact that in the western countries of Europe, in the chief neutral States, throughout the British Commonwealth, as well as in the United States, large numbers of men and women devoted much of their time, their money, and their energies to maintaining the League of Nations Associations in their respective countries. These were the true heirs of the peace movements of the nineteenth century. Unlike their predecessors, they had no need to debate on the principles of their action; they had only to follow the guidance of the Covenant. Nor were they, save in Germany and the United States, trying to bring about a radical change in the accepted policy of their governments; they had only to urge those governments to do what they had bound themselves to do and what they did not cease to claim that they were in fact doing.

Thus the Associations had at least a large measure of common ground. All could insist that every question of serious international importance should be submitted to the League. All could campaign for ratification of the Permanent Court and for the signature of the Optional Clause. All could support the extension of the technical, economic, social, and humanitarian work of the League, and the full performance of the obligations of the mandates system. All desired, with some difference of emphasis it is true, to see full publicity on every aspect of international affairs, Germany a Member of the League, armaments reduced, private manufacture of war material abolished. In general, therefore, they were apt to agree with what we have called the left-wing tendency in the Assembly and to demand that the League organs, and in particular the Council, should display more decision and more enterprise. Although they maintained friendly relations with the Secretariat, they considered it as being over-prudent and over-ready to acquiesce in the limitations of its official competence.

The national Associations of the Western Allies had been in touch with one another during the war, chiefly through the efforts of the American League to Enforce Peace. Those of the European neutrals

had hardly dared to correspond with one another for fear of offending some belligerent power. After the acceptance of the Covenant, neutrals and Allies quickly decided on the formation of an International Federation to which the national Associations might become affiliated. In 1921 a small permanent bureau was established at Brussels, with Théodore Ruysen, who had for many years been prominent in the French peace movement, as Secretary. About twenty national Associations then belonged to the Union: three years later the number had risen to thirty-five. It is doubtful, however, whether the movement profited by this attempt at centralization. The essential function of the Associations was to influence public opinion and official action in their own countries. In their joint capacity, on the other hand, their resolutions could only be addressed to the Council or the Assembly; and the annual conferences at which these resolutions were debated tended to become a sounding-board for the grievances and even for the quarrels of individual nationalities. At Prague, in 1922, there arose so violent a dispute over the treatment of minorities that the representatives of four Associations, including the Czechoslovak Association which was the host, showed their indignation by withdrawing from the conference.

It was, therefore, within the borders of their own countries that their true sphere of action lay. And even here it is impossible to estimate what was the sum of their contribution to the development of the League. A political campaign can usually be judged by its effect on the results of an election or by the adoption or rejection of a particular measure. No such criterion could be applied to the work of the Associations.<sup>1</sup> Yet, without doubt, all rendered some service, and some rendered great service, in making the affairs of the League, and foreign affairs in general, a subject of public interest and public discussion.

Of all the private Associations formed in support of the League, the British League of Nations Union was by far the most active and the most powerful. Its membership in 1922 was already 200,000; in 1932 it had nearly a million subscribing members. Under the leadership of Robert Cecil, whom it followed with unquestioning zeal, it became an element to be reckoned with in the political life of the country. Other Associations fell far short of the League of Nations Union in membership, in resources, in the maturity and wisdom of their leaders, in the enthusiasm of their rank and file. But in all the democratic countries at least they were able to exercise a good deal of influence in Parliament and in the constituencies.

The pressure thus brought to bear upon their governments was not

<sup>1</sup> Except in the case of the 'Peace Ballot' organized by the League of Nations Union. (See p. 636, below.)

without its dangers. They were not always able to keep clear of party politics. The general thesis that foreign affairs should be conducted in the public view, on the basis of the Covenant, and through the agency of the Council, the Assembly, and other organs of the League was everywhere much more fully accepted by the Liberal, and almost everywhere by the Socialist, parties than by the Conservatives. (It was totally rejected by the Communists until Russia joined the League: but the Communist parties outside Russia did not at that time possess any voice in the conduct of foreign affairs.) Although, therefore, the League of Nations Union in Britain and the sister Associations in France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and elsewhere included a number of prominent Conservatives, nevertheless the policy which they tried to urge upon their governments was often a policy favoured by the parties of the left and centre and disliked by those of the right; and when the latter were in power the efforts of the Associations sometimes had the effect of provoking hostility rather than good will towards the League itself.

Years later the leaders of the private Associations, and many others who had begun at last to realize the need to resist the growing threat to the League and to world peace, reached the conclusion that their endeavours had hitherto been on too narrow a basis. They then sought and found the way to bring into their ranks those great movements which depended for their progress upon the maintenance of peace yet which, in their anxiety to keep clear of partisanship in regard to foreign affairs, had shrunk from committing themselves to supporting the League. The success of the International Peace Movement<sup>1</sup> in securing the adhesion of the Churches, of Labour, of the Co-operative Societies, of Women's Organizations and others came too late to do more than suggest, in this field also, what might have been, and to be a guide to future workers for peace.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 55.



## OPTIMISM IN THE THIRD ASSEMBLY THE RESCUE OF AUSTRIA

*German application postponed—The rescue of Austria—The Assembly not an instrument of the victorious powers—Minorities and Mandates—The League and reparation—The League and the Greco-Turkish war—A tonic Assembly*

(AUGUST—SEPTEMBER 1922)

AS the summer of 1922 drew on towards autumn and the opening of the Third Assembly, the hopes of European reconciliation and German entry into the League steadily receded. Poincaré seemed determined to make no concession to friend or enemy. He was seeking an adequate pretext to occupy the Ruhr, to take charge of the German Customs, to seize control of mines, forests, and factories and apply the profits on their working to the reparation account. Convinced that an implacable attitude to Germany and Russia alike was legally and morally justified, Poincaré was ready to disregard the contrary views of his British and Italian partners and cared little for their growing resentment and anger. Anglo-French relations were already more strained than they had ever been since the Entente existed. But they were to become much worse during the next two years, in which Poincaré inflicted upon Europe wounds from which it was never to recover completely.

After the failure of the Genoa Conference, the British government began to show itself openly desirous of seeing Germany enter the League. Lloyd George spoke fervidly about the League; he and other Ministers announced that a German application for membership would receive their full support; Lord D'Abernon, who was believed to have great influence in Berlin, advised the Chancellor to act without further delay. But the Wilhelmstrasse proceeded to give a characteristic display of diplomacy. Germany was for once in a position to grant or refuse something on which other governments had set their heart. Her membership was being proclaimed as necessary, not only for the restoration of her own position in the world, but for the sake of the League itself. The natural conclusion was that she should attempt to exact the greatest possible benefit from this unusual state of affairs. D'Abernon was informed that German opinion was averse from the idea of entering the League and

that it could only be considered on conditions. There must be no opposition; there must be no demand for any new promise to carry out the Treaty of Versailles; and Germany must be at once given a permanent seat on the Council. Germany must be released from military control and from any threat to extend the Allied occupation. And Germany would refuse to allow the League to decide the problem of reparation.

The effect of the German attitude was to make Poincaré the arbiter of the whole situation. He was no doubt hostile to the entry of Germany, though he did not make any public statement. Yet, if the Assembly were formally seized of a German application, it would be difficult for France to put up any effective opposition. A two-thirds majority of the Assembly was enough to admit a new Member; and even if France chose to vote against admission, not more than two or three delegations were likely to follow her lead. She could, it was true, prevent Germany from being made a permanent Member of the Council, which would require a unanimous vote in the existing Council. But her veto would be an empty gesture, since the Assembly could, and undoubtedly would, elect Germany as a temporary Member and continue to re-elect her year by year. Her only effective weapon would be a threat to abandon the League if Germany were admitted. But the consequences of such a decision would be incalculable; it might prove even more disastrous for France than for the League itself, nor was there any certainty that French opinion would support it. At any rate, so long as Germany asked for assurances beforehand, Poincaré was relieved of all embarrassment. Nothing was easier than to avoid giving hypothetical promises: and meanwhile the nationalist press proclaimed the unalterable opposition of France.

Having thus displayed its diplomatic skill by putting all the cards into the hand of its chief opponent, the Wilhelmstrasse continued the demonstration by disarming those who might have been its friends. The German press was encouraged to attack and criticize the League. The United States and the Argentine Republic preferred to stay outside: why should Germany act otherwise? In the face of such an attitude, it was difficult for Cecil, Branting, Motta, and others who had been protagonists for the admission of Germany to maintain their pressure. The British government quickly abandoned what had never been more than a half-hearted effort. During the Assembly, German opinion did, indeed, react against the inertia of the administration. Party meetings of the Centre and the Social-Democrats, who made up the government majority, urged that Germany should no longer delay her application. The press began grudgingly to suggest that, in spite of all the shortcomings of the League, it might be more profitable to be in than out.

But the Wilhelmstrasse, if it succeeded in nothing else, had succeeded in paralysing its own action. No approach was made to Geneva; and a few weeks later the French occupation of the Ruhr removed the question from the realm of practical politics for another two years.

Although the League's natural line of progress was thus blocked, it was impossible not to be aware that its position in the world, and especially in Europe, was steadily improving. Its reputation and its influence were greatly enhanced, in the autumn of 1922, by the way in which it faced a new and, as it seemed at first sight, a hopeless task—the political and financial rescue of Austria.

Austria had emerged from the war as a small Republic with a capital which had been the social, administrative, and economic centre of a great empire. Of her seven million inhabitants, more than two million lived in Vienna. Defeated, humiliated, impoverished, the Austrian people had no strong national unity and no firm will to survive in their new political form. That form had not in the first place been imposed by the victors on the vanquished. The new Austria was simply what was left over after her Italian, Yugoslav, Roumanian, Czechoslovak, and Polish subjects had shaken off the Habsburg rule, and her Hungarian partner had claimed the right to a separate existence. But though the Allies had not been responsible for the creation of the ill-balanced republic, they might justly be held responsible for its future destiny, inasmuch as they had prevented its people from adopting what most Austrians considered as their only hope of a tolerable future. Before the peace of St Germain was signed, the Supreme Council had intervened to prevent it from becoming a part of the German Reich; and by the terms of the Treaty itself the Anschluss was forbidden, except with the agreement of the Council of the League—an agreement which both France and Italy were certain to refuse.

The winters of 1918-19 and 1919-20 were the scene of misery and famine throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and nowhere more so than in Austria. She was saved, by the powerful and public-spirited Socialist party of Vienna, from the revolutionary violence and the equally bloodstained reactions which afflicted her neighbours in Hungary and Bavaria. But her commerce was destroyed; the huge population of the capital could not be supported by the rest of the country and could no longer import from abroad the necessities of life. Although the Allied powers never made any serious attempt to exact reparations from Austria, and indeed spent large sums on relief for her benefit, many died of starvation. During the three years which followed the end of the war, something like £40 million were advanced by the chief Allies for

the purpose of keeping the Austrians alive. But little or no progress had been made towards enabling Austria to live on her own resources. Such assistance could not continue indefinitely. Yet, when it ceased, not only would the population be subjected to intolerable hardships, but the political and social stability of Europe would be gravely threatened. The provinces might be expected to proclaim their attachment to Germany; a Communist revolution might be expected in Vienna.

Already in the spring of 1921 the Allied powers had asked the League to work out a plan of reconstruction which might enable Austria to become self-supporting. The investigations of the Financial Committee had shown that this was not impossible, provided that Austria on her side accepted stringent reforms in her finances, and that her creditors not merely renounced their claims for reparation and for the repayment of relief credits, but also agreed to make a substantial new loan. The scheme drawn up by the Committee was approved by the Council. Most of the creditor States agreed to postpone their claims. But, in Washington, Congress refused or delayed its sanction: and the most generous and most disinterested of Austria's creditors was responsible for the failure of the plan. As the months went by, the situation became more and more catastrophic. The Austrian krone, already enormously depreciated, became practically worthless. A few more million pounds were reluctantly advanced, in the spring of 1922, by Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia, in order to stave off an immediate collapse. But by August a new crisis was imminent. The Austrian government formally declared that, unless further help were given, complete administrative breakdown was inevitable. Neither they nor any alternative government could continue to hold office: and they would invite their parliament to proclaim that the future of Austria was no longer the responsibility of the Austrian people. The Allies, however, were by now unwilling or unable to continue the process. They replied that the whole question would be submitted to the League, and added the warning that there was no further prospect of loans being granted from public funds.

To most people, and to the Austrians themselves, the second part of their decision seemed to make a mockery of the first. If the great powers with all their immense resources could not solve the problem, and refused to grant further credits, what was to be expected from the League, which had no resources at all? In the European press, many even of those organs which were favourable to the League advised the Council to refuse the impossible task laid upon it, while the *Morning Post*, the *Action Française*, the *Kreuz Zeitung*, and all their tribe found a fresh text for their usual sarcasms at the expense of the costly farce of

Geneva. But the Council was clearly bound to make the best attempt it could. Balfour came out to Geneva in a mood of unusual determination. He was in his seventy-fifth year; he knew that Lloyd George's government could not last long; and he was resolved to make a success of what might be his last service to the League. He could count on some help from Hanotaux, who was now regularly replacing Bourgeois, and from Imperiali, not on account of their personal qualities, but because France preferred that Austria should be rescued by the League rather than turn to Germany, and Italy that she should be rescued by the League rather than form close economic ties with the Little Entente. On the political side Balfour's main support was Beneš, the cleverest and most constructive European statesman of the time. Since Czechoslovakia had played an important part in relieving Austria's pressing necessities a few months earlier, there was good reason to invite her to share in the work on the same footing as the regular Council Members. Thus Beneš became a member of the special Council Committee set up to deal with the Austrian problem. Austria herself was entitled under the Covenant to act as a Member of the Council. The Austrian Committee was thus composed of Balfour as chairman, Hanotaux, Imperiali, Beneš, and Monsignor Seipel, the Austrian Chancellor. This group was in charge of the whole proceedings. Political questions it kept in its own hands: financial, economic, and legal work was entrusted by it to the technical organizations of the League and to the Secretariat.

Such details of procedure may well seem at first sight to be hardly worth recording. Was it not obvious common sense, since the Council was agreed as to the ends which it desired to achieve, to constitute a special committee made up of those most directly concerned?—just as in the case of Upper Silesia, where these same powers were in complete disagreement, it was obvious common sense to turn to those who had no direct interest in the conflict. What could be more natural than to ask a group of financial experts to advise on the stabilization of Austrian currency or the balancing of the Austrian budget, and a group of economists to advise on the problems of Austrian imports and exports? And since success depended not only on the political and financial arrangements but on the hearty co-operation of the Austrian people, was it not evidently necessary to associate the Austrian representatives with every stage of the proceedings? These methods of procedure were, indeed, obvious, sensible, natural, and necessary: but they were nevertheless a completely new and unprecedented phenomenon in international affairs. They depended upon conditions which had not been, and could not be, fulfilled before the days of the League—upon the existence of a permanent international institution, working under

known and regular rules, and possessing, in its turn, a whole series of organizations which it could call into service as required and which were, like itself, formally established on an international basis. Thus what from one point of view appears as uninteresting routine constituted in truth one of the most important and even revolutionary aspects of the League. And the more normal, natural, and regular such methods became, the greater was their superiority over those of the past.

All these arrangements had already been made, or planned, when the Council, on August 31st, accepted the task which the Supreme Council had abandoned. There was some surprise that it announced its intentions, in a public meeting, it is true, but in a brief and formal statement, the Austrian delegate sitting silent. But in proceeding thus, the Council was paying an unusual tribute to international psychology. By good fortune, the Third Assembly was due to meet a few days later: and the Council deliberately postponed its hearing of the Austrian appeal until after the Assembly had come together. That appeal could then be made in the presence not of ten<sup>1</sup> but of nearly fifty national delegations. All except ten would be, strictly speaking, merely part of the audience: but the Council realized that its hope of success would to a great extent depend upon the support of the League Members as a whole. With equal insight it allowed Seipel to be, on that occasion, the only speaker. The sufferings of the Austrian people had already aroused general sympathy. And, though Seipel was regarded with hostility by the Socialist party in Vienna, it would be hard to imagine a more effective advocate in any international gathering than this quiet, ascetic, supremely intelligent priest, whose clerical garb seemed to set him apart from other delegates.

His speech was simple and practical. The population was in desperate straits; but he believed that the country could live and prosper if adequate help were given. He would accept control over the use made of any new loan, so long as Austrian sovereignty were respected. But if help were refused, the Austrian people would not consent to perish in isolation, and the peace of all Europe might then be at stake.

The circumstances and the manner of Seipel's address to the Council, rather than his actual words, produced exactly the effect which he had hoped. The next day in the Assembly Motta put the general feeling into words far more emotional than those of the Austrian statesman. Following him, one speaker after another declared that the League must not fail in this great undertaking. The whole Assembly was visibly inspired with a common and corporate will, not different in character, though different in power, from that which may inspire a national parliament

<sup>1</sup> Eight regular Council Members, with Austria and Czechoslovakia.

at some critical moment. It was easy to exaggerate the importance of such a manifestation of the Assembly's sentiments. The institutions of the League were justly criticized, on not a few occasions, for their tendency to confuse eloquent speeches and unanimous resolutions with effective action. The delegates could only act through their respective governments; and the emotions which they might feel in Geneva were not communicable to fifty different capitals. But it would be not less erroneous to treat such phenomena as being devoid of all value and all reality. In the particular case of Austria, the success of the League's action was beyond doubt largely due to the enthusiasm of the Assembly. That enthusiasm did something to create the confidence which was the first need of the moment. It affected the attitude of the great powers. When the Italian government nearly wrecked the plan at the last moment, the rank and file of the Assembly did not hide their indignation; Scialoja took the train to Rome and persuaded his government to withdraw its conditions. It affected the action of the small powers, several of whom agreed to guarantee some part of the necessary credits. Above all it roused the Austrians themselves to a new hope and new resolution, to a new will to live, without which they could hardly have faced the stern measures demanded by the Council as a part of its scheme for the reconstruction of their country.

The scheme itself can be briefly summarized. Neither the Financial Committee, nor the Secretariat experts, had ever considered the problem as hopeless, nor advised the Council to refuse the request of the Allied powers. It was true that no further government credits could be expected, and that new credits on a large scale were absolutely necessary. But the experts believed that these might be subscribed by private capital if certain conditions could be fulfilled. Austria's currency must be stabilized. Her budget must be balanced. Her expenditure must be drastically reduced. Certain taxes must be earmarked for the service of the new loans; and the League must be given authority to ensure both the punctual payment of the revenues from these sources, and the proper spending of the loans. These conditions could be fulfilled by a strenuous effort on the part of the Austrians. But there were other conditions, both financial and political, which could be fulfilled only by the Allied powers. These powers were called upon, in the first place, to guarantee a certain proportion of the interest and amortization of the loan, which was to amount to about \$120 million. They were further called upon to pledge themselves to respect the independence, integrity, and sovereignty of Austria, to seek no special or exclusive economic influence, and to do nothing which might prejudice the working of the plan. And their pledges were balanced by an equally solemn obligation

on the Austrian side that she would maintain her own political, economic, and financial independence.

These complicated financial and political agreements were completed in five weeks. On the last day of the Assembly Balfour gave a general account of the situation and announced that, but for one last difficulty which still remained to be settled, the whole plan had been completed and accepted by all concerned. Everybody knew that the difficulty in question was a demand from Rome to have a preponderant voice in the system of control which was to be set up in Vienna. It was generally expected that the Italian government would in the end consent to be placed on the same footing as the rest; and Balfour's speech was received with great enthusiasm by the Assembly. Three days later final agreement had been reached, and Austria, Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia had signed the three protocols in which that agreement was embodied.

From the day—October 4th, 1922—on which the protocols were signed, the Austrian scene changed rapidly for the better. Public confidence revived; the krone became stable; prices began to fall. The League's Commissioner-General, Dr Zimmerman, arrived in Vienna in December. Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland agreed to guarantee a small proportion of the new credits. In the summer of 1923 the loan was floated with complete success in London, New York, Paris, and other centres. Meanwhile the Austrian government was honourably performing its painful task. Seipel carried the necessary legislation against strong resistance from the Socialists; Germany, which had no desire to see a prosperous and independent Austria, did its best to keep resistance alive. Internal economy and reform of the public finances could not be accomplished without causing much suffering and unemployment. But the situation was, at worst, far better than before; and it improved much more quickly than had been expected. Already in 1924 the budget was balanced without drawing on the loan, and the latter could be used for work of positive economic reconstruction. By the end of 1925 full control of its budget was restored to the Austrian government, and six months later the League's Commissioner was withdrawn from Vienna.

Meanwhile, the Third Assembly was passing in an atmosphere of confidence and cheerfulness. It was generally felt that the League's star was rising; that progress might be slow, but was nevertheless steady and continuous. The Supreme Council had practically ceased to exist; and if the Conference of Ambassadors was still maintained in Paris, it was looked upon as no more than a subordinate organ to deal with the last



long-drawn-out details arising from the Treaties of Peace. The growing importance of the Assembly was indicated not only by the crowds of journalists and visitors who flocked to Geneva, but still more by the steady increase in the number of responsible statesmen among the principal delegates. The Salle de la Réformation was already beginning to look like a gathering of the Foreign Ministers of Europe, although those of the great powers remained at home and Geneva could not therefore compare with the galaxy of Genoa.

The German press continued to assure its readers that the League was merely a continuation of the coalition which had won the war. These reproaches were taken up by some sections of opinion in Britain, America, and the ex-neutral countries, which accused the French of establishing a military hegemony in Europe and perpetuating the division of the Continent into victors and vanquished. That division was, indeed, being kept alive by the policy of both sides—by those who, like Poincaré, demanded that Germany must carry out at no matter what cost every obligation imposed on her by the Treaty of Versailles; and not less by those who, in Berlin or Budapest, fought against every move towards fulfilment of the terms of peace, and thought only of the day when they in their turn might enjoy the delights of power and revenge. Certainly the Third Assembly did not possess the means to put an end to that profound and obstinate conflict. But it could and did demonstrate to every honest observer that, as a body, its aim was not to safeguard the interests of the victors but to bring about appeasement and reconciliation. This was shown by the unanimous wish to save Austria. It was further shown by the fact that Hungary was admitted into League membership by unanimous vote. The Hungarian government was reactionary at home and provocative abroad. It made no secret of its implacable resentment against the territorial settlement imposed by the Treaty of Trianon. But the Members of the League, including the Little Entente, which had profited by that settlement and was determined to maintain it, did not consider that Hungary's attitude was a reason to exclude her from the League.

The action of the Assembly in regard to minorities in Europe and in regard to mandated territories in Asia and Africa proved conclusively that in certain respects at least the League, so far from being an agent of the victorious powers, was becoming an unwelcome critic of the uses to which their victory was put. For the Allied States of Central and Eastern Europe, the chief prize of the peace settlement was the acquisition or recovery of territory inhabited by large numbers of men of alien races. For France, Britain, and the other mandatories, the extension of their administrative control over the German colonies and the

fragments of the Turkish Empire was at least a partial compensation for their losses. Each group, in assuming its new powers and privileges, had accepted a certain responsibility towards the Council. Each would have preferred that the Assembly should abstain from interference and should leave it to work out its problems with the Council alone. But the Assembly insisted upon its right to discuss any and every question which formed part of the regular functions of the League. Year by year it added to its agenda the consideration of those sections of the Secretary-General's annual report which related to minorities and to mandates, and so placed two important groups among the victorious powers under the continuous watch and the open criticism of their fellow Members.

On both these subjects the debates of the Third Assembly were specially lively and important. On minorities it did not take up individual cases, but laid down a general statement of principle covering the rights and duties of the minorities themselves, of the governments which were bound by minorities treaties, of other League Members, of the Council, and of the Secretariat. The statement, first put forward by Gilbert Murray, who, like Cecil, was sent to Geneva as a delegate of South Africa, was adopted only after hard debate: but having been in the end accepted unanimously, it remained thereafter a guide for the action of the League second in importance only to the minorities treaties themselves.

In regard to mandates the Assembly showed itself, in these early years, critical and even suspicious. The reason was not far to seek. The Council, at that time, did not include a single one of the States which were bound by minorities treaties. But of the seven mandatory powers, four were members of the Council, the very body to which the reports of the Mandates Commission were submitted; and they adopted towards the Commission a defensive, almost an unfriendly, attitude. The rank and file of the Assembly believed that the Commission was both an expert and a public-spirited body, and deserved better treatment. In the course of time, the Mandatory powers came round to the same view. But till then the Assembly yearly offered its encouragement to the Mandates Commission with the conscious purpose of supporting it against the coldness of the Mandatory powers and of the Council.

Nor did the Assembly refrain from discussing particular events in regard to which the mandatory seemed to be acting against the letter or spirit of the mandate. Already in 1922 the South African government found itself called to account by Dantès Bellegarde, a singularly gifted negro delegate of Haiti, and by an Indian delegate, over the report that it had showed harshness and injustice in dealing with a disaffected tribe in South West Africa. But it was not until a year later that the

Assembly had before it a full picture of the functioning of the mandates system in Africa, in the Near East, and in the Pacific. For the most important mandates of all, those for Syria and for Palestine, did not come into effect until September 29th, 1923. Through the summer of 1922, the Council spent many hours in discussing their last details. On one subject, the guardianship of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, no final agreement was ever reached. Hitherto, the decision in cases of dispute had been in the hands of the Turks. The new plan put forward by the British government, as mandatory power, aroused great resentment among Catholics. It was withdrawn: and no acceptable alternative was ever found. But the question of the Holy Places did not prevent the application of the rest of the Palestine Mandate, and from that time onward the whole system was in full operation.

Such was the new sentiment of self-confidence which animated the Third Assembly that it was ready and even eager to take over the responsibilities which the great powers appeared to find heavier than they could bear. Lloyd George, who allowed it to be believed that he intended to come to Geneva for the first time, had already proposed to Poincaré that the problem of reparation should be referred to the League. The French had rejected the suggestion on the ground that decisions on the execution of the Treaty could not be taken by a body which included many countries that had been neutral in the war and were not parties to its terms. The German Chancellor also opposed it, arguing that if France, having first considered the League to be too impartial, were later to agree to submit to its decision, this would be enough to show that Germany must mistrust it. This strangely confused opinion was, in truth, based not on reason but on sentiment—on the unconquerable resentment felt by Wirth for the Council's decision on Upper Silesia. It was not likely, however, that Wirth's objection would be sustained: it was effective only inasmuch as it made it difficult for Lloyd George to press his proposal. The real obstacle was Poincaré, who alone had a firm purpose and a powerful army, and was, both in law and in fact, in a position to insist upon keeping the question in the hands of the Reparation Commission.

Nevertheless, neutral opinion, American opinion, Liberal and Socialist opinion, were in general anxious to see it referred to the League: and for a brief moment they believed that their view might prevail. Lloyd George decided to stay at home. But throughout the Assembly there was a marked *rapprochement* between the French and British delegations. The harmony between Balfour and Bourgeois on the Council was paralleled by that between Cecil and de Jouvenel in the Disarmament Committee of the Assembly: and it was in this latter body that to the

general surprise the French themselves joined with Cecil in bringing up the reparation question. De Jouvenel, a man of constructive temperament, was convinced that confidence and security could never be restored in Europe, and armaments could never, therefore, be reduced, until the problems of reparation and war debts had been settled and the road to prosperity thus reopened. He persuaded Poincaré to allow him to put forward a resolution endorsing this statesmanlike view, and actually warning the Council to be ready to intervene if requested to do so by the powers concerned. In the light of subsequent events, it is to be supposed that Poincaré was already determined that no such request should ever be made. Indeed, three months later, after he had launched the French invasion of the Ruhr, he claimed that the terms of the Assembly's resolution—'if requested to do so'—actually barred the League from taking any initiative in the matter. In the minds of de Jouvenel himself and of most of those who voted for it, the purport of the proposal was exactly the contrary; it seemed to them to be a long step forward in the direction of entrusting the whole question to the League, and as such it was enthusiastically received by the Assembly.

Another great affair which many members of the Assembly wished to see dealt with by the League was that of making peace with Turkey. It was during the actual session that the attempt of Greece, with British support, to establish herself in Asia Minor came to its disastrous collapse. The Greek army for all its courage was in utter rout: the Kemalist forces were threatening the Allied positions on the Asiatic shore and might at any moment open an attack on Constantinople, which was jointly occupied by the British, French, and Italians. The Allies themselves were deeply divided: Lloyd George used bellicose language, and for a week or more it seemed possible that Britain and Turkey might be again at war. In any case it was clear that the terms of peace which had been imposed upon the Sultan's government must be finally discarded, and a new treaty negotiated with Mustafa Kemal not only by Greece but by all the powers which had been allied against Turkey in the First World War.

The sudden and dramatic crisis in the Near East naturally filled men's thoughts at the Assembly as in the national capitals. Nansen, one of those who had long been urging the Council to intervene to end the war in Asia Minor, now formally proposed that the whole question should at once be taken up by the League. The great powers had hitherto insisted on keeping the whole matter in their own hands, and they did not now take Nansen's initiative very seriously. But to their surprise messages in its support began to arrive from sources which they could not disregard.

It was strongly backed by the lesser European States whose interests were bound to be affected by the new terms of peace—Roumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa had had a sudden shock when the British government had asked whether they were ready to send contingents in case of war with Turkey; they did not refuse, but they plainly declared that the League should be invited to find a peaceful settlement. The Kemalists themselves allowed it to be said that they would be ready to negotiate through the League.

The Allied powers, however, were not to be moved; and Curzon and Poincaré, with Italy obediently following their lead, invited the Turks to take part in a new peace conference. They announced their intention to propose, at that conference, that the Straits should be demilitarized and placed under the supervision of the League: that the League should be entrusted with the protection of Christian minorities in Turkey and with the solution of any problem on which the conference might fail to agree; and that Turkey should become a Member of the League. Meanwhile, in Geneva, the three delegations succeeded in persuading Nansen to modify his original suggestion and leave the Council free to take up the question only if this were made necessary by the ill success of the conference.

The hopes of the Assembly that the great issues of reparation and war debts, and of peace in the Near East, would be submitted for settlement by the League, proved to be no more than illusions. But these hopes had been not a cause but merely a sign of its consciousness of stability and efficiency, its conviction that the League had established itself as a necessary centre of international life and need no longer be afraid of taking risks. Delegates, journalists, and spectators were all alike impressed with the sense of a co-operative will combined with practical capacity. Lord Chelmsford, a former Viceroy who was India's first delegate, declared that he had come to Geneva 'a profound sceptic as to the value and utility of the League of Nations', but that a fortnight's experience of the Assembly had sufficed to change his opinion. A group of Republican observers from Washington went home, after seeing the Assembly at work, convinced that the United States ought to join the League without delay. Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely: and indeed it was exceptional that anyone who followed closely the sessions of the Assembly failed to become a supporter of the League, though his sentiments might soon fade on return to the scepticism or indifference of Washington or Whitehall. Already men had begun to talk of the 'atmosphere of Geneva'<sup>1</sup> and to see the essential difference

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 25.

between the work of a continuous and well organized international institution and that of improvised conferences on the one hand and of the traditional diplomatic exchanges on the other.

A particular source of optimism during the Third Assembly was the belief that real progress was at last being made in the direction of disarmament. The difference between the points of view of Britain and France had been disagreeably conspicuous in Washington. Now, in Geneva, the two delegations had found and agreed upon a line of action which combined the essential requirements of both. In the next chapter we shall briefly trace the development of this all-important subject before and after the Assembly of 1922. At that Assembly, the Anglo-French agreement was rightly judged to be an important milestone on the road of European peace.

In many ways, therefore, the happy Assembly of 1922 was a tonic for the growing frame of the League. It brought a new self-confidence to the working organizations in Geneva. It increased the reputation of the League in the world at large. It confirmed the tendency in the United States to wish for the League's success and to collaborate in such of its undertakings as involved no political commitments. These general, if imponderable, reinforcements came at the right moment; for the next twelve months were to witness new and grave crises.

## DISARMAMENT: FIRST STAGES

*Disarmament in the Covenant—The Council chooses delay—The Temporary Mixed Commission—The Esher Plan—Controversy between the direct and the indirect method—‘Resolution XIV’ of 1922—The Treaty of Mutual Assistance—British rejection—MacDonald and Herriot intervene*

(1920-4)

FOR twelve years, from 1922 to 1933, the question of disarmament was continuously in the forefront of the aims and activities of the League. It was discussed and debated at every one of the Assembly's sessions and at many sessions of the Council. Committees and Commissions, some composed of men of high political rank, others of specialists and technicians, held innumerable meetings on the subject. Whatever might be the progress of the League in extending its membership, in preventing war, in settling disputes, in promoting economic and social advance, its success continued to be judged by public opinion and by its own most devoted supporters by one test above all—the test of disarmament. All these efforts failed in the end; and, as is usual when a great enterprise has failed, there were many who concluded that it should never have been undertaken; that, if once peace and confidence were restored, defence budgets would have shrunk by a natural process, and that attempts to deal with armaments in themselves could only lead to conflict. Such language, however, was rarely heard in the years following the war. The men who knew best how Europe had stumbled helplessly into that fatal catastrophe were convinced that the armaments race which preceded it had been the greatest single element in making disaster inevitable. That opinion might not be shared by professional soldiers and professional diplomatists; but it was accepted by the world in general. Throughout their discussions, the drafters of the Covenant were unanimous in considering that a provision for the reduction of armaments by international agreement must be an essential part of the whole plan. Such opposition as showed itself at that time was confined to warnings that the question was one of profound difficulty and complexity and that the Peace Conference should beware of going too far or too fast.

These obvious considerations had not escaped the intelligence of such men as Wilson and Smuts. They had been pointed out in Smuts's 'Practical Suggestion'. In Wilson's drafts of the Covenant, the section

on disarmament had throughout taken the form of a general declaration of principle, the practical execution of which was to be first planned by the Council and then carried out by the Member States. This prudent method of approach had been duly accepted and embodied in Article 8 of the Covenant.

The Members of the League as a whole had thus agreed to look to the Council to draw up a general plan of arms reduction. This arrangement was perfectly reasonable, inasmuch as the question depended essentially on the action of the great powers. It was reasonable also that those powers should approach their task with hesitation in the first years. The flames of war were not all quenched; the immediate future was still uncertain. The military strength both of Germany and of Russia was still in many ways an unknown quantity. The United States had rejected the Covenant and was carrying out a competitive naval programme. In such conditions, the Council States were by no means ready to make proposals for the limitation of the armed forces of League Members, including their own.

Most countries were indeed engaged in reducing their forces from the enormous figures at which they had stood at the moment of the Armistice. But the purpose of Article 8 was not merely that armaments should be reduced, but that they should be reduced in accordance with an international plan, and that, once such a plan had been accepted, no country should be free to exceed, at its own sole will, the limits therein laid down. It was a frequent event, both in Geneva and in the national capitals, to hear an official spokesman announce that his government had cut down the number of regiments, ships, or aeroplanes in its service, and claim that it was thereby fulfilling its Covenant obligations. Such sacrifices, as they were usually called, were doubtless a relief to the taxpayers of the State concerned. They might, in some cases, exercise a useful influence on international relations by giving a temporary sense of increased security to its neighbours. But so long as the decision, thus freely taken, could be freely reversed, they could not properly be reckoned as contributions to disarmament in the sense of the Covenant. The essence of the Covenant was that States should renounce their right to be the sole judges of their own armaments, and that this most dangerous of all questions, the very heart and fortress of nationalism, should be brought under international control.

Neither this nor any of the obligations of the Covenant in regard to disarmament was destined to be fulfilled. No such plan as had been there foreseen was ever prepared by the Council. The arms traffic was never brought under the control of the League. Private manufacture of war material was neither prohibited nor regulated. The pledge that



full and frank information as to their armed forces and their war industries should be exchanged between Members of the League was treated as impracticable. The lesson which Grey and Wilson drew from the history of pre-war diplomacy was accepted in theory, but completely rejected in practice. The principal governments of the world continued to believe that their security depended above all on maintaining armaments equal or superior to those of their neighbours. For some ten years, there was indeed a tendency towards reduction. But each country insisted on maintaining the right to be the judge of its own needs; and the conditions which had allowed the armaments race to develop before the war were still permitted to exist, in spite of widespread anxiety lest it should be restarted. When it did start, it moved with incredible velocity towards its inevitable consequence.

It is neither an easy nor a cheerful task to describe the course of long and complex negotiations which were never to attain the results at which they aimed. But the story must be briefly told, for many reasons. The problems of disarmament, and the debates of the Assembly, the Council, the Temporary Mixed Commission, the Commission to prepare the Disarmament Conference, and the Disarmament Conference itself, constitute an essential part not only of the annals of the League but also of the general history of the inter-war period. Before the final breakdown occurred, there were moments when success seemed to be within reach; there were also actual achievements of high importance in the political field. If any single question could be described as the central issue of the whole period, it was that of the relations between Germany and the rest of the world. And from the days of Stresemann onwards, the relations between Germany and the rest of the world depended mainly on a settlement of the problem of armaments.

In 1920 the Council, as we have seen, had strong reasons for postponing any attempt to draft a scheme of armaments reduction, which must in the nature of things begin by dealing with the forces of France, Britain, Italy, and Japan. In December of that year, its Permanent Armaments Commission, dominated by the great powers and composed of high officers of the various fighting services, formally advised that any such attempt would be premature. But the Assembly, consisting for the most part of countries whose forces were small and weak, which grudged the necessity of spending public money on defence, and which considered that the great powers could perfectly well dispense with a large part of their own military establishments, was at all times more impatient for action in this matter than the Council. Assembly pressure led to the creation of the body known under the clumsy appellation of

the Temporary Mixed Commission, the members of which, serving in an unofficial capacity, were free to put forward plans and opinions which might have led to internal crises if they had come from official representatives. Thus an additional stage was added to the procedure foreseen by the founders of the League. They had laid upon the Council the duty of preparing a plan for the consideration of the Members. The Temporary Mixed Commission was now asked to prepare a plan for the consideration of the Council.

Even so, things moved slowly: the new Commission did not meet till July 1921, shortly before the Second Assembly, and its first report was chiefly devoted to setting forth the technical and political difficulties in the way of disarmament. But the success of the Washington Conference made further delay impossible. The addition of Cecil to the Commission introduced a new element of seriousness and energy to its work. The French too began to change their attitude. Lloyd George had wished that the Genoa Conference should deal with European disarmament; the Russians, at the opening meeting, had made a formal proposal to that effect, arguing, not unreasonably, that since their unknown military power was often quoted as making reduction impossible for their neighbours, it was high time to allow them to share in future discussions on the question. Poincaré flatly refused, saying that disarmament was a matter for the League, and that if it were dealt with at Genoa the French delegation would immediately withdraw from the Conference. Poincaré's reference to the League was inspired less by zeal for the Covenant than by unwillingness to negotiate on equal terms with Germany and Russia. Nevertheless, the French did thereafter take a leading part in the proceedings of the Temporary Mixed Commission and in all the long sequence of events to which those proceedings gave rise.

Public opinion in Britain, as in all countries which felt no particular anxiety about their national security, was impatient to see an effective reduction of the armed forces of Europe. Such reduction was held essential to the recovery of commercial prosperity, as well as to the regrowth of confidence and political appeasement. Cecil's British colleague on the Commission, Lord Esher, decided to take the bull by the horns and to put forward a simple plan for a massive and immediate reduction in the peace strength of all the land and air forces of the European powers. These forces, he suggested, should be restricted according to a fixed ratio, following the naval precedent of Washington. They should be reckoned by units of 30,000 men of all ranks; France should retain six such units, Italy and Poland four, others, including Britain, three or less.

Lord Esher's proposals were no more than preliminary suggestions as

to the form which reduction might take. They did not claim to be either original or complete, but merely to serve as a starting-point for discussion—to bring the question down to concrete facts and figures, doing for land and air forces what the United States government had done for navies on the first day of the Washington Conference. Unfortunately, the actual figures put forward, and the ratio suggested between particular powers, were strongly resented; and, being purely arbitrary, they could not be reasonably defended. The situation in Europe, the anxieties of some countries and the ambitions of others, the immense complexity of the land and air problem as compared with the sea problem, made any such proposals both rash and premature. Esher himself quickly suggested that the discussion of his plan should be postponed indefinitely. No further comparable attempt was made until Ramsay MacDonald, as British Prime Minister, submitted his famous draft treaty to the Disarmament Conference in the spring of 1933.

The Esher plan was an extreme example of what became known as the direct method of armaments reduction, which starts from the conviction that armaments are in themselves a cause of war and that disarmament in itself promotes security. Every country declares, and usually believes, that whatever forces it maintains in addition to those needed to guarantee internal order are intended solely to guard it against attack from without. On this showing, the armed power of each is in the main decided by that of its neighbours or other possible enemies. It follows that, if any important military power declares itself ready to reduce its armed forces, its neighbours can at once make a corresponding reduction. If this process can be extended over the world, or even over a whole continent, armaments can be reduced all round by the same percentage and each country will still be exactly as safe as it was before. Indeed it will be much safer, since the process will at the same time tend to put an end to fear and suspicion; it will also increase material prosperity and so lessen the danger of war being started for economic reasons. Such was, at most times throughout the twelve years of debate on this question, the general thesis of Britain, of the Dominions, of Italy, of the Scandinavian and other ex-neutrals, and of the United States—of those countries, in other words, which felt no immediate fear of attack. It was also, for other reasons, the thesis supported by Soviet Russia.

A very different attitude was that of France, Belgium, Poland, and other European countries which felt themselves open to attack from Germany. These also declared that they wished for nothing more than for a massive reduction of armaments. But they affirmed that armaments were essentially the result, and not the cause, of insecurity and of fear.

No agreement on the figures of guns, tanks, aeroplanes, and ships could alter the inequality caused by Germany's enormous industrial resources and her great and growing preponderance in man-power. Let Europe be assured of peace: let it be certain that any attempt to change the Versailles settlement by force would be met by overwhelming counter-action, and the reduction of armaments would follow. France had, at the Peace Conference, given up her demand for a defensive frontier on the Rhine in return for a pledge from the United States and Britain to come to her help if she were attacked. That pledge had then been repudiated. She was left with the Covenant as her sole guarantee: but the United States being outside the League, and Britain, in consequence, showing a strong inclination to minimize her commitments under the Covenant, that guarantee was not enough. Either she must maintain her armed forces at a very high level, or she must receive new and reliable pledges for her security. And these pledges must cover Poland, the Little Entente, and Eastern Europe as a whole, since war in the East was certain to involve the West also.

The thesis that disarmament was to be attained as a natural consequence of increased security was one which could not be contested on either logical or political grounds. It was not denied by those who already pressed, in 1922, for the adoption of a definite scheme of reduction; but they believed that the state of security in Europe was actually such as to make it possible to draw up a practicable scheme. The Covenant might not be such a guarantee as could satisfy the exigencies of the general staffs: but the pacifying influence of the Council and the Assembly was an undeniable fact. Germany might be dangerous again one day: but she was effectively disarmed for the time being. The Washington Treaties had brought stability in the Pacific and had enabled the great naval powers to reduce, or at least to limit, their fighting strength. The statements addressed to the League on the subject by half its Members, including all those of military importance, proved that almost all were in fact cutting down their forces and their defence budgets. Was it not possible, therefore, at least to make a start towards preparing that general plan which the Council was bound by Article 8 of the Covenant to lay before the Members of the League?

The swift extinction of the Esher proposals showed that the French and their supporters were still far from ready to admit any such optimistic view; and Cecil, though he did not agree with their argument, began to look for some alternative plan which might satisfy the conflicting demands of the two groups. He could not at that time speak for his own government; but, as a member of the Temporary Mixed Commission, and as delegate of South Africa in the Assembly, he was able

to join in the debate; and, though Balfour or Fisher occasionally opposed him, he did in fact enjoy a part at least of the influence which naturally belonged to those who spoke for Britain. In the Temporary Mixed Commission he found Frenchmen of authority ready to negotiate with him—Viviani, Lebrun, who was later to be twice President of the Republic, Colonel Réquin, an influential member of the general staff. As the result of their discussions, the Commission agreed upon a report which at last appeared to bring the whole question down to a point from which concrete action might become possible. It accepted the fact that certain States believed that they could not undertake any obligation to disarm without receiving additional guarantees of security. It therefore proposed the conclusion of a new Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, under which each signatory, once it had reduced its armaments according to an agreed plan, would, if it were attacked, be assured of immediate support from all other signatories in the same continent. Thus the reduction depended upon the guarantee of help, while the guarantee in turn depended on reduction.

This new plan, accompanied by various proposals for its practical application, was laid before the Third Assembly. Outside Geneva, Franco-British relations were unfriendly; and it was far from certain that the official delegations in the Assembly would endorse the agreements reached by unofficial, if eminent, persons in the Temporary Mixed Commission. France, represented by Henry de Jouvenel, gave them enthusiastic support. The British attitude was more doubtful: but in the end the whole Assembly, including the British delegation, accepted the general principles reached by the Temporary Commission, declaring in brief: first, that no scheme for armaments reduction could be successful unless it were general; secondly, that many governments could not seriously reduce their existing armaments unless the safety of their country were guaranteed; thirdly, that such a guarantee could be provided by a defensive Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, open to all, and ensuring that any signatory State should, if attacked, receive immediate and effective assistance from all other signatories in the same part of the world; fourthly, that since the object of the Treaty would be a general reduction of armaments, its guarantee should only come into play after such reduction had been carried out according to a general plan.

This declaration of policy was the fourteenth resolution adopted by that Assembly on the question of armaments. The first thirteen dealt with the limitation of defence budgets, private manufacture, the control of the arms traffic, the extension of the Washington Naval Treaty to the lesser naval powers, and other kindred questions. These were matters of no small importance. But it seemed to all the delegations that their

general agreement, under joint Anglo-French leadership, on the outline at least of a plan to solve the problem of security and disarmament, was the outstanding event of the Assembly and might prove the most important action so far achieved by the League. And indeed that action was to prove the starting-point of all subsequent attempts to bring about disarmament by constructing a system of security supplementary to that of the Covenant itself. Resolution XIV of 1922 led on to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance drawn up in the Assembly of 1923; to the Geneva Protocol of 1924, and to the Locarno Treaties of 1925.

The Assembly had requested that each government should give its opinion on the proposals set forth in Resolution XIV and had at the same time instructed the Temporary Mixed Commission to embody them in a formal draft Treaty. In the troubled year that followed, these two procedures were carried on side by side; and in each the proposals met with rough handling. Of the governments, some considered that the Resolution went too far, others that it was insufficient. The first declared that they could not accept any obligations additional to those of the Covenant; the second, that a general treaty could add little or nothing to the security of the signatory States, and must be supplemented by special treaties providing for immediate joint action according to plans worked out beforehand by the military authorities of the parties. Half the Members of the League returned no answer at all. This was natural enough in the case of the Latin American States or of others whose military resources could weigh nothing in the balance. But neither Britain nor any other Member of the British Commonwealth replied, except Canada, whose government briefly answered that Canada could not participate in a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee.

Meanwhile, the soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the Permanent Armaments Commission had been invited to make a report on the plan from the technical military standpoint. Here also the British representatives remained silent; but the majority of their colleagues declared that no general treaty could justify any country in reducing its armed forces. Reduction would be possible only in strict proportion to the reinforcement which could be counted on to arrive in the very first days of war. No such assurance could be given by any general treaty or even by any regional treaty which was open to all States within a given area; it could come only from a military alliance, based on a strong common interest, and organized beforehand for joint action in time of crisis. To this demonstration the Italian and Spanish experts replied that such an alliance would merely restart the pre-war armaments race; it might permit individual parties to reduce their respective forces, but it would oblige the neighbouring States to maintain their peace-time establish-

ments at a level capable of meeting the combined strength of the alliance from which they were excluded. All agreed in pointing out the difficulty of deciding how and when the obligation to give assistance would arise. It was easy to talk about giving a pledge to join in resisting aggression; but no acceptable definition of aggression had ever been found. If the victim could expect no help until the Council had met and pronounced a verdict in its favour, it might be overwhelmed before help could come. If, on the other hand, the signatory States could decide for themselves that the *casus foederis* had arisen, was not this a return to international anarchy?

In spite of all discouragements, Cecil persisted in preparing a draft treaty on the lines of the Assembly's resolution. His plan was promptly torn to pieces by the military experts. But the French were anxious to keep the movement towards a new treaty alive; and Colonel Réquin, who had been among the keenest critics of Cecil's draft, produced a substitute of his own. Thereafter, in a long series of meetings, the two drafts, with many amendments, were combined into a single text, which was renamed the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. Approved by a majority of the Commission, disapproved by an important minority, it was ready only at the beginning of September 1923, just in time to be laid before the Fourth Assembly.

In that Assembly the main attention of every delegation was concentrated on the conflict between Italy and Greece. Further, those who came from overseas countries could not receive any instructions from home on the new draft, which they saw for the first time on arriving at Geneva. In these circumstances discussion might be exhaustive and detailed, but could not be conclusive. The Treaty was piloted by Cecil through a committee of forty-five States as a bill is piloted through Parliament. He was now a member of the British Cabinet, and head of the delegation to the Assembly: yet it was evident that he was still acting to a great extent on his own initiative and without full government backing. Thanks to Cecil's arguments, the persistent support of the French, and the skilful diplomacy of Beneš, the draft Treaty was carried through without important changes. It did not receive the approval of the Assembly; many delegations objected to one or more of its provisions, and many more asked for time for reflection before committing themselves. But all were ready to agree that it should now be submitted to all governments, with the invitation to consider its terms and to inform the Council of their views.

It could not have been expected that so far-reaching a plan as that of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance should progress otherwise than by slow degrees. For it involved for every signatory State the obligation to

give military support to any other signatory which was the victim of aggression; and empowered the Council to designate the aggressor, to decide on the application of economic sanctions, to determine what military forces each signatory should provide, to organize the transport of troops, to furnish financial help to the victim, and to appoint the commander-in-chief of the combined operations. These vast powers, to which those conferred upon the Security Council by the United Nations Charter bear a striking resemblance, were subjected to two important limitations. The first was that no State could be obliged to take part in military operations except in its own continent. The second was that no State could claim the benefit of the Treaty until it had undertaken to reduce and limit its armaments in accordance with a plan to be drawn up by the Council. The Treaty further permitted any group of signatories to conclude special agreements for mutual assistance among themselves, and even to put these into effect without waiting for the Council to designate the aggressor; but such agreements were first to be considered and approved by the Council.

Emerging into the world with but the faintest of blessings from the Assembly and no clear backing from any government, the Treaty of Mutual Assistance seemed from the first to have little chance of survival. It was submitted to the powers outside the League as well as to the Members; and the first replies from important governments came in the form of uncompromising rejections from Moscow and Washington. The Russians criticized the plan at length on the general basis that there was no necessary connexion between security and disarmament and that all that was needed was immediate reduction all round. The Americans pointed out that the Treaty was closely bound up with the Covenant and that they could therefore have nothing to do with it. Next came a reply from London: Ramsay MacDonald, whose government had come into power since the close of the Fourth Assembly, controverted every proposal in the Treaty, and indicated his intention to call a world-wide disarmament conference as soon as the moment seemed favourable. And this was followed by a note from Berlin, equally critical of the Treaty, but continuing with an unexpected argument to the effect that the best basis for security as well as for disarmament was to be found in the Covenant itself. After all these negatives, Herriot, who had recently replaced Poincaré, answered on behalf of France that his country approved the Treaty; and Mussolini also expressed approval of all except the provisions for special agreements.

Among the lesser States, support for the Treaty came from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, the Baltic States, Finland, and others who feared aggression by powerful neighbours. The European neutrals were



against it. Like Italy, they objected to the encouragement given to the making of special agreements for defence, which they considered was no more than the resuscitation of military alliances; and they repeated that the Covenant made disarmament an obligation. The other members of the British Commonwealth endorsed the answer sent by London, on the general ground that the Treaty would increase their commitments and so reduce, rather than extend, their present security. The Latin American countries, with one exception, sent no reply before the Assembly. But their attitude was, in fact, closely allied to that of the British Dominions.

No one could doubt, from the moment that the British reply was known, that the Treaty of Mutual Assistance was condemned without hope of recovery. It would have been a natural and easy step to conclude that nothing more could be done for the time being: that any agreement capable of effectively reducing the anxieties of those States which, rightly or wrongly, believed themselves to be in danger, was certain to be rejected by those which, rightly or wrongly, believed themselves to be secure. Such a consequence might well have been drawn from MacDonald's letter. But the publication of that letter produced a strong reaction among his own followers and still more among the Liberal party, without whose support the Labour party could not continue in office. It was said with truth that the very government which had proclaimed that its whole foreign policy would consist of strengthening the League, had now not only destroyed by a single gesture the result of all the efforts of three Assemblies and of the Temporary Mixed Commission, but had done so in a tone which reflected the dislike of the older generation of officials for the institutions of Geneva and by arguments which seemed intended to undermine the foundations of the Covenant itself. Thus, as the date of the Assembly drew near, MacDonald was anxious to bring forward some new proposals which would prove the sincerity of his past declarations and yet avoid the military commitments involved by the Treaty of Mutual Assistance.

There were some who believed that such proposals could best be found within the four corners of the Covenant: that the reinforcement required was no external addition to the structure, but a practical assurance that Britain and the other chief powers intended to carry out in full strength and loyalty the actual obligations of League membership. Was it not wiser and more practical to begin, at least, by making plans for the effective fulfilment of that instrument which all agreed in praising and which they were legally bound to honour? The argument

was strong: but, for different reasons, it commended itself neither to MacDonald nor to Herriot. They sought to resolve their uncertainties by the adoption of some new principle. The worst difficulties in the London conference on reparation had been met by providing that, in case of future disagreement, the difference should be submitted to arbitration. And the two Prime Ministers began, by separate roads, to approach the same conclusion—the conclusion that, if the Members of the League would extend the principle of arbitration so as to cover all international disputes, the obstinate problems of security and disarmament would be effectively solved. Almost every government, in commenting on the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, had pointed out that the action of the Council could be neither rapid nor reliable unless it had some clear criterion to show which of two warring States must be treated as the aggressor. But, if one agreed, and the other refused, to submit to arbitration, would not the decision at once become both easy and irrefutable?

Thus the first chapter of the great attempt to reduce armaments through the League of Nations closes upon a note which may well seem paradoxical. Article 8 of the Covenant, the Council's duty to draw up a general plan for world-wide reduction, Esher's scheme, the proposals of Resolution XIV for mutual guarantee after reduction had been assured, the Treaty of Mutual Assistance—all were put aside until a new solution had been found to the old problem of compulsory arbitration. Earlier Assemblies would have been surprised and resentful if they had foreseen that negotiations on disarmament would move in so strange a circle. Yet in truth the formula Arbitration, Security, Disarmament,<sup>1</sup> which the Assembly of 1924, on the inspiration of Herriot and MacDonald, adopted as its guiding principle, lay very near the heart of the question.

While the organs of the League were thus struggling painfully forward on the indirect road towards disarmament, that is to say towards the reduction of armaments as a consequence of greater security against war, three further attempts were made to use the direct method by partial agreements. The first was sponsored by the Russian government, which in December 1922 held a conference at Moscow of the States along its European borders, and, like the Americans at Washington, opened the proceedings by putting forward a bold and definite scheme of reduction. Their suggestion was that each State should reduce its existing forces by 75 per cent, agree on a proportional limitation of expenditure, set up demilitarized zones along its frontiers, and sign a

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 22.

pact of non-aggression. In theory the plan had great merits. But Russia's neighbours were mistrustful: they were convinced, as other powers were convinced in later negotiations at Geneva, that her proposals were not put forward in good faith but as material for propaganda to be used by her friends abroad. Whether this judgement were right or wrong, it made them unwilling to commit themselves to such radical decisions without further study and reflection. The Russians, on the other hand, insisted on an immediate answer; they refused to set up an experts' committee to prepare the resumption of discussions at a future conference; and the meeting broke up without result only ten days after it had begun.

The second attempt took place in March 1923, at the Fifth Pan American Conference at Santiago. Before the meeting, it was confidently expected that the American States would have no difficulty in concluding among themselves a treaty for the limitation of their naval forces on the lines adopted at Washington. But two of the powers chiefly concerned, Brazil and Argentina, held such opposing views that, so far from reaching any conclusion, the Conference did not succeed in discussing the question at all.

The third attempt was one made by the League itself to extend the principles of the Washington Treaty to the naval forces of the rest of the world. It was a meeting of naval officers representing the members of the Council and all other States which possessed ships of the types limited at Washington, except Turkey which declined to attend. The meeting took place in February 1924: and, since it was held in Rome and not in Geneva, the Russian Admiralty was represented. The experts were instructed to study the technical aspect of the question, leaving political problems out of account—a task which, as might have been foreseen, proved from the first to be quite impracticable. The results of their conference were completely negative. The more important of the countries concerned—Russia, Spain, Brazil, and Sweden—were quite unwilling to limit their tonnage at the existing figures. They were not impressed by the superior virtue of the great naval powers whose acceptance of the *status quo* left them in a position of overwhelming predominance. Russia, in particular, announced that, her battle fleet having for practical purposes ceased to exist, she would have to build some half-a-million tons of capital ships, unless both the Black Sea and the Baltic were closed to all foreign ships of war, in which case her claim might be reduced.

The total fiasco of the naval meeting in Rome was one more proof that the reduction and limitation of armaments could never be achieved except as a part of a strong international structure for the maintenance

of peace. The Washington Treaty itself would have been impossible without the political treaties which, it was believed, had banished all danger of war from the Pacific Ocean. But this was often disregarded, and the British and American governments claimed to have set an example which other powers could follow, not only at sea but also on land, without introducing any new political conditions. There could be no more illuminating commentary on these comfortable illusions than that provided by the attitude of Russia. In its observations on the Treaty of Mutual Assistance the Soviet government rejected the principle that armaments reduction depended upon guarantees against war. But when at Rome the Russian Admiral was called upon to give the actual figures of naval strength which were needed for his country's defence, he began by observing that 'the question of security was, and should be, the first consideration on which to base the limitation of armaments'.<sup>1</sup>

The Washington agreements were a valuable first step. But it was too often forgotten that they were a first step and nothing more.

<sup>1</sup> From the Minutes of the Rome meeting, February 15th, 1924.

## NEW TROUBLES IN EUROPE

*A period of setbacks—The victory of Fascism—The occupation of the Ruhr—League action prevented—Council membership increased to ten  
—Conflict over the Saar*

(OCTOBER 1922—SEPTEMBER 1923)

THE fifteen-month period from the Assembly of 1922 to the end of the year 1923 was disastrous to the moral and material recovery of Europe. This period seemed indeed to be the culmination of all the mistakes and misfortunes which had marred the victory of the Western powers. The Italian constitution was destroyed by a personal dictatorship based upon the tyranny of a single party—the first of many parliamentary regimes to succumb to the effects of the war and the violence of the extremists whether on the left or the right. The conflict between France and Germany was made still more bitter and incurable by the unrelenting obstinacy of both countries—Germany struggling to nullify the Peace Treaty, by fair means or foul, France trying to find security in the ruin and disruption of the Reich. The British government could do no more than look on, advising and protesting, unable or unwilling to take sides with either or to adopt a firm policy of its own. Cecil and others tried in vain to convince their countrymen that the basic elements of such a policy were clearly laid down in the Covenant, and that the principles and institutions of the League, if rightly used, could ensure the security and rebuild the prosperity not only of France and Germany but of all Europe.

The fortunes of the League were naturally affected by the general failure of European statesmanship, and, above all, by the discord, which in this year was close on actual enmity, between Britain and France. Some hopeful signs from the greater non-League States ended only in disappointment. There was a clear revival of pro-League feeling in the United States, following a Democratic success in the elections of November 1922. American experts were no longer discouraged from serving on the technical agencies of the League. Great hopes were aroused in February 1923, when the President and the Secretary of State proposed that the United States should join the Permanent Court. The proposal was backed by the Democratic party and by an impressive array of public opinion. But the isolationists were confirmed in their convictions, and assisted in their tactics, by the view of Europe's implacable quarrels:

and they were able to delay the taking of a vote in which they would certainly have been in a minority. Turkey, having announced that she intended to apply for membership of the League, decided to wait until after the settlement of her claim to Mosul. The slow growth of connexions between Russia and the League was roughly broken by the murder at Lausanne, on May 10th, 1923 of the Russian envoy, Vorovsky, the acquittal of the assassin after an unjustly conducted trial, and the consequent refusal of Moscow to take part in any meeting on Swiss territory. Meanwhile, the small countries looked on with helpless resentment at the shortsighted egoism of the great. Like the opposition parties in Britain and France, they believed that the League offered the best hope of escape from their difficulties; but they looked to the Council for action in vain, and they had not sufficient resolution to insist on making use of their right as League Members to bring before it any question which was disturbing peace and good relations.

In these circumstances, the activities of the Council during this period could be of little importance. Before considering them, it is necessary to refer to two events which, though not directly a part of the history of the League, were destined to exercise a profound effect upon its future development—the installation of Fascism in Italy and the invasion of the Ruhr.

A few days after the close of the Third Assembly, the constitutional regime which had existed in Italy since the great days of the Risorgimento was replaced by the rule of the Fascist party under the unquestioned personal dictatorship of Mussolini (October 30th, 1922). Ever since the Armistice, Italy had been the scene of internal weakness and disorder. Her terrible losses had bought only a fraction of the gains which her government had demanded, and the Allies had promised, as the price of her entry into the war. Her economy was shattered. Poverty and unemployment were hardly less in the cities of Italy, despite her status as a great and victorious power, than in those of the weakest among the defeated. Her imperialist ambitions were frustrated in the Adriatic by the opposition of Woodrow Wilson, in Asia Minor by the military re-birth of Turkey, in Africa by the possessiveness of France and Britain—but everywhere by her own weakness. The denial of territorial expansion was doubtless in Italy's best interests, however painful to her pride. But it was an undeserved and unjust misfortune which piled an intolerable burden of material distress on the political defeat of her representatives at the Peace Conference. She was the first victim of the American decision to dissolve the economic unity of the last year of war. She received no help from Britain or France. Her

government had then, in October 1920, turned to the League, asking that an international organization should be set up to ensure the fair distribution of those raw materials which all industrial countries required, but which some possessed in abundance while others had little or none of their own. But the well-endowed countries, with Canada and the Commonwealth members at their head, would not agree that the League should concern itself with such matters, which they described (in defiance of the plain words of the Covenant) as being outside its competence, and (in defiance of political common sense) as being of secondary importance. Though they could not altogether prevent the study and discussion of the question, they did effectively prevent it from ever reaching any practical results.<sup>1</sup>

The natural scepticism of the Italians, their traditional skill in diplomatic intrigue, their desire to enjoy the privileges of a great military power, were enough to preclude enthusiasm for the purposes or the methods of the League. But successive Italian governments tried to follow a moderate and conciliatory policy; and their delegates had played a useful role in all the organs of the League. Meanwhile, the country itself was the scene of endless strife and misery. The excesses of the Communists were countered by Fascist violence, equally lawless and much better organized. By the summer of 1922, the Socialist party had lost all authority, and the great bulk of the workers themselves began to turn to the Fascists as the only alternative to disorder.

The Fascist party was essentially nationalist and militarist. At heart, such men could have only dislike for everything to do with the League: nor did their press and their speakers hide their hostility. The spirit of the new rulers towards other countries was shown by the immediate imposition in South Tyrol of a ruthless system of Italianization, in plain violation of the pledges given at the time when the Tyrolese were handed over against their will to Italian rule. Mussolini proclaimed that the new Italy would no longer be content with a secondary place in the counsels of Europe. He was careful, however, to do nothing which could offend or alarm his neighbours. In his first speeches on foreign policy, he made no reference to the League. But early in the New Year he called Attolico to Rome and informed him that he did not intend to adopt an unfriendly attitude towards it. On the contrary, he desired that Italy should take a more active part in all its work; but he insisted that more League appointments, in the Secretariat and outside, must be given to Italians.

<sup>1</sup> Years later an offer to reconsider the problem of raw materials was made by the British in the hope of staving off Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia. The general justice of the Italian demand was at last recognized in the Atlantic Charter, though a proposal to set up a special agency to deal with the question was rejected at San Francisco.

In later years the tyranny of Fascism created a position of great difficulty for those Italian officials of the Secretariat who wished to act as conscientious members of an international service. They were conscious of being watched with suspicion; and they could hardly forget that to incur the displeasure of a dictator might bring themselves and their families into personal danger. But here also Mussolini's earlier attitude appeared reassuring. In the democratic capitals, men began to speak of the beneficial aspects of Fascist administration: and, in Geneva, to persuade themselves that the new dictatorship might after all do the League no harm.

In the first days of 1923 the French and Belgian governments proceeded to take over the control of the mines and factories of the Ruhr as productive guarantees for the payment of reparation. A mission of engineers and managers was sent in under the protection of a number of French divisions, fully equipped with cavalry, tanks, and artillery. If the Germans accepted this control without resistance, the occupation would, according to Poincaré, be essentially civilian and pacific in character; but disobedience or opposition would be punished with the utmost severity. In actual fact, the Germans on the spot organized and practised passive resistance on the widest scale, and the government in Berlin gave orders that there was to be no co-operation with the invaders. For the next nine months a state of cold war was maintained between Germany on the one hand and France and Belgium on the other. During this time the finances of Germany collapsed completely; the German middle class was practically wiped out; the payment of reparation stopped except for such deliveries as the French and Belgians were able to carry out by their own means. Meanwhile, the two sides held bitterly on their course, each conscious of the calamities it was bringing on itself, but each determined not to be the first to yield. The French proved the stronger: and Stresemann, who took office for the first time in August, 1923, announced on September 27th the abandonment of passive resistance.

Volumes have been written in justification or in denunciation of the policy of Poincaré and, in particular, of the invasion of the Ruhr. The question was never, in any form, dealt with at Geneva, and we need here consider not the substance of the conflict but its effect on the League. That effect was indirect; nevertheless it was both grave and lasting.

For many months the chief Allied powers had been deeply divided both in the Reparation Commission and in their frequent conferences. Agreement being unattainable, either among themselves or with Ger-



many, there remained two possible courses: either to invite some outside body to seek a new solution which all might accept, or to allow France to take the matter into her own hands in so far as her interpretation of the Versailles Treaty enabled her to do so. If the first alternative were followed, the natural procedure would be to submit the matter to the League, as the same powers had done in the case of Upper Silesia and in the case of Austria. This indeed had been suggested in August 1923 by Lloyd George and refused by Poincaré. But after de Jouvenel's proposal to the Assembly, there were widespread hopes that Poincaré would after all accept the mediation of the Council rather than insist upon direct and almost isolated action, with all the unknown dangers thereby created. In the months which followed the Assembly, it became more and more evident that such mediation would be welcomed with relief all over the world. It was urged by all parties in Britain, where Lloyd George had now been succeeded by a Conservative administration under Bonar Law. It was supported by the most reputed newspapers of Italy, which were still allowed, for a few months more, to write freely about foreign affairs; by the press of South America, and by Spain and the European neutrals. The Socialist and Labour parties everywhere, including those of France and Belgium, were calling upon their governments to insist upon the question being referred to the League.

All this Poincaré brushed aside with contempt. He had the consent of Belgium, the temporary acquiescence of Italy, the full support of the French Parliament and of the majority of the electorate. The British government argued and protested. But it offered no real opposition and Bonar Law did not repeat his predecessor's attempt to call on the League for a settlement of the Anglo-French deadlock.

The invasion began on January 11th, 1923. The Council's twenty-third session was to take place on January 29th; and during the interval the demand for League intervention naturally reached its climax. Poincaré had never concealed his intentions; but the scope and the vigour of his action, when it came, had aroused a new wave of consternation. The number of troops, the extent of the occupation, were increasing day by day. Passive resistance, organized with German thoroughness and supported by all classes and by all parties except the Communists, was met by the imposition of martial law and by measures of great severity, in particular by the expulsion of tens of thousands of the population. Men's minds were suddenly oppressed, as never since 1918, by the fear of new conflicts, from which not only France and Germany but the whole world would have to suffer.

At this moment it began to be reported in the Swedish press that Branting intended to place the question on the agenda of the forth-

coming meeting of the Council. He seemed doubly qualified to do so. His country had been elected to the Council in order to strengthen the representation of the highly respected group of European neutrals; and he himself had long been a leading figure in the Socialist and Trade Union movement, which was carrying on a sustained agitation throughout Europe against the invasion of the Ruhr. Branting personally, and the neutral governments also, hoped that the British might now give them a lead. But reports from London were to the effect that, though the government was inclined to favour reference to the League, it would leave to others the responsibility of action. Before leaving Stockholm, Branting announced his definite intention to bring the matter before the Council.

The prospect of Council intervention was not unwelcome to a considerable section of French opinion. The world-wide resentment at Poincaré's move, and the reports of military rule in the Ruhr, had affected many besides the left-wing parties. But the government was not to be shaken. The Quai d'Orsay managed to have the place of the meeting changed from Geneva to Paris, on the plea that it was Bourgeois's turn to preside and that he could not face the rigours of a Swiss January. (But, before the Council met, Viviani, disagreeable and domineering, took Bourgeois's place.) The official press declared that France would veto any proposal to bring forward the reparation problem; and that, if she were accused of being a danger to peace, her opposition would not stop short of leaving the League. The French success was complete, whether as a direct result of Poincaré's talks with Branting, or in consequence of pressure brought upon the Swedish government—a government not less distinguished for the prudence of its acts than for the moderation of its sentiments. Branting accepted the formalistic view that, since the Assembly had resolved that the Council should be ready to take up the question when invited to do so by the Allied governments, the Council could now do nothing without such an invitation. He made no motion in any formal session, whether public or private. In a secret meeting he put forward a proposal in terms so weak that its adoption would have made the Council a laughing-stock. Balfour and the rest sat in silence. Viviani and Hymans declared that they would vote against the resolution; and Branting withdrew it.

The story of the secret meeting, though it leaked out in time, was kept back longer and more successfully than was usually possible. Even so, it was clear to all that Branting had been defeated in his avowed purpose. The Council had met at a moment when one great question, the occupation of the Ruhr, filled the whole stage of international relations. All Europe was shaken by the Franco-German conflict and

the Franco-British disagreement. There had been a widespread desire to see the Council intervene; most of its members, including the most powerful of all, desired to do so; but its action had been paralysed by the determination of France. Branting told the press that he still believed that the League must take charge of the question, but that he had been convinced that the moment for action had not yet come. But the weeks and months went by: the occupation continued, and no further attempt was ever made to call upon mediation by the League. Those who had hoped to see Poincaré challenged by the Council were bitter in their disappointment. The Labour parties of Europe, though they continued in general to affirm the need of an effective League, did not soon forget or forgive the fact that a single great power had been able to prevent the Council even from discussing a question in which the security and prosperity of all were at stake.

It is often seen that men feel greater resentment towards those to whom they have looked in vain for help than towards their open enemies. For a time, at least, the ever-ready indignation of the German people was directed hardly less against Britain and the League than against France herself. Such sentiments might be changed by circumstances. But one lesson was unalterably engraved by the Ruhr invasion upon the German mind—that their sufferings and their defeat had been the result of the fact that Germany was disarmed and France heavily armed. Until that time the great social-democratic movement in Germany had felt a certain satisfaction in the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Peace. By long tradition they disliked the vast power and prestige of the German Army: they knew that the military caste was hostile to the Republic and they had no wish to see it restored to its former predominance in the State. But they now perceived that, unless the victorious powers disarmed, or Germany rearmed, they would be at the mercy of their neighbours—not only the French, but the Poles or the Czechs, could march in with tanks and aeroplanes to which Germany had no reply. Henceforward, equality in arms was to be the central purpose of all German policy.

As was to be expected, the Council was immediately affected by the doubts and discords of Europe. An increase in its numbers from eight to ten had made it more representative than before of general international sentiment. In the Third Assembly, even more than in the Second, the lesser Members had shown their discontent at a system by which, in practice, most of them were permanently debarred from enjoying the dignity of Council membership. The four elected Members were acquiring something like a vested right to re-election: they could

point not only to their status in the community of nations but also to the many services which their representatives had rendered to the Council. The permanent Members were indeed anxious not to lose the valuable co-operation of Hymans and Quiñones; Brazil was still, in the absence of Argentina, the preferred candidate of Latin America; China could not help much, but there was a general feeling that Asia ought to have another Council seat besides that of Japan. A situation was arising in which it would seem ungrateful and unfriendly to refuse to re-elect the same group of four, three of whom had held their seats from the beginning. Meanwhile, the membership of the League had increased from forty-two in 1920 to fifty-two in 1922. In the circumstances, the Council was persuaded by Balfour and Bourgeois to propose the creation of two new seats: and the Assembly, not without hesitation, agreed. The new places were filled by the election of Sweden and Uruguay.

Thus the Covenant plan of five permanent and four elected Members of the Council was reversed: and the process was carried still further in later years. The increase from eight to ten was wholly beneficial. It was not enough to destroy the friendly and intimate character which habitually marked the proceedings of the Council. At the same time it met the very real need to increase the representation of two groups which had been too much neglected by the Peace Conference and by the League itself—the European neutrals and the Spanish-speaking republics of America.

Since the new Council included four Members from outside Europe, it might now be expected to shake itself free from the too great concern with European affairs which had marked its earlier years. But Europe, if no longer pre-eminent in power, was still pre-eminent in its capacity for making trouble. In the political field, the Council's work still consisted mainly of settling, or attempting to settle, various outstanding differences in Central and Eastern Europe. It intervened successfully on behalf of a large group of Germans in Poland who were threatened with the confiscation of their farms. As these men were colonists, established in their holdings with the deliberate purpose of driving out the Poles from their own homeland, it required courage and generosity on the part of the Polish government to consent to leave them in possession. But in justice it must be said that at this time Polish policy was notably moderate and conciliatory. The frontier between Lithuania and Poland was fixed at last, the demarcation line, laid down in October 1920 by the Council in order to separate the forces of the two countries, having been converted by the Conference of Ambassadors, in March 1923, into the actual frontier between them. Various other frontier disputes of the same sort were heard and considered, involving Finland and Russia,

Bulgaria and Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, Hungary and Roumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In most of these small affairs the Council was able either to effect a settlement or to pave the way for direct agreement. The Finnish-Russian dispute, however, was perforce left in the air: it involved a question of international law on which the Permanent Court was asked to advise and, since the Russians refused to plead, the Court replied that it could give no opinion (July 23rd, 1923).

The current of League action, slow and reduced as it was, was flowing outside the main stream-bed, through the activities of its subordinate organs rather than through the sessions of the Council. In Greece, various agencies of the League were helping to meet the overwhelming problems caused by the sudden arrival of more than a million refugees in a country whose population hardly exceeded five million. The Financial Committee was watching over the progress of Austria and completing its preparations to float the Austrian loan on the chief markets of the world. At the same time it was making plans for two other operations of comparable magnitude: one intended to rescue Hungary from impending ruin, the other to enable the Greek government to establish the refugees in permanent homes and productive employment. In the Temporary Mixed Commission, Cecil, Réquin, and their colleagues were hammering out the framework of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. At The Hague, the Permanent Court, which many had expected would have little or no work to do, was becoming embarrassed by the number of questions laid before it. The Council might claim to be playing a useful part as the central pivot in these and in the many other activities of the League agencies. But in the three sessions between that in which the solution of the Austrian problem was announced and that in which it had to face the grave conflict of Corfu, the only question of serious importance which appeared on its agenda was that of the conduct of the Governing Commission in the Saar. This affair aroused high feelings, partly for its own sake, but chiefly because it formed a part of the general tension created by the struggle between France and Germany.

The conflict centred round the position, the personality, and the action of Rault, the French member, and also the Chairman, of the Governing Commission. From the first, the German government had protested against the Council's decision to entrust this office to the French member of the Commission. The justice of the protest could hardly be disputed. The Council accepted the view that, in the early stage of its labours, the Governing Commission would of necessity have so many points to settle with France that the only practical plan was to

have a Frenchman as its chief executive member; but it had, in truth, yielded, not to the force of argument, but to the insistence of the French representative. And while the argument, such as it was, had lost its force year by year, the same insistence had induced the Council to continue Rault in office. He showed himself a good administrator; the Saar gave much less trouble than might have been expected; and the Secretariat, like the Council, followed the line of least resistance and gave its powerful support to the French view. In March 1922, the Council committed itself still further by promising Rault and his colleagues to reappoint them year by year for the next three years. Meanwhile Rault, by virtue of his office as Chairman, by the fact that the French authorities dealt solely with him in questions concerning the mines, the customs, and other vital matters, and by his ability and force of character, had built up a commanding position within the Commission itself. He took important decisions without consulting his four colleagues, knowing that he could count on the acquiescence of two of them at least. One member, the Canadian, R. D. Waugh, protested in vain; the majority was always against him.

Though overbearing in official relations, Rault was genuinely anxious to make a success of the Saar government. He possessed, what was specially needful in dealing with that area of great industrial establishments, a strong sympathy with the working class and desire to improve their conditions. He was not personally unpopular, though the industrial magnates of the Saar and the local press attacked him continuously. Nor was he, as they asserted, an obedient tool of French policy: on not a few occasions, he persuaded the French government to agree to measures which it believed to be against its interests, in order to assist in the economic development of the Saar Territory. But even at these times he acted on his own initiative, neglecting the opinions of his colleagues, and placing every obstacle in the way of the expression of any opinion at all by the Saarlanders themselves. And when the bitter passions which seethed across the Rhineland and the Ruhr in the spring of 1923 overflowed into the Saar Territory, the Council had to pay a hard price for its weak acquiescence in a discreditable situation. Rault committed a bad mistake: and the Council was exposed to the charge of having, in its subservience to France, neglected the due protection of the three-quarters of a million Germans for whose government it was responsible.

At the beginning of 1923, the Territory was enjoying a high degree of prosperity: but the miners were dissatisfied with their conditions and threatening to strike for better wages. It seemed that a successful compromise had been reached: but, in the meantime, the invasion of the Ruhr brought a new element into the debate. The provisional agree-

ment made between the union secretaries and the French managers was unanimously rejected by the men's committees. The natural reluctance of the Saar miners to keep at work in mines owned by France, while their comrades in the Ruhr were suffering great hardships in maintaining passive resistance against the French occupants, was exploited by a violent propaganda from the Reich. The men were assured of strike pay from German funds. They struck work on February 5th and maintained a complete strike for over three months. Thirty thousand steel and railway workers were thrown out of employment, in addition to the 70,000 miners.

Poverty and anxiety now reigned in the Saar. The Saarlanders were, as ever, orderly and law-abiding; but Rault, fearing the effect of agitation from Germany, first asked that the French garrison of 2,000 men should be doubled, and soon afterwards issued a decree for the maintenance of order, the terms of which—though partly taken from a decree issued by the German government after the assassination of Rathenau—were a grave offence to the democratic countries of the League. It not only limited freedom of meeting and the freedom of the press, but actually threatened with long terms of imprisonment any person who in writing or in public speech should criticize the Governing Commission, or the League of Nations, or any country Member of the League, or any country signatory to the Treaty of Versailles.

Not many years later, Europe was to become sadly familiar with far more drastic restrictions on civil liberty than those of the Saar decree. But at that time the liberal doctrine that freedom of speech and of the press were the foundations of all other forms of freedom still held the field: and that such a revival of despotic methods should take place in a territory governed by the League came as a severe shock. The German press made the most of the opportunity to condemn the League, France, the Governing Commission and the whole system set up in the Saar Territory by the Treaty of Versailles. In Britain and in the group of ex-neutral States there was a general protest. At the next Council meeting, in April 1923, Branting once more came forward as the spokesman of liberal opinion. At this session the British representative was Edward Wood, then a junior Minister, who, as Lord Halifax, was destined to play a conspicuous role in the last years of the League's history. His sympathy with Branting was evident: but his government was unwilling to start a new quarrel with France, and he gave Branting no real support. Rault, at the Council table, was defiant and unrepentant. He quoted the Treaty provisions to show that the Governing Commission was not merely responsible for maintaining public order in the Saar, but was formally empowered to be the sole interpreter of the relevant

section of the Treaty. He denied that any arbitrary action had been taken on the basis of the decree: he would not promise to withdraw it even when the strike should come to an end, and he asked the Council to give its confidence and a free hand to the Governing Commission.

Rault left the Council table with the honours of battle; but in the next weeks the chorus of protest became louder still. In the House of Commons, where the government was already under continuous attack for its passive acquiescence in the occupation of the Ruhr, the question of the Saar was fiercely debated. Asquith declared that the worst days of Russian despotism could show nothing more monstrous than the decree issued by the Governing Commission. Such a statement coming from such a man was an extraordinary proof of the passions aroused by French policy and of the efficacy of German propaganda; for, in actual fact, however disgraceful the terms of the decree might be, it did not give rise to a single arrest. Nevertheless, the government, yielding to the general indignation, announced that it would demand a full inquiry into the conduct of the Governing Commission. Soon afterwards, Bonar Law resigned in favour of Stanley Baldwin; the latter invited Cecil to join his government and to act as its representative on the Council. Meanwhile, Poincaré made it plain that he would resolutely resist the proposed inquiry; the attacks of the London press were answered with interest by that of Paris, which at the same time launched a concerted assault on the League budget.

When the Council met in July, the situation had grown easier; the strike had come to an end, and Rault had, after all, withdrawn the decree. Accordingly, Cecil did not insist that an inquiry into the conduct of the Governing Commission should take place on the spot. Instead, he proposed that the Council should make the inquiry itself, by summoning to Geneva not the Chairman alone but the whole Commission, and asking each member to give an account of his stewardship. Having carried this point, and having with much difficulty prevailed on the Council to hold the whole proceeding in open session, he gave an amazing demonstration of the virtues of frankness in international disputes. In four long meetings the theory of the Saar regime was publicly explained, and its practice publicly examined. Journalists and spectators crowded into the Council room; but those who came expecting to enjoy a first-class row between Cecil and Branting on one side, and Hanotaux and Rault on the other, were disappointed. Cecil gave full credit to Rault and his colleagues for the good work they had done and for the many difficulties they had successfully overcome. When he turned to recent events and began to subject Rault to a courteous but searching cross-examination on his relations with the French govern-



ment, with his own colleagues, and with the elected representatives of the Saar, on the calling-in of French troops and on the issue and withdrawal of the famous decree, it soon appeared that, for whatever reason, Rault's attitude had greatly changed. His last step, before leaving for Geneva, had been to proclaim a general amnesty for all offences connected with the strike or the decree. He defended his past actions with his usual skill and courage, but was ready to promise amendment for the future. Each of the other members was heard in turn; and Waugh and Rault thus had the opportunity, not only of explaining their differences, but also of bearing witness to the respect which each felt for the administrative ability of the other.

At the end of many hours' discussion, much of the poison had been extracted from the whole question. It was understood that the Chairman would in future refrain from engaging the responsibility of the Governing Commission without consulting his colleagues, and that normal conditions would be restored as soon as possible, so far as this had not already been done. The Commission was warned that it was, individually and collectively, responsible to the Council and to the Council alone. It was instructed to press on with the organization of a local gendarmerie, in order to be able to dispense altogether with the French garrison. By these means, and more especially by its decision to summon the whole Commission to Geneva and publicly to inquire into its working, the Council had effectively asserted its authority and shown its dissatisfaction. Having done so, it assured the Commission of its confidence for the future. At the same time, it gave formal approval to the Commission's decision to make the French franc the sole legal currency in the Saar Territory. This decision had been attacked in the German press with its usual one-sided violence; but it had been desired by the Saarlanders and finally rendered unavoidable by the fact that the mark had become completely worthless.

The Germans and their more extreme sympathizers elsewhere were disappointed with these results. They had hoped to see Rault disavowed and humiliated. But, though his faults had been great, his services had been great also: to have forced his resignation would have been unjust and would in the long run have added to the difficulties of the Governing Commission. He had learnt a useful lesson: and for the remainder of his term of office things went on reasonably well in the Saar Territory. Thereafter the chairmanship was held first by a Canadian and then by a British member of the Commission. The French garrison was withdrawn in April 1927 after a famous debate in the Council; and no major troubles or difficulties arose until, in 1934, the imminence of the plebiscite brought the Saar once more into the forefront of the European stage.

## CORFU

*Murder of General Tellini—Italian ultimatum—Occupation of Corfu—  
The Greek appeal—Action of the Council and of the Ambassadors' Con-  
ference—Indignation of the Assembly—Legal questions—Effect on the  
League*

(AUGUST—SEPTEMBER 1923)

IT was with no great expectations that the various delegations began to convene, at the end of August 1923, for the Fourth Assembly and the Twenty-sixth Council. They anticipated meetings of little interest, since all serious progress must await the breaking of the Franco-German deadlock. Suddenly, while many of them were still on their way to Geneva, the League found itself faced with a dangerous and dramatic crisis—a threat of war in the Mediterranean, and the first direct challenge to the authority of the Covenant.

The Conference of Ambassadors had lost much time in deciding, on the map, the frontiers of Albania. To delimit these frontiers on the spot proved to be an equally protracted task. It had been begun at the end of 1921. It was still far from being finished when on August 27th, 1923, General Tellini, the Italian member of the Delimitation Commission appointed by the Ambassadors, was assassinated, together with three Italian subordinates and an interpreter. Tellini was engaged on the work of marking the frontier between Albania and Greece. His car was ambushed on Greek territory, at about one hour's distance from the Albanian frontier. All the occupants of the car were murdered. Neither the murderers themselves, nor any witnesses of their act, were ever found.

In the course of the conflict which resulted from this crime, and at other times also, the Conference of Ambassadors was often referred to as an international body. But the mere fact that an organ is made up of representatives of several States does not of itself entitle it to be called international. The Conference of Ambassadors, set up by four powers to serve their own interests, responsible to those four powers alone, had no shadow of claim to such a description. In the particular case of the Albanian frontier, the Conference, which in such questions consisted of Britain, France, and Italy, the Japanese member taking no separate part, had appointed a Delimitation Commission consisting of British, French, and Italian officers. A Commission thus composed could hardly

enjoy the confidence of Albania, Yugoslavia, and Greece, the three countries whose boundaries it had to mark. France was the close associate of Yugoslavia. Italy had tried, and failed, to annex the Albanian coast, and had been at odds with Greece over the frontier question. General Tellini himself had previously been employed in the Italian forces which occupied Valona and held the region for a time under martial law.

Although the moral and legal right of the Conference of Ambassadors to take upon itself the settlement of these frontiers had originally been questionable; and although their proceedings had from first to last been tainted with intrigue and inefficiency; nevertheless, it was clearly the right and duty of that body to consider the murder of its Commissioner and his staff as a wrong done to itself, and to insist upon just measures of compensation to the families of the victims, and on punishment of the assassins. This it proceeded to do in a note drawn up on August 30th and delivered in Athens the next day.

This, however, did not suffice for Mussolini. Already on August 29th he had addressed an ultimatum to the Greek government in terms which ominously resembled the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia in July 1914. Greece was summoned to make her apologies to Italy in various humiliating forms. Further, she must carry out a strict inquiry into the circumstances of the crime: and this inquiry must take place in the presence of the Italian military attaché, must be completed within five days, and must end in the execution of all the guilty persons. Within five days also Greece must pay, as penalty, 50 million lire—about half-a-million pounds sterling—to the Italian government. At the same time the Italian press was filled with violent accusations against the Greeks, and Greek consulates and individuals were attacked by mobs in a number of Italian cities. The Greek reply conceded most of the Italian demands. But it refused Italian participation in the inquiry: and refused also to pay the financial penalty unless the inquiry should demonstrate that Greece must bear the responsibility of the crime, in which case she was ready to offer proper compensation to the families of the murdered men. (The Greek government was, or pretended to be, convinced that the crime had been committed by Albanians, who had thereafter taken refuge on the Albanian side of the frontier; and though Albania denied it, this may well have been true.) Finally, if Italy did not consider her reply as adequate, Greece would submit the question to the League, and would undertake to accept its decisions.

Like Berchtold in 1914, Mussolini had foreseen that his ultimatum could not be completely accepted. His answer was to send a powerful Italian squadron to the Greek island of Corfu, with orders to occupy the island. Corfu was undefended: it was occupied without resistance, after

a brief bombardment of the ancient citadel, in which a number of refugees from Asia Minor were killed and wounded. This action, Mussolini announced, was not to be considered as an act of war, but was a temporary measure intended to maintain Italian prestige and to show Italy's inflexible resolve to enforce due reparation.

Like so many of the most critical events in the history of the League, the occupation of Corfu took place on the eve of the Assembly. The Council, which regularly opened its autumn session a few days before the Assembly, was holding its first meetings on August 31st, the day on which Corfu was bombarded and occupied. The Greek delegation, with Politis at its head, was already in Geneva. It had work of much importance to do: the Council and the Financial Committee were now putting the last touches to the long and complex task of organizing a large loan, to be issued under the auspices of the League, and to be used for the permanent settlement of the million and a quarter refugees who had fled from Asia Minor eleven months before. Even before the news of Corfu was known, Politis had been instructed to bring the Italian ultimatum and the Greek reply to the attention of the Council, and to ask that the dispute be considered under Articles 12 and 15 of the Covenant—the articles relating to disputes of a grave character which could not be settled by diplomatic means. Thus, within a few hours of the Italian attack, the question was formally laid before the Council. At its public meeting on the morning of September 1st Ishii, as President, announced that important documents on the subject had been received and were at that moment being translated and duplicated for circulation to the Council: he proposed, and the Council agreed, to meet and discuss them that afternoon.

Meanwhile, there had arisen in Geneva an atmosphere of crisis and excitement never yet known in the experience of the League. The memory of Sarajevo was still fresh. The ambitions of Italy in the Adriatic, if they had failed to bring her positive satisfaction, had at least prevented the re-establishment of settled conditions in that vital strategic area. The new imperialism of the Fascist party had revived the fears of Yugoslavia and Albania. The language of the Italian press and of Mussolini himself was warlike and uncompromising. But for the fact that Greece had been beaten down and exhausted by her Anatolian defeats, serious fighting might have already broken out. It was not surprising that delegates, journalists, and the public crowded into the Glass Room of the Secretariat—once a hotel dining-room, now adapted to serve as the Council's regular meeting-place—in such numbers that the members themselves could hardly force their way to their places at the table.

To the general disappointment, the afternoon meeting was held in private; Cecil, as usual, tried to persuade his colleagues to admit the press, but without success. At this meeting Politis formally declared that Greece would carry out whatever measures the Council might propose in order to give full satisfaction to Italy. Salandra, a veteran statesman whom Mussolini had chosen to replace Imperiali, replied that he must ask for an adjournment: he had no information as to the facts, and no instructions as to his attitude in the Council. In any case, since the Conference of Ambassadors was dealing with the question, he doubted whether the Council was competent to consider the Greek appeal. This plea was promptly rejected by Cecil on the ground that nothing could take away the right and duty of the Council to act as enjoined by the Covenant; and by Branting, who spoke of the anxiety which had been aroused among the representatives of the smaller powers now gathering in Geneva for the Assembly. They considered that if the Council were to abdicate its functions in favour of the small group of great powers which formed the Conference of Ambassadors, it would be dealing a fatal blow to the future of the League. Neither Cecil nor Branting, however, opposed the request for adjournment.

During the next three days there was growing up an open conflict between Geneva and Rome. The Assembly showed its feelings by refusing to include an Italian among its twelve Vice-Presidents—the only time in its history when a permanent Member of the Council did not receive this mark of courtesy.<sup>1</sup> Mussolini gave the lead to a chorus of Fascist denunciation of the League, announcing that, if the question were considered by the Council, Italy would at once resign her membership. At the same time his military ardour was already subsiding. His rash and dangerous policy was everywhere condemned except by the *Quai d'Orsay*, which saw its chance to buy Italy's support in the Ruhr by defending her action against Greece. He was forced to abandon the claim that Italy had the right to avenge her wrongs, and vindicate her prestige, without interference from other powers. But, choosing the lesser of two evils, he declared that the affair must be dealt with only by the Conference of Ambassadors, and that, if the Council attempted to intervene, he would continue to hold Corfu. Had not that island belonged for four centuries to the Venetian Republic? Meanwhile, the Greek government had replied to the note addressed to it by the Conference of Ambassadors. The reply protested against the accusations made against Greece; invited the Ambassadors to send British, French, and Italian representatives to conduct an inquiry both on Greek and

<sup>1</sup> In 1935 the elected Vice-Presidents did not include a Russian delegate: but the Assembly thereupon unanimously created an additional Vice-Presidency so as to add Litvinov to the list.

Albanian territory; and declared that Greece would accept whatever conclusions were reached as a result of such inquiry.

Thus, when, on September 4th, the Council resumed its consideration of the dispute, it found itself in a position of singular embarrassment. Italy was bluntly denying its right to discuss the question at all, while Greece, though asking for its help, had not only pledged herself to carry out the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors but had actually requested that body to ensure the rapid evacuation of Corfu. It was hardly reasonable to insist on removing the issue from the instance whose jurisdiction was admitted by both sides. But the whole Council, with the exception of Hanotaux, was unwilling even to seem to yield to the Italian argument and to abdicate that function which was the very heart of the Covenant. Moreover, the elected members were conscious that the rank and file of the Assembly mistrusted the Conference of Ambassadors and disliked abandoning a small State to their judgement, even though it had itself accepted that perilous situation. The Council was now meeting in public: and the Glass Room was thronged with journalists and delegates in a high state of excitement. As usual however—and never more so than when its sessions were open to the press—the debate was maintained on a calm and courteous tone. Hymans, Branting, and Alberto Guani, the solid and sensible representative of Uruguay, expressed the general sentiment in stating that, whatever course were followed, they could not admit any doubts as to the competence of the Council. Cecil, with the same intent, brought one touch of drama into the meeting by asking the interpreter to read out the full text, in French and English, of Articles 12, 13, and 15 'of the Treaty of Versailles'. This was, as all knew, a protest against the evident fact that Poincaré was condoning Italy's violation of one chapter of the Treaty for the sake of forcing Germany to the strict execution of another. As the well-known sentences were solemnly and slowly read out by an interpreter, who visibly felt himself to be playing a part in a moment of historical significance, no one could doubt that the provisions of the Covenant were meant to apply to precisely such a situation as that created by Mussolini.

The conflict between Mussolini and the Council appeared to many enthusiastic believers in the League as being at the same time a conflict between the Council and the Conference of Ambassadors. They pointed out that the Council had the full right, under Article 15 of the Covenant, to draw up its own recommendations for a settlement of the dispute and, if Italy refused them, to declare that she had had recourse to war in violation of the Covenant and to call on the Members of the League to join in forcing her to relinquish Corfu. This, they urged, was

a decisive test. If the Council did not now insist on imposing its will, the League was doomed to failure. Such language had been often heard before. It was used when the First Assembly rejected the plan for compulsory arbitration by the Court; when the Council refused to set up a permanent Minorities Commission; when the French and Belgians declined to register the military clauses of their Treaty of Alliance; when the Council failed to drive Zeligowski out of Vilna, to stop the Greco-Turkish war or to intervene in the invasion of the Ruhr. But it was never so widely heard as at the time of Corfu. Even such men as Cecil and Branting had from the first believed that the Italian aggression had opened the gravest crisis which the League had yet faced. But their long experience of great affairs would never allow them to give way to such exaggerated fears. They ardently desired that the countries represented on the Conference of Ambassadors should decide to pass the whole question to the Council. But, failing this, they thought it wiser to attempt to secure common action by the two bodies rather than risk aggravating the crisis by insisting upon the special rights and duties of the Covenant.

The Ambassadors themselves made the first move, by notifying the Council that the Greek government had agreed to carry out whatever acts of reparation they might think just, and that they intended to meet and pursue the question two days later. On this slender thread the Council proceeded to hang the next part of its action. After unofficial meetings without the two parties, the members, on September 6th, authorized Quiñones de León to put forward a detailed proposal covering the action which Greece should be required to take. In substance, the plan provided that the excuses and regrets of Greece should be presented not to Italy but to the three powers represented on the Delimitation Commission of which General Tellini had been chairman; that the same three powers should participate in the investigation of the crime; that the Permanent Court at The Hague should be asked to decide on the amount of compensation to be paid by Greece; and that meanwhile, 50 million lire should be deposited by the latter in a Swiss bank to be drawn on in accordance with the decision of the Court. Salandra refused to discuss these proposals; the rest of the Council having, some in words and some by silence, approved them, Cecil pointed out that courtesy required that the whole record of the meeting should be communicated to the Conference of Ambassadors. That body was thus, by an artifice of procedure, informed of the proposals of the Council without any formal vote being taken. Meeting the next day, it adopted the plan put forward by Quiñones, with just enough changes to mark its independence: and the Greek government hastened to declare

its acceptance of the conditions. These were, in fact, based in many particulars upon suggestions put forward to the Council by Politis himself.

The relief and satisfaction with which this denouement was received by the Council was not altogether shared by the Assembly. The danger of war was now remote: the Italian ultimatum had been gently but efficiently side-tracked, and, despite Mussolini's polysyllabic vaunts of implacable purpose and irrevocable resolution, the conditions laid down were those of Geneva and not of Rome. But was not this result purchased at the cost of the dignity and reputation of the Council? That body had not firmly faced and rejected the Italian plea of its lack of competence: it had humbly accepted the role of adviser and subordinate to the Conference of Ambassadors. Corfu was still in Italian hands. No protest had been uttered against the cowardly bombardment of an undefended town. A strong power had trampled on the rights of a weak neighbour, and the protection afforded by the Covenant had not been given. The Members of the Assembly had succeeded in making it clear that Italy's action had aroused general disapproval and resentment. If the question had been discussed in the Assembly itself, though many delegates might have been prudently silent, not one would have defended Italy. But, at the request of the Council, they had refrained from speaking on the subject. They had sacrificed the general debate, which had been the feature of every previous Assembly, since to speak on other matters and say nothing about Corfu would have seemed unreal. The regular work of the six main Assembly Committees had continued, but their usual zeal and energy were lacking; the chief interest of all delegates was concentrated on the three-cornered duel between the Council, the Ambassadors, and the Duce.

The acceptance by Greece and, as it then appeared, by Italy of the decision taken on September 7th by the Conference of Ambassadors did not set the Assembly free. Two great questions still remained unsettled: the question of the evacuation of Corfu, and the question of the competence of the Council.

It had been taken for granted that, agreement having been reached on the reparation to be made by Greece, the withdrawal of Italian forces would promptly follow. But inspired statements from Rome began to sound unpleasantly ambiguous; and from Corfu itself it was reported that the occupying forces were being reinforced and that various administrative measures were being taken which did not by any means suggest the intention to withdraw in the near future. In fact, Mussolini was regretting his hasty acceptance of the Ambassadors' decision, and was planning to use the general anxiety about evacuation to force them to alter it. This he succeeded in doing. The Ambassadors were persuaded



to announce, on September 13th, that their Commission of Inquiry was to report to them five days after beginning its investigation and that, if the report showed that the Greek government had not used proper energy in its hunt for the murderers, the Conference might decide to order the 50 million lire deposited by Greece to be paid over to Italy as a punishment, instead of leaving that matter to be decided by the Hague Court. The plot was not difficult to perceive: unfortunately for the plotters, the Commission reported that, though there had been certain negligences on the part of the Greek authorities, only the Italian member considered that the government should be held responsible for them; the Japanese, French, and British members attributed them to the inadequate resources of the police service. Nevertheless, the Ambassadors now decided—Lord Crewe consenting, it was said, much against his will—that this report, which they kept strictly secret and did not communicate even to the Greek government, was enough to justify them in condemning Greece to pay the whole sum of 50 million lire to Italy.<sup>1</sup> The decision closed with the announcement that Italy would evacuate Corfu on the following day. The Athens government, having previously agreed to execute whatever decision the Ambassadors might take, submitted promptly, though with a bitter sense of injustice. In the Assembly, which was then in the last days of its session, there was profound indignation.

In the meantime, the Council was contemplating with some misgiving the effect upon its future position of the renunciations it had made. During the excited discussions of the first week of September, arguments had been urged by the Italian spokesman which might fatally compromise its future powers. He had affirmed that the occupation of foreign territory as a measure of peaceful coercion was permitted by international law; and that, since Italy had no intention of declaring war on Greece, the Council had no right to deal with the question as one in which peace was endangered. He had denied the competence of the Council on other grounds also—on the ground that the dispute was already being dealt with by another international authority; on the ground that it was a question of the application of the Peace Treaties and as such not to be considered by the Council unless all parties consented; on the ground that Italy's honour and vital interests were involved and that she could not therefore admit any discussion of her action. In its anxiety not to embitter the situation (or, as some averred, in its anxiety to avoid such a disagreeable responsibility) the Council

<sup>1</sup> This decision was taken on September 26th, 1923. The report found its way into the press at the end of November. It was formally forwarded to the Secretary-General on December 13th and communicated by him to all the Members of the League.

had not formally rejected these arguments. Not only so but, since it had in fact consented to leave the decision in the hands of the Conference of Ambassadors, it might well be told in some future case that it had yielded, not merely to practical considerations, but to the constitutional arguments of Salandra, and that, having so yielded once, it was bound to do so again. For these reasons, the small powers in the Assembly were insistent that the Council should not leave matters where they were, but should reassert its right and duty under the Covenant to deal with any situation in which a Member of the League believed that its peace and security were at stake.

The Italians did their best to delay and obstruct the general desire. But they received no support, even from France; Poincaré was still anxious to keep on good terms with Mussolini, but he could not disregard the views of his best friends, Belgium and the Little Entente, nor the resentment felt in the Assembly at what seemed to be the unprincipled opportunism of French policy. The theory that reprisals such as the occupation of territory were permitted under international law was particularly obnoxious to the Latin American countries. They had suffered from such acts in the past: they did not then accept them as legitimate, and asserted that in any case they were now forbidden by the Covenant. They also objected to the doctrine laid down by the Conference of Ambassadors, and admitted by the Council, that every State is responsible for crimes committed on its territory even when no negligence or complicity has been proved against it. Indeed this doctrine, though it formed the legal basis of the final verdict of the Ambassadors, was everywhere considered as indefensible. In Switzerland, the murder of Vorovsky was a recent memory: and the local press left the Assembly in no doubt as to the true nature of international law on the subject.

With such universal backing, Cecil and Branting, who, as usual, led the fight in the Council, succeeded in the end in securing a legal report which left the Council's powers undiminished, if not reinforced. But they did so only after overcoming a skilful rearguard action conducted by Salandra who, taking advantage of their desire to show moderation and courtesy, succeeded in forcing delays, secret meetings, long discussions on points of detail, which were undignified for the Council and provoked a new wave of mistrust and exasperation in the Assembly. The final agreement took the form of five questions. The first three were concerned with the right and duty of the Council to act under Article 15 of the Covenant when one of the parties to the dispute claimed that the procedure of that Article was for some reason inapplicable. The fourth question was whether measures of coercion which were not intended as

acts of war were consistent with the obligations of the Covenant. The fifth related to the responsibility of States for crimes committed on their territory. These questions were submitted not, as Cecil and Branting had hoped, to the Permanent Court, but to a committee consisting of nominees of the several members of the Council. Their replies on the first three were a clear vindication of the Covenant: and, on the last, a clear rejection of the thesis enounced by the Conference of Ambassadors. But on the fourth question they gave an oracular answer which by no means satisfied the many Members of the League which held that all acts of force were forbidden by the Covenant, at least until its provisions for peaceful settlement had been fully observed.

It was not until September 28th, when the Assembly was about to close, that the Council was at last able to announce the steps which it was taking to clear up the doubts thrown upon its competence by the Fascist government. Twenty-four hours earlier, the delegations had heard the news of the final decision of the Conference of Ambassadors and of the evacuation of Corfu. They were at last free to give utterance to some part of their feelings: only a part, since the Council still begged them not to speak of the Italo-Greek conflict itself but only of the rights and duties of the League. But to most of them it seemed too late to speak. They regarded the whole episode as indefensible—the bombardment and occupation of Greek territory, the Fascist ultimatum, the threats to leave the League or to hold Corfu, the hesitation of the Council, the surrender of the Ambassadors. If it had then been known that the final condemnation of Greece had been based on a report which was in the main a vindication of her conduct, the Assembly would without doubt have witnessed a formidable outburst of anger. But the report was still a secret. There was an unmistakable undercurrent of indignation against Italy: but, except for Nansen, no delegate gave it voice. The rest of the ten or twelve delegates who mounted the Assembly tribune did so in order to approve the Council's action in calling for a legal report to clear up all doubts as to its future competence, and at the same time to declare their government's continued loyalty to the Covenant.

In spite of the inglorious role of the Council in the Corfu affair, it is not certain that the League emerged in a seriously weakened condition from its unpleasant experience. The irreconcilables, indeed, proclaimed once more that, as they had always said, the Covenant was a useless scrap of paper when a great power chose to defy it. The most enthusiastic friends of the League were bitterly disappointed because it had not taken strong measures to force Italy to evacuate Corfu and submit her quarrel to the judgement of the Council. And, in the general public,

many who had hitherto taken no side but had vaguely thought of the League as a super-national power, which might be expected to step in at moments of crisis and insist on peaceful and reasonable settlements, now, with equal vagueness, concluded that it had proved itself to be a delusion. On the other hand, the governments of Member States had on the whole been strengthened in their belief that membership in the League was an essential factor in their foreign policy. The common surge of indignation which had been felt in the Assembly against Italy's defiance of the Covenant had indeed been frustrated in its action and even in its expression: but it had exercised a powerful influence on the course of events. The British Prime Minister affirmed that, had the League not existed and acted as it did, a resort to arms would have been almost inevitable. In any case, the smaller powers had seen that in the Council and the Assembly their sentiments had had some effect, whereas the Conference of Ambassadors had proceeded in disregard of them and without their knowledge. The practical conclusion was that, whether or not they could rely on the honourable execution of the Covenant, at least they could express their views, and get some attention paid to their interests, in the League and not elsewhere. They still placed their hopes in British leadership; and they had been deeply impressed to see how strongly the press and public in Britain had rallied to the side of the League. The prestige of British policy and the prestige of the League, low as both were at that time, had perceptibly risen as a result of Cecil's action at Geneva.

Mussolini himself was doubtless surprised by the weight of opposition which was aroused all over the world and concentrated in the Assembly. In Italy itself, although the press had not yet been completely enslaved to Fascism, serious criticism of foreign policy had ceased: and Mussolini, whose intelligence was keen, but whose knowledge of the world outside Italy was small, had surely not foreseen the storm which gathered over his act of force. Such acts of force had been frequent in the past: they were the privilege and almost the proof of belonging to the category of great powers. The world-wide reaction over Corfu made it plain that the new doctrines of international relations embodied in the Covenant could not be flouted without danger.

The effect was quickly seen in the Italo-Greek conflict itself, where Italian policy changed in a few hours from military display and threats of annexation to the safer paths of diplomatic intrigue. It was seen also in regard to Italy's long quarrel with Yugoslavia for the port of Fiume. The Belgrade government had for some time been considering the reference of this dispute to the Council of the League. For this purpose a necessary first step would be to register with the Secretary-General the

Treaties of Rapallo and Santa Margherita, which embodied the agreements previously reached between the two countries. But Mussolini had announced that the question must be settled by direct negotiation and that he would regard registration of these Treaties as a hostile act. In the first flush of excitement over Corfu, the occupation of which strengthened Italy's strategic position in the Adriatic, there were ominous signs that the Fiume dispute also might in his view be best decided by a threat of violence. This was a much graver danger to peace than the invasion of Corfu, and the anxiety was great. A few days later, however, the situation was completely changed. Mussolini realized that a little more pressure might reverse the French attitude and subject him to a humiliating defeat in the affair of Corfu. On September 12th, 1923, the Treaties of Rapallo and Santa Margherita were presented to the Secretary-General jointly by the Italian and Yugoslav governments. From that moment the negotiation moved forward to a friendly and sensible conclusion; when hitches occurred, the Yugoslav Minister had only to hint that he might be forced to appeal to the League; and it was said with truth that the only direct gainer from the Corfu quarrel had been Yugoslavia.



## PART III

# THE YEARS OF STABILITY

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## 21

### THE TURN OF THE TIDE

*Marking time in the Assembly—Admission of the Irish Free State and of Ethiopia—Canada and Article 10—Rehabilitation of Hungary—The Dawes plan—MacDonald, Herriot, Stresemann—Change in British and French attitude—Russia, Germany, and the League*

(SEPTEMBER 1923—AUGUST 1924)

EACH Assembly meeting had hitherto been a source of strength and encouragement to the young and growing League. The Assembly of 1923 was an unpleasant contrast to those which had gone before. The tension and distress in Europe were deeper than ever. World-wide disapproval had not shaken Poincaré's resolve to force Germany to abandon all resistance; and, in their anxiety to stifle any proposal that the Council should be called upon to break the deadlock, the Quai d'Orsay and the formidable group of journalists who followed its lead adopted an attitude of aggressive hostility towards the League itself. The British government fell back, not for the last time, on the inglorious policy of doing nothing and hoping for the best: having dispatched, in August, a note to Paris and Brussels in which they protested that the Ruhr occupation was both illegal and disastrous, Baldwin and Curzon left for a long holiday in France. The delegations of the lesser States would have been ready to follow with enthusiasm a joint Anglo-French lead or even a resolute lead from London alone. If the chief powers could have agreed on a comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation of Europe, they could still have counted on receiving every possible support and assistance from the rest. The general lines of such a plan were clear enough—Germany to join the League, with a permanent seat on the Council, thus at the same time pledging herself to keep the peace and recovering her due place as a world power; if necessary, additional guarantees of peace between Germany and her neighbours, to be given by Britain and Italy; the reparation question to be submitted to inquiry by independent experts; German economy to be restored by

methods similar to those which had succeeded in Austria and were about to be repeated in Hungary. All these measures were later to be adopted, though not as a coherent whole, and not in time to produce their full effect. They were well understood, and anxiously desired, by many delegations; but none ventured to take the initiative of proposing them. If there were any faint hope that what was already known as 'the atmosphere of Geneva'<sup>1</sup> might yet make it possible to bring them forward, it was crushed, before the Assembly opened, by the new crisis of Corfu.

Since the delegates dared not discuss the Ruhr occupation, and were persuaded by the Council not to discuss the occupation of Corfu lest by so doing they should make a peaceful settlement more difficult, the ordinary work of the session was performed with a sense of frustration and unreality. Two new Members were admitted. The Irish Free State, established, after many tragic events, by the Treaty of December 1921, put forward its request to join the League, and was accepted with universal pleasure. The application of Ethiopia, on the other hand, was much debated. For the last two years a League Committee had been engaged in accumulating information concerning the survival of slavery, in various forms and in various countries. The reports on Ethiopia were appalling, in regard not only to the institution of domestic slavery but also to slave-raiding and the slave-trade. Ras Tafari (later Haile Selassie), son-in-law of the reigning Empress and Regent of Ethiopia, had made some attempt to put an end to these horrors; but his action seemed to be neither determined nor effective. On these grounds the British delegates, supported by Australia and some other Members, urged that Ethiopia's admission should be postponed until she could show proof that the Regent's reforms were producing satisfactory results. The French and Italians, who suspected that the real cause of Britain's opposition was her desire to annex the sources of the Blue Nile, gave Ethiopia strong support. In the end, she was admitted by a unanimous vote, but not until her delegation had been authorized to sign a declaration, whereby the Ethiopian government pledged itself to make special efforts to abolish slavery and the slave-trade. At the same time it formally recognized that the question was not a purely internal one but one on which the League had the right to intervene, and to receive whatever information it might require.

This Assembly witnessed also the climax of a long campaign carried on by Canada against the obligation contained in Article 10 of the Covenant to preserve the territorial integrity of all Members against aggression from without. Canada had disliked this obligation from the first: and, since it had played an important part in influencing American

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 25.



opinion against the ratification of the Covenant, she hoped, by abolishing it, to ease the way for American adhesion later on. At the first two Assemblies the Canadian delegation had tried to cut the Article out of the Covenant altogether. But those Members who feared attack from their neighbours had answered, as Woodrow Wilson had done before them, that Article 10 was the very keystone of the Covenant. At the Assembly of 1923 Canada would have been content with a declaration that, though the Council could, if need be, call upon Members of the League to use their armed forces in case of aggression against a fellow Member, and though each Member must do its best to answer the call, nevertheless the final decision must rest with the individual Member and not with the Council. This was, in fact, the clear meaning of the English text of the Article and the natural interpretation of the French. But many delegations, anxious to do nothing which might weaken the rights and obligations of membership, were unwilling to endorse a formal statement to that effect. When the matter was brought up in full Assembly, the Persian delegation insisted on recording a contrary vote and, under the rule of unanimity, the motion was therefore lost. Some twenty other Members, who sympathized with the Persian view, abstained from voting. The Canadian proposal had none the less received such authoritative support that its essential purpose had been in practice achieved, and not only Canada but other Members could henceforth claim the right to speak the last word as regards the actual employment of their fighting forces.

Amongst its other regrettable features, which included a determined attack by the French upon the budget both of the League and the International Labour Office, the Fourth Assembly showed an increased tendency to bargaining and intrigue in connexion with the Council elections. It had already opened with a surprise, when an unknown Cuban delegate was elected President; this was the first notable success of the regular Cuban representative, Agüero y Bethancourt, whose skill and assiduity in this field won for him the nickname of the Great Elector. In the end, the only change in Council membership was that China lost her seat, not owing to intrigue, but to the evident facts that the Peking government was no more than a façade and that its representative on the Council was personally quite incompetent. The vacancy was filled by Czechoslovakia, and the presence of Beneš added much to the efficiency of the Council's proceedings. Though the outcome of the elections was thus sound enough, they had been preceded by so unpleasant a campaign that the Secretariat decided to propose that they should in future take place in the first days of the Assembly, in order that its later proceedings should not be affected by the log-rolling of the

candidates or their backers. It was not until 1927 that this plan was adopted. Thenceforth, the energies of the Great Elector were diverted from the Council elections to fields of action, such as the choice of presidents and vice-presidents of committees, where they were generally harmless and sometimes useful.

None of the delegates, as they took leave of one another at the close of the Fourth Assembly, could have anticipated the change which was to take place before they met again. The political and economic conditions of Europe were constricted and oppressed by the reparation deadlock and the occupation of the Ruhr. No real progress could be made until Germany had been brought back into normal relations with the rest of the world. It was hardly in dispute that this process could be most effectively carried out through the agency of the League, and that it must necessarily involve Germany becoming a Member of the League. But the aggressive nationalisms of France and Germany, each nourishing the other on a diet of hatred and revenge, were even less prepared for so great a change than they had been two years before. The French were trying to promote the formation of a separate German State in the Palatinate and the Rhineland. In Germany Hitler and Ludendorff were proclaiming racial and militarist theories more savage than the worst excesses of orthodox nationalism; and, though their attempt to set up a government in Munich was easily defeated, their followers were growing in number throughout the country.

Meanwhile the League could do no more than clear up such business as did not directly involve the central problem of reparation. Meetings in Geneva, within the limits thus imposed, were numerous and successful. In October 1923, the first general conference on economic problems held by the League drew up a convention for the simplification of customs formalities. In November, the second general conference of the Communications and Transit Organization agreed upon two important conventions, one on the international regime of railways, the other on the international regime of maritime ports. Germany took part in both conferences. The United States was also present, the State Department having discovered for such cases a formula which made the best of both worlds. Her chief delegate was a diplomatist, authorized only to follow the discussions and keep his government informed; but he was accompanied by a group of experts who were able to influence events behind the scenes, if American interests were involved.

But the most important task performed at this time, both in itself and because of its indirect influence on the German question, was the economic and financial restoration of Hungary. It would be tedious to

relate the details of the complex schemes by which this task was successfully performed. In its technical and financial aspects the problem resembled that of Austria, and its solution followed the precedents which had then been set. But, in the case of Hungary, it was not enough to provide a stable currency, a balanced budget, a foreign loan, and a League Commissioner to supervise the administration of the public finances until normal prosperity was restored. Hungary, unlike Austria, was an active and a disturbing element in the political scene of Central Europe. She felt the humiliation of defeat as bitterly as Germany herself; and lost no occasion of protesting against the territorial losses imposed by the victors. The Little Entente had first been formed in order to combat this dangerous irredentism. Yugoslavs, Czechs, and Roumanians had not forgotten or forgiven the oppression they had suffered under Magyar rule; and, even if they had done so, they still had to guard themselves against the unsleeping resentment of the Magyar nation. But the Council of the League would have been neither willing nor able to assist Hungary in her distress without the consent of her neighbours. It called for some courage and generosity on the part of the Little Entente not only to postpone their claims on Hungarian reparation but also to agree to measures which would, if successful, add to Hungarian strength; though they were individually, and, still more, collectively, superior to her in material resources, they did not possess, like her, the force which comes of national unity and of single-minded purpose. However, they were predisposed to support any action of the League, in which they, perhaps more than any other countries, had placed their hopes; and they agreed to waive their own claims and to join with the chief Allied powers in binding themselves to respect the independence, integrity, and sovereignty of Hungary, on condition that the latter in turn pledged herself to the strict fulfilment of the terms of the Treaty of Trianon, and, in particular, of its provisions for disarmament. This having been agreed, and the necessary negotiations with the Reparation Commission having been brought, after much delay, to a successful conclusion, the various engagements were consigned to two Protocols, signed in Geneva on March 14th, 1924. Thereafter, the course of events in Hungary resembled closely what had happened in Austria eighteen months earlier. The loan was floated without difficulty. Stability and prosperity were re-created even more quickly and completely than had been expected. The League Commissioner in Budapest was Jeremiah Smith, an American banker, whose exceptional qualities soon caused all Hungarians to look upon him as the best friend of their country.

The later stages of the work for Hungarian reconstruction coincided with the labours of the Dawes Committee, whose report was to prove

the decisive turning-point in the history of German reparation. In this long-desired development, the League had no direct concern. The Dawes Committee was appointed by the Reparation Commission: to that Commission it made its report. The subsequent decisions were taken first by Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium, and later by conference between these powers and Germany herself.<sup>1</sup> The organization set up to carry out these decisions, and to settle any differences which might arise, was quite unconnected with any League institution. Indirectly, on the other hand, both the creation and the achievement of the Dawes Committee owed much to the precedents set by the League in Austria and in Hungary. The success of the Financial Committee had given compelling weight to the arguments of those who had long been pressing that Germany's capacity to pay should be investigated by a group of impartial experts. The experts themselves held unofficial consultations with Salter, the chief architect of the plans both for Austria and for Hungary; and, when their report was presented (April 9th, 1924), it was seen that, in so far as the German problem resembled those of Austria and Hungary, in regard, that is to say, to the reorganization of public finance, the same solutions were proposed. The great difference was that, while the League plan had cut out Austrian reparation payments altogether, and reduced those of Hungary to a very small fixed annuity, the Dawes Committee had to plan for the resumption by Germany of payments on a heavy scale. Nor was it within their province to consider, as the League Council had done, the political conditions or consequences of their proposals. These, indeed, were of vital importance. But, for that very reason, it was found necessary to leave them for future consideration. The London conference of July and August 1924 arrived, not without great difficulty, at agreement on the organization of German finance and of future reparation payments. The political settlement, then left aside, was in due course to take the form of the Locarno Treaties and of German membership of the League.

It was not until August 30th, 1924, on the very eve of the Fifth Assembly, that the London Agreements were signed. But in the months that had followed the setting-up of the Dawes Committee in December, the European scene had undergone an extraordinary change for the better—a change in which the chief part was played by three men, Ramsay MacDonald, Edouard Herriot, and Gustav Stresemann. Stresemann was the first of these to take office. He became Chancellor in August 1923: his Chancellorship lasted only a few months, but they were filled with difficulties and dangers enough for a lifetime. In that

<sup>1</sup> The United States was a party to the discussions at each stage, but not to the decisions.

period he had abandoned passive resistance, liquidated a Communist government in Saxony, overcome a dangerous reactionary movement in Bavaria, created the basis of a new German currency. In regard to foreign policy all that his administration could do was to carry on an unequal and humiliating duel with Poincaré. Nevertheless, it was this aspect of statesmanship toward which he was most strongly attracted. When the stormy hundred days of his Chancellorship came to an end, he gladly accepted the office of Foreign Minister in the next government, and retained that office through all vicissitudes until his death six years later.

Ramsay MacDonald combined the functions of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in the first Labour government, which held power in London from January to November 1924. Like nearly all his colleagues, he had no experience of office: and his government, based on a minority in the House of Commons, was daily at the mercy of a united Conservative and Liberal vote. Nevertheless, he imparted to British foreign policy a vigour and decision to which it had long been a stranger. He established diplomatic intercourse with the Soviet government. He instituted tolerable relations with the French, even before the fall of Poincaré, and thereafter joined with Herriot in restoring the old friendship between the two countries. He played an essential part in piloting the London conference on reparation to a successful issue, though the heaviest decisions, and therefore the chief credit, doubtless fell to Herriot and Stresemann. The nations of Europe once again began to look to Britain for leadership and to believe that she intended to make her full contribution to the great task of reconstruction.

Herriot came into power as a result of the general election of May 1924, in which Poincaré suffered a resounding defeat, to the surprise of the diplomatists and journalists, who made the common mistake of judging French opinion by the Paris press. Like the other two, he possessed no solid parliamentary majority; but the great electoral successes of the Radical-Socialist party and the support of the Socialists gave him a clear mandate to carry out the policy on which both had based their campaign, that is to say, to abandon methods of force and to seek French security in friendship with Britain and in the reinforcement of the Covenant. In truth, Poincaré himself had already begun to move in the same direction. He had not merely agreed to the setting up of the Dawes Committee, but had shown his intention of accepting their report; and he had approved the plan for security embodied in the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. But Herriot, a comparatively young man, frank and idealistic, met the former allies and the former enemies of his country, as well as her fellow Members of the League, with a warm-

hearted enthusiasm which was a complete contrast to the cold legalism of his predecessor.

With the coming into power of a Labour government in Britain and a Radical-Socialist government in France, there began a momentous change in the position of the League. Each had announced, as a cardinal point of its appeal to the electorate, that it would reinforce the authority of the League and make the Covenant the keystone of its foreign policy. Each had accused its predecessor, not without justification, of paying lip-service to Geneva but of acting in the spirit, and through the methods, of that outmoded system which had led Europe into war. Each, on assuming office, hastened to affirm its intention of carrying out the promises it had made. 'The League is the way to safety', declared MacDonald, 'we shall do all in our power to develop and strengthen it and to bring other governments to share our conviction.'<sup>1</sup> 'We believe', wrote Herriot, 'that there can be no real peace until France has reinforced and extended the functions of the League and of such international institutions as the Court of Justice at The Hague and the International Labour Office.'<sup>2</sup>

Although Ramsay MacDonald was often inclined to the proclamation of high moral principles without any clear conception of how to put them into practice; and although his impatient and dramatic temperament, like that of Lloyd George, was ill-suited to the impersonal and patient team-work which alone can bring solid results in the international field; yet there is no reason to doubt his sincerity, and still less that of his colleagues and supporters, in promising to base their policy on the League. But his first care was to carry through the *de jure* recognition of Soviet Russia; and throughout the spring and summer he was trying not only to settle the problem of reparation but also to negotiate new and comprehensive agreements with Russia and Egypt. To combine all this with the function of directing, as Prime Minister, the whole activities of an able but inexperienced Cabinet, was too great a burden for any one man. In practice, therefore, he did not as Foreign Secretary devote any great attention to the business of the League. He could not spare the time to attend the meetings of the Council. Indeed, before actually taking office, and without consulting those who had experience of the working of the League, he had invited Lord Parmoor to join his government as Minister in charge of League affairs and British Representative on the Council. This was an unfortunate step. Parmoor was a man of ability, an eminent lawyer, devoted to good causes. But his views

<sup>1</sup> Interview published in *Le Quotidien*, January 27th, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> From his letter of June 2nd, 1924, inviting the Socialist party to take part in his government.

on foreign affairs and on the working of the League were those of religious pacifism. He was over seventy; he possessed no authority in Parliament or in the country; he was not even a member of the Labour party. Such an appointment was altogether inconsistent with the proclaimed intention of the new administration to make the League the main instrument of its foreign policy. And the officials of the Foreign Office, with few exceptions, continued to treat the work of the League as having no essential connexion with the practical business of their profession.

From the first, MacDonald declared that the entry of Germany was necessary for the League and for Germany herself. But he did not definitely commit his government to agreeing that she should become a permanent member of the Council, and this was, if not the only condition laid down by Stresemann, at least the only one which he could legitimately make and the only one which he was sure to maintain. MacDonald further confused the issue by using the same language about Russia as about Germany. It was true that the Soviet government was now less demonstratively hostile to the League than in past years. In January 1924 it had welcomed a visit to Moscow from a delegation of the Health Committee; a member of the Secretariat had addressed the pan-Russian Conference on malaria at length, not on technical matters but on the general subject of the League, and his speech had been received with enthusiasm. A Russian admiral had attended the meeting on naval armaments called by the Assembly of 1923 and held in Rome in February 1924. But for the Vorovsky affair and its sequel, Moscow would have established an official observer in Geneva and would doubtless have accepted invitations to take part in various committees and conferences. Rakovsky, the chief of the Russian delegation in London, spoke publicly about the possibility of joining the League, not indeed in any positive form but without the habitual sarcasm and invective of Chicherin. But if Russia could now look at the League without active hostility, she was far from being ready to face all the consequences and implications of membership. Nor was it certain or even probable that a two-thirds majority of the Assembly would vote for her admission. It was very different with Germany. There was indeed an important minority of Germans who dreamed only of making their country once more the greatest military power in Europe; while at the other extreme, the German Communist party, which, like that of Hitler, won a large number of seats at the elections of May 1924, lost no opportunity of proclaiming its contempt for the League. But the majority parties, and the general weight of opinion, were now anxious that Germany should join the League on conditions of equality with other

great powers; and the League Members in general were equally anxious to welcome her.

The German government, however, still held back from making any clear move, partly from a desire to get the reparation settlement finished before anything else, partly owing to the influence of the powerful group of officials, diplomatists, and soldiers headed by Brockdorff-Rantzau and Maltzan. These men had nothing but hatred for Communism; but they believed themselves sufficiently strong and clever to be able to use Soviet hostility to the West as a lever to restore the power and greatness of their own country. For this purpose it was essential to keep up the greatest possible degree of ill feeling towards the Western democracies on the part of Russia and Germany alike; and they therefore strenuously opposed any policy of reconciliation with France and Britain, such as would be symbolized and consecrated by entry into the League. Stresemann, whose evolution from aggressive nationalism was still far from complete, did not choose to break with this group. MacDonald's speeches provided him with a characteristic manoeuvre. He suggested that Germany might join the League if Russia did so at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

While MacDonald was vaguely talking of world co-operation through the League, and Stresemann pursuing his complicated tactics in internal and external affairs, Herriot lost no time in bringing forward the familiar demand for security. Within three weeks of taking up office, he visited London: and, though his discussions with MacDonald were mainly concerned with the application of the Dawes report and its consequences, the two agreed that they would attend the Assembly in the following September—the first occasion on which the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister of either country had done so. Such a manifestation would naturally increase at least for a time the influence and prestige of the League, which had already risen in consequence of the general attitude of the two governments: it would enhance the authority of the Council and give a fresh impetus to the work of the social and economic organizations. But Herriot at least had much greater plans in mind. Every French government, left or right, was preoccupied above all with the question of national survival. Like Clemenceau, Foch, or Poincaré, Herriot could never forget that if Germany had not had to divide her forces in 1914, Belgium and France would have been overwhelmed in a few weeks. French sentiment was more and more turning to the defensive: the election results expressed the disavowal of militarism and the desire to establish tolerable relations with her dangerous neighbour. But the new government was resolved to guarantee its own frontier

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. *Gustav Stresemann: His Diaries, Letters, and Papers* (London, Macmillan, 1935-40), vol. i, pp. 293, 315.



against sudden attack and to maintain the strength and safety of its natural allies in Central and Eastern Europe. These essential purposes would be furthered, if not ensured, by the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, in particular by the partial alliances which were permitted within its general framework. In announcing that France was ready to accept that Treaty, Herriot had the support of Parliament as well as of the General Staff. And since its rejection by all members of the British Commonwealth destroyed any possibility that the Treaty in its existing form could ever come into effect, Herriot resolved to lay before the Fifth Assembly a plan whereby the British objections might be met, and the stabilization of Europe might rest less heavily upon the shoulders of the French army.

## THE PROTOCOL

*The Assembly as a world parliament—Arbitration, Security, Disarmament  
—Drafting and contents of the Protocol—Briand's first speech—Hostility  
in London*

(SEPTEMBER 1924)

THE gathering in Geneva of the Fifth Assembly was such an occasion as had long been hoped for, but never yet realized. The successful issue of the London conference had created a new confidence. This, it seemed, was at last the true beginning of European peace. Germany had signed the London Agreements of her own free will: France had rejected the policy of force: Britain was joining with energy in the common effort needed for reconstruction and appeasement. Above all, the Assembly presented at last the authentic picture of a world parliament. For the first time in the world's history the men directly responsible for national policy were convened, not in a temporary conference, but in a regular constitutional meeting. Almost every Member of the League had sent the most authoritative representatives it could choose. Herriot and MacDonald came to report the results of their joint action in London, to announce that the next step must be to establish the peace of Europe on the basis of a reinforced League, and to invite the co-operation of their fellow Members to that end. The Foreign Ministers or Prime Ministers of twenty-one European countries were present in Geneva: the delegations from overseas, though for the most part they could hardly include those actually in high office, were led by men who had held it in the recent past and hoped to hold it again. Journalists and politicians flocked to Geneva to report or to watch the proceedings of the Assembly. The local hotels were strained to the breaking-point. Late arrivals, seeking everywhere for rooms, were told that bathrooms and corridors were already being used for the accommodation of delegates and the officials and experts who accompanied them.

In the mingled exhilaration and anxiety of the time, many thought with regret of Woodrow Wilson.<sup>1</sup> Through the last sad years of his life his mind had always been fixed on Geneva; and it seemed a final irony of destiny that he should have died at the very moment when the League was beginning to play a central part in the affairs of the world. But in truth Wilson was little affected by the flux of European politics. To him

<sup>1</sup> President Wilson died on February 3rd, 1924.

only one thing was essential—that his own country should in time assume her place in the League. He died in the unshaken conviction that this great event could not be long delayed, and that the League would thereby be brought to that height of influence and power which would enable it to fulfil its mission.

The serious business of the Assembly began with a speech from MacDonal. He spoke with a vague but ardent pacifism. He seemed to be still wedded to the easy belief that public discussion and appeals to reason and good will were enough to banish the danger of war, and that it was safer not to repeat or make more precise the pledge to resist aggression by which every Member of the League was bound. Two main ideas, not new but urged with new fervour, were pressed upon the Assembly. The first was that Germany must be admitted to the League without delay. The second was that the key to peace was to be found in compulsory arbitration—that the Covenant system must be so extended that every Member should be obliged to submit all disputes to arbitration, and that this should be regarded as the only reliable test of pacific intentions. His speech was deeply disappointing to the French and their friends, who saw in it a fresh proof of how, in Anglo-Saxon minds, isolationism and pacifism, arising from opposite sentiments, yet led towards similar conclusions. Even his admirers could not but ask why, if he cared so much about German membership, he had not even discussed the question with Marx, the Chancellor, and Stresemann during the weeks which they had spent in London; and why, if he believed so profoundly in arbitration, he had refrained from taking the obvious and expected step of signing the Optional Clause of the Court Statute.

Herriot followed with a speech less eloquent but more solid. France, he said, was favourable to the principle of arbitration, and was ready to join in a world-wide disarmament conference. But it was not enough to provide for arbitration: what if the award of the arbitrator were rejected by one party? and, above all, what if that party, having failed to get its way by peaceful means, attempted to do so by force? The Covenant went some way to meet this danger: but the sanctions therein provided needed to be made more precise in their nature and more certain in their operation. Like MacDonal, Herriot paid special tribute to what was known as the American plan—an amended treaty of mutual guarantee drawn up by a group of Americans headed by General Bliss and Professor Shotwell. The essential point of the American plan was that, if once a method of peaceful settlement were provided for every sort of dispute without exception, then the problems of designating the aggressor and setting sanctions in motion would be easily and completely solved. The aggressor would be that State which went to war instead of

submitting its case to arbitration, or, having so submitted its case, went to war rather than comply with the award. On this basis the Council would not have to examine the complicated arguments put forward by each side about the substance of the dispute. It would only have to recognize a simple fact; and, having done so, it would be able, without question and without delay, to call upon all Members of the League to come to the help of the attacked State. On such a basis as this, Herriot concluded, a disarmament conference could succeed. Arbitration, Security, Disarmament, these were the three indispensable factors of stability and peace. But the conference must be called by the League: and surely no country now outside would refuse to attend.

This last observation referred to an idea, then widely current, that the United States might be intending to call a general disarmament conference in Washington. The Commonwealth Members of the League, including Britain, were believed to prefer such a plan: and correspondents in Washington gave the opinion that, if the convocation were sent out by the League, the American government would be offended and would decline to attend. All this, however, was mere conjecture: no official statement had been made by Coolidge or Hughes, either in confirmation or in disavowal of the sentiments attributed to them. In any case, the majority of the Members of the League were now less inclined than in earlier years to await the pleasure of the United States. They had some hopes, which they carefully refrained from expressing, that a Democratic victory in the forthcoming Presidential election might revive the possibility of American membership. John W. Davis, the Democratic candidate, had made unexpectedly strong statements in this sense. But the advice of the many Americans who were devoted supporters of the League was that American opinion was more likely to turn in the desired direction if the Council and Assembly went forward as best they could in fulfilment of the Covenant, than if they reiterated their appeal to the United States to come over and help them.

On German membership Herriot spoke, as was natural, with less fervour than MacDonald. But his language was calm and conciliatory and, though it did not altogether satisfy German opinion, it could only be reasonably understood as an encouragement to the legitimate demands of Stresemann—that Germany should not be required to make any new formal pledge to fulfil the Treaty of Peace and that she should become at once a permanent Member of the Council.

The debate started by MacDonald lasted three days. It showed that the overseas members of the British Commonwealth were enthusiastic for disarmament; that the former neutrals and the Latin American

Members were enthusiastic not for disarmament only but also for compulsory arbitration; while the European States which had suffered most profoundly in the war declared themselves favourable both to disarmament and to compulsory arbitration, on condition that full effect was also given to the third element in Herriot's triple formula. They urged that the security provided by the Covenant was not enough. It did not forbid all wars; and, in the case of those wars which it did forbid, the help which it promised to the victim of aggression was uncertain and slow.

It was a surprise and a shock to many supporters of the League to learn that there existed what now began to be called a 'gap in the Covenant', and that Members of the League had not renounced all right of going to war otherwise than in self-defence. Leaving aside all legal niceties, the gap may be thus described. If a Member of the League, being in dispute with another country, should have duly submitted the case to the Council; if then the Council, excluding the parties, should have proved unable to make a unanimous recommendation for the settlement of the dispute; and if the Member in question should have waited three months after the Council had acknowledged its failure; then it could, without violating the Covenant, proceed to enforce its claim by war. The makers of the Covenant had considered it infinitely unlikely that such a combination of contingencies could ever occur. Nothing in the experience of the League, then or later, suggested that they were mistaken. Already in 1924 some delegations, such as those of Italy and Holland, were urging that the Covenant contained all necessary safeguards if it were carried out with firmness of purpose. But, however improbable in practice, it was undeniable in theory that a war might break out in which the Members of the League could not be asked to intervene. The French and their supporters made much of this argument to show that the system of the Covenant required reinforcement before any States which were exposed to danger could be expected to reduce their armed forces. With questionable wisdom, they chose to throw doubt on the adequacy of the Covenant, and to propose new measures, rather than to try and make certain that the Members of the League, including the British Commonwealth, would act promptly and resolutely on their Covenant obligations.

After hearing the views of other delegations, MacDonald and Herriot drew up a joint resolution, in which they invited the Assembly to prepare for the summoning of a general Disarmament Conference by making a fresh study—based primarily on the Covenant but also on the Treaty of Mutual Assistance and the American plan—of arbitration on the one hand and of guarantees of security on the other. In this

suggestion, as in all the negotiations that followed it, could be traced the skilful hand of Beneš—Beneš, of whom more than of any other European Minister it could be said that he knew exactly what he wanted and that what he wanted was in full harmony with the purposes of the League. It was received with enthusiasm by the Assembly. Every delegation was glad to see Anglo-French differences reconciled on a basis, not of selfish national interest, but of constructive work for peace.

There followed four weeks of intensive discussion, carried on for the most part by a committee of twelve members under the chairmanship of Beneš. Their meetings often lasted far into the night, and those who had been present at the Peace Conference were vividly reminded of the long sessions at the Hotel Crillon in which the text of the Covenant had been drawn up. Like Wilson's Committee, they worked with extraordinary concentration, with frankness, good temper, and a sincere desire to reach agreement. Unlike that Committee, and indeed unlike any similar committee in the whole history of the League, they threw off the artificial courtesies of diplomatic usage: they were frequently to be seen in shirt-sleeves, and to be heard addressing one another by their surnames alone. Another group, with the Greek delegate Politis in the chair, was simultaneously engaged on the problems involved by the principle of compulsory arbitration. The enunciation of this principle in general terms by MacDonald and Herriot had been received with applause: it was a different matter to convert it into the practical and definite terms of a binding treaty. The texts prepared by the two groups were then combined in a single document; revised and amended by further committees, in which all delegations were represented; and finally laid before the Assembly by Beneš and Politis. This document was thereafter known as the Protocol of Geneva.<sup>1</sup>

The Protocol of Geneva was a highly ingenious, and, as many thought, a highly successful attempt to translate into a formal system the formula, Arbitration, Security, Disarmament. It was clear that, if the system were to have any chance of acceptance, it must not depart from the essential lines of the Covenant: and the appellation 'protocol' was chosen as indicating that the new treaty was no more than a development of that instrument by which all concerned were already bound. In truth, the founders of the League had foreseen each part of the triple formula. The Covenant insisted on arbitration or other peaceful method of settlement for every dispute: all that remained was to close the gap whereby, if the Council were divided, the use of force would in theory become legitimate. The Covenant provided security in so far as every Member was pledged to maintain the independence of the rest against

<sup>1</sup> Its official title was 'Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes'.

external aggression, and to apply sanctions against any State which went to war in defiance of the Council or the Assembly; all that remained was to ensure that these sanctions should be prompt and effective. The Covenant called for the reduction of armaments: on this point no new conditions were required, but the Council must be encouraged to fulfil as soon as possible its onerous duty of drawing up a general plan for adoption by all Members of the League.

We shall indicate briefly how the authors of the Protocol dealt with each of these three points of their task.

*Arbitration.* The intention of the Protocol was to make it impossible for any dispute to be left open. Every signatory was to adhere to the Optional Clause of the Court Statute, so that all cases of a judicial character would be submitted to settlement by the Court at the request of either party. Any dispute not submitted to the Court or to some other form of arbitration was to be brought before the Council. If then the Council were unanimous, its decision was binding. If the Council were divided, the parties were not thereby, as in the Covenant, set free to go to war three months later: on the contrary, it was here that compulsory arbitration, in the full sense of the words, was provided by the Protocol. The Council was bound to appoint arbitrators: the disputing States were bound to submit their case to the arbitrators so appointed, and to abide by their decision.

*Security (or Sanctions).* Any State which chose to make war rather than submit its dispute to arbitration, or rather than carry out the arbitrators' award, would, unless the Council unanimously decided otherwise, be considered as the aggressor. Thereupon, it became the duty of all signatories of the Protocol to co-operate in supporting the Covenant, in resisting the aggressor, and in helping the attacked State. They pledged that their co-operation should be 'loyal and effective'; but they retained control of their own forces and were bound to help only so far as their geographical position and the condition of their armaments allowed them to do so. One further provision in this section of the Protocol is of special interest, inasmuch as it anticipates an important article of the Charter of the United Nations. The Council was authorized to receive special undertakings from Members of the League stating exactly what military, naval and air forces they would hold ready to bring into action immediately in support of the Covenant or of the Protocol.

*Disarmament.* The signatories of the Protocol agreed to take part in a Disarmament Conference to be convened in Geneva by the Council on June 15th, 1925. All countries were to be invited. During the intervening period, the Council was to prepare a programme of reduction and limitation for approval by the Conference. The Protocol would only

come into force when the Conference had adopted a general plan for reduction: and, if the Council should find that this plan was not being carried out, it was to have power to declare the Protocol null and void.

It was later suggested that the mere fact of having accepted, with no dissentient vote, an elaborate text on the most difficult of all problems after less than a month of discussion was enough to prove the superficial and irresponsible character of the proceedings of the Fifth Assembly. This reproach was unfounded. The delegates worked fast because the subject of their debates had been exhaustively studied by the Assembly, the Council, or the Temporary Mixed Commission. So far from being irresponsible, they were the holders, present, past, or future, of the highest offices of State. They included the Foreign Ministers of most of the countries of Europe. The spokesmen of the great powers—Arthur Henderson, Briand and Paul-Boncour, Salandra, Schanzer and Scialoja, Ishii—all had been, or were soon to be, Prime Ministers or Foreign Ministers. The same was true of the chief Latin American delegates—Afranio de Mello Franco of Brazil, Enrique Villegas of Chile, Guani of Uruguay. Australia, Canada, and the Irish Free State were represented by Cabinet Ministers: India by Lord Hardinge, a former Viceroy, who had also been head of the British Foreign Office. That these men were inspired by a wave of constructive enthusiasm, felt far more strongly in Geneva than in the majority of their national capitals, was certainly true. That they were irresponsible or unrealistic was as certainly false: nor would it be hard to argue that, if blindness there were, it was not in Geneva where the Protocol was made, but in those capitals where it was rejected.

The final drafting of the Protocol was held up for a few anxious days by the Japanese delegation. The new draft, like the Covenant, excluded from arbitration any question lying within the domestic jurisdiction of one of the parties. Would this prevent Japan from asking the League to intervene on behalf of her nationals in China, or from protesting against the humiliations inflicted on her by the American immigration laws? The solution of this, as of many another practical problem, was found in Article 11 of the Covenant: the Assembly was unanimous in holding that, though compulsion and sanctions could not be used to force any State to change its internal legislation, nevertheless the Council had both the power and the duty to consider any question whatever by which peace was endangered.

This and all lesser difficulties having been settled, it was with much optimism and self-satisfaction that the Assembly gathered, on October 1st, 1924, to receive the finished text of the Protocol. It was accompanied by explanatory reports from Beneš and Politis—documents



which, by common consent, must be regarded as among the classical expositions of international organization. Optimism was natural enough; for among the delegations there was far wider and more complete agreement on the Protocol than had ever been seen upon any question of comparable importance. It was, of course, impossible to adopt it in a form which committed all Members of the League there and then to accept it. But the resolution which was proposed, and was carried by the unanimous vote of forty-eight delegations, was very different, both in substance and in tone, from that which had been voted by the previous Assembly in connexion with the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. In the first place, the delegations recommended that the Members of the League should give earnest attention to the possibility of accepting the Protocol. Secondly, they decided that the Protocol should at once be open for signature by all those whose governments had already made up their minds to sign it. Thirdly, they asked the Council to convene a world-wide Disarmament Conference for the following June, and in the meantime to draw up a general programme of reduction and limitation. Fourthly, they asked that the expert committees of the League should set to work on plans for the effective use of financial and economic sanctions, as provided in the Covenant. Fifthly, they recommended that every Member of the League should adhere to the Optional Clause of the Court Statute.

Almost the first speaker, when these resolutions were submitted, was Briand—the first occasion on which the Assembly listened to the man whose speeches were to move it more deeply than any other. He had shown no interest in the League during his premiership, or during the years he had spent in opposition. But now his experience of the Council and Assembly had lit a fire of enthusiasm in a mind in which scepticism and generosity had long contended for mastery. In announcing to the Assembly that he was authorized to sign the Protocol in the name of France, he added that this was the most memorable event in his political career. His conduct for the next seven years was to prove the profound sincerity of that surprising declaration.

On the following day, the resolution was voted, and the Protocol opened for signature. Nine other countries signed besides France, including Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Portugal. Meanwhile, the speeches made in the Assembly seemed to show that the prospects of general acceptance were good. The European ex-neutrals were as favourable to the Protocol as they had been frankly hostile to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay gave enthusiastic support. Henderson and Parmoor did not hide their regret at not being allowed to sign by the side of France: all they could do was

to declare their own unreserved approval of the Protocol and their hope that the British government would sign it in the near future. Scialoja and Ishii spoke in the same sense for Italy and Japan. From only one delegation, Canada, came the expression of doubts and hesitations which, though not in themselves negative, sounded so amidst the general chorus of agreement. Canada, said Senator Dandurand, is all for compulsory arbitration and for disarmament: and, like many Canadian spokesmen before and since, he described with pride the total demilitarization of her southern frontier from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But on security, that is to say, on pledging assistance to the victim of aggression, she must think twice. She asked for no help herself; could she, in the absence of the United States, promise her help in keeping the peace in Europe? It was here that Dandurand used the famous simile 'in this association of Mutual Insurance against fire, the risks assumed by the different States are not equal. We live in a fire-proof house, far from inflammable materials.' In substance, the effect of Dandurand's speech was not to reject the Protocol, but to reserve judgement until the members of the British Commonwealth should have had the time to reflect upon its consequences among themselves, and to take stock of its bearing on relations with the United States. It was not yet certain that MacDonald's government as a whole was prepared to follow the lead of Henderson and Parmoor. Further, that government was not expected to be long-lived; and there were many signs of dislike for the Protocol among the Conservative party. Throughout the Assembly the most moderate Conservative organs had abandoned their usual tone of cautious encouragement of the League. They had joined in spreading a story that the Protocol would transfer control of the navy from the British government to the Council of the League. For a week or more this invention filled the columns of the press, without any steps being taken by the Foreign Office to deny it: and, though it was eventually shown to be totally unfounded, it had created for the time being a definite condition of antagonism between London and Geneva. Although, therefore, the Protocol had the complete approval of the British delegation, and also of Hardinge, there was much doubt as to what the final attitude of the government was likely to be. With the United States and Russia outside the League, with Germany still negotiating about the conditions of her admission, with the reaction from internationalism which was evident in London; the fundamental question was still unsolved—would the greatest powers accept the responsibilities of organized peace, or would they still hope to enjoy security without paying the price?

## GERMANY STILL HESITATING

*Decision to 'aim at entering the League'—Stresemann's conditions—The Council's reply*

(SEPTEMBER 1924—MARCH 1925)

RAMSAY MACDONALD came to Geneva without having had any official conversation with Stresemann on the subject of a German application to join the League, or even having discussed it with Herriot. He could not be unaware that such a step involved momentous decisions for Germany and France alike: yet he seemed to suppose that the frequent references in his speeches to the desirability of German membership would suffice to ensure the prompt arrival of a German request. It was by now taken for granted by the general mass of opinion in the English-speaking countries that Germany was anxious to join and would have joined long since but that the League organs themselves, dominated by French wire-pullers, had refused to give her the encouragement she needed. It was true that at the First Assembly Germany would have willingly asked for admission, had it not been certain that, under Franco-British influence, her application would have been rejected. It was less true at the Second Assembly: and, in 1922 and 1923, Germany was well aware that she could be sure of admission to the League and election to the Council, if not without opposition, at least by great majorities. Yet she had held her hand. Now, at the Fifth Assembly, she had reason to expect that she would not only be admitted by unanimous vote, but also made a permanent Member of the Council. And still, in spite of growing pressure from many sides, more especially from the moderate parties at home, Marx and Stresemann let the first three weeks of the Assembly pass without making a move.

Stresemann was playing a complicated game of internal politics, the object of which was to carry with him the German Nationalist party. The members of that powerful group, selfish, vindictive, and cowardly, were profoundly opposed to his desire to reach some understanding with the democratic powers. Their mentality was sufficiently shown by the fact that they put forward Admiral von Tirpitz as candidate for the Chancellorship in place of Marx. They announced their irrevocable hostility to the Dawes plan: and, with Communist and Nazi support, they could defeat the London Agreements, which had perforce to be

submitted to the Reichstag. The Democratic parties were delighted at this situation. They knew that the country was overwhelmingly favourable to the plan. Let the government put it to the vote. If the Nationalists carried out their threat, a new election would follow; all the parties which had voted against accepting the plan would lose many seats, while the Nazis would probably disappear from the Reichstag altogether. If, as was more probable, the Nationalists decided to abstain, or to vote for ratification, their reputation and influence would suffer decisively. Stresemann, however, preferred to buy their support; and the price which he and Marx consented to pay was not only to give them a share in the government, but also to promise that the acceptance of the London Agreements should be accompanied by a new official denunciation of Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, by which Germany acknowledged her own and her Allies' responsibility for the war.

The world in general had long come to think that the causes of the war were too profound and too complex to be summed up in a few lines. As for the Germans, finding that few people now agreed with the full implications of Article 231, they had, by a characteristic process, reached the conviction that Germany had been the innocent victim of the imperialism of her rivals. Stresemann fully shared this sentiment; and thought that the declaration which he had promised to make might conveniently be combined with the first formal statement of Germany's attitude towards joining the League. He found, however, that this suggestion aroused deep resentment among all the Allies, while the moderates in Germany considered that his promise had been a blunder and that to act on it at that moment would be a worse one. For ten days a tea-cup storm raged in the German press, during which Stresemann's reputation for truthfulness was not enhanced. All this would have mattered little at any other time. But its effect was to prevent what had been most hoped for at Geneva—that a German application might arrive at the moment when MacDonald and Herriot were giving new energy and confidence to the League. If Germany could have seized that occasion by the hand, accepted the obligations and acquired the rights of League membership, joined in the making of the Protocol, would not the whole problem of European security have been suddenly within sight of its solution?

Such hopes were not destined to fulfilment. The question had once more, to the indignation of the Democratic parties in Germany, become a matter of bargaining between right-wing leaders, in which the officials of the Wilhelmstrasse were happy to join; while the Soviet government, doubtless encouraged thereto by Brockdorff-Rantzau, did its best to delay decision, and the nationalist press foretold that Germany would

be forced to fight against Russia in the name of the Covenant. Geneva waited. Nansen, who was never one for waiting, went himself to see Marx and tried to persuade him that all these difficulties were purely artificial. It was not until September 23rd, when the Assembly was drawing to its close, that the expected announcement was made in Berlin—an announcement prudent both in form and substance. It stated that the Cabinet was now unanimous in holding that Germany should aim at entering the League at an early date. Some conversations on the subject with other powers had already taken place. Now the Foreign Minister would be definitely instructed to start negotiations individually with all Members of the League so as to make sure that they accepted the conditions on which Germany must insist before putting forward a formal request for admission. One of these conditions was that Germany should at once receive a permanent seat on the Council. The rest remained secret; the communiqué merely observing that they related to questions inseparably connected with that of joining the League.

It need scarcely be added that this plan for circumventing the normal procedure of the Covenant by undertaking separate negotiations with fifty-four individual States instead of awaiting the vote of the Assembly was due to the ingenuity of a member of the Reich's diplomatic service—in this case of Dr Adolf Müller, German Minister in Berne.<sup>1</sup>

In the end, however, Stresemann contented himself with addressing a memorandum to each of the ten Members of the Council, asking them to state their attitude in regard to four points which the German government considered it necessary to clear up before it could make a formal request for admission to the League. Germany must be assured of receiving immediately a permanent seat on the Council. She must be allowed, in view of her disarmed and defenceless condition, to take no part in the economic or military sanctions against an aggressor provided in Article 16 of the Covenant. She must not be asked to repeat under any form the admission of responsibility for the war, which had been forced upon her by the Treaty of Versailles. Finally, she would expect in due course to be given a share in the mandatory system of the League.

Of the four conditions, the first was accepted by all concerned, and the answers given were satisfactory to Germany: neither in Geneva nor, as it seems, in Berlin was it perceived at that moment that the question was incomplete, inasmuch as it was possible for a Council Member to declare itself in favour of a permanent seat for Germany without disclosing its intention of demanding, at the same time, a similar privilege

<sup>1</sup> *Stresemann Papers*, vol. i, p. 458.

for itself or for some other State. The third condition presented no difficulty: no one, except the Germans themselves, had ever wished to connect the question of Germany's admission to the League with that of war guilt. The fourth could be answered in terms as vague and non-committal as those in which it was stated.

The second condition, on the other hand, raised formidable difficulties. It was clear enough that Germany, whose military, naval, and air forces had been reduced to the minimum, could not reasonably be called on to employ those forces in resisting an attack made upon some other Member of the League. But she asked much more than this: to be allowed to remain completely neutral, neither applying economic and financial sanctions nor permitting passage across her territory to troops taking part in the measures decided upon by the Council. Other disarmed States, Austria, Bulgaria, and Hungary, had made no such demand. Even Switzerland had accepted the obligation of sharing in the common action, so far as economic sanctions were concerned. The French quickly replied that, in their view, Germany ought to enter the League on an equal footing with other Members, enjoying the same rights and undertaking the same obligations. Other Council Members answered in the same sense. They also pointed out that the question was one to be judged by the League as a whole, not by individual Members. This suggestion was taken up by Stresemann. In a formal letter addressed to the Secretary-General on December 12th, 1924, he transmitted the text of the note he had sent to the Council powers, and declared that the answers of those powers had given satisfaction to Germany except in regard to the problem of sanctions. Now, therefore, he desired to lay that problem before the League itself. Germany, disarmed and defenceless, was surrounded by countries which maintained great and powerfully equipped armies. She was anxious to take her full share in fulfilling the ideals of the League. But if, in joining the League, she were to be obliged to participate in any degree in coercive action against an aggressor, she must expect to be treated as an enemy, to see her territory invaded and her soil become the battlefield of Europe. Even when a general disarmament treaty had been adopted by the League, the other Members would certainly not reduce their forces to the same level as those of Germany; and the obligation to allow the passage of troops and to take part in measures of blockade would still involve far greater dangers for Germany than for others. Neutrality was the last defence of a disarmed people. Could not the League understand these fears and find a way to remove them?

The note to the League was a characteristic product of Stresemann's diplomacy. Moderate and dignified in its language, it was sympatheti-

cally received abroad. Memories of the Ruhr obscured the fact that its picture of a peace-loving, helpless Germany, on which her smaller neighbours could trample without danger to themselves, was singularly far from reality. Within the Reich, it was enough to ease the pressure from those who blamed the Government for not applying for League membership during the Assembly—a pressure which Stresemann resented much more than the attacks of the Nationalist party. Meanwhile, it postponed the moment when a definite step would have to be taken, in defiance not only of the Nationalists but also of Moscow, whose spokesmen multiplied their threats, warnings, and expostulations. And at the same time it emphasized once more the fact that in German minds the inequality of armaments was a standing barrier to the resumption of normal relations with the other powers.

At its first meeting after the reception of the German note, the Council decided to send a provisional reply to Berlin. The question, if pressed by Germany, could be authoritatively answered only by the Assembly. But the Secretariat urged that, if nothing were done till the autumn, the Reich government might well be offended; and the Assembly itself might not be able to reach the final stage of voting for the admission of Germany. The whole Council was now anxious to clinch the affair. For years the only serious opposition, so far as the League was concerned, had come from France: and French opinion had swung far across to the other side. Geneva was now the central point of French policy: no plan for European security, whether in the form of the Protocol or of a Rhineland pact, was acceptable to France unless Germany became a Member of the League. Accordingly, the Council's note to Berlin (March 14th, 1925) was friendly and cordial. It could not agree that Germany, after joining the League, should stand completely aside from any common measures which might be taken in case of war. The whole structure of the League would be undermined if one of its chief Members, with a permanent seat on the Council, were to remain neutral when the rest were acting in defence of the Covenant. But the note gave many reasons why Germany need not fear that any excessive demands would be made; and closed by expressing the Council's sincere wish to see Germany sharing in its labours and so playing, in the organization of peace, a part corresponding to her position in the world.

If doubts about Germany's participation in sanctions had been the real reason for Stresemann's delay in applying for membership of the League, this note from the Council would have proved decisive. It did, in fact, give pleasure in Berlin, and so acute an observer as D'Abernon recorded in his diary that the matter might now be considered as nearly settled. But the whole complex of questions connected with European

security, the Protocol, and the entry of Germany into the League had, in the meantime, taken a new turn. On the one hand, the Protocol had been rejected by the whole British Commonwealth. On the other, a beginning had been made with the negotiations which were to end in the signature of the Locarno Treaties.



THE REJECTION OF THE PROTOCOL;  
THE LOCARNO TREATIES

*The British Commonwealth rejects the Protocol—Stresemann's new proposal—German, British, and French views on Germany's eastern frontier—The Sixth Assembly—The Locarno Treaties*

(NOVEMBER 1924—OCTOBER 1925)

FROM the first it was clear that the fate of the Protocol would depend upon the attitude of Britain. France was fully committed to accepting it. Italy and Japan were ready to sign if the British government gave the example, but would certainly not do so if that government held aloof. If these four adhered to the Protocol, it was reasonably certain that they would be followed in due course not only by the nineteen States which actually signed it but by the great majority of their fellow Members.

It is probable that MacDonalld himself, in face of the strong objections of the Dominions, would have had to reject the Protocol or at least to propose important amendments. But the question was never put to the test. A few days after the Assembly, being defeated in Parliament on a matter of small importance, he decided to appeal to the country. The result was a clear victory for the Conservative party, and in November 1924 the Labour government was replaced by a Conservative administration under Baldwin. The fate of the Protocol was now sealed. The new government took no precipitate action. The Prime Minister was well disposed to the League. Cecil and Balfour were Members of the Cabinet. Austen Chamberlain, the new Foreign Secretary, had not hitherto been much concerned with foreign policy; he knew little of the League, but he was anxious to co-operate as closely as possible with the French. Although, therefore, the government was in fact resolved not to accept the Protocol—and in this opinion both Balfour and Cecil concurred—it preferred to take no formal decision on the question until it had consulted the Commonwealth Members of the League. The Dominion Prime Ministers declined to attend a special conference the result of which was a foregone conclusion: but each reported that his government was convinced that the Protocol as it stood was dangerous to the Commonwealth. It permitted foreign interference in their domestic policies; it increased the danger of their becoming involved in war over European frontiers; it stabilized for ever a territorial *status quo*

which public opinion considered unjust; it took the navy away from its true function of imperial defence; it might lead to ill feeling between Britain and the United States, and it would wipe out whatever chance there might be that the latter would one day enter the League.

All these objections except the last might have disappeared on a more careful study of the Protocol. But it was true, at least in theory, that its terms increased the possible cases in which the navy might be used to prevent commercial intercourse between the United States and some power guilty of aggression; and this was a reflection of overwhelming gravity to Britain and the Dominions alike. It has since become known that the British Ambassador in Washington was instructed to ask the Secretary of State whether he could make any helpful suggestion on the subject, and was told in uncompromising terms that the United States might be expected to insist on maintaining the full rights of neutrality.<sup>1</sup>

Thus at the thirty-third session of the Council, in March 1925, Austen Chamberlain was ready to announce formally his government's rejection of the Protocol. The real reasons were four: the opposition of the Commonwealth Members, fear of trouble with the United States, a reluctance to underpin the territorial settlement of Eastern Europe, and the deep-seated dislike of the Foreign Office for compulsory arbitration. None of these reasons, however, appeared in the statement which Chamberlain read to the Council, criticizing the actual terms of the Protocol with a verbal felicity and dialectical skill, which revealed unmistakably the master-hand of Balfour. To the delight of the audience, Balfour's arguments were answered in the same strain by Briand, perhaps the only man in Europe capable of doing so. But Chamberlain, Briand, their colleagues, and the press knew very well that the question was no longer open to discussion and that the Protocol was dead.

Unlike most of the Dominions, the British government refused to consider the possibility of amending the Protocol. Chamberlain's reasons were weighty enough. They were approved by the general sense of public opinion. Yet it is impossible not to compare his refusal of all new commitments in 1925 with those spontaneously undertaken by his brother as Prime Minister in 1939. 'For the Polish corridor', wrote Austen Chamberlain, 'no British Government ever will or ever can risk the bones of a British grenadier'.<sup>2</sup> Fourteen years later, Neville Chamberlain gave Poland a guarantee that if she were compelled to defend herself against a German attack, or to go to war because of any threat, direct or indirect, against her independence or security, she would

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1925, vol. i, pp. 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of February 16th, 1925, quoted in Sir C. Petrie, *Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain* (London, Cassell, 1940), vol. ii, p. 259.

receive immediate and full support from Britain. In 1925 the British government shrank from any risk of having to fight for the security of Eastern Europe under conditions which ensured that, if fight it must, it would do so with all the League on its side and with the sentence of the Court or of the Council to prove that it was defending a just cause. In 1939, that same government pledged itself to fight, with only one ally, on no other condition than that Poland should consider it necessary to take up arms. If it had been ready, in earlier years, to honour fully the obligations of League membership, would it have been driven to accept, too late, commitments more onerous and dangerous than were ever contemplated under the Covenant?

Even before the formal decision to reject the Protocol had been taken, Chamberlain had been looking for some easier way of reducing the fear of future war which was preventing disarmament and hindering economic recovery; and had found it in the plan, beloved of British diplomats from the days of Lord Lansdowne, of a defensive alliance with France. Such an alliance was not likely to be approved by British opinion. It was far, also, from meeting the anxieties of the French, who plainly foresaw that the danger would lie in an attack by Germany not upon her western neighbours but upon Poland or Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, Herriot and Briand would doubtless have closed with the offer, once they were convinced that they must abandon the hopes they had placed in the Protocol. However, on January 20th, 1925, while the British were in theory still making up their minds on this latter subject, Stresemann put forward his famous suggestion for a Rhineland pact, whereby Germany, France, Britain, and Italy should jointly guarantee the inviolable character of the Franco-German frontier. Chamberlain's first reaction was to put the proposal aside until his scheme for an Anglo-French alliance had been realized. But, on second thoughts, he saw the immense superiority of the German suggestion. That Germany should of her own free will reaffirm her acceptance not only of the loss of Alsace and Lorraine but also of the demilitarization of the Rhineland; that Britain and Italy should jointly guarantee a reciprocal promise of non-aggression between France and Germany—would not the peace of Western Europe be better secured by such acts as these than by any ordinary alliance? And for his countrymen they were also a far more acceptable alternative to the Protocol than any alliance could be, since British opinion still believed that Germany needed protecting against France much more than France against Germany.

Once convinced of the advantages of the German offer, Chamberlain devoted himself whole-heartedly to the conclusion of a Rhineland

pact. The speech in which he informed the Council of the British view of the Protocol closed with the suggestion that security and disarmament could best be achieved by promoting special arrangements between those powers whose relations with one another were most important for the preservation of peace. And, in the months that followed, the Locarno pacts were gradually elaborated between the German, French, and British governments, with the acquiescence of Italy and Belgium. The success of these long negotiations was in large measure due to Briand, who became Foreign Minister in April 1925. Briand was more conciliatory in spirit and more fertile in resource than any other European statesman. The difficulty of his position was the same as that of all French ministers of the time. Germany was ready to declare that she accepted her western frontiers as permanently settled; but she would make no such statement in regard to her frontiers in the east. Similarly, Britain and Italy were willing to guarantee the western frontier but not the eastern. To France such a distinction seemed deceptive. The phrase 'peace is indivisible' had not yet been coined. But the French were convinced that war in Eastern Europe could not possibly fail to involve the West—not only because they had concluded defensive alliances with Poland and Czechoslovakia, but because German expansion eastward and southward would be the prelude to an attempt to recover the military hegemony of the continent. Briand perceived that the only solution to this problem was to be found in the Covenant. He insisted, therefore, throughout the negotiations that German membership of the League must be a basic element in the new pact. And, having won this point, he devoted the rest of his life to strengthening the League, in which he saw at once the fulfilment of a great ideal and the best guarantee of his country's safety.

On the German side, Stresemann conducted the negotiations under the shadow of continual opposition. The Nationalists formed part of the government majority, held important offices in the Cabinet, and dictated a financial policy which sacrificed the common interest for the benefit of the landowners. Yet they shrank from no intrigue which might bring about the fall of Stresemann and the failure of his negotiations with the Western powers. In this they were supported by all the influence which the Russian government and its friends in Germany were able to exert. At one moment it seemed that they would also receive decisive support from an unexpected direction. Ebert, the first President of the German Republic, died in February: the right-wing parties persuaded Hindenburg to stand for the presidency; and the 77-year-old Field-Marshal was elected by a small majority over Marx, the candidate of the Centre party. The opinions of the *alter Herr* were

naturally conservative and monarchical. Like nearly all military leaders on both sides, he had nothing but contempt for the League; and he looked with distaste upon negotiations for a settlement which involved Germany becoming a Member. But he did not intervene in the proceedings; and Stresemann and Luther were able to carry through their policy, defeating the Nationalists, whom they flattered and courted, with the help of the Social-Democrats, whom they did everything to discourage and frustrate.

It would seem, so far as one can discern Stresemann's motives amid the tortuous contradictions of his acts and words, that he still wished to avoid, or at least postpone, German entry into the League. The ideals of the Covenant, the potential development of the League, had not at that time begun to arouse his interest. He saw the practical advantages of being able to take part, as a member of the Council, in decisions on political or economic questions, particularly in matters which directly concerned Germany—Danzig, the Saar, the rights of German minorities or the application of the mandates system to the former German colonies. But he would have preferred that such matters should be dealt with by the great powers, without the presence of Poles, Czechs, Latin Americans, or other representatives of States whose *Kultur* was inferior to that of Germany. Above all, he feared to sacrifice in any degree his freedom to work and plan for the overthrow of the territorial settlement as between Germany and Poland.

To recover from Poland the lost districts of Upper Silesia, Posen, and Pomerania, to bring Danzig back into the Reich and wipe out the corridor which separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany—these were the fixed aims of all Germans. They could not often be frankly proclaimed by responsible statesmen; but they were never absent from their minds, and governed, openly or secretly, all their acts of foreign policy—their commercial quarrels with Poland, their encouragement to the German minority to make the most of every cause of complaint, their reluctance to allow the Danzig government to find a *modus vivendi* with Warsaw. Not until six months before the outbreak of the Second World War was this conflict clearly brought into the forefront. But for twenty years it had lain close beneath the surface. The statesmen of Europe recognized it as the greatest and most dangerous threat to world peace; but most of them judged it safest to avert their eyes and hope that the storm might never break.

Through nearly the whole of that period successive French governments declared that the frontiers laid down by treaty were inviolable, and could not be changed without Polish consent. This attitude was naturally supported by the Little Entente, whose own frontiers were

settled by the Treaties of Peace. Poland herself refused to admit that there was any possible question for discussion. Italy, Austria, and Hungary, for their own purposes, tended to encourage the claim for revision. Other Members of the League, particularly the Commonwealth Members, desired above all to remain outside the controversy. In Britain, there was an inclination to sympathize with Germany. The frontiers drawn in Paris constituted, in the judgement of most impartial students, a sincere effort to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the majority of the populations concerned. But the profound conviction of all Germans, that the result was an intolerable injustice to Germany, had produced its due effects on British opinion: and no one asked how much that conviction was based on the sentiment that it could never be just to allow Germans to be ruled by representatives of an inferior race. The thought of being committed to take part in a war for the preservation of the *status quo* in Eastern Europe was one which neither people nor government was prepared to face, partly because of doubts as to the justice of the existing settlement, partly because Poland herself had alienated public sympathy by her greed and pugnacity in the days of Zeligowski and Korfanty, partly because it seemed certain that Germany, Russia, or both together would be strong enough in due time to take what they wanted in spite of all opposition. Yet the government must have known that the *status quo* in the East could not be upset without a war which would inevitably involve the West; nor had it the right to forget that those frontiers were the result of treaties in which it (like the government of the United States) had had a full share of responsibility, or that it was already committed by the Covenant to maintain them against external aggression.

These latter considerations had led Cecil, the most clear-sighted statesman of the time, to propose the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, with its pyramid of general, continental, and regional agreements for the prevention of aggression. In MacDonald's rejection of that Treaty, and in his successor's rejection of the Protocol, the opposite sentiment had prevailed, and it continued to prevail. When, therefore, Stresemann, while offering a permanent guarantee of the Franco-German frontier, refused to consider any similar system in the East, his plan came to be recognized by Chamberlain as representing exactly what the British government desired. To Briand it seemed no more than a small part of what was desired by France. France accepted it on condition that Germany should enter the League, and should also sign comprehensive arbitration treaties not only with France and Belgium but also with Poland and Czechoslovakia. She accepted it also in the hope that the provisions of the Rhineland Pact might prepare the way for a world-

wide convention on the lines of the Protocol and be, in due course, absorbed thereby. Such, in fact, were the terms of Stresemann's original proposal, as addressed by him, on February 9th, 1925, to the French government. But once the Locarno agreements were completed, Stresemann resisted all attempts to extend them, and in this resistance he was supported by Chamberlain.

The preliminary discussions for the new agreements went on throughout the summer. They could not be completed before the Sixth Assembly met; and it was not till October 1925, after the close of the Assembly, that the seven powers concerned assembled in Locarno to draw up the final texts. In the meantime, the rest of the Members of the League had watched developments, with sympathy, indeed, but with a certain disquiet. They recognized that the enmity between France and Germany was the greatest of all threats to peace, and that reconciliation between them was the first need of the time. They saw that the negotiations between what were later known as the Locarno powers were based, at many points, upon the terms of the Covenant, and even of the Protocol. They knew that France and Britain were making the whole plan conditional upon German admission to the League, which most Members had long desired. Nevertheless, they could not but ask whether the use now being made of the League, however important and practical, was altogether in harmony with the hopes and ideals with which it had been founded, and which, if still far from fulfilment, had never been abandoned. Was it being treated, not as a living institution, universal in its scope and destined to grow in moral and material power until all nations and all the political and social interests of men were included in its activities, but as something which could be defined, shaped, and limited to serve the purposes of a few great powers? Those purposes might in themselves be creditable and beneficial: but would their achievement involve a price which all Members of the League must pay?

In the hard bargaining between Germany, Britain, and France the tendency, at least of the first two, seemed to be to circumscribe and even to reduce the moral and legal obligations of League membership. The British government, in rejecting the Protocol, had used arguments which, if they did not directly undermine the Covenant, did none the less suggest a deliberate resolve not to allow its effects to develop beyond the strict interpretation of its text. In November 1924, that same government, in a sudden quarrel with Egypt, had acted in a manner strongly resembling that of Mussolini at Corfu, and had declined on legal grounds to consent to any discussion on the subject in the Council. At

the same time it had surprised the Secretary-General by protesting against the fact that the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 had been registered by him at the request of the Dublin government five months previously. Chamberlain had, as all agreed, rendered an immense service to the League when he decided that regular attendance at Council meetings was an important part of his duties as Foreign Secretary. Where Britain set the example all the rest who could do so were sure to follow: and this single act raised the prestige of the Council higher than it had ever been, and added greatly to the public interest in its proceedings. Yet, for this, too, a price might have to be paid. Imperceptibly but effectively, the far-off and magnificent aspirations with which the League had been conceived were being overlaid and forgotten, and the Council became more and more influenced by the day-to-day preoccupations of the chief foreign offices. Already at the Council meetings of June and September 1925, and at the Sixth Assembly, the other Members were compelled to mark time while the inner group made progress along the road to Locarno. And the non-European Members began to feel that the interests and policies of the European powers were looked upon as having, in practice, the first claim upon the attention of the League.

Such half-formed misgivings, however, weighed little in the mind of the Assembly in comparison with the knowledge that the negotiations were going steadily forward and that the seven powers were to meet in Switzerland at the end of September. Superficially, the situation from the League point of view was not satisfactory. The delegations had to accept the abandonment of the Protocol, drawn up with so much zeal a year before. They seemed further off than ever from being able to prepare that wide plan of armament limitation to which the Protocol had been intended to lead. They could not take up again the question of compulsory arbitration, since their debates on the subject might embarrass those who were drafting the arbitration treaties between Germany and her neighbours. For the same reason, they were actually forced to abstain from discussing the means of execution of the Covenant itself. Their consolation lay in reflecting that, without the preparatory work done in previous years, none of the negotiations now proceeding would have been possible: and that, if the new pacts were successfully concluded and crowned by German membership of the League, the principle of arbitration would be unmistakably vindicated, the danger of aggression reduced, and the chances of disarmament increased. Satisfied, or at least silenced, by these reflections and hopes, the Assembly left problems of high policy untouched. Where its predecessor had actually fixed a date for the Disarmament Conference, the Sixth Assembly only



asked the Council to make a preparatory study of the subject, in order that the Conference might be convened as soon as the general conditions of security allowed.

In the meantime, the Assembly turned to a field of action which to many seemed at once the most important and the most neglected of all. The French delegation suggested that the time had come to organize a world-wide Economic Conference. The proposal was almost universally approved, though no formal resolution could be taken since the British delegation wanted further time for consideration. Accordingly, the Council was asked to give a final decision in the following December: and the technical organizations of the League, including the International Labour Office, were instructed to start their preparations as soon as possible. These measures were to lead in due course to the Economic Conference of 1927.

The Locarno Conference met immediately after the close of the Assembly. On October 16th, 1925, the famous group of treaties known as the Locarno Pacts were initialed in their final form. They were greeted throughout the world, save in Moscow alone, as opening new prospects of lasting peace, not only in virtue of their specific promises and guarantees against war, but because they were seen as the beginning of reconciliation between Germany and France. The negotiations had been watched with some disquiet, perhaps even with some jealousy, from Geneva: but when the full results were known, relief and hope were the prevailing sentiments there as elsewhere. Supporters of the League had indeed a double motive for satisfaction. At last, it seemed, the world was about to return to those normal international relations which the drafters of the Covenant had contemplated as the natural condition of its working. And the new situation could never have been brought about but for the past efforts of the Council and the Assembly; nor could it be maintained in the future without their help. Every line of the pacts was based upon the Protocol or the Covenant. Every provision for their application depended in the last resort on action by the Council. What had been planned at Locarno could be fulfilled nowhere else than at Geneva.

The first and greatest of the new pacts was the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee between Germany, Belgium, France, Britain, and Italy. By this Treaty—usually referred to at the time as the Rhineland Pact, and later simply as the Treaty of Locarno—Germany, Belgium, and France bound themselves, first, to regard their existing frontiers, and the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland, as inviolable; and, secondly, in no case to attack, invade, or resort to war against one another. For all

possible disputes between them, they accepted a complete system of peaceful settlement on the lines of the Geneva Protocol. These obligations were placed under the guarantee of Britain and Italy as well as of the three States directly concerned. Any claim that they were being violated was to be addressed to the Council and, if the Council confirmed the complaint, the guarantors were to come at once to the assistance of the injured State. If the violation took the form of flagrant aggression, the guarantors were to act at once, though they would at the same time bring the dispute before the Council, and accept its decision. As in the Protocol, the aggressor in such case would be that signatory which refused to submit to arbitration or to carry out the arbitral award.

The Rhineland Pact was accompanied by a group of four Arbitration Conventions. The first two, between Germany and Belgium, and Germany and France, respectively, laid down in detail the methods of peaceful settlement to which these countries had already bound themselves by the terms of the Pact itself. The other two were between Germany and Poland, and Germany and Czechoslovakia. These, like the first pair, provided an elaborate system of arbitration, conciliation, or resort to the Council. The parties further pledged themselves to refrain, during the dispute, from any acts which might aggravate or extend it, and in this connexion to carry out any measures ordered by the Permanent Court, the Conciliation Commission, or the Council. They did not, however, formally declare that they would in no case resort to war; nor was any system of sanctions or of guarantee accepted by Germany for her eastern and southern frontiers as for her frontier in the west. The place of such a system was supplied, in part, by the Covenant; and the Arbitration Treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia contained a clause, which was not considered necessary for those with Belgium and France, stipulating that they did not in any way affect the rights and duties of the signatories as Members of the League, nor the duty of the League itself to safeguard the peace. Separate treaties were signed at the same time between France on the one hand, and Poland and Czechoslovakia on the other, by which each pledged armed support, in execution of Article 16 of the Covenant, in case Germany should attack the other. But though signed at Locarno and depending for their validity upon the treaties drawn up by the Conference, these agreements were, strictly speaking, outside the proceedings of the Conference and were not formally endorsed by the other powers there represented.

The Rhineland Pact and the four Arbitration Treaties were clearly dependent in substance upon Germany becoming a Member of the League. Germany's scruples about the obligations which she would

thereby undertake under Article 16 were overcome, after long discussion, by recourse (yet once more) to the Protocol. In that instrument it had been said that each signatory was bound 'to co-operate loyally and effectively in support of the Covenant and in resistance to any act of aggression, in the degree which its geographical position and its particular situation as regards armaments allow'. This definition had been devised in the first place to meet the case of Denmark, whose government intended to abolish the Danish army and navy and therefore felt even more than the usual Scandinavian fear of having to take part in sanctions against Germany. It had found favour also in the eyes of the Commonwealth Members of the League; and now it served to calm Stresemann's anxieties, and to furnish him with an answer to the sharp protests of Chicherin. He agreed, therefore, that Germany would now apply for admission to the League, and that the whole group of treaties initialed at Locarno should only come into force when she became a Member.

It was decided at Locarno that all the treaties should be signed in London, after an interval of a few weeks. In the meantime each government could consult its Parliament, answer the questions and criticisms of the press, and thus give its formal signature with the support and approval of public opinion. Briand and Skrzynski, the Polish Foreign Minister, had to face vicious attacks from the extreme right. Briand was sure of a large majority; but Skrzynski carried the Polish Sejm with him only after a hot debate and with the help of those members who represented the German minority. In Berlin, still greater difficulties were anticipated. But it was soon seen that the policy of Locarno was welcomed by the country as a whole. For the first time in his life Stresemann found himself a popular figure. The Nationalist party acted with its habitual perfidy. Its leaders individually accepted the acts of Locarno, the more so since they knew that Germany badly needed financial help from the United States and that this would only be forthcoming if American investors could foresee a period of peace in Europe. They waited, therefore, to declare themselves until it became clear that their opposition would not prevent the treaties from going through; and, once assured of this, they withdrew from the government and carried on a campaign of vituperation against a policy which confirmed for ever the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. They intensified also their attacks upon the League, which was described at once as an assemblage of chattering pacifists, and as an alliance of victorious powers, which would hold Germany for ever in the bonds of Versailles and force her into war with Russia. Nevertheless, in the world at large, including Germany, belief in the League had been greatly enhanced by the Locarno Treaties, and

by the hopes that a new era of security, prosperity, and disarmament might follow the reconciliation between victors and vanquished.

By an unexpected chance, the Council was called upon, in this interval between the initialing and the signing of the Locarno pacts, to meet a sudden threat of war between Greece and Bulgaria. The working of the Covenant, and the efficiency of the Council, were put to exactly the test which partisans of the League might have chosen. The crisis was undeniably grave and dangerous. But it did not directly affect the policy or interests of any great power. The members of the Council could act with unity, and hence with speed and decision. The result of the Greco-Bulgar dispute, the first occasion on which there had been actual fighting between two Members of the League, was to add considerably to the prestige of the Council. But before describing this event, it is necessary to look back and to consider the position and the acts of the Council from the time, some eighteen months earlier, when MacDonald and Herriot had announced that the foreign policy of Britain and France would henceforth be based upon using and strengthening the League.

## THE YEARS OF STABILITY

*League methods now fully established—The 'Atmosphere of Geneva'—Regular dates for Council sessions—The Foreign Ministers now attend them—Business of the Council—Control of German disarmament—The Statute of Memel—The Mosul dispute*

(1924-1925)

THE period from the Anglo-French reconciliation of 1924 to the Japanese attack on Manchuria in 1931 was a time of ease and prosperity for the institutions of the League. They had acquired a complete mastery of the new technique of international action. The problems of method and procedure, which had taken up so much time and trouble in the earlier years, had been solved. For every question that arose, local or world-wide, the Council and the Assembly were able without difficulty to find or to devise an appropriate form of discussion and decision. The national delegations, the standing committees, and the Secretariat had learnt to work together: they understood what States or bodies must be invited to participate in dealing with each subject and how such participation could best be organized. The system of information for Members of the League and for the press was working to the general satisfaction of both. A wide and ever growing network of personal acquaintance and experience connected the organizations of Geneva, permanent or temporary, not only with the Foreign Offices but also with the Ministries of Commerce, Health, Transport, and other departments with which the League's activities were concerned. Practical working relations were being established at the same time with the Administrations at Washington, at Berlin before Germany entered the League, and even to some extent at Moscow. Two powerful organs of each State, the General Staff at home and the Diplomatic Service abroad, continued to be cold and unfriendly towards the League. Each, however sincerely anxious for peace, was by function and by training a natural stronghold of nationalism. Each would see its influence and importance disappear or diminish as the League's hold upon public opinion and governmental action grew stronger; and, with many individual exceptions, this evident fact was reflected in their attitude. Save for these two groups, it may be said that the international institutions of the League were, from the middle nineteen-twenties until the outbreak

of the Second World War, effectively linked, both administratively and personally, with the various departments of the Member and non-Member States.

The Secretariat had always realized that administrative co-operation of this sort would be a necessary condition for the successful working of the League, although its attainment might probably be a long and difficult business. On the whole, however, experience showed that such co-operation was a plant of quick and natural growth. No remuneration beyond the bare repayment of their expenses was normally offered to those invited to serve on the many standing or temporary organs set up by the League. Their service was in most cases a net addition to the labours of men already fully occupied with professional or departmental responsibilities. Yet the invitations were rarely refused; and politicians, officials, and experts of all nationalities found it easy and even agreeable to work together in the various international institutions. And the machine proved itself sufficiently flexible and resourceful to meet any special need that might arise, such as that of adding, after Germany's admission, German representatives to all League organs and German nationals to the Secretariat, or that of finding an appropriate way to include American members whenever their government was willing that they should serve.

Indeed, from the early days of the League, there had been observed an unexpected, yet constantly recurring, phenomenon—the successful issue of conferences, or of sessions of the Council or the Assembly, which had been preceded by many signs of discord and seemed destined to lead to complete deadlock. Delegates who arrived with the expectation of meeting irreconcilable opposition, and with the intention of showing equal obstinacy on their own side, would soon be using all their energy and intelligence in seeking grounds of agreement, and would find their opponents doing the same. New suggestions for compromise would be put forward, new safeguards would be discovered, new concessions would be exchanged, and the session would close with results which all concerned could regard as satisfactory.

Such experiences were often ascribed to a sentimental or even a mystical state of mind induced by what was known as 'the atmosphere of Geneva'. There was, in truth, an atmosphere of Geneva; but it was in no wise mystical, nor was it, in the usual sense of the word, sentimental. All who took part in any League meeting, on whatever subject, were conscious that the success or failure of their work would necessarily contribute, in some slight degree, to the success or failure of the primary aim of the League, that is to say to the maintenance of international peace: and in so far as their actions were affected by this reflec-

tion, they might be described as being under the influence of sentiment, although that sentiment was in the last analysis a perfectly sound and rational motive. But the will to co-operate was in the main made up of elements of an entirely practical nature. In the first place, the desire to produce effective results is a part of the normal equipment of human nature, and is present in international as much as in national institutions. Secondly, while leader-writers in the press may talk of victory or defeat, and speak with contempt of compromise, those responsible for administration must act on the belief that an imperfect compromise is, in most cases, much better than a glorious failure. Again, in actual discussion, men learn to understand the attitudes of other countries more clearly than they can ever do by correspondence, and can often make agreement possible by setting at rest anxieties of which they knew nothing. Finally, most important, yet hardest to define, of all the factors which made up the atmosphere of Geneva, was the sharpened vision of interests common to all men and all nations. Everybody agrees in theory that there is a wide area of such common interests; but it is only in an international setting that this truth can be seen in its practical bearings. Under favourable conditions, this sense of the essential unity of mankind can exert unexpected driving power. And these conditions—expert preparation beforehand, meetings that take place in a calm and regular manner, rules of procedure known to and respected by all, a Secretariat which inspires confidence by its knowledge, efficiency, and impartiality—were present in Geneva to an extent never previously reached or imagined.

By slow degrees, the Council, the most conservative of League organs, had been almost unconsciously bracing itself to withstand the strains and stresses which the entry of Germany was certain to bring. It began by accepting on August 31st, 1923, a reform which the Secretariat had been vainly trying to press upon it ever since the move to Geneva. It decided that, beginning from its twenty-seventh session of December 1923, it would hold four regular sessions each year, at fixed dates in March, June, September, and December. This change, small as it seemed, proved to be of great practical importance. It relieved the Council members, and the Secretariat, of the irritating and ever-recurring task of finding, for each session, a date which suited the general convenience. It enabled the various advisory bodies to adopt, in their turn, a regular time-table. Each of them was constitutionally bound to submit all proposals to the approval of the Council: the Council's decision might be a mere formality, but it was a formality without which no action could be taken. Naturally, therefore, they desired to

arrange their meetings at such times as would enable their reports to pass through the Council with the least possible delay. The Financial Committee, for example, always met just before the Council, and its members had often been put to much trouble by not knowing beforehand when they would be called together. The Secretariat could now fore-ordain for months ahead the successive convocations of conferences, committees, and sub-committees. Above all, the fixing of the dates of Council sessions reinforced their centripetal attraction. When, some twelve months later, the Foreign Ministers of the great powers began to come regularly to the Council, they found that Geneva was already the habitual meeting-place, four times a year, of their colleagues from the lesser States of Europe.

Another development of great potential importance was the action of Brazil in appointing a permanent representative on the Council, with the rank of Ambassador, resident in Geneva and holding no other post. The Secretariat had always tried to discourage such appointments in the case of European Members, being convinced that the Council would be more effective if its sessions were attended by responsible members of the respective governments. But in the case of distant States, this was impossible. Brazil and Japan had, from the first, been represented by their Ambassadors in Paris: Uruguay, elected later, had followed their example. Since Spain had, without any such necessity, continued to send Quiñones de León to every session, the result was that, counting the French representative, at least half of the members at every meeting were resident in Paris. This fact was often quoted by those who reproached the Council with being too much under French influence; and the reproach was justified. On questions which did not directly concern his own country, it was natural that an Ambassador stationed in Paris should be disinclined to oppose French wishes. The Quai d'Orsay, a model of efficiency in the minor business of diplomacy, took full advantage of the situation. The arrival, in July 1924, of de Mello Franco, a leading personality in the political life of Brazil, was therefore an event of some moment. His time as permanent representative in Geneva was destined to be cut short, through no fault of his own, by the deplorable incidents of March 1926 which delayed Germany's admission to the League and led to the withdrawal of Brazil. Until then, he had been an admirable member of the Council. Later, as Foreign Minister, he helped the Council to settle a dangerous conflict between Peru and Colombia.<sup>1</sup>

The Brazilian example was later followed by Argentina; other Latin American countries, though many of them established delegations in

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 43.



Geneva, continued to be represented, during their period of office on the Council, by a diplomatist from one of the European capitals—occasionally from Madrid, Rome, London, or Berlin, but most often from Paris. But the number of Council representatives who resided in Paris was never again so high as in the first few years. And after the entry of Germany, and the increase in Council membership which followed it, the question soon ceased to have any practical interest.

The third and greatest change in the nature of the Council was that it became a periodic meeting of the European Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The growth in the prestige and influence of the League, which MacDonal and Herriot had done much to bring about, led their successors to a decision of major importance in its history. Neither MacDonal nor Herriot ever sat in the Council: it seemed to them already a startling departure from precedent that they should take part for a few days in the proceedings of the Assembly. Chamberlain and Briand, who succeeded them at the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay, made it a practice from the first to attend not only the Assembly but also every regular session of the Council. They arrived at the same conclusion from different starting points. Briand was appointed as the permanent representative of France on the Council in September 1924, when age and ill health compelled Bourgeois to resign. In the following April he succeeded Herriot as Foreign Minister: but he did not give up his post on the Council and continued to combine both functions for the next seven years.

When Austen Chamberlain became Foreign Secretary in November 1924, his sentiment in regard to the League was by no means one of enthusiasm. He considered not merely the Protocol but the Covenant itself as far too ambitious; and his general view of the League was that it could be a useful adjunct to British policy on condition that it was firmly restrained from trying to do too much. His decision to attend the December session of the Council was inspired by mixed motives. He wished to make a gesture of good will and respect to the League. If he did not go himself, Cecil would necessarily take his place and would thereby play a greater part in foreign policy than Chamberlain was ready to allow him. Finally, it chanced that the Council had accepted the repeated invitation of Mussolini and was, on this occasion, meeting in Rome. Chamberlain, a lover of Italy and an admirer of the Duce, was keenly desirous of making the latter's acquaintance: and the opportunity was too good to be missed. The session was, as it happened, a particularly dull one. No exceptionally important or controversial question was on the agenda. But Chamberlain found the Council a much superior body to anything he had imagined. Its corporate sense, its

homogeneity, and its freedom from intrigue were a surprise to him: and his opinion of the usefulness of the League was modified in consequence. On return to London, he announced that he would henceforth consider it as part of his duty as Foreign Secretary to attend its sessions regularly. This promise he faithfully observed; and the precedent he set was followed by all who succeeded him in his great office.

After the entry of Germany, the Council included at almost every session the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, Germany, and Poland, of one country belonging to the Little Entente, and of Holland or one of the Scandinavian countries. Besides these, their colleagues from European States which had no place on the Council were now more anxious than ever to find some reason to come to Geneva and thus have the opportunity of personal contact with the statesmen of the great powers. The long rivalry with the Supreme Council and the Conference of Ambassadors was ended: the former had ceased to exist, the latter relapsed into obscurity. This great gain was not won without a heavy price. The presence of so many responsible Ministers increased the preponderance of Europe in the Council at the very moment when other continents began to feel their need of its services.

It was perhaps symbolic of the growing stability and self-confidence of the League that the Assembly should decide in 1924 that the time had come to build a new hall for its future sessions and those of the Council. The necessity of expansion and improvement in the accommodation for their meetings had long been painfully apparent. The Federal and Cantonal authorities of Switzerland and Geneva had presented to the Assembly of 1922 two building sites: one on the lake-side, just outside the town, the other adjacent to the existing offices of the League. On the first of these it was decided to build a home for the International Labour Office. On the second it was now proposed to build a new Assembly Hall; and the Assembly actually expected that its next session would take place under the new roof. Its hopes were to be fulfilled in nobler fashion than was then foreseen; but only after long delay. The Secretariat, having learnt by bitter experience to be prudent to the point of timidity in all proposals which involved fresh expenditure, drew up preliminary plans on a modest scale. A committee of architects, chosen from five or six different countries, was then invited to give its professional advice. No sooner had the architects seen the plans and the site than they dismissed them with contempt. The site was far too small, the plans too unambitious, the estimates voted by the Assembly totally inadequate. There was no choice but to put off the whole question until the Assembly met again: so that the schemes which were in the end to

lead to the construction of the Palais des Nations underwent the first of many postponements.

During the two years between the affair of Corfu (September 1923) and the Greco-Bulgar dispute (October 1925), the Council was happily free from any of those occasions of excitement which are always of ill-omen in international affairs. It dealt with two serious and difficult territorial problems, those of Memel and Mosul. It was beset with the quarrels between Danzigers and Poles: its agenda in a single session might show ten or more separate questions under this heading: but, once they arrived in Geneva, the two disputants usually settled their differences in the offices of the Secretariat and only one or two would in the end have to be decided by the Council. The easiest part of all the Council's business in these two years was that prepared for it by the experts of the Financial Committee. The League loans organized for the recovery of Austria and Hungary were followed by others on behalf of Greece, Bulgaria, and Danzig. In most cases it was a condition of the Financial Committee's plan that a representative of the League should control the spending of the funds, and should present a report to the Council every three months; so that at each regular session of the Council a number of such reports had to be seen and approved. Those from Greece and, later, from Bulgaria were of special interest, since the purpose of the loans was not to restore the public finances of the two countries, but to provide the means of settling the vast numbers of refugees who had poured across their borders as a result of long years of war and disorder. It was a pleasant relief to turn from political arguments to figures of houses built, seed and oxen distributed, malarial regions drained, roads and railways constructed or improved.

The most difficult and obstinate problem in the Council sessions of 1924 and 1925 was never destined to become a matter of practical application; yet it led to unending debate in the Council and to passionate feelings in many of the countries concerned. This was the question of the Council's future responsibilities in connexion with the disarmament of Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Each peace treaty provided that an Allied Control Commission should control and verify the execution of all clauses relating to disarmament: and that, when these Commissions were withdrawn, the Council of the League should be responsible for deciding whether any further investigation was required. After the acceptance of the Dawes plan, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the Control Commissions in Germany, although there were wide differences of opinion among the Allied powers themselves as to whether Germany was effectively disarmed or not. The

French naturally insisted that the change could not take place until the Council had made all arrangements beforehand so as to be able to carry out any necessary investigation without delay. The whole business was deeply disliked by most Members of the League, especially the former neutrals. They were already burdened with such legacies of the war as the government of the Saar Territory and the guarantee of the status and constitution of Danzig. To have to share the responsibility of inquiring into the activities of German shooting clubs, the condition of German fortresses and munition plants, the stocks maintained by the German army and navy, was a still harder and more disagreeable task. In theory, it was true, the Council also possessed the power, as soon as Germany had been admitted to the League, of altering or abolishing all the restrictions on her armaments which were imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. For this, however, unanimity would be required: and unanimity would be clearly unattainable. For the exercise of its right of investigation, on the other hand, the Council could act by a majority vote.

In any case, the League was not legally able to refuse any function laid upon it by the Versailles Treaty, inasmuch as its own Covenant was a part of that Treaty. From a practical point of view, there was the further consideration that, much as Germany disliked being subjected to the possibility of occasional investigation at the order of the Council, she disliked still more the continuous presence of Allied Commissions on German soil. The Council, therefore, after taking the advice of its Permanent Armaments Commission, drew up elaborate plans defining the composition, the procedure, the rights, and the duties of any investigation commission which it might later decide to send to any of the four countries concerned; and defining also the obligations which the four governments must undertake in order to ensure that the investigators could do their work both thoroughly and in safety. These plans were not completed without obstinate argument over various details, many secret meetings, and strong feelings between the British and Swedish members on one side and the French and Belgian on the other. They were accepted in the end by French opinion with protestation against their mildness, by German opinion with equal protestation against their despotic stiffness. There is no need to discuss them further, since the Council was never officially invited to carry out any of the investigations for which it had so painfully prepared itself.

The port of Memel had lived through centuries of peace and obscurity when the general break-up of Eastern Europe made its fate a matter of anxious consideration to men who otherwise might hardly have known

of its existence. It was a German town, surrounded by a hinterland whose inhabitants, though German subjects, were Lithuanian in speech and sentiment. It served as outlet for the commerce of the Niemen basin, a region which had previously belonged to Russia but which from 1919 onward was divided between Poland and Lithuania. Under the Versailles Treaty, Memel and its hinterland was taken from Germany and placed under Allied sovereignty, as a first step to transferring it to Lithuania. But the further step was indefinitely delayed, partly on account of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict, partly because the Poles and the French began to think that it would suit them better to turn Memel into a Free City on the Danzig model. The Memelland remained, therefore, under Allied control: and Lithuania's hope of acquiring a port, the only one which could be found along her sandy coast, turned to doubt. In January 1923, the Kovno government decided to emulate the Polish action at Vilna and to present the world with an accomplished fact. Lithuanian forces crossed the boundary, overcame the resistance of the small French contingent which had been for three years in peaceful occupation, and took possession of the town. The Allies protested; but they were not inclined to restore the position by force. Their dignity had suffered, but not their interests. They began, therefore, to try and reach agreement with the Lithuanian government as to the future status of the town and the treatment of its German population of seventy thousand souls. The Lithuanian coup was soon forgiven by the Allies. But it was never forgiven by the Germans.

It was now the turn of the Conference of Ambassadors to experience that unyielding obstinacy which had enabled the Lithuanian race to survive a century and a half of Russian despotism, and which prevented it from acquiescing in the loss of Vilna. They drew up a draft Convention, much of which was accepted by Lithuania. But they insisted that Poland should have a share in the administration of the port and that Polish commerce should have the same privileges as that of Lithuania herself. This the Lithuanians refused; and in September 1923, after months of negotiation, the Ambassadors decided that all they could now do was to lay the whole question in the lap of the Council. The Council, seeing that the only hope was to make a completely fresh start, entrusted the problem in the first place to a special Commission chosen from countries which had no direct or indirect concern in the terms of settlement—a Swiss, a Dutchman, and, as Chairman, Norman Davis, who had been one of President Wilson's most trusted lieutenants and had held high office in the State Department.

The real problem in Memel was to ensure, on the one hand, that the Germans who must become Lithuanian subjects against their will

should be protected from injustice and should enjoy equal rights with their Lithuanian fellow citizens; and, on the other, that the port of Memel should function efficiently as the principal route for Lithuania's sea-borne commerce. The Convention drafted by the Conference of Ambassadors had made various provisions for these purposes. Under Norman Davis's energetic impulsion these parts of the draft were admitted with minor amendments. At the same time he and his colleagues agreed that the attempt to create special privileges for the Polish government and Polish trade were unjustified. They forced the Lithuanians to promise that in all matters of transit and commerce Poles should have equal rights with all other users of the port, and that no obstacle should be placed on the floating of timber down the Niemen, which formed in fact practically the whole of Poland's potential export trade through Memel. But they proposed that external supervision should be exercised not by Polish officials but by a neutral member of the Harbour Board, appointed by the League Transit Committee. With these changes the various texts setting forth the future status of Memel under Lithuanian sovereignty were accepted, at the Council meeting of March 1924, by Lithuania and by the Allied powers. The Polish government protested; but it did not try to block the decision.

Nothing, indeed, was more noticeable throughout the Council's proceedings in these years than the reasonable and conciliatory attitude of Poland. Polish affairs were constantly on the agenda. The Council had to inquire into complaints from her German minority, to compose her differences with Danzig, to settle outstanding details of her frontier with Czechoslovakia, and to hear the mutual recriminations between her and Lithuania. Some part of these many questions arose from her unjustified action after the war, more especially from the seizure of Vilna; but a much larger part was due, not to any special defects in Polish policy, but to the disturbed and confused conditions created in Eastern Europe by the past misdeeds of Russia and of Prussia—misdeeds of which Poland herself had been the principal victim. The better-informed among Polish statesmen realized that the very existence of their country depended upon the League. They saw, also, that only at Geneva were they able to insist on a fair hearing. For these reasons the wisest Polish Foreign Ministers, Count Skrzynski (1924-6) and Auguste Zaleski (1926-32)—though it could not but be galling to be thus repeatedly forced to give an account of their acts—showed a patience and moderation which was not usually characteristic of the national temperament. For these reasons they rightly claimed, when Germany became a permanent Member of the Council, that Poland should be at least an elected Member, so that she should not be shut

out, as she had been at Genoa and Locarno, from an inner circle of greater powers whose discussions directly affected her vital interests.

The Memel Convention, accepted in Geneva in March 1924, was not brought into force until August 1925: nothing, it seemed, connected with the Conference of Ambassadors could escape procrastination. Thenceforth, the many quarrels which arose in Memel were not between Lithuania and Poland but between Lithuania and Germany. The Memellanders were prosperous: but nothing could reconcile them to being separated from the Reich and subjected to the rule of an inferior race. There were periods of calm, when the Lithuanian Governor was unusually conciliatory, or when the German government found it advisable for other reasons to tell the Memellanders to keep quiet. These, however, did not last long: and the Council was forced, at many of its sessions, to hear the complaints of both sides and to attempt to bring them to agreement. It will not be necessary to describe these debates. They were not without interest from a legal and constitutional point of view. But they were essentially unreal; and, while the arguments of the contestants were necessarily directed to the interpretation of the Memel Statute, the real conflict lay deeper. The Germans might accuse the Lithuanians of violating their engagements. But their real purpose was not to ensure that the Statute was respected, but to hasten the day when Memel should once more lie within the frontiers of Germany. After Germany had left the League, Hitler made no further appeal to the Council; he openly declared his demand for the recovery of Memel and heaped his usual insults upon the barbarous and cruel tyranny under which its German population was forced to live. In March 1939, at the same time as he annexed Bohemia, he reoccupied Memel without resistance on the part either of the Lithuanians or of the Western powers.

The affair of Mosul was a territorial dispute comparable in importance to that of Upper Silesia. The parties were on the one hand Turkey, to whom the Mosul province had belonged for centuries: on the other hand Britain, which had occupied it ever since British forces had conquered Mesopotamia in the war, and Iraq, the new Arab State which Britain had created and which was being guided towards self-government under British mandate. By the first peace treaty with Turkey, the Treaty of Sèvres, the province had been awarded to Iraq. But at Lausanne, when a new treaty was being made with the new Turkey of Mustafa Kemal, the Turks had insisted on retaining it. Neither side would yield: but both sides were anxious that this dispute should not prevent the signature of the general treaty of peace. It was therefore provided in the treaty that the frontier between Turkey and Iraq

should be settled by direct negotiation between Turkey and Britain, and that, if no agreement were reached within nine months, the dispute should be referred to the Council of the League. The direct negotiations ended in deadlock; and in August 1924, the prescribed period having expired, Ramsay MacDonald requested the Council to give a decision.

At the following Council meeting all went well. Turkey was assured that she would take part in its proceedings with exactly the same rights as Britain. Her representative was Fethi Bey, a leading supporter of Mustafa Kemal. He arrived in Geneva with the reputation of being a hard and obstinate negotiator: but at the Council, while arguing the Turkish case with great skill, he showed himself to be uniformly courteous and conciliatory, both towards the Council and towards his opponent. Branting, whose fair-mindedness was acknowledged by all, was asked to be rapporteur. Long documents were presented, and long speeches made, by the two parties. The Turks claimed that the inhabitants of the Mosul province desired to be returned to Turkish sovereignty: the British that they preferred to remain as subjects of the Arab kingdom. After hearing their arguments, the Council began by asking and receiving assurances from both that they would honour the promise, already contained in the Treaty of Lausanne, to do nothing to modify the present state of the territories in dispute. Next, it asked each side to pledge itself to accept in advance whatever decision it might eventually make. The British government had throughout the proceedings declared that it would do so. Fethi Bey was unwilling at first to give the same undertaking: but, at the end of the session, he did in fact give it in clear terms. These preliminary conditions being settled, the Council decided to send a Commission to the spot, with power to ascertain the sentiments of the local population, to consult the three governments concerned, and thereafter to make whatever recommendations it thought best.

While discussions at Geneva were thus advancing easily and quietly, there was serious trouble along the disputed frontier. Each side protested that it was observing its promise not to disturb the *status quo*. But it now appeared that the British and Turkish views of the line which could be so described were widely different. Each was taking measures to keep order in, and to strengthen its grip upon, the area within which it considered that it could so act without breaking its word. The vague wording of the Lausanne Treaty did indeed make it easy for each to find plausible grounds for justifying its own operations and protesting against those of its opponent. Already during the Council meeting there had been reports of minor clashes with some loss of life. On October 9th,



a few days after its close, the British government delivered an ultimatum threatening military action unless all Turkish troops were withdrawn, within forty-eight hours, beyond the line which, according to the British view, Turkey was bound to respect. The Turkish answer was to appeal to the Council for a ruling as to what the line should be. A special meeting therefore was held in Brussels. Branting declined to enter into arguments as to the interpretation of past undertakings. He proposed that the Council should itself fix what appeared to be in present circumstances the best line of temporary demarcation. The controversy was thus settled. No more was heard of the British ultimatum. Each side gave a solemn promise that none of its troops or civil agents should cross the line as drawn at Brussels. The way was thus clear for the Commission of Inquiry to set to work.

In the appointment of such Commissions it was always necessary to try to avoid including any individual who, on personal grounds or on grounds of nationality, might possibly be supposed by either side not to be completely impartial. In the case of Mosul, there was another special precaution to be taken. It was believed that the province was rich in oil: so much so that the United States government had refused its consent to the Iraq mandate until after it had made sure that American citizens were not to be unfairly excluded from the field. The territorial controversy was represented in some quarters, especially in Germany, as being no more than a sordid deal in oil. But the Mosul province was of great strategic importance; its population was considerable; its economic wealth was already high by the standards of most Arab and Turkish provinces. There seems no reason to doubt that the policy and the aims of Turkey, Iraq, and Britain would have been exactly the same, even if no prospect of finding oil had been known to exist. But that prospect was enough to prevent the Council from including in its Commission a national from any country which could be supposed to want a share for its citizens. The Commission was made up of a Swedish diplomatist, a Belgian soldier, and a Hungarian geographer, who had also been Prime Minister. This was the first time that the League entrusted such responsibilities to a national of one of the defeated Central powers.

The Commission reported in due course that, contrary to the assertions of both parties, the sentiment of the population was not very favourable to either. The Kurds, who outnumbered all the rest put together, would prefer to be independent of both. All that could be said was that the majority was on the whole more in favour of incorporation in Iraq than of return to Turkey, on condition that Iraq continued under a mandatory regime for another twenty-five years. The Commission

recommended that, on that condition, the Brussels line should be fixed as the frontier between Turkey and Iraq, thus giving to Iraq practically the whole of the province. But if that condition were refused, all but a small sector should be awarded to Turkey.

This conclusion was painful to the Turks; and not at all agreeable to either Iraq or Britain. The Arabs, who believed themselves quite capable of self-government, resented the existence of a mandate. It had already been necessary for the British to obtain the Council's agreement to an ingenious scheme whereby their obligations as mandatory power might be fulfilled without wounding the pride of the Iraqi nation. The terms of the mandate, as laid down by the Council, remained binding upon the British government; and that government undertook the same responsibilities, vis-à-vis the Council, as it had undertaken for Palestine or as the French had undertaken for Syria. At the same time it concluded a treaty with the government of Iraq, in which the conditions of the mandate were reproduced in the form of an agreement freely negotiated by both sides. The Iraqi Parliament had ratified the treaty with reluctance. It would not have done so at all but for the fact that, by an additional agreement, the validity of the treaty, and therefore of the mandatory relation, was reduced from twenty years to four. This change was welcome in Britain not less than in Iraq: for a large section of British opinion considered the mandate as useless, expensive, and dangerous, and, in the hope of forcing its abandonment, had actually sustained the Turkish demand for Mosul. And now the two countries were invited either to renounce Mosul or to extend the duration of the mandate to twenty-five years. They chose the second alternative, on the understanding that Iraq was not precluded from applying, before the end of that period, for admission to the League, and thereby inviting the Council and Assembly to say that the mandate could now be terminated.

In announcing the acceptance of this and other conditions laid down by the Commission, the British asked that, in addition to the Mosul province there should now be awarded to Iraq a narrow belt of territory on the Turkish side of the Brussels line. This would provide a better frontier from the military point of view; it would also include under Iraqi sovereignty and British protection the secular home of the Assyrians, and thus enable the scattered survivors of that ill-fated community to return to the villages from which they had fled during the war after an unsuccessful revolt against their Turkish rulers. The case was a strong one, if it could be proved that this Christian people would be safer under Arab than under Turkish rule. Unfortunately, it had not been brought forward until after the Treaty of Lausanne had been concluded and ratified. Thus the Turks could justly claim that the new

demand was altogether outside the problem which, under that Treaty, they had agreed to submit to the Council. They declared also that the Assyrians could return home without fear: on condition of showing themselves law-abiding citizens, they could dwell in peace in their mountains, as they had done for centuries until that peace had been broken by their own act. The Inquiry Commission had decisively rejected the British demand. Nor did the British representative at the Council press it with great conviction. The Council was in possession of a recommendation, based on exhaustive study of the strategic and economic aspects of the problem as well as on the sentiments of the population, to the effect that the Brussels line was the best possible frontier between Turkey and Iraq. In endorsing that recommendation, the Council was merely ordering each side to stay where it was and to turn what had hitherto been a provisional control into a permanent administration. It never seriously considered rejecting the Commission's advice in order to award to Iraq a region on the Turkish side of the line. Such a verdict could hardly have been carried out without leading to war between Turkey and Britain—a war which had seemed possible and even probable at more than one moment of the controversy.

The juridical ingenuity of Turkish negotiators now threw a new obstacle across the Council's path. Fethi Bey had been replaced as delegate by Tevik Rüştü Bey, whose attitude was very different from the frank and friendly bearing of his predecessor. He claimed that the Council had no power to decide the question without the consent of both parties, or to adopt any resolution on the subject except by unanimous vote. This was a complete reversal of the position agreed to by Fethi Bey a year before. But Rüştü could produce impressive legal arguments in support of his case; and the Council was at all times anxious, perhaps excessively anxious, to avoid any accusation of going beyond its powers. To delay its verdict was highly undesirable. The prospect was greeted by a violent outburst of criticism in the British press. The situation on the provisional frontier was unstable: was it not a disastrous and even a ridiculous confession of weakness that nearly a million human beings should be condemned to further months of uncertainty by the Council's doubts concerning its own procedure? None the less, the Council refused to go forward until the Permanent Court had given a ruling as to the nature of the powers which it was to exercise under the Treaty of Lausanne. The Court was asked to hold a special session. Its answer was prompt: the Council's decision required unanimity, but the votes of the two parties were not to be counted. And the decision so reached would be binding on both parties and would constitute a definitive determination of the frontier.

Both then and thereafter this opinion of the Permanent Court was the object of much debate by international lawyers. Whether or not it was legally sound, it was at least both clear and practical. The long conflict over Mosul was now near its end. Turkey, having vainly protested against the Court's opinion, took no further part in the proceedings. On December 16th, 1925, the Council, endorsing the recommendations of its Commission of Inquiry, decided that the frontier should be drawn along the Brussels line, as soon as two conditions had been fulfilled. The first was that Britain and Iraq should jointly undertake to continue the mandatory regime for twenty-five years unless Iraq should be admitted to the League before the expiration of that period. The second was that the Kurdish population of the Mosul province should receive certain guarantees from the mandatory power. These conditions were at once accepted by the British government.

Although Turkey's attitude at the Council had grown steadily more intransigent, she quickly decided that it was useless to expect that the decision could be changed; and a few months later (June 5th, 1926) a treaty was signed at Ankara by the representatives of Turkey, Britain, and Iraq, by which the new frontier was declared to be definitive and inviolable. It was long, however, before she forgave the Council and became reconciled to the League. Ever since the opening of the Lausanne Conference the Turkish press had been foretelling that the government would shortly apply for admission. Her official representatives had on many occasions expressed good will towards the League; they had taken part in a number of conferences, and had frequently sat at the Council table to discuss various minor questions arising out of the Lausanne Treaty. But her government held its hand until the Mosul question had been decided; and for the next few years little was heard of Turkish membership. It was not until 1931 that Mustafa Kemal let it be known that Nationalist Turkey would be glad to accept an invitation to join the League.

## THE GRECO-BULGAR CRISIS

*Greek invasion and Bulgarian appeal—Action of the Council—The Covenant and security*

(OCTOBER—DECEMBER 1925)

IN the early morning of Friday, October 23rd, 1925, the Secretary-General was aroused by an urgent call from the Secretariat. A telegram had just arrived from Sofia. The Bulgarian government announced that, as a result of a frontier affray three days before, numerous Greek forces had entered Bulgarian territory, supported by artillery and by air bombing. The advance was continuing and now threatened the town of Petrić, ten kilometres from the frontier. Bulgaria asked for an immediate meeting of the Council: meanwhile her troops had been ordered to make no resistance.

The Secretariat had already noticed brief reports in the press concerning the frontier incident of October 19th. But such incidents had occurred on several occasions: and the latest news seemed to show that this one, like the others, had been quickly settled. The Bulgarian telegram therefore came as a complete and unwelcome surprise.

It had not always been easy to persuade the Council to meet in extraordinary session, and the finding of a convenient date had usually involved trouble and delay. At the moment of the Bulgarian appeal, the principal members had only just returned home after the intense strain of the Locarno Conference. But the foresight of the men who drafted the Covenant had provided that, in case of war or threat of war, the Secretary-General should, at the request of any Member of the League, forthwith summon a meeting of the Council. This was the one important political duty laid upon the Secretary-General; and in all discussions on Council procedure Drummond had jealously guarded this one responsibility in his own hands, refusing to share it with the President or with the Council as a whole. He therefore determined to convoke the Council for October 26th, the earliest day on which the members coming from the more distant capitals could arrive in Geneva.<sup>1</sup> For courtesy's sake, however, his first move was to inform the President of the Bulgarian telegram and of the action he intended to take.

It was the Council's rule that the presidency should change hands at

<sup>1</sup> Air travel was then still an exception. Dr Undén, the Swedish Foreign Minister, came by air—the first time, it seems, that any Council member did so.

each regular session: thus, whoever had presided over the last regular session remained in office until the opening of the next. By a stroke of good fortune, the result of this rule was that the President to whom Drummond now addressed himself was Briand, who entered with zest and authority into the affair. He agreed with the proposed convocation, only suggesting that for himself, for Chamberlain, and for most Council members it would be easier to gather, at such short notice, in Paris than in Geneva. He also volunteered to telegraph at once, in his presidential capacity, to both parties, exhorting them to stop all military action and withdraw their troops each to his own side of the frontier.

It was afterwards found that this telegram had exercised a remarkable influence on the course of events. At 6 a.m. on October 24th—exactly twenty-four hours after the Sofia telegram had reached the Secretariat—the Greek commander was about to launch an attack on Petrić with 1,000 men and three batteries. Between him and the town was a Bulgarian battalion, with twelve guns, under instructions to resist the Greek advance in order to protect the inhabitants of the town. Both sides were angry and full of fight: and there was every prospect of an obstinate and bloody engagement on a scale which would have made it difficult, perhaps impossible, to prevent another Greco-Bulgar war. But, at that moment, as the direct consequence of Briand's telegram, which had reached Athens late on October 23rd, the Greeks received orders to suspend all offensive operations.

When the Council met in Paris, the crisis had already passed its peak. But the situation was still dangerous. Greek troops had advanced up to eight kilometres on a thirty-kilometre front. The hostile forces were still in contact and some skirmishing was still going on. Accordingly, the Council's first demand was that all fighting should cease and that each side should withdraw its troops behind its own frontiers, the movement to begin at once and be completed within sixty hours. Until it had received assurances on these points, the Council declined to listen to the legal and moral justifications which each was prepared to set forth at length. That, said Briand, would come in due time. Whatever the origin of the dispute might be, said Chamberlain, it would be an affront to civilization if a frontier incident between two Members of the League should lead to warlike operations, instead of being submitted to peaceful settlement by the Council. Scialoja, representing Italy, sat silent: his thoughts might be guessed.

The Bulgarian representative gave all the assurances required, observing with truth that no Bulgarian troops stood on Greek soil. The Greek representative was in difficulty. He could see the weakness of his country's position: but he was the spokesman of a military dictator.

General Pangalos, who had seized power in Greece in June 1925, was, if not the wickedest, without doubt the stupidest of the dictators who darkened the face of Europe between the world wars. And his instructions to his embarrassed delegate were that national dignity and security made it necessary that a penalty should be exacted from Bulgaria.

Briand and Chamberlain, fresh from their great days at Locarno, were in no mood to be defied by a small and shaky dictator. There were no public threats: but behind the scenes there was talk of a naval demonstration and even of the sanctions of Article 16 of the Covenant. Meanwhile, the nearest British, French, and Italian military attachés were sent to see for themselves, and report to the Council, that its demands were carried out by both sides, although only one side had at that time agreed to do so. This firm and prompt action met with its due reward. When the attachés reached the spot, they found that withdrawal had already begun. They observed its completion well within the Council's time-limit. They were ordered to remain and investigate the incidents which had started the trouble, while the persons concerned were still available for questioning.

There being now no further danger of a renewal of hostilities, the Council was ready to listen to the arguments and complaints of the parties. As usual, it decided to send a Commission of Inquiry to the spot, with instructions not only to report on the rights and wrongs of the case, but also to study the general situation on each side of the frontier with a view to preventing the recurrence of any similar crisis. Further, since Greece and Bulgaria each demanded reparation from the other, the Commission was empowered to consider all such claims and propose a final settlement. And before it separated, the Council secured from both the assurance that on this point they would accept and carry out its decision, whatever it might be.

Five weeks later, on December 7th, 1925, the Council reconvened for its regular session, the thirty-seventh of the series. The Commission had already completed its work. It found that the responsibility for the original frontier skirmish was divided. In that skirmish a Greek officer, advancing under the white flag to stop the firing, had been shot dead; and it was natural that this aroused great indignation. But the Greek government, instead of laying its grievance before the League in accordance with the Covenant, had taken the law into its own hands and invaded Bulgarian territory. A considerable number of Bulgarian soldiers and civilians had been killed or wounded. The population of numerous villages had fled; their homes and crops had been pillaged. For the moral and material losses inflicted on Bulgaria the Commission decided that an indemnity of 30 million leva (£45,000) should be paid;

adding that, in making its calculation, it had allowed for an indemnity due to Greece for the death of her officer killed under the white flag. It also proposed that each country should appoint a neutral officer to serve on its frontier for two years: the two officers should be of the same nationality, and should at once meet and settle any local incident that might arise.

All this was simple enough and was accepted by both parties, the Bulgarians protesting that the indemnity was too small and the Greeks that it was too large. But as for the general situation on the frontier, the Commission, while making some suggestions of detail, could only report that money, time, assistance from outside, and much self-restraint on the part of both governments were needed before stable conditions of peace could be built up. Since the Balkan wars of 1912 the region had been the scene of recurrent tragedies. On each side there was a great unsettled population—refugees, emigrants who had left their property behind under exchange agreements which were still to be executed, minorities who clung dangerously to their homes amidst the hostility of their neighbours. Terrorism and crime were always close under the surface. Neither government possessed the administrative or financial resources to cope with these difficulties. They were gradually brought under control, during the years that followed, with the help of advisers supplied by the League and of the loans issued under its auspices. And as acts of violence and injustice became rarer, enmity between the two nations became less acute. A time was to come when the Balkan peoples, instead of being the danger-spot of Europe, might seem rather to set an example to greater and more advanced countries. Though Bulgaria was never a full partner in the Balkan Entente, she went some way along the path of reconciliation, and would have gone further if the Balkan States had been allowed, as they desired, to settle their affairs amongst themselves, with the assistance of the League, and without other interference from the great powers.

When the Council separated at the close of its thirty-seventh session, it had laid down the final settlement both of the Greco-Bulgar quarrel and of the territorial dispute over Mosul. These were the last such problems with which it had to deal for a long time. It was not until nearly six years later, during its sixty-fifth session of September 1931, that it was again called upon to act in a dispute which involved an immediate threat to peace.

In the meantime the Council's action in the Balkan crisis had come to be regarded as a classic example of the application of the Covenant. Amongst the keen supporters of the League, and indeed in the Council



itself, its achievement was described in exaggerated language. A success in dealing with a conflict between two small countries, neither of which was capable of withstanding serious pressure from outside, was no proof that the League could now be relied on to restrain a more powerful aggressor. There had been no legal difficulties, no question of competence, no complications arising from the special interests of the great powers. Yet, even when all this had been fully taken into account, the settlement of the Greco-Bulgar affair was a notable event. The danger of war had been brief; but it had been real and even acute. The machinery of the Covenant had worked exactly as it had been meant to do. The Council had met without delay, and had acted with decision. The result had been quick and complete. Both sides had had a fair hearing; and there was general agreement that not only had peace been preserved but substantial justice had been done.

The effect of this success was heightened by the fact that it occurred immediately after the Locarno Conference, at a moment when Germany was about to enter the League with the full and friendly support of her late enemies. More and more it seemed that Geneva was about to become the centre to which all nations except the two great outsiders would look for security. At the same time there was a renewed interest in the Covenant itself. The long effort to extend and strengthen its provisions, first by the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, and then by the Protocol, had been checked. The governments which rejected the Protocol had in many cases declared their conviction that the faithful application of the Covenant would be the best guarantee of peace. Now the Covenant had been tested and had proved equal to the occasion. Henceforth, a great part of that anxious search for security which was still to be the unending preoccupation of most of Europe, was directed to bringing out what the Dutch Foreign Minister called 'the infinite riches of that marvellous instrument'.<sup>1</sup> In this search the main emphasis had hitherto been laid upon Article 16, that is to say upon the need for effective sanctions against a State which actually went to war. Little attention had been paid to the latent possibilities of Article 11, which gave the widest powers to the League, when war was still no more than a distant threat, to take any action that might be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. Now for the first time Article 11, to which the Bulgarian government had appealed, and on which the Secretary-General and the President of the Council had acted, was seen to be perhaps the most important part of the whole system.

<sup>1</sup> See Council minutes, December 8th, 1926.

THE ADMISSION OF GERMANY:  
THE RESIGNATION OF  
BRAZIL AND SPAIN

*Germany applies at last—Unexpected difficulties—Claims of Poland, Brazil, and Spain—Fiasco at the Assembly—Its general effect—Reorganization of the Council—Resignation of Brazil and Spain—The Assembly's welcome to Germany*

(FEBRUARY—SEPTEMBER 1926)

THE thirty-seventh Council session of December 1925 showed a further advance in the slow ascent of the League. Four Prime Ministers and eight Foreign Ministers were taking part: the British government alone was represented by three members of the Cabinet. The final settlement of the Greco-Bulgar conflict and of the controversy over Mosul would have been enough to make it a notable occasion. Still more important, it marked a fresh expansion of those activities in the field of disarmament and of economic reform to which the international institutions were now directing their growing energies.

It was in all men's minds that this would be the last regular Council session before the arrival of Germany. The Locarno Treaties, signed in London on December 1st, were brought to Geneva by Chamberlain and, at a public meeting on December 14th, solemnly entrusted to the custody of the Secretary-General. One after another the Council Members, European, Asiatic, and Latin American, declared their belief that the authority and action of the League would be powerfully reinforced by the new agreements and especially by the new spirit of which they were the expression; and their satisfaction at the prospect of German entry. As if to show that these were not empty words, the Council proceeded to take steps towards each of the two great events to which international opinion was anxiously looking forward—the Disarmament Conference and the Economic Conference. A preparatory Committee was established for each. Germany (already considered as being practically a Member), the United States, and Russia were invited to take part not only in the Conferences themselves but also in the preliminary work of both Committees.

Two months later, on February 8th, 1926, the German government at last sent in its formal demand for admission to the League. For this

long awaited event the Secretariat had planned and prepared, as it had planned and prepared, in the last months of 1919, for the first meetings of the Council and Assembly. Every point of procedure had been carefully foreseen. The Assembly was convoked for March 8th, the earliest date allowed by its Rules of Procedure. In the meantime Drummond went to Berlin in order to explain to the German government exactly what he expected to happen, and to discuss the administrative consequences of German membership—such as the appointment of German experts on the principal League Committees, the places which German officials might occupy in the Secretariat, and the German contribution to the expenses of the League. He was received with great cordiality. On a previous visit, he had already established a good understanding with Stresemann. From this time until his death Stresemann remained on the best of terms with Drummond and with the Secretariat as a whole.

From the administrative and procedural points of view, the way now lay clear before Germany and before the League. But there suddenly arose formidable political complications, unforeseen till then by either the German government or the Secretariat. Some right-wing journalists in France had for several weeks been urging that Poland ought to become a permanent Member of the Council at the same time as Germany. The suggestion was probably in the first place no more than a part of the nationalist campaign against the Locarno Treaties. It was plainly contrary to the real meaning of the Covenant, which was generally and rightly understood to be that the great powers, and the great powers only, should be permanent Members of the Council. It was equally destructive of the spirit of Locarno. Germany had there been assured that all the other signatories would support her claim to receive a permanent seat. It was never suggested that the same privilege should simultaneously be extended to Poland or any other Member. Germany was fully justified in taking it for granted that she would be one of five permanent Members of the Council and that her status as a great power would thereby be reaffirmed.

Unfortunately, the proposal began to be taken seriously by the Polish government and by the Quai d'Orsay, and was in due course approved by Briand himself. Still more unfortunately, it was not rejected by Chamberlain. Passing through Paris at the end of January, he listened to Briand's arguments, accepted them for himself,<sup>1</sup> and promised to submit them to the Cabinet. On the same occasion he saw Quiñones de León and gave positive encouragement to a similar claim on behalf of

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain would neither admit nor deny this, but it seems clear that it was a fact. See D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1929-30), vol. iii, p. 235.

Spain; for the publicity given to the Polish prospects had naturally aroused other ambitions also. Both Spain and Brazil had in the past aspired to permanent seats; in September 1921 their requests had actually been discussed in secret meetings of the Council. That of Spain was opposed only by Brazil, which made her agreement dependent upon receiving a permanent seat for herself. Since no other Council Member was prepared to grant the Brazilian demand, both proposals had been dropped; and the Council's proceedings had been kept so profoundly secret that even in the Secretariat they were known to nobody except the Secretary-General. Neither country, however, had abandoned its hopes. Spain, by refusing to ratify the amendment to Article 4 of the Covenant which had been adopted in 1921, had deliberately frustrated the Assembly's desire to regulate future elections.<sup>1</sup> Brazil, in her reply to the first German note of September 1924, had included a vague phrase which she later interpreted as a warning that her support of the German demand for a permanent seat was conditional upon the success of her own.

By mid-February, three weeks before the Assembly opened, the whole European press was filled with the din of battle. In Germany, all parties agreed in holding that it would be an act of bad faith for the Council to create any new permanent seat except that which Germany would fill; and that until this possibility had been cleared away, Germany could not accept membership of the League, nor, in consequence, could the Locarno Treaties come into force. Public opinion in Britain was hardly less unanimous: Chamberlain was begged, by supporters and by opponents alike, to announce that the British government would refuse any other addition to the Council until Germany had become a permanent Member. Thus, they urged, the implicit engagements of Locarno would be honoured, and the dangerous agitation would immediately die down. Any change in the number of seats required a unanimous vote in the Council. The certain prospect of a British veto would at once put a stop to the untimely demands of Poland, Spain, and Brazil. What government would stake its credit upon a policy which was faced by such a combination of legal and moral obstacles? The rank and file of League Members, including those of the British Commonwealth, were anxiously awaiting such a declaration. Chamberlain, however, refused to be moved by the strong and united pressure of Parliament and the press. All that was needed, in his view, was a secret meeting of the Locarno powers before the Assembly met. Let him have a free hand; the signatories of Locarno would end by agreeing among themselves, and all would be well.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 148.

Thus encouraged, the various claimants intensified their campaign. Each supported the other, since it was evident that all had to pass the same barriers—the general principle that only the acknowledged great powers should have permanent seats, and the particular objection of Germany to any change in the Council before her membership was an accomplished fact. For the same reason, though Briand's own attitude was now more reserved, the French press was giving full encouragement to Spain and Brazil as well as to Poland. Mussolini, who was carrying on a wordy battle with Stresemann over the treatment of Italy's Tyrolese subjects, pronounced himself in favour of Poland. To add to the confusion, China and Belgium let it be known that if any new permanent seats, except that of Germany, were to be created, they also would be candidates. Meanwhile, the Swedish government issued a statement that its representative on the Council would be instructed to veto any change whatever except the addition of Germany.

In spite of so many signs of a coming storm, it was with full confidence of a successful issue that the delegations gathered for the Special Assembly. The League had faced difficult and critical hours before now, and had never failed to find a solution which if not glorious was at least workable. The great fear had been lest the Germans might retract their application, or might refuse to come to Geneva until everything had been settled. But Stresemann and Luther, the Chancellor, had declined to listen to such suggestions. They had arrived in a special train, bringing with them a crowd of experts and secretaries. The documents and office material of the delegation filled two furniture vans. A line of magnificent Mercedes cars stood outside their hotel. Over a hundred special correspondents had accompanied them. Some German journals had even sent newspaper boys, dressed in a showy uniform, to sell their special issues in the streets of Geneva. Was it possible that after all this the Germans would have to return home with their mission unfulfilled; that the League, which had long desired to receive Germany as a Member, should be paralysed at the last minute by its own internal difficulties; that the achievements of Locarno should be brought to nothing by the failure of Geneva? The Secretariat, and the old hands among the delegations, had no doubt but that, once the Council and the Assembly began to bring their regular methods into play, agreement would soon follow.

In judgement after the event, it appears probable that in the press campaigns and the diplomatic exchanges of the weeks preceding the Assembly, the dictatorial regimes of Spain and Brazil had engaged their credit too deeply to be able to accept a reasonable compromise, and that the Council and Assembly themselves could hardly, at that stage,

have succeeded in reaching a settlement. In any case, the question was not put to the proof. The Locarno powers took charge, and the organs of the League were reduced to silence while Briand, Chamberlain, Stresemann, Scialoja, Vandervelde, Beneš, and Skrzynski met secretly in the hotel rooms of one or the other. Two Assembly Committees were formally constituted, the one to report on Germany's application for membership, the second to consider the additions to the League budget which her entry would necessitate. Each had completed its work within a few hours. But no decision could be taken by the Assembly itself, since Germany naturally refused to be admitted as a Member of the League until her Council seat was certain. Day after day was filled with rumours, while the delegates of forty States, convoked specially, waited with growing impatience, resenting the humiliation inflicted upon themselves and the League, fearing that a far worse humiliation might be inflicted upon Germany, believing that the only hope of success was to bring the whole complex problem to the test of public debate in the Assembly, yet forced to remain inactive lest they might unknowingly destroy the prospects of the secret negotiations.

For more than a week this intolerable situation continued. At the end of that time it became known that, thanks to the self-sacrifice of Undén and Beneš, a plan had been found on which the Locarno powers were ready to agree. Germany was to receive a permanent seat at once: Sweden and Czechoslovakia would resign their temporary seats, and the Assembly would be asked to elect Poland and Holland in their place. During the six months before the autumn session of the Assembly, a further study would be made of the whole question of the Council's constitution. The delegations of Poland and Germany, both of which had behaved with exemplary patience and dignity, had, after some resistance, consented to the plan. But as soon as it was submitted to an informal meeting of the Council, both Spain and Brazil declared it to be completely unacceptable. The Spanish delegate stated that if Spain did not receive a permanent seat, she would place no obstacle in the way of Germany, but would thereafter withdraw from the League. This heavy blow was followed by a heavier one still. Mello Franco informed his colleagues that his instructions were to veto Germany's seat unless Brazil received one at the same time. Brazil claimed to be acting on behalf of the American continent and for no selfish end. The pretext was quickly demolished when all the other Latin American delegations held a meeting among themselves and unanimously invited her to reconsider her decision for the sake of the League, for the sake of world peace, and because the American countries ought to help, not hinder, the reconciliation of the peoples of Europe. The dictator-President in Rio

cared as little for their views as for the protests of the British, French, and German Ambassadors.

Now, when failure was certain, there was nothing left to do but call the Assembly together and ask it to postpone until September all action on the application of Germany. The proceedings opened (March 17th, 1926) with a statement by Mello Franco. He could not conceal his painful emotion in the face of an intensely hostile Assembly: but he did bravely conceal the fact that he was personally in complete disagreement with his government's instructions and had done his best to get them changed. And if the veto of Brazil was indefensible, it was not difficult to show that the Locarno powers bore much of the responsibility for their own failure. Changes in the Council, he pointed out, ought not to be treated in secret negotiations between a few European States, but openly in the Council and Assembly: they were of vital importance to the League, and all Members of the League should be able to express their views. Locarno was an admirable achievement; but Locarno must be brought into the framework of the League, not the League into the framework of Locarno. Next Chamberlain spoke, describing the compromise reached by difficult stages, praising the generosity of Sweden and Czechoslovakia, expressing his bitter disappointment that the Assembly was prevented from doing what it had met to do and his hope that all would be well in September. His consolation was that the solidarity of the Locarno group had not been broken. Briand, following him, brought some relief by a warm tribute to the attitude of Germany. In language not before heard from any French statesman, he declared that Germany must not be deprived of the place which was her rightful due, and asked the Assembly to pronounce a moral verdict in favour of German membership by passing a formal resolution of regret that she had not now been admitted, and of hope that she would be effectively admitted at the September session.

When Briand sat down Ishii informed the Assembly that the Council intended to appoint a Committee to study the whole question of the number of Council Members and the method of election. And then the smaller powers had at last the chance to speak, although the Assembly's tradition of self-restraint prevented them from showing the full strength of their feelings. Their anger was still directed as much against the Locarno group as against Brazil. The Assembly had been exposed to humiliation and ridicule; the League had been made to appear in the eyes of the world as a hotbed of intrigue, paralysed by the selfish claims of its Members and the complications of its own procedure. Nothing could alter the fact that its prestige had been damaged and its power to fulfil the purposes of the Covenant correspondingly reduced. And all

this had been done by diplomatic exchanges before the session and by secret meetings of a small group after the session had begun. The proper organs of the League had not been consulted; its open and well-trying methods had been neglected. Yet it was upon the League that the blame and loss would fall.

Thus the Assembly, convened to carry out an act which was to have been the greatest success in the history of the League, was the occasion of the most severe and costly setback which it had yet suffered. The original promoters of the plan for giving a permanent seat to Poland might well congratulate themselves upon the result of their manœuvre. The press of Moscow and of Rome declared that the League could not recover from such an exposure of its real nature. Isolationism and nationalism were everywhere invigorated. The weakness and hypocrisy of Geneva were contrasted with the solid achievements of pre-war diplomacy as exemplified at Locarno: and, false as the argument might be, it was plausible enough to shake the faith of the average man. In the United States especially, there was a swift reversal of sentiment. For five years there had been a slow but steady trend towards co-operation with Geneva. The Locarno Treaties, the prompt action of the Council in the Balkan crisis, the prospect of the Disarmament Conference and the Economic Conference, had much increased men's interest and sympathy. Now, seeing Germany kept out by a selfish and undignified scramble for Council seats, few Americans reflected that if their country had been present, the veto of Brazil would have been impossible. The general conclusion was that the United States was well out of such quarrels, and the isolationists recovered the ground they had lost.

In Germany itself, by a curious paradox, the effects of the March fiasco were not unfavourable. It had been prophesied, by those who might be expected to know best, that Stresemann must fall and that Germany's application for League membership must be withdrawn.<sup>1</sup> To the German mind, however, it seemed clear that if so many States coveted a place in the Council, if it was so difficult for Germany to get one, there must be more reality in the League and more solid advantage in Council membership than most Germans had hitherto supposed. Hence the nationalist opposition was more inclined than before to back Stresemann's policy. Liberal opinion learnt with pride that the whole world had admired the patience and dignity of the German delegation in Geneva: some papers even admitted that the Poles also had earned praise for the same reason. And Stresemann himself, emerging more and more as the first statesman in Germany and perhaps in Europe, remained

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. D'Abernon, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 233.



calm and optimistic. There had, he said, been quarrels in the League: but there was no quarrel between the League and Germany. She would await the event of the September Assembly; and in the meantime she would accept the invitation to take part in the Committee set up to study the general question of Council membership.

The proceedings of this Committee, which opened on May 10th, 1926, showed how easily the whole crisis could have been avoided if the methods of Geneva had been used from the beginning. It was made up of representatives of the ten Council States, together with Argentina, Poland, China, Switzerland, and Germany. Motta was in the chair: and most of the members were men who, like him, had had much experience of League affairs. Cecil, as representative of Britain, persuaded the Committee to admit the press to all its deliberations, even when the claims of individual powers were to be discussed. In all his experience of the League, he said, he had never known a case in which private meetings had proved an advantage. It was argued that delegates could express themselves more freely in private, and could more easily yield to the arguments of their colleagues. He believed, on the contrary, that the fact of speaking in public led to moderation in the statement of policy and hence increased the chance of ultimate agreement. International affairs could no longer be successfully managed by individuals, however skilled, meeting behind closed doors. No effective solution could be reached without the support of public opinion, and for this purpose the press and the public must have full opportunity to understand what was being done. Cecil was deliberately challenging the methods followed by the Locarno powers at the Assembly; he had protested at the time, but Chamberlain had refused to listen to his advice. On this occasion, at least, his attitude was completely justified by the event. The debates of the Committee were full and frank, but they remained throughout on a high level of courtesy. They gave rise to no such press campaigns as had preceded and accompanied the Assembly. And they resulted in general agreement, so far as agreement was still possible.

The plan drawn up by the Committee and subsequently adopted by the Assembly was of necessity a compromise. Council membership was to be raised from ten to fourteen. Germany alone was to become a permanent Member. The elected Members were to be increased from six to nine. They were in principle to sit for three years, and not to be re-elected immediately after their term expired. But this last rule might be relaxed, by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly, in favour of not more than three States: and no limit was placed upon the number of times a

State might, under these conditions, be re-elected. The effect was to create an intermediate class of semi-permanent seats whose holders, unlike the permanent Members, needed to be re-elected every three years, but could in practice expect to retain their Council seat for an indefinite period. Such a system corresponded closely to the actual situation: Poland, Spain, and Brazil, for whom the semi-permanent places were designed, were in fact intermediate between the great powers and the rank and file of League Members. The six ordinary places would allow most, if not all, of the small States to count on being elected to the Council every twenty years or so, and would ensure that the chief groups would always be represented.

This plan, worked out in the public sessions of the Committee, met with general acceptance, not as being in itself an ideal arrangement, but as a practical solution and as making it certain that the Assembly would not be paralysed in September as it had been in March. Poland was satisfied. Spain and Brazil would doubtless have been satisfied six months earlier. But unhappily both had engaged their national pride too deeply to consent to a compromise, even though it gave them the substance of what they had demanded. When the Council met for its regular session of June, the Spanish seat was occupied by a young diplomatist who explained that he was there to observe, but not to participate in, its proceedings. He read a statement to the effect that Spain would ratify the amendment to Article 4 of the Covenant and so would no longer prevent the Assembly from regulating future elections. But she could not accept a plan which placed her in the second rank of powers. And though it did not say so in clear terms, the statement ended with words which implied that Spain intended to withdraw from the League.

The action of Brazil was more definite. Mello Franco did not take his seat until near the close of the session. He then announced that Brazil was resigning her place on the Council forthwith, and would in due course notify her resignation from the League. She knew now that the claims which she had put forward, not on her own behalf but for the sake of the Western Hemisphere and for the greater benefit of the League, were not going to be accepted. The changes which were about to occur would make the Council, even more than before, a predominantly European organism. German membership was desirable and necessary: but distant countries ought not to be deprived of their rights in order that Germany might enjoy a privilege which had been promised her by a small group of European States.

To both countries the Council answered with sincere emotion. Both had been partners in all its acts. Quiñones de León and Mello Franco

had played a valuable part in settling many a difficult point; they had never found themselves in conflict with any of their fellow members; they had worked in close friendship and co-operation with the Secretariat. Their loss would be deeply felt in the Council and would darken the prospects of the League. Each Council member expressed the hope that during the three months which must elapse before the Assembly met the two governments would relent. But no one suggested that the League should yield to their pressure and create permanent seats for them to occupy. To do so would be only to reopen the whole problem. It was time to finish, even at a heavy cost.

In spite of flattering words and diplomatic arguments, both countries proved, for the time at least, inflexible. The formal notification of withdrawal was sent by Brazil on June 14th, by Spain on September 11th. These were the first serious losses in League membership: the only previous withdrawal had been that of Costa Rica (January 1925) on the ground that the annual contribution was beyond her means. They were the last until Japan resigned in 1933. Their effect at the time was for various reasons much smaller than might have been anticipated. They were set off not only by the entry of Germany but also by the expectation that Argentina was about to return to active membership. They were the result not of any failure or weakness in the League, but of its resistance to threats which all considered unjustified. Further, the drafters of the Covenant had in their wisdom ordained that withdrawal should not become effective until two years after the formal notice had been given; and there was much hope that both countries might change their minds before two years had passed. Primo de Rivera, the Spanish dictator, had never appeared intransigent in matters of external policy. He was openly declaring that if Spain received satisfaction as regards her claim to Tangier, she would remain in the League. And in the end she did remain, although this condition was not fulfilled. As for Brazil, the despotic Presidency of Arturo Bernardes was about to end. There was good reason to believe that his successor, Dr Washington Luiz, disapproved of his attitude. This in fact was true. But though the new government showed good will towards the League, continued its membership of the International Labour Office, of the Permanent Court, and of some League Committees, and more than once appeared to be on the point of resuming full membership, it never took the last step back to Geneva.

When the Assembly opened the places of Brazil and Spain were empty. No fresh difficulties were expected or encountered. The Assembly quickly agreed to the proposed reorganization. Holland and the Scandinavian

members manifested their regret and misgiving over the increase in the Council from ten to fourteen. But they would not vote against the only plan which was sure to pass without other opposition, and which was inseparably bound up with the entry of Germany. And so, at last, on September 8th, 1926, Germany was formally admitted, by unanimous vote, as a Member of the League.

Two days later Stresemann led his delegation into their seats, while the applause of the Assembly was taken up by a cheering crowd outside. It was impossible, after all that had passed, to recapture the confident enthusiasm of a few months before. Yet this was an event of historic importance, justly greeted the world over as opening new prospects of peace; and it was signalized by speeches from Stresemann and Briand which were worthy of so great an occasion. Stresemann's emotion was such that he could scarcely pronounce his first sentences; then in simple words he declared that German opinion had not always been favourable to peace and co-operation with other powers, but was now in its great majority resolved to support that policy. Germany would wholeheartedly devote herself to the duties devolving upon all Members of the League and would work in harmony and confidence with all nations represented in the Council and the Assembly.

With that sense of stage-management which the Assembly, alone of League institutions, sometimes displayed, it had been decided that only one speech of welcome should be pronounced, and that it should be pronounced by Briand. He was doubly indicated for the task: first, because the entry of Germany was everywhere welcomed as a new stage of reconciliation between her and France; secondly, because he alone possessed the magic gift of oratory which could express the relief and satisfaction of the whole Assembly. His own feelings were deeply stirred; and he more than fulfilled the expectations of his colleagues. He delighted the smaller States by admitting that there had been too much private discussion among a limited group and that in future all negotiations should take place in the spirit of the League, that is to say in the public eye and with the collaboration of all Members. In words that long remained famous, he greeted the arrival of the German delegation as a symbol of the hope that the long series of wars between the two countries was ended and that henceforth all their differences would be settled through the League.

The cordial words of Stresemann and Briand were of course denounced by the nationalist press in Berlin and Paris as being weak and unpatriotic. But without doubt they truly reflected the prevailing sentiment of both nations. In Geneva, for the time being, the French and German delegations worked together on surprisingly friendly terms.

Stresemann behaved with politic moderation: he refrained from raising any difficult question, and even let it be known that Germany favoured the election of Poland to the Council. He was at first surprised and even embarrassed at the publicity and informality of the Council, so different from the stiff bureaucracy of the Wilhelmstrasse. But he soon found the atmosphere congenial and before leaving Geneva he announced that his respect and liking for the League had been much increased by a nearer acquaintance.

## CHINA AND THE LEAGUE (FIRST STAGE)

*The Peking government and the League—Chiang Kai-shek in power—  
Chamberlain's note to the League—Plans of Rajchman and T. V. Soong  
—Co-operative attitude of Japan*

(1920-1929)

IT was only by slow stages that the affairs of China began to be considered at Geneva, where they were later to fill so great a place. Few realized, in 1926, that the anarchical condition of the country already contained the germs of danger to the peace and prosperity of the rest of the world. The Western powers were meeting with an organized hostility of a more serious nature than the many similar episodes of the past; but they still had no idea of the real gravity of the situation. For many reasons, it was long before any sustained attempt was made to bring the problem of China before the League. Within the Secretariat, as a result of chance rather than of deliberate planning, there had been formed an amazingly correct estimation of future developments, and of the methods by which the League, and the League alone, could guide them towards safety and progress in the interests of China and of the rest of the world alike. But neither the Western governments, nor those who then claimed to speak for China herself, were ready to listen.

At the Peace Conference the Chinese diplomatist Wellington Koo had taken part in the work of drafting the Covenant. The delegation had refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles, in protest against the provisions whereby Germany resigned all her rights and privileges in the province of Shantung not to China but to Japan; but it never considered abstaining from membership of the League, and acquired this by the simple expedient of signing and ratifying the Austrian Peace Treaty, which, like all those drawn up in Paris, contained the Covenant as its first section. But the Chinese government, with good reason, looked upon the United States as its best friend among the great powers; and when the Senate rejected the Covenant, the League immediately lost most of its attraction. The Chinese observed with satisfaction that the Shantung clauses played some part in the isolationist campaign against American membership—a notable illustration of the vanity of human judgement, since the absence of the United States was to prove a fatal handicap to

the League's power to help China to prosperity or to save her from aggression.

As a result of the Senate's action, it was in Washington and not in Geneva that the negotiations had been set in motion whereby she hoped to free herself from the limitations on her sovereignty imposed by nineteenth-century treaties. But the impetus of the Washington Conference was short-lived, and the negotiations in Peking were long drawn out and inconclusive. The Far Eastern departments of the principal Foreign Ministries seemed to be the repository of all that was inert and unimaginative. They thought only of consortiums and concessions, of the rights granted to foreigners by a long series of one-sided treaties, or of the various powers and privileges which had been gradually attached to the Diplomatic Body in Peking. And indeed the Chinese Foreign Ministry itself was no less detached from the turbulent realities of the national scene. It occupied itself with a skilful imitation of the diplomatic activities of the Western powers. It made its *démarches* and its protests, accredited and received Ministers, nominated delegations and adhered to treaties. The brilliant qualities of a few individuals had helped to keep up the illusion. From 1920 to 1922 Wellington Koo was able to secure the election of China to the Council of the League. But in truth all this was leading nowhere. The nation was torn by the armies of rival war-lords. The government departments in Peking, controlled by whatever General was master of the capital for the time being, were losing their last remnant of dignity and authority. By 1926, there was no longer, in the northern capital, any semblance of a government capable of speaking for the nation. But far away in Canton there was arising a new power based on something deeper than the personal ambitions of individual leaders.

The Kuomintang had met with no help or sympathy from the Western powers. It had grown strong, firstly through its appeal to Chinese patriotism, and secondly through the help and guidance it had received from Soviet Russia. It was still at this time much influenced by the Russian agent Borodin and by the left wing among its own members. Borodin deliberately encouraged the anti-foreign sentiments of Chinese nationalism and turned those sentiments with special virulence against the British. The British government, on its side, had made up its mind that the only possible policy was to abolish the unequal treaties, restore the concessions, and treat China as a fully sovereign and independent State. But it could not see how to bring these good intentions to practical realization while China was still in a condition of disorder and possessed no government with which other powers could negotiate. Meanwhile, the British authorities were unable to avoid or prevent a series of grave

incidents, at Shanghai, Canton, Wanhsien, Hankow, and Nanking, in which a number of Chinese and British lost their lives. These events still produced nothing more than the faintest of echoes at Geneva. During the Assembly of 1925 the Chinese delegate—a nominee of the Foreign Ministry in Peking—had spoken of the need to revise the treaties which, under modern conditions, had become inapplicable. In the following year, the same delegate interrupted the proceedings to read out a protest against the action of British warships at Wanhsien. A few months later, in February 1927, Chamberlain was persuaded by Cecil to address to the League a statement of British policy towards China and an explanation of why it had been necessary to disembark a considerable British force to protect the International Settlement at Shanghai. But neither the Chinese nor the British government asked for the intervention of the League. Chamberlain, indeed, in closing his letter, observed that there was no way in which the League could be of assistance.

However, at that very moment, decisive developments were starting within the ranks of the Kuomintang. Throughout the year 1927 a struggle for power was carried on between Borodin and the left wing of the party on the one side, and the right wing led by General Chiang Kai-shek on the other. At one time Chiang Kai-shek was driven into exile: but by the end of the year he had established himself firmly at the head of the government, had broken with Russia, and had excluded the Communists from the National Executive Council. During the next few months, the National government transferred the capital from Peking to Nanking, extended its effective control over the greatest and richest areas of the country, and was recognized both at home and abroad as the lawful government of China. Thenceforward, it pursued, so far as circumstances allowed, a clear and consistent policy. It aimed at getting rid of the unequal treaties and yet remaining on good terms with the West. It aimed also at raising the material and administrative level of the country, calling for this purpose on the services of foreign experts, but without sacrificing any fraction of the national dignity and independence, as had so often been done in the past.

Long before then, one prophetic eye had seen, not only the profound importance of the whole Chinese question to the peace and prosperity of the world, but also the possibilities which the League offered for its solution. The eye was that of Ludwik Rajchman, Director of the Health Section of the Secretariat, a Polish doctor with a revolutionary past, a sympathy for left-wing movements of all kinds, unwearying energy and extraordinary intelligence. Rajchman visited Japan by invitation in the winter of 1925-6, and contrived to spend some weeks in China on his



way back. His official report to the Health Committee was a revelation to Western readers of the magnificent system of public health administration which had been built up in Japan. His private<sup>1</sup> report to the Secretary-General described with astonishing insight the probable trend of events in China and the many ways in which her membership of the League could be used, whether to assist her in her material development, or to establish her international position on a sound and normal basis. Rajchman perceived that the confusion and disorder in which Chinese affairs were plunged, though they were accepted as a natural and irremediable state of things by the Diplomatic Body in Peking and the Foreign Ministers to whom they reported, were in truth a standing danger to peace. He was convinced that the nationalist movement of the Kuomintang had captured the idealistic energy of Chinese youth, and would prove the strongest force in the country; and that if it were to receive from the Western powers that sympathy which till then had been shown only by Russia, it would be able to construct the platform on which a new Chinese government might take its stand. He was, assuredly, not alone in these beliefs: but of the few who had visualized them clearly, he was the only one who also had an adequate understanding of the methods and machinery of the League. As a Member of the League, China could call for its help as a right, with no loss of prestige. If the political aspects of the problem were laid before the Council or the Assembly, she could take part in the proceedings on equal terms, and in the presence of other countries which enjoyed no special privileges within her frontiers—a very different thing from the conferences with the Diplomatic Body in Peking. On the material side, the social and economic organizations of the League could supply expert advice and technical assistance, at little cost, and with no danger that the interests of China might be subordinated to those of any other country.

Much of what Rajchman foresaw and suggested came to pass in time, but less rapidly and far less completely than he had hoped. The first official contact between the National government and the League was by no means auspicious. It was at the Assembly of 1928 that China was represented at Geneva for the first time by a delegate taking his instructions from Nanking and speaking in the name of 'a new national and democratic regime'. China, having been elected to the Council in 1926 for a period of two years, could only retain her seat if the Assembly declared her re-eligible by a two-thirds majority. She received 27 votes out of 50. A majority was in her favour: but this was not enough.

<sup>1</sup> 'Private' in the sense that it was not officially submitted to any League body. But it was widely circulated in the Secretariat, and was doubtless also known to the principal Foreign Offices.

The loss of Council membership was much resented in Nanking, where the erroneous, but natural, conclusion was drawn that the Assembly was less well disposed towards the Kuomintang than it had been to the phantom government in Peking. Resentment was increased by the fact that, as a consequence of the struggle over its budget, which the Secretariat had to face each year, a quite disproportionate prominence was given to the question of the Chinese contribution. For years this had not been fully paid and arrears of nearly 7 million francs had accumulated—no great sum, but an embarrassment to the Chinese Treasury, which had to face a complicated problem of external debts and difficulties of exchange.

It looked, indeed, as though China was about to follow the example of Brazil and withdraw from the League. The danger was averted by the use which the Secretary-General now made of Rajchman's ideas. He proposed to the Chinese government that he should send his deputy, Joseph Avenol, on an official visit to Nanking, in order to establish closer relations between China and the League, and to explain its activities and organization to the heads of the National government. It was well understood, though official discretion prevented its being openly stated, that the real purpose of the journey would be to discuss the various ways in which the Chinese could make use of the expert committees of the League in their enormous task of reconstruction. Avenol was warmly welcomed at Nanking, at Canton, and even at Mukden; the latter centres, though largely independent in internal affairs, did not question the right of the National government to represent the whole country in its dealings with other States and with the League. His mission was successful both psychologically and practically, and the misadventures of the Assembly were forgotten.

From 1929 onwards until after the outbreak of the Second World War there was a steady succession of Secretariat officials and League experts visiting or residing in China. Rajchman himself returned there that year, and in each of the two following years. He went, this time, on the formal invitation of the Chinese government, duly endorsed by the Council after the Secretary-General had already accepted it. As adviser on public health, he set on foot an extensive programme of work which was thereafter carried on with remarkable success. He became the intimate and trusted counsellor not only of the new Health Ministry in Nanking, but of Chiang Kai-shek himself, and, more important still, of T. V. Soong, the Minister of Finance, and the most powerful influence in foreign policy. Like many Chinese, Soong was a lover of plans; but he was also consistent and resolute in carrying them out. He called for League help for many other purposes besides the public health pro-

gramme—road construction (China's greatest need of all), flood prevention, public education, agriculture, the reform of the civil service, the establishment of rural co-operatives. In the course of time, he consolidated or repaid China's old debt to the League; and Drummond succeeded in persuading the Assembly to utilize the money thus made available for promoting the services of the League to China.

On the side of the League itself, the whole design was both conceived and executed by the Secretariat. From most of the powers concerned with Chinese affairs it met with little sympathy. Though they had formally recognized the National government at Nanking, they had by no means resolved to give it the clear and resolute support which it so desperately needed. Their state of mind was symbolized by the refusal to transfer their Ambassadors or Ministers from the Legation Quarter at Peiping, although this city had been deprived of both the name and the reality of capital status. It was only with a disastrous time-lag that they realized the fact that the new government was something more than a transient group whose powers might at any moment be at the mercy of some fresh combination of provincial war-lords. To most of their experts on Far Eastern affairs, however completely they might themselves have misjudged the situation, the League was still a new-fangled institution which had better confine its activities to Europe; oriental complications were outside its experience and beyond its understanding. Men who throughout their professional lives had regarded the international relations of China as a question for specialists, subject to different rules and governed by different conditions from those of all other countries, could not easily bring themselves to approve methods based essentially on treating China on the same footing as every other Member of the League. The development on a massive scale of co-operation between China and the League might have been of untold advantage to countries such as Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, and Australia, and indeed to the United States also. It may have been that thus alone could the greatest of world problems have been solved, and the civilizations of East and West have found the way to live together in harmony. But at no time did the Western powers appear to attach any real value or importance to the question, or do more than acquiesce somewhat reluctantly in the conjoint efforts of the Chinese government and the Secretariat. Naturally, therefore, these efforts could never even remotely approach the extent or effectiveness for which their planners had hoped.

In their beginnings they did, however, evoke a friendly and co-operative attitude from Japan. The Japanese government was greatly attached to the League. The loss of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the

indignities inflicted by the American Senate, had led it to appreciate the more highly its position as a permanent Member of the Council and thus as one of the acknowledged leaders of the international community. Shidehara and his colleagues of the Minseito party, who held power during the greater part of the period from 1921 to 1931, did not share the view that the League's activities were best confined to Europe: on the contrary, they welcomed its few incursions into *Far Eastern* questions and took care to play therein the authoritative part to which they felt entitled. They were on the friendliest terms with the Secretariat, towards which the Emperor himself had shown interest and good will. And their course of action in China, the inexorable test of Japanese statesmanship, was not then engaged on the slope which was to lead both countries into the abyss of misery and ruin.

The terrible crimes committed against China in later years by a totally militaristic Japan have led many people to conclude that her real purposes were always those of a ruthless imperialism. Certain it is that the current of militarism never ceased to flow, though it was not always visible on the surface. It may well be that it was always powerful enough to take charge, whenever its leaders decided that the moment to do so had arrived. But in the nineteen-twenties there were many Japanese who declared their adherence to another policy. They believed that the future of their country depended on building up the strongest possible economic and political ties with China: that thus alone could Japan face the danger to her inward stability involved in the spread of Russian influence and ideas, and the economic danger to which she was always exposed unless she could count on China as a source of raw materials and a market for her finished products. They realized that their aims could be achieved only by treating China as a sovereign State and the Chinese as masters in their own house; and that this meant encouraging the growth of a strong central government. The men who professed these theories affirmed also that they were widely accepted by the younger generation in Japan, and might well be the prevailing policy in the future. Their hopes were completely frustrated; and, in the light of later events, it is often asserted that Japanese liberalism was nothing but a mask to hide imperialist designs. But it is difficult to doubt the honesty of men like Shidehara or Adatci, or the young Liberal leaders in Japan; and, indeed, men who run a daily risk of assassination on account of the principles which they advocate surely give the best proof that their advocacy is sincere. In any case, until the militarists took charge of events, in the summer of 1931, plans for League assistance to the National government of China were treated in a friendly and helpful spirit by the authorities in Tokyo.

## THE NEW COUNCIL AND THE LOCARNO POWERS

*The Council in its definitive form—Effect of increased numbers—The  
Triumvirate of Briand, Chamberlain, Stresemann—Other Council dele-  
gates—The Locarno powers and the League—Restriction on the Council—  
Indignation of small powers—‘League Opinion’—A serious cleavage—  
Failure to use the period of stability*

(1926–1929)

IN the course of the next two years the new Council assumed what was to be for practical purposes its definitive form. It now included five permanent Members, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan; two semi-permanent, Poland and Spain; and seven which, though independently elected, were chosen in accordance with a system of group representation. Three of the seven were always Latin American States; and since election was always for a period of three years, it was easy to arrange that each year one Latin American State should retire, to be replaced by another. (The choice of the latter was usually made—unofficially but effectively—at a separate meeting of Latin American delegates held before the Assembly vote.) Of the remaining four, one was an Asiatic State; one a member of the Little Entente; one from the group of European ex-neutrals; and one a member of the British Commonwealth.

This system was never embodied in any formal agreement. But it was maintained without difficulty and almost without question. It gave nearly every Member a fair chance of election to the Council from time to time:<sup>1</sup> and it composed a Council which at any moment represented a complete cross-section of the total membership of the League. The result was that the electioneering intrigues of the earlier Assemblies were now reduced to very small dimensions: and from 1927 onwards, the Council elections were held, as the Secretariat had long desired, in the early days of each session of the Assembly.

It was a good day for the Council when the Assembly first gave its vote to a member of the British Commonwealth. At the Peace Conference, Sir Robert Borden, the wise Prime Minister of Canada, had asked

<sup>1</sup> It was, however, a complete bar to a few Members, such as Portugal, Austria, and Hungary, which belonged to no recognized group. Their grievance was met, in 1933, by the temporary creation of an additional elective seat.

for and received the assurance that the British Dominions would have equal rights with all other League Members as regards election to the Council. But in a Council of eight or even of ten, it was hardly possible that two places could be held by the Commonwealth: the Dominions themselves did not think of being candidates. For years Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand did not even exercise their right to sit as Council Members when their own actions as mandatory powers were under discussion, but allowed the British representative to speak for them as well as for himself. Nevertheless, they attached great importance to their status as separate Members of the League, and, having acquiesced in the augmentation of the Council, they allowed Sir George Foster of Canada to remind the Assembly of 1926 that in numbers, in resources and in their position in the world, the six Dominion Members of the League could bear comparison with any other group. In that year, the Irish Free State stood, unsuccessfully, as an independent candidate. Next year, Canada was elected: and thereafter, to its great advantage, the Council continuously included one or other of the Dominions. Their representatives were always among its most outspoken and impartial members. Further, except for the period of Irish membership (1930-3), they brought to its meetings the views and interests of distant continents.

It had been commonly affirmed that the increase of the Council from ten to fourteen members would reduce its efficiency as a working organism. Such a point is incapable of proof or disproof; but on the whole this fear did not seem to be realized. The sense of intimacy, of discussion within a small group who had learnt to understand one another's point of view, was certainly lessened. But this was not a question of numbers. A statesman who is prepared to speak freely in a meeting of ten or eleven will not be reduced to silence in a meeting of fourteen. The old familiarity was lost because, of the fourteen countries which composed the Council elected in 1926, seven were new to its work. It was partially at least regained as time went by. Another objection had been that any increase in numbers would add to the difficulty of reaching unanimous conclusions. This argument was logically unanswerable; but things turned out quite otherwise in practice. However small the Council might be, it must have always included not only the great powers, but also those directly interested in the question at issue. Once a decision had been found in which all these could concur, there was not the least doubt that it would be accepted by the rest.

There had been some fear lest a more numerous Council should take a longer time to get through its work. This would not have been from every point of view a regrettable consequence: the Secretariat, at least,

always resented a certain tendency among Council delegations to want to finish the session in the fewest possible days. In any case, it was not observed that the average length of each session was greater than before the change. In most of the more serious questions considered by the Council, it was naturally the spokesmen of the countries directly concerned who took up most of its time. Possessing full rights of Council membership, they were entitled to state their case as completely and as often as they might think desirable. The Council rarely if ever departed from that patience and courtesy which are a necessary element in the conduct of international business. It placed no limitations on the length or number of speeches. There were days when the whole of a morning meeting was taken up by one speech, and the whole afternoon meeting by the answer.

For the next few years the Council sessions were largely dominated by the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, and Germany—Chamberlain, Briand, and Stresemann. Each of the three regarded it as part of his official function to make regular and frequent visits to Geneva. Each enjoyed an unbroken period of office which was without parallel in the post-war years. From the day of Germany's entry until the summer of 1929, this famous triumvirate was present at almost every session of the Assembly and the Council. No such steady and continuous representation of its principal Members is to be found in the annals of the League either before or since. United by a common purpose, accustomed to working together, confident, in spite of occasional uncertainties, in the sincerity and seriousness of one another, they directed the normal work of the Council and powerfully influenced the whole development of the League.

Briand, Chamberlain, and Stresemann were all men of parliamentary traditions; and they deliberately tried to maintain in the Council something like a parliamentary standard of debate. Its meetings at this time were noticeable not indeed for the importance of the questions on the agenda, but at least for the full and frank nature of the discussions. There was an occasion in March 1927 when the Council had to decide whether or not a French force should be stationed in the Saar Territory. After taking up, in their first declarations, opposing and apparently uncompromising attitudes, Briand and Stresemann, helped by suggestions from various other members, succeeded in working out an acceptable solution in open meeting. The matter was of no great moment in itself, but public opinion in both countries—abnormally sensitive, at that time, over any point connected with the occupation or evacuation of German territory—had been worked up to a state of

excitement. It was an astonishing innovation that two Foreign Ministers could treat such a question, in the presence of the press, with friendliness and humour.

Of the three, Gustav Stresemann had, beyond doubt, the hardest task. Germany, beaten, disarmed, and humiliated, was still the object of suspicion and fear. Stresemann's aim was to restore her to a position of equality with other great powers without reviving the fears of those who, having suffered so terribly from her strength, were naturally inclined to believe that their only safety lay in keeping her, if they could, under permanent sentence of enfeeblement. Even if his personal situation at home had been secure, if, that is to say, his purposes had been clearly understood and supported by the mass of the German people, he would still have had formidable obstacles to overcome. But, in fact, it was at home that his greatest difficulties lay. His own party following was small and unreliable. The moderate left-wing parties, which were the only real supporters of his foreign policy, were easily confused and discouraged. They were opposed to him in internal affairs, and never gave him their full confidence. Against him stood all the powers of militarism and reaction embodied in the nationalist parties, which always shirked responsibility themselves but shrank neither from slander nor assassination in their hostility to those who accepted the burden. He lived in an atmosphere of unceasing intrigue and sabotage. He could not count upon the loyalty even of the officials of the Wilhelmstrasse. The Nationalists killed him in the end as surely as they had killed Erzberger, Rathenau, and the rest. But for years he fought them and defeated them. His strength lay in his own courage and intellect; in the conviction that Germany could carry out the obligations of the Treaty, return to equality with other powers, and learn to be great without becoming aggressive; and in the help and sympathy which he received from Briand and Chamberlain.

Until the last months of his life, when his health was already fatally undermined, Stresemann always seemed to enjoy life at Geneva. Negotiations with the Locarno powers, or debates in the Council or Assembly, were easy and agreeable compared with the harsh struggle in Berlin. And of an evening he would sit late in his chosen café, brimming with vitality and cheerfulness, surrounded by the journalists who were always his favourite company.

Briand, too, was happy in Geneva, where he was sure of the admiration and affection of his fellow delegates, of the press, and of all save the irreconcilable critics amongst his own countrymen. For he, also, in his pursuit of reconciliation with Germany, had to face fierce opposition at home. If less unscrupulous than the German nationalists, those of France



were vicious and bitter enough; they were also clever, determined, and well equipped to use the weapons with which extreme exponents of nationalism always supply their counterparts in other countries. He alone of the triumvirate believed in and loved the League for its own sake, thinking of it not only as a useful instrument of policy, but as the embodiment of the world's hopes for peace. With his long years of office, his inexhaustible stores of logic, eloquence, and humour, his passionate conviction that Europe must shake itself free from the legacies of hatred left by the war, he was personally as nearly invulnerable as a politician can be. But though his opponents could not oust him from the Foreign Ministry, they were strong enough to delay and impede the fulfilment of the purposes which he had at heart.

Chamberlain was not the equal of the others in intellectual power or in personal magnetism. But circumstances endowed him with an influence greater than either of his colleagues could claim to possess. He spoke for a government which was sure of its parliamentary majority, and a country which had rid itself of the bitterness of the war years. Such opposition as he had to meet at home was neither violent nor factious. Liberals and Labour alike supported the Locarno Agreements, and in other respects criticized, not the avowed policy of the administration, but its timidity and inertia in putting that policy into effect. Chamberlain, unchallenged representative of a power still rich, united, orderly, peace-loving, and impartial, could, in the Council and Assembly of the League, speak with unequalled authority.

This position gave great opportunities for expanding the activities and responsibilities of the League; it gave also decisive power in resisting such expansion. Chamberlain was throughout on the side of restriction. The League to him was a part of the diplomatic system, to be used or not according as convenience might dictate. The Covenant was simply an international treaty, important no doubt, though not so important as Locarno: and it was a treaty which must be interpreted in the most limited sense. Even the pledges of Locarno seemed to him a heavy and dangerous burden. He was determined to avoid further commitments, whether general or particular; and he was reluctant even to admit discussion of any question in the Council or Assembly if he saw the slightest risk of any legal or moral obligation arising for Britain. He refused to accept the compulsory arbitration of the Permanent Court and even persuaded other members of the Commonwealth, which had intended to do so, to hold their hand. He could think of naval disarmament as a matter interesting the great naval powers, totally unconnected with the general question of world peace. He rejected the idea that the League could be called upon to intervene in differences such as those

between China and the Treaty powers. Even in Europe he discouraged attempts to bring disputes before the Council in their early stages and, when direct settlement appeared unlikely, preferred to deal with them through joint diplomatic action by Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. He beat down any suggestion to increase the responsibilities of the Mandates Commission. He was always on the watch lest the economic, social, or humanitarian organizations of the League should trespass on fields which ought in his view to be reserved for the consideration of individual governments.

Unlike Briand and Stresemann, Chamberlain disliked the conditions of life and work in Geneva—the lack of privacy, the unending lunches and dinners in which it was impossible to escape talking politics, the exposure to the indiscretions of fellow-delegates or of journalists. Yet, having made up his mind that his country ought to play a dominant part in the activities of the League so long as these remained within proper limits, he was ready to make a complete sacrifice of his personal preferences. He was not only insistent on the duty of Foreign Ministers to attend all meetings; but in the course of the session he was unflagging in his concentration on every problem that came up. The more difficult and complicated the question, the more his colleagues would turn to him to take charge of it as rapporteur: and he shouldered tasks which many far less busy members would have declined.

The other Locarno powers were represented, Italy by Vittorio Scialoja, and Belgium by Émile Vandervelde. Scialoja, one of the drafters of the Covenant, was always heard with respect. He was both learned and witty: he was genuinely devoted to the League, but he served a master who was at heart its enemy, and he fell back on the belief that the Council should do as little as possible and trust that time would bring a slow but certain growth of power. Vandervelde, an old fighter in the van of European socialism, was at this time the Foreign Minister of Belgium. The place of Japan was occupied either by Ishii or by Adatci. Neither intervened frequently; the proceedings of the Council were mainly concerned with Europe, and the Japanese delegates, unless acting as rapporteur, usually preferred to listen. But they followed the discussion closely, and their suggestions, when made, were rarely rejected. Other leading members of the Council at this period were Beneš and Titulescu, both of whom were inclined by policy and temperament to support all measures which might extend the authority of the League. The Polish Foreign Minister, Zaleski, was, like Stresemann, so much occupied with problems in which his country was an interested party as to take no great share in the general activities of the Council. The fact that Sweden was no longer a Member had deprived

the Council of its left wing: Holland, which had been elected in her place, followed a steady conservative line. Of the Members from other continents, Canada and Chile played the most influential parts; the Chinese representative alone was, at this time, completely ineffective, since, taking his instructions from the old Ministry at Peking, he could not be regarded by his compatriots or his colleagues as the spokesman of his country.

It was the practice of the Locarno powers (not including Poland or Czechoslovakia) to take the opportunity given by Council sessions to hold meetings among themselves. Japan was invited also, though her representative seems to have been hardly more than an observer. These meetings were secret: they were a source of particular excitement to the press, and of some resentment among other delegates to the Council or Assembly. Many feared that their purpose, or at least their effect, might be to form an inner cabinet of Council Members which would usurp the powers which rightly belonged to the whole body. The six countries declared that they were simply discussing questions connected with the Locarno Treaties, or which had arisen as between themselves. They denied that their meetings could in any way prejudice the freedom of action of the Council. They observed that they were not the only group to indulge in such private conversations; the Little Entente, the Latin Americans and others did the same, and were perfectly entitled to do so. Why should the great powers alone be criticized? This defence was unanswerable in theory. The right of any two or more delegations to hold informal meetings was self-evident. Nay more, supporters of the League pointed with pride to the fact that its sessions enabled the Foreign Ministers of the chief powers to confer together, in Geneva, without the excessive curiosity and publicity which would arise if they visited one another's capitals. It was continually, and justly, affirmed that one of the greatest services rendered by the League was to foster direct personal contact between responsible ministers, thereby doing away in great measure with the delays and misunderstandings of formal diplomacy.

If the meetings of the Locarno powers (colloquially known in Geneva as Locarno tea-parties) had been limited, as was claimed, to the consideration of questions which concerned the participants alone, they would have been open to no objection. But in fact they were not so limited. They were used to discuss matters of general interest to the whole League, such as that of the relations between the Western powers and Russia. They were used for preliminary negotiation on questions which were on the agenda of the Council. They were even used, on

occasion, for preventing the submission to the League of affairs which might embarrass one or another member of the group. The critics were not fully aware of these facts. With all their suspicions, they would have been amazed to hear Chamberlain assuring Stresemann that the unity of the Locarno powers was more important to him than all the resolutions of the League.<sup>1</sup> But they realized that the unity and the prestige of the Council were being undermined. Previous agreement between the great powers could not properly be assimilated to previous agreement between a group of lesser States. When the former were all of one mind, what chance was there that the views of the latter could carry their full weight? and what became of the vital principle that Member States whose interests were directly affected should take part in the Council's proceedings with all the rights of Council membership? Again, the secrecy of the Locarno meetings was strictly preserved: six delegations knew what passed, but neither the other members of the Council nor the Secretariat were kept informed. The result was naturally a loss of corporate sentiment in the Council, and a loss of cohesion as between the Secretariat and the delegations. Most serious of all, the Covenant itself seemed to be in danger of oblivion. The Locarno group was to some extent a re-embodiment of the old Concert of Europe; it reached its conclusions, not by respecting the principles, nor by using the methods, of the League, but by finding diplomatic compromises between the wishes and interests of the great powers.

The gravest political problems in 1927, the first year of German membership, were first, the internal and external conflicts of China; secondly, the rupture between Britain and Russia; thirdly, a prolonged state of tension between Italy and Yugoslavia. It was not difficult to find reasons for keeping the first two outside the League, though the other course might have presented great advantages, and would have been consistent with the obligations of the League Members concerned. It could be argued that China had no effective government. It was possible that Russia would have declined to be represented at the Council. But no such pretext could apply to the third dispute, which arose when, in March 1927, Italy accused Yugoslavia of massing troops on the frontier with the intention of invading Albania. The reputation of the League was then at its highest in all the Balkan countries, and the immediate reaction of the Yugoslav government was to propose that the Council should be asked to investigate the truth of the Italian accusation. This was the last thing that Mussolini desired; and he persuaded Chamberlain and Briand to discourage the suggestion. The government at Belgrade was urged to refrain from appealing to the League. The dispute was

<sup>1</sup> *Stresemann Papers*, vol. iii, p. 209.

discussed at Geneva, not in the Council with the participation of Yugoslavia, but in a Locarno meeting from which she was excluded. After months of recrimination the affair was gradually forgotten: but the hostile feeling between the two countries remained. There remained also the damaging fact that the wishes of the Italian dictator had prevented the Council from doing its duty.

The result was that at the very time when the Council appeared to be clothed, at last, with the supremacy which it was intended by the Covenant to possess, its positive field of action was smaller and narrower than ever before. The men who sat round its famous horse-shoe table could speak with an authority denied to their predecessors. The world's press was filled, before each session, with conjectures and prophecies as to what they would do. Journalists in scores came to report their words and gestures. Many countries which were not Members of the Council sent their principal ministers to follow its work and to submit their views to the masters of Europe. Yet the actual agenda of the Council was made up of questions of third-rate importance. It settled disputes between Poland and Danzig; it discussed whether French detachments should guard the railways in the Saar; it listened to brilliant but interminable speeches on the claims of Hungarian landowners to be compensated by the Roumanian government for their properties distributed among the peasants of Transylvania. But of the greatest questions it heard nothing.

While the social and economic agencies of the League were actively extending their work over all the continents, the horizon of the Council seemed to be contracting rather than expanding. The warning of Brazil, that the development of the League as a world-wide power was in danger of being subordinated to the immediate concerns of Europe, was to prove only too well justified by the events of the next few years. It had been prophesied that, with Germany's entry, the Peace Treaties would drop out of sight and the Covenant would come into its own. The actual result was the exact contrary. It was the Covenant that was forgotten, while the tasks imposed upon the Council by the Treaty of Versailles derived an importance they had never had before from the fact that Germany must now be associated with every insignificant decision.

The first year of German membership was thus one of disappointment to the rank and file of League Members. And the unhappy episode, soon to be described, of the Three-Power Naval Conference increased their doubts and discontents. Here too, it seemed, the same influences were at work. The Preparatory Commission, in which small States as well as large were represented, and whose proceedings were public, had

been superseded to make room for secret discussions between the United States, Britain, and Japan. The Conference had not merely interrupted the work of the League Commission; it had left all questions of collective security completely out of account. Was it not a further proof that the great powers were concerned above all to maintain their own predominant authority and that the principles of the Covenant were being thrust into the background? Such conclusions were strengthened when, in the summer of 1927, Cecil resigned from the British government and de Jouvenel refused to be a member of the French delegation to the Assembly, each giving as his reason that he could no longer take instructions from a government which did not regard it as its first duty to build up the peace-keeping system of the League.

The pent-up sentiments of the lesser powers were expressed with unaccustomed vehemence at the Eighth Assembly. For the last two years the general debate had been of a perfunctory nature. In 1925, the Assembly had been waiting for the outcome of the Locarno negotiations. In 1926, the entry of Germany had overshadowed all other business. But in 1927, as in the early days, there was nothing to prevent the delegations from speaking freely. The general dissatisfaction with the proceedings of the great powers was voiced, as usual, with special emphasis by the ex-neutral States of Europe.

The cleavage between the two points of view was wide and deep, although it did not often appear so plainly on the surface. It sprang from two contrasting attitudes towards the whole question of international organization. The one side looked on the League as the supreme arbiter of international affairs; the other, as no more than a part of the diplomatic machine. The one side believed that the reinforcement of the League was the primary interest of every individual country; the other that the League was not an end in itself but an instrument to be supported when it served, and attacked or ignored when it impeded, their own national policy. The first maintained that every dispute and difficulty which might arise between any two countries ought either to be submitted to arbitration, or laid at once before the Council; that, in the latter case, the Council ought to discuss and decide it in accordance with the principles laid down in the Covenant; and that all this ought to be done with the full knowledge of the peoples concerned. The second claimed that resort to the League should take place only after every effort to settle the question by traditional methods had failed. The first view was, naturally enough, usually upheld by the small States, which knew well enough that direct and secret negotiation is always to the advantage of the stronger side. Their contention might be founded on self-interest; it was nevertheless in accordance with the

Covenant. It was indeed widely shared within the great powers themselves; in Britain it was without doubt approved by a majority of the electorate; but it was not effective in preventing the governments from indulging their preference for the older methods. This combination of official opinion in the small States and unofficial opinion in the great ones made up what was often known as League opinion, and those who held it were spoken of as supporters of, or believers in, the League. Such phrases may often seem vague, but they describe a perfectly definite political attitude, held by a vast if fluctuating number of men and women in every country, including the United States.

Hitherto, the resentment of the lesser States—whether based upon practical objection to being excluded from discussions which affected their interests, or on moral objection to seeing the principles of the Covenant disregarded—had been directed principally against the Supreme Council or the Conference of Ambassadors. But now these bodies had in effect been superseded, not, as League supporters had hoped, by the Council, but by the private meetings of the Locarno powers. The argument thus became, much more than before, an internal difference in the League: and it led to strong feelings on either side. Chamberlain, Briand, and Stresemann were not men to fear criticism or hesitate to answer it in open debate. The answers of Briand and Stresemann did much to restore the harmony of the Assembly. The answer of Chamberlain, severe and uncompromising, was greeted with joy by the opponents, and with dismay by the friends, of the League. But all agreed that it was far better that British policy should be thus frankly stated than that it should be wrapped in official silence or disguised by insincere platitudes.

There was, indeed, a fundamental difference in the position of the three heroes of Locarno. To Briand and Stresemann the treaties there made were a beginning. Each believed that there was much still to do and that it could be done only through the League. Briand's aim was to extend to Eastern Europe the security which the Rhineland Pact had given in the West: and that extension he sought in the reinforcement of the Covenant or even the revival of the Protocol. Stresemann's aim was to secure the total evacuation of the occupied regions, and to put an end to Germany's military inferiority. These concessions were, he claimed, promised by implication at Locarno. But they were not included in any formal agreement: and in these, as in other respects, the road onward from Locarno must perforce, in Stresemann's belief, pass through Geneva. Thus both the French and the German Ministers proclaimed that the hopes and the policies of their countries were based upon the League. Stresemann, especially, reassured the Assembly. He declared

that Locarno meant peace on Germany's eastern frontiers as well as in the west: he also announced that Germany would adhere to the Optional Clause of the Permanent Court Statute and thus be the first of the great powers<sup>1</sup> to accept the Court's jurisdiction as obligatory in all juridical disputes. For the time being Germany not merely dissipated the doubts of the small States but was almost looked upon as their leader.

To Chamberlain, however, Locarno represented the extreme limit of Britain's contribution to security; and his speech was a castigation of those who, at home or abroad, urged her to go further. She had guaranteed the danger-point in Western Europe: let others do the same in the East. She had willingly submitted great questions to arbitration: but she could never accept the general obligation of the Optional Clause. She had agreed at Washington to limit her navy: let the heavily armed powers of Europe limit their armies. She had signed the Covenant and she would honour her signature: to go further would mean the breaking-up of the British Commonwealth. The effect of these warnings was increased by the manner of their delivery. Chamberlain spoke of 'your' Council and 'your' Assembly. His tone, if not his words, implied that the League endangered the unity of the Commonwealth—a view which was certainly not that of the Dominions themselves. It was clear that he resented the attitude of the small powers, who laid claim to superior virtue yet would perforce leave to the great ones the main responsibility of action. And the small powers were, at least, silenced. It would not have been difficult to answer his arguments. The experience of the next few years demolished them one by one. But the essential fact remained that the British government had declared its policy: to oppose any extension of the authority of the League, and to limit the political action of the Council to the strict minimum of what was necessary and useful for the moment. This was a position which no reasoning was likely to alter; for it was based on the character and temperament of the men in office. And though some of the Commonwealth delegations in Geneva considered that he had overstated the case so far as they were concerned, the greater part of the press, both in Britain and in the Commonwealth, welcomed the Foreign Secretary's speech.

Looking back over the whole history of the League, nothing is more striking than its failure to profit by the brief years of political appeasement and economic prosperity. It was, indeed, impossible to foresee that the still frail foundations of peaceful co-operation were soon to be

<sup>1</sup> France had signed the Optional Clause in 1924, but her ratification was withheld owing to the failure of the Protocol.



subjected to the strain of an unprecedented economic crisis. But it is normal—perhaps it is inevitable—that there should be an ebb and flow in the affairs of men, whether national or international, whether political, economic, or social. The parable of Pharaoh's dream is applicable in every age. It is the task of economic management to build up in the fat years reserves which may avert disaster in the lean ones. It was the task of wise statesmanship to use the period of tranquillity in order to strengthen the structure of peace and prepare it to meet the stresses that were bound to come.

There were in those days two pre-eminent sources of political and economic power, the British Commonwealth and the United States. The one did indeed contribute some part of its abundance to the maintenance, if not the growth, of the institutions of the League; but it did so rather as a duty than as part of a great design. The other, for all its generosity and humanity, still stood in proud and self-confident isolation, opposing its unchallengeable veto to the effective organization of the world.

## THE GREAT OUTSIDERS

*Relations between League institutions and the United States—American view of the League as valuable for Europe—Proposals for admission to the Permanent Court—Failure to reach agreement—Soviet Russia in political opposition to the League—Gradual development of connexions—Arrival of Litvinov—Parallel between American and Russian attitudes*

(1923-1927)

IN these years, the relations between the League and the United States, easy and friendly enough on the surface, were in their essence darkened by a fog of doubt, hesitation, even mistrust. There were many, on both sides of the Atlantic, who sincerely believed that the progress and happiness of all mankind depended upon America taking her rightful part in the organization of peace; who believed that Wilson's prophecy that, if the isolationists had their way, there would come 'another struggle in which not a few hundred thousand fine men from America will have to die, but as many millions as are necessary to accomplish the final freedom of the world', was no mere rhetoric but a sober judgement of probabilities. Yet nothing positive, it seemed, could be done about it from the side of the League. The watchdogs of the Senate, the isolationist press, and even the State Department itself, were instantly ready to react against the slightest attempt to influence the policy of the American government or even the opinion of the American people. No country, however friendly, could venture to disregard this powerful sentiment. Even individual visitors to the United States were warned, if they spoke about the League, to avoid putting forward arguments in favour of American membership. To do so, they were told, could only weaken the position of those Americans who still hoped that their country would take a steadily increasing share in the League's work and so end by full participation.

In these circumstances, the responsibility for maintaining such connexions as were possible between the League and the United States fell mainly upon the Secretary-General; and the manner in which that responsibility was discharged was generally believed by the Secretariat to be one of its greatest successes. Drummond himself had special friendship for Americans. He was advised by two or three devoted members of the Secretariat, and in particular by Arthur Sweetser, who had been press officer of the American delegation in Paris. There was a constant

stream of American visitors to Geneva—politicians, journalists, and experts; diplomatists with even more than the usual prudence of their type: professors who despised prudence and demanded action. The policy of the Secretariat was always to give the United States government the opportunity of taking part in League conferences and committees, without pressing it to accept; to encourage the good will of such private institutions as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment; and to enlist the services of individual Americans in the solution even of political problems. It cannot be proved that a more active method would not have had better results. To have continually recalled the fact that American abstention was weakening the League at every point, and obstructing the chief purposes and interests of the United States itself, would have led to angry replies from Washington. Yet such representations would have been absolutely valid. Might they not have influenced American decisions in the long run? In any case, the Secretariat could only act through the Council or the Assembly: and there was not the slightest chance that the members of those bodies would risk offending the most powerful and susceptible of governments. Drummond was thus forced by circumstances, as well as impelled by temperament, to a policy of restraint. And within these limits it was no small achievement that he was never seriously criticized from the American side either for neglecting or for over-emphasizing their concern in any of the countless questions that arose in many years of continuous contact.

Even after President Harding's Administration had abandoned its first attitude of ignoring or frustrating all approaches from Geneva, it was from individual American citizens that there came the first examples of co-operation. John Bassett Moore accepted election as a judge of the Permanent Court. Norman Davis was chairman of the Committee that negotiated the statute of Memel. Jeremiah Smith was appointed League Commissioner in Hungary: Henry Morgenthau, Charles Howland, Charles B. Eddy filled in turn a similar post in Greece. Eminent teachers and scientists took part with zeal in the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation. In 1922 the Rockefeller Foundation began to contribute on a large scale to the expenses of the Health Organization. Other American gifts made it possible to carry out plans which the Assembly did not deem sufficiently important to be covered by the official budget. In 1927, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. presented a great sum to provide the League with a Library appropriate to its needs.

On the official side the Administration continued to display its ingrained caution: yet its connexions with Geneva multiplied as by a gradual process of nature. American interest in the control of the drug

traffic led to participation in various conferences and committees on that question, and even to a brief appearance by an American representative in one of the main Committees of the Assembly of 1923. High departmental officials served on the Health Committee and on the Committee for the Welfare of Women and Children: they did not formally represent their government, but they could not have come without its consent. The United States Minister in Berne, and a reinforced Consulate in Geneva, followed the details of the League's work with close attention. Invitations to conferences convoked by the Council or the Assembly were rarely refused, though the State Department was always careful to limit the competence of its representatives and to call them to order if, in the security of Geneva, they showed any tendency to forget the looming menace of the Senate. From 1925 onwards, the United States was present at all conferences on questions connected with armaments and at most of those on economic and commercial subjects; and a number of treaties and conventions drawn up at these meetings were signed and ratified by the American government.

The slow but progressive extension of official and unofficial contacts, of which these are but examples, produced in Geneva an optimism which was not really justified. There was no change in the general attitude of isolation from the League as a world-wide organization for peace. Sometimes deliberately, sometimes by the mere attraction of its great concentration of power, the United States was still impeding full co-operation between the other American Republics and the League. When Harding, Coolidge, or Hughes had occasion to express their view of the League, they were careful to treat it as an essentially European affair. In so far as it helped to appease the quarrels of Europe, they wished it well: but it was plain, though they did not say so in terms, that they wanted it to keep its hands off the Western Hemisphere. The founders of the League had been forced to declare that the Covenant did not affect the validity of the Monroe Doctrine, on the ground that without such a precaution the Senate would refuse its consent. The clause was a blot on the Covenant: it involved general recognition of the validity of the Doctrine without any definition of its scope, and with a false description of its character. Nevertheless, it did not imply, and was never intended to imply, that the Council or Assembly of the League were in any way debarred from applying the Covenant in the Western Hemisphere, or that the American Members were in any way disqualified from sharing in all their proceedings in respect of Europe or Asia. Yet it was never possible to secure a clear admission of this fact from Washington: and in actual practice the United States government was, at this time, doing its best to keep the affairs of North and South

America as a field apart, to be dealt with, whenever international action was required, through the agencies of the Pan American Union. The natural consequence of this policy was that the Pan American Union now began to extend its activities in ways that had never been contemplated at the time of its foundation. Into it the United States poured much of that strong creative spirit which characterizes the American people and which, but for the Senate, would have invigorated and strengthened the League.

In expressing, therefore, their good will towards the League as an institution beneficial to Europe, the President and the Secretary of State were in fact undermining its prestige and its power. Such language might well imply that the United States would look with disfavour upon any political intervention by the Council or the Assembly in the Western Hemisphere and even in the Far East. Member States, uncertain of what the American reaction might be, were inclined to play for safety. This was particularly true of Britain and the other members of the Commonwealth. These might naturally have been the leading champions of the League as a world-wide rather than a European organization. But they were also specially sensitive to the importance of not offending American susceptibilities.

By the time Germany entered the League the United States was officially taking part in a considerable section of its diverse activities. But in doing so, it had patiently and skilfully established the position that it remained completely aloof from any sort of collaboration in settling disputes or preventing war. In the Disarmament Commission the American delegates were ready to consider figures of ships, tanks, or planes; but as soon as anything was said of the political conditions which would facilitate disarmament, they retired from the discussion.

Yet there was one point in which the supporters of international co-operation seemed likely to win an important success. When the attitude of the new Republican Administration had made it plain that all hope of American membership of the League must for the time being be abandoned, they concentrated their efforts on the question of joining the Permanent Court, whose Statute was open to signature by all States named in the Annex to the Covenant, whether Members of the League or not. The establishment of a World Court of Arbitration had long been one of the aims of American foreign policy. It was in great part due to the United States that this had become the principal object of the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907; and no country had more regretted their failure. Adherence to the Court was therefore in full accord with the previous views of the Republican party; and the great Republican

lawyer-statesmen, Hughes and Root, believed that it could be given without assuming any legal or moral obligation towards the League. Accordingly, in February 1923, President Harding asked the Senate to approve a proposal by Hughes as Secretary of State to sign the Court Statute, the signature to be accompanied by reservations of which the chief stipulations were that no political commitment was implied and that the United States should be permitted to join in the election of judges.

Public opinion was strongly favourable to the plan: but Lodge and Borah were still irreconcilable, and still held control of the Foreign Relations Committee. They repeated the tactics which had defeated the Covenant. Consideration of the President's message was delayed on various pretexts while opposition was being organized. It was argued on the one hand that membership in the Court would subject American policies to foreign interference; on the other, that American idealism could not be satisfied with a Court which had no power to compel States to submit to its jurisdiction, and no established body of law on which to base its judgements.

For three years a small group was able to thwart the desires of the Administration and to withstand the pressure of national sentiment. Harding's proposal was warmly backed by Calvin Coolidge, who became President on his death in 1923. It was endorsed by professional opinion, expressed through the American Bar Association; by the churches, the universities, the American Federation of Labour, the women's organizations. In the elections of 1924 it was included in the official platform of both parties. In March 1925 the House of Representatives voted in favour of it by 301 votes to 28. Lodge himself died during the struggle. But his methods were once more successful. It was not until January 27th, 1926 that the final vote was taken. By a majority of 76 to 17, the Senate recommended adherence to the Court, with the four reservations originally proposed by Hughes, but with an additional reservation on which the whole plan was destined to suffer shipwreck. This reservation provided that the consent of the United States must be given before the Court could entertain a request for an advisory opinion on any question in which the United States had or claimed an interest.

During the three years that had elapsed since Harding sent his message to the Senate, partisan hatred of the League had faded away. But it was still necessary to emphasize that adherence to the Court did not involve any new connexion with the League. Accordingly, Frank B. Kellogg, who had succeeded Hughes as Secretary of State, now addressed a separate communication to each signatory of the Court Statute, asking whether it would agree to the various reservations and

understandings enunciated by the Senate, and stating that American signature would take place when affirmative replies had been received from them all. However, it was obvious that they could not reasonably answer without consulting together, and especially without considering how the fifth reservation might affect the powers of the Council and Assembly. At the Council's next meeting it was decided, on Chamberlain's proposal, to hold a conference of signatories for this purpose during the Assembly. The United States declined to take part. The tactics of the isolationists were already producing their well-calculated effects. Enthusiasm, as always, was evaporating under the influence of delay. The Council seemed to the Americans to be giving but a chilly welcome to an approach which had cost them so great an effort. On the League side, Kellogg's refusal to be represented at the proposed conference was thought unco-operative. Yet in truth no plenipotentiary could have been empowered to discuss a resolution taken by the Senate.

The Conference, which consisted mainly of legal experts, met on September 1st, 1926. It had to answer one fundamental question. The Covenant stated that 'the Court may also give an advisory opinion upon any dispute or question referred to it by the Council or by the Assembly'. The Council had already used this possibility on numerous occasions: and the Court's opinion had invariably been accepted as a guide to its decisions. But the fifth reservation entitled the United States to veto any request for an advisory opinion. If it were approved, would the Council and Assembly be depriving themselves of the power to carry out the Covenant? All agreed that it would be just and proper to give the United States the same rights as those enjoyed by a permanent Member of the Council. Unfortunately, it was not certain exactly what those rights were; for the delegates were not all of one mind as to whether unanimity were required before the Council could ask for an advisory opinion. There had been no difficulty in practice: opposition had never gone further than abstention and the Council had always been formally unanimous. But in theory the difficulties were great: for many Members of the League attached much importance to the view that the Council could ask the Court for an opinion even if one of the States concerned should vote against the proposal. The final result of the Conference was an agreement to grant the United States the same rights in this respect as were possessed by a permanent Member of the Council. It was left to the future to decide whether this amounted, as demanded by the fifth reservation, to an absolute right to veto any request for an advisory opinion.

A few Members of the League had already informed the Secretary of State that they consented to all the reservations. The rest answered in

the terms drawn up by the Conference in Geneva, or, knowing that the Conference's conclusions were unacceptable to Washington, refrained from sending any answer at all. For, as might have been much more clearly foreseen that it actually was, the American government was by no means prepared to invite the Senate to reconsider its reservations. It had done what it could: the League powers had not seen fit to accept its proposal: there the matter must rest. Three years later the indefatigable efforts of Elihu Root, then in his eighty-fifth year, led to an agreement on a method of applying these same reservations which was embodied in due course in the Statute of the Court. The Statute, thus amended, was actually signed on behalf of the United States on December 9th, 1929; but, after long delay, ratification was prevented by the irreconcilable minority in the Senate.<sup>1</sup> American adherence was never finally achieved.

Supporters of the League, and the Secretariat itself, were always too much inclined to magnify successes and to minimize failures. They took the failure of the American approach to the Court as a regrettable episode. It had been emphasized throughout, on the American side, that this move did not involve any change in the general attitude to the League. If then the move came to nothing, was there really so great a loss? In fact, however, it was almost certain that adherence to the Court would accelerate the steady trend towards co-operation which had now been going on for four or five years. It would have multiplied the connexions between the United States and Europe: it would have given a clearer meaning to the Kellogg Pact. Acceptance of the fifth reservation was something of a risk, but it could not be called a great one. Rejection was an encouragement and a weapon to the American isolationists, while those who cared for international co-operation were the more inclined to turn towards the Pan American movement, making it, what it never ought to have been, a rival to the League of Nations.

With the help of the German Ambassador in Moscow and a powerful section of other military and diplomatic personages, the Soviet government had made a supreme effort to prevent Germany from entering into the agreements of Locarno and from joining the League. It did its best to persuade German opinion that the result would be to make Germany a tool and vassal of Anglo-American capitalism. Stresemann, however, rejected the argument that he must choose between East and West, between Moscow and Geneva. He repeatedly assured the Russians that Germany in the League would not cease to be their friend, and that her

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 46.



presence on the Council would be the best safeguard against any possibility of the League being used to organize a new attack on the Bolshevik State. To prove his words, he agreed to negotiate a new treaty of friendship and non-aggression with Moscow; and, as a result of the deadlock in the Assembly of March 1926, the signature of this treaty, which took place in Berlin on April 24th, actually preceded Germany's entry into the League.

The treaty was drafted with great care in order that its wording might not be legally inconsistent with the Covenant. Nevertheless, the Russians, taking it as a pledge that Germany would never join in sanctions against them, claimed to have won a diplomatic victory which went far to compensate the defeat they had suffered at Locarno. For they still believed, as they have believed ever since, that the reconciliation between Germany and the West was a gigantic plot against their safety. These suspicions had no real justification in fact. Certainly the Western powers expected and hoped that the Locarno agreements would lessen the danger of close partnership between Germany and Russia—a partnership which Moscow would have affirmed to be purely defensive, but which, in the minds of the German nationalists who worked for it, would have had a very different object. But this was in any case a secondary motive: and the main purpose of Chamberlain and Briand, as of Stresemann himself, was to get rid of the ever present danger and difficulty generated by the hostility between Germany and France, and the French fear of German aggression.

In spite of the reassurance conveyed by the Treaty of Berlin, the official speeches and declarations of the Soviet leaders did not cease to attack the League; and Soviet diplomacy was actively directed towards neutralizing the Covenant in Eastern Europe. In particular, the Russians at this time tried to weaken the validity of Article 16 of the Covenant, in the belief, real or assumed, that the sanctions therein prescribed against an aggressor were really intended for use against the Soviet Union. They had pressed Stresemann hard to include in the Russo-German Treaty a provision forbidding, in any circumstances, participation by one party in joint economic action against the other; and in the following months they sought to conclude pacts in the same sense with all the Baltic States, including Finland, and also with Persia and Afghanistan. But Stresemann, with the help of his acute legal adviser, Friedrich Gaus, had shown how to parry their demand without offence. He would not go further than to agree that neither party should join in a boycott imposed on the other 'despite its peaceful attitude': and in the exchange of letters which took place at the time of signature, he pointed out that the loyal observance of the Covenant, which would be

Germany's duty after her entry into the League, was not prejudiced by this clause, since under the Covenant sanctions could only be imposed upon Russia if she started an aggressive war. This example was followed in September 1926 by Lithuania, which alone of the Baltic countries was ready at this time to accept Russia's invitation to sign a political treaty. A year later, in October 1927, it was followed by Persia also.

These diplomatic enterprises did the League no serious harm. They were even helpful, in so far as they tended to tranquillize the political atmosphere of Eastern Europe: and they left little doubt that Russia's neighbours, if they were faced with a categorical choice between Moscow and Geneva, would choose Geneva. More damaging was the effect of Russian influence on the Turks. When it seemed likely that Turkey was about to apply for admission, and when Britain, France, and Germany were trying to encourage her inclination in that sense, the Russians launched a propaganda campaign to prevent it. Whether on Russian advice or not, the Turks let it be known that they would not ask for admission unless they were assured beforehand of at least a semi-permanent seat on the Council—a demand which was quite unacceptable to the Members of the League.

It may seem strange that in these circumstances there could have been any talk of the possibility of Russia herself becoming a Member. When certain German newspapers tried to point out the advantages of such a move, the Soviet press retorted angrily. But some leading Bolsheviks, notably Rakovsky, their Ambassador first in London and then in Paris, spoke openly of an eventual change in their government's attitude, if it were sure that the League was not a tool in the hands of its enemies. The Russian press and the speeches of the leaders were at this time full of assertions that the British government was organizing a new war against the Soviet Union, and hoped, under cover of the League, to force the rest of Europe to fight on its side—a strange accusation when it is remembered that Chamberlain, so far from using the Covenant as a pretext for aggression, was actually trying to minimize its defensive provisions for fear of becoming involved in a possible conflict in Eastern Europe. It can hardly be doubted that men so intelligent as Chicherin and Litvinov knew perfectly well that neither the Council nor the Assembly could ever have been persuaded to undertake any hostile venture against Russia or any other power which was not openly threatening the peace; and that the permanent organs of the League desired to co-operate with the Soviet government. At any rate, the acts of the government were less uncompromising than the speeches of its leaders.

During 1927 a number of events conspired to make co-operation with

the League more important and more desirable from the Russian point of view. With the elimination of Trotsky and his friends, Soviet policy was concentrated on national affairs: hopes of universal Communism were dropped or postponed, and less weight was laid on the idea that a world organized under the Covenant was a world forearmed against Communism. Secondly, Soviet influence had suffered complete eclipse in China. Thirdly, London had broken off diplomatic relations and Paris seemed likely to follow London's example. It was not surprising if the League, which still regularly invited Russia to its various meetings, and which now included Russia's only European friend, began to look more attractive.

Unfortunately, it was not until April 1927 that the obstinate quarrel between Switzerland and Soviet Russia was settled by an agreement signed in Berlin. The Swiss government had promised to facilitate the movements, and ensure the safety, of any Russians attending a meeting convened by the League. They were ready also to pay compensation to the family of Vorovsky: but only as part of a general arrangement covering the question of compensation for the losses suffered by Swiss citizens in Russia. At the same time Swiss opinion displayed extreme hostility towards the Soviet Union. The press, with hardly an exception, called upon the government to refuse all concessions. When the Secretariat, which was always anxious to extend co-operation between Russia and the League, tried to find a way to end the deadlock, it was severely criticized. Switzerland, it was said, had not surrendered her right to a national policy by becoming the home of the League of Nations. A Bureau was set up in Geneva itself for the express purpose of conducting among the delegates to League meetings a campaign against the Third International and the Soviet government. In these circumstances it was not surprising that the Russians refused to send delegates to any conference on Swiss soil until the Vorovsky affair had been finally settled, and abandoned their intention to appoint an official observer in Geneva. Soviet doctors were allowed to participate in the work of the Health Organization; but all other invitations were rejected. Chicherin even claimed that such invitations proved that the Council did not desire Russian co-operation: otherwise it would order the meetings to be held elsewhere. But, considering that at the same time he affirmed Russia's implacable hostility to the League, this was asking rather too much.

The agreement signed in Berlin showed Moscow's desire to enter into closer relations with the League, for it differed only in detail from that which the Swiss had previously proposed. It was rapidly followed by the arrival in Geneva of a strong delegation to take part in the League's first general economic conference (May 1927). This first contact was

not free from embarrassment. The elaborate precautions of the Swiss authorities were considered by the Bolshevik delegates to be designed as much to keep watch on their movements as to ensure their safety. Police agents accompanied them everywhere. Palisades were erected outside their hotel, and a curious crowd stared at their goings and comings as of visitors from another world. However, after some complaints from the former prince who headed the delegation, a reasonable *modus vivendi* was established.

In that summer the Soviet government also accepted an invitation to the Third General Conference of the Communications and Transit Organization. Later, learning that on certain questions only those States which were actually Members would be able to vote, Chicherin withdrew the acceptance: but he did so in terms of unusual amiability. Finally, the arrival of Maxim Litvinov in December 1927, to take part in the Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference, was the real beginning of a regular connexion between Russia and the League. From that time, until his fall from office in 1939, Litvinov came to Geneva more frequently than any other statesman. He came as Russia's spokesman in the Preparatory Commission; in the Commission for European Union set up in 1930; in the Disarmament Conference itself; and, finally, after Russia entered the League, as her principal delegate both to the Assembly and the Council. His promotion, on Chicherin's death in 1930, from the second to the first place in the Foreign Ministry, brought no interruption in the regularity of his attendance. No meeting could be dull while Litvinov was there. His astonishing debating power was uninhibited by any regard for great countries or great personages. Sharp and bitter in the first years, he grew mellow as time went on and as his government became converted to the principle of collective security through the Covenant. His longer speeches are better to read than they were to hear, for, in spite of his remarkable mastery of the English language, they were delivered in a repellent and bewildering accent. In ordinary discussion his accent seemed less marked; and his courage, quickness, and wit made his interventions almost as enjoyable to his opponents as they evidently were to himself.

Litvinov was never a member of the all-powerful Politburo in Moscow. It was often asserted by well-informed persons that he had no real influence and was merely a mouthpiece of the inner cabinet. No one who witnessed his activities in Geneva could readily believe this. It is not hard to see when a delegate is merely acting on instructions. Litvinov rarely asked for time to consult his government; he seemed always ready to decide on the spot whether to press his argument, to propose a compromise, or to resign himself to accepting the majority

view. It was clear that he had at least as free a hand as was generally given to the Foreign Ministers of the democratic powers.

It chanced that the meeting of the Preparatory Commission which brought him to Geneva for the first time coincided with the forty-eighth session of the Council (December 1927). At this session the Council succeeded at last in bringing to an end the nominal state of war between Lithuania and Poland. Through Stresemann's agency, Litvinov was privately consulted, and expressed the concurrence of his government with the resolution which it was intended to lay before the Council. On the same occasion Litvinov was able to hold a conversation with Chamberlain, in spite of the fact that diplomatic relations between their countries had been broken off six months before. Their talk led to no direct result. But these episodes, which were no part of the original purpose of his journey, showed what various possibilities co-operation with the League might bring. Cut off from normal intercourse with the West (on the American continent it was recognized by Mexico alone), the Soviet government could find in the meeting-place of Geneva openings such as it could hope for nowhere else.

It would be a great mistake to consider the attitude of Russia as having, in the circumstances of the time, an importance in any way comparable to that of the United States. The latter was, then and always, a far greater factor—indeed the greatest single factor—for or against the successful development of a world-system. Yet without losing sight of this essential difference, it is a fact of no small interest that in spite of the extreme contrast between their political institutions, and between their social, moral, and economic ideals, the policies of the two Great Outsiders towards the organization of international affairs proceeded on parallel lines for more than ten years. Each became slowly more and more involved in co-operation with various conferences and agencies of the League. But each remained aloof from its main purpose, and refused to share its responsibilities. 'Let others bind themselves if they wish; we remain free.' These were the words of Chicherin:<sup>1</sup> they might have equally been the words of Hughes or Kellogg. Each indeed, in the pursuit of its national greatness and security, deliberately obstructed the growth of the League in its own part of the world. The United States prevented the full participation of the Western Hemisphere in the working of the Covenant. The Soviet Union played a like role in regard both to the Asiatic peoples and to the small nations on its European frontiers: its success was less because it had less to offer; but its influence was enough to hamper the proper development of the League. The frequent

<sup>1</sup> Radio message, December 1st, 1926.

discussion amongst diplomatists and journalists of the possible formation of an American League of Nations, under the leadership of the United States, was echoed by similar rumours of plans for an Asiatic League, under that of Russia and Turkey.

Each took a far more active part in the discussions on disarmament than in any other sector of the League's work. Each, indeed, considered itself to be an example in that respect to the rest of the world; but each refused to commit itself to that common action through common institutions which alone could make disarmament a natural and therefore a durable process. The consequences of this fatal disunity were not seen all at once in their true character. The internal weakness of the Russian government, and the profound dislike and mistrust which it inspired abroad, inclined the League powers to disregard its open hostility. As for the United States, the gradual growth of co-operation in economic and social fields created the illusion of a movement towards co-operation in the essential business of preventing war. It was hoped that by the time—still, it seemed, far distant—that a real threat to peace arose, she might be ready to act conjointly with the League. The history of the Manchurian conflict was to show that this belief was mistaken, but also that it might well have been justified if more time had been given or if the economic crisis had not broken the slow process of world organization.

## DISARMAMENT: FRUSTRATION AND DELAY

*Disarmament after Locarno—The Preparatory Commission—First session: the report of the military experts—Second session: the Draft Convention—The Three-Power Naval Conference—Third and fourth sessions: Russian intervention; the Anglo-French agreement of 1928—Fifth session: the pressure of public opinion; the Hoover proposals—Further postponement*

(DECEMBER 1925—APRIL 1929)

THE Protocol of 1924 had been the climax of four years' continuous work on the problem of the reduction and limitation of armaments. Its rejection brought the process, for the time being, to a standstill. When the Assembly met again in September 1925, it was insistent, as always, that the question must not be allowed to drop. But the Locarno meeting was still to come, and its success could not be taken for granted. The Assembly therefore had to steer between two reefs: it was unwilling to see another year lost in waiting for the result of negotiations between a few States, yet it could not risk doing anything to complicate an already difficult task. In the end—and even this met with some opposition from the British and Italian delegations—it could do no more than invite the Council to undertake the preparatory work for a Disarmament Conference. No time could, in the circumstances, be laid down for this work to begin; but it was stated that 'any inactivity of the Council in this respect would fail to meet the ideas of the Sixth Assembly'.

It was not without reason that the Assembly expressed in this unusually explicit phrase its anxiety lest the Council might once again show itself inclined to delay in facing this, the hardest and most dangerous of all its duties. The difficulties, psychological, political, and technical, were great. In many countries the defence ministries were asking that the armaments at their disposal should be increased rather than reduced. Others would at least have preferred to postpone the task of carrying out the pledges of the Covenant and of the Peace Treaties in this respect; and they could produce some arguments in support of this view. The obligation of the Covenant was that national armaments should be reduced 'to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations'; the

promise in the Treaties was that the disarmament of Germany and the rest would make possible a general measure of reduction. But where was 'the lowest point . . .'? And was Germany really disarmed?

Whatever its doubts might be, no government could openly propose further postponement. Economic experts continued to affirm that most countries were still spending far more on defence than they could reasonably afford. Public opinion still looked on the reduction of armaments as the test of international statesmanship, and the necessary condition of future peace as well as of present well-being. The great outside powers, Germany, the United States, and Russia, were not less ready than the Assembly to protest against any inactivity on the part of the Council. The signatories of the Locarno agreements pledged themselves 'to give their sincere co-operation to the work relating to disarmament already undertaken by the League of Nations and to seek the realization thereof in a general agreement'; and in commending those agreements to their fellow countrymen they laid special emphasis on the new prospects for disarmament which now opened for the peoples of Europe.

No sooner, therefore, were the successful results of the Locarno Conference announced to the world than the Council turned once more to the planning of a general Disarmament Conference. It was still expected that such a Conference could be held in the near future. In the Protocol, its convocation had been specifically fixed for June 15th, 1925. When the question was taken up again, no attempt was made to decide on a definite date, but the calculation in the Secretariat was that all necessary preparations, both political and technical, could be completed in the course of the coming year, and that the Conference itself could take place in the spring of 1927. It was clear, however, that a new organ must be set up for this purpose. The Permanent Armaments Commission could give technical advice, but could not even begin to discuss the political aspects of the subject. The old Temporary Mixed Commission could not now be revived. Its labours had not been in vain. They had led from the Treaty of Mutual Assistance to the Protocol and from the Protocol to the Locarno agreements. That road, however, was closed, at least for the time being. The Council had no choice but to accept the practical lesson involved in the failure of the Protocol, and to make its approach to the Conference by means of what was briefly described as the direct method—to leave aside the question of the political conditions which might eventually lead to a reduction of armaments, and to concentrate its attention on the armaments themselves, in the hope that such a study might reveal, as the Washington Conference had revealed, the possibility of immediate and proportionate reduction in the existing figures.



If this were once achieved, it was widely believed, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries and among the former neutrals, that there would follow a rapid increase in confidence and co-operation, which would make subsequent reduction progressively easier.

The new organ, set up by the Council on December 12th, 1925, under the title of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, was always known by the name of the Preparatory Commission. It could justly claim to be representative of the whole world. It included all the States then on the Council, together with six other Members of the League. It included also Germany, the United States, and Soviet Russia, though the last-named did not actually join the debates until its quarrel with the Swiss had been patched up. From 1928 onwards Turkey was also present. This Commission was destined to be the main instrument for all the League's work on disarmament until the meeting of the World Conference itself. For five years its long public sessions, its slow advances, its frequent interruptions, held the centre of the international stage, arousing greater interest and fiercer controversy than any of the acts of the Council, the Assembly, or any other of the Conferences and Committees of the League.

The Preparatory Commission itself was composed of politicians or diplomatists; but two bodies of technical experts were placed at its disposal by the Council. The first consisted of officers of the fighting services of each country represented on the main Commission; the second of members chosen by the Financial, Economic, and Communications Committees of the League and by the Workers' and Employers' groups in the International Labour Organization.

Each of the two newcomers was represented by a member of the diplomatic profession. Count Bernstorff, who continued to be the chief German delegate throughout the whole existence of the Commission, had a difficult task: he performed it with dignity and a certain stiff courtesy, through which, however, the bitterness of a Germany deprived of her beloved army was often allowed to appear. His role was simply to carry out the instructions of Berlin and, like every German of the time, except Stresemann, he appeared to be entirely devoid of personal initiative. Hugh Gibson, the American member, was held on the tightest of curbs by the State Department. He was never allowed to forget that the United States stood on a different footing from the Members of the League. He stated his government's views, for the enlightenment of his colleagues, as facts which neither he nor they were competent to debate or question. His wit, good humour, and impartiality helped the Commission through many moments of strain; but were not these very qualities those of one whose country was essentially a looker on,

sympathizing with the efforts of the European powers to reach agreement, but recognizing little responsibility for the success of the work?

The Chairman of the Commission was Jonkheer Loudon, who had been Netherlands Foreign Minister through the war years. The British member, till his resignation from the Cabinet, was Cecil. France was represented by Joseph Paul-Boncour, a leading member of the Socialist party—after Bourgeois and Briand the chief name among French delegates to the League. Though he lacked something of their intellectual force, and had what seemed to Anglo-Saxons a tendency to be too eloquent too often, Paul-Boncour was a man of both initiative and courage, as he proved beyond a doubt during the tragic days of 1940. He already showed it in the Preparatory Commission, by accepting unequivocally the view that the preamble to the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles—‘in order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations, Germany undertakes . . .’—constituted a moral and legal obligation for the Allied powers.

One other member must be mentioned, the Belgian representative, de Brouckère. Next to Émile Vandervelde, de Brouckère was the most influential member of that famous Belgian Socialist Party which had contributed much to the progress of European Socialism, and which did not (as the French Socialists unfortunately did) refuse to participate in a government composed mainly of Liberal ministers. He combined a profound attachment to the League with a clear and practical intelligence and great debating power. He represented a government which was doing its best to help towards reconciliation between the Allied powers and Germany, and was at the same time deeply concerned over its own national security. Like Cecil,—even more, indeed, than Cecil at this time, when he was bound by instructions of which he often disapproved—he kept in view the essential purposes of the League and spoke out effectively to prevent them from being obscured by technical complications. It was an irreparable loss to the Commission when, on the fall of the Vandervelde government in 1927, de Brouckère was replaced by a member of the diplomatic service.

As a guide to the first steps of the Preparatory Commission, the Council drew up a list of questions which, in accordance with the decision to concentrate on direct methods of reduction, were concerned almost entirely with the technical aspects of the subject. How should armaments be defined? How could they be compared? Could offensive weapons be distinguished from those intended only for defence? What were the various forms which limitation or reduction might take?

Could the total war strength of a country be limited, or only its peace establishments? Was it possible to exclude civil aviation from the calculation of air armaments? How could such factors as population, industrial resources, communications, geographical position, be reckoned in preparing an equitable scheme? Could there be regional schemes of reduction, or must reduction necessarily be planned on a world scale?

The Preparatory Commission met for the first time in May 1926. It began its gigantic task—a task now seriously undertaken for the first time in human history—by adding two further questions to those on the Council's list, one relating to the possibility of international supervision of the armaments of individual countries, the other to the manufacture of poison gas for use in war. All agreed that it was impossible to deal with these highly technical problems until they had first been studied by the military, naval, and air experts: and the latter spent the next six months in preparing elaborate and exhaustive replies. By November they had produced a voluminous report covering, in a professional aspect, the whole field of armaments, not only men and material, but also such cognate factors as financial resources, manufacturing power, wealth in raw materials, and so on. Their report was not, at first sight, a highly encouraging document. It included, on nearly every point, a number of doubts, disagreements, or reservations which this or that delegate had found it needful to put on record; and these reservations were inspired by considerations of policy rather than of science. Nevertheless, the report represented a stage in the procedure which had of necessity to be gone through. It was essential not only for technical but also for psychological reasons that the General Staffs should be given the fullest opportunity to state their case. After they had done so, it would become possible for the Preparatory Commission to draw up an agenda, and propose a time, for the Conference itself. The Assembly indeed had already suggested (September 24th, 1926) that the Conference might be held in the summer of 1927.

When the Commission next met, in March 1927, the French and British delegations each submitted a draft Convention to serve as a basis first of the preparatory work and then of the Conference. The two sets of proposals were widely at variance on many essential points; and indeed there was at this time a profound dissension between the two countries. The French believed that the British government was doing its utmost to get rid of its peace-keeping commitments, including those of the Covenant; the British believed that French demands for new pledges of security were merely pretexts to cover their fixed intention of maintaining their military predominance on the European continent; and there was a certain part of truth in the suspicions of both. But while

it was the Anglo-French differences which thus occupied the centre of the stage, there were many others, not less grave, between other countries. The Commission held long and obstinate debates as to whether the Convention should provide for the limitation, not only of men serving with the colours, but also of trained reserves; whether it should limit the quantities of material in stock or in reserve, or should provide for publicity, but not limitation, or should leave this point entirely untouched; whether it should limit expenditure on armaments, or merely lay down rules for the publicity of military budgets, or contain no provision on the subject; whether ships of war (apart from those already covered by the Washington Treaty) should be limited by classes, or by the total figures of the respective fleets; whether naval and air personnel should be treated on the same footing as those serving in the armies; whether there should be any limitation of naval aeroplanes. Most of these were questions of great importance. Still more fundamental was the problem of supervision. To the French no convention could be satisfactory unless it provided an effective system of international supervision to ensure that all parties carried out their engagements. Others, especially Italy and the United States, declared that no international institution could be permitted to conduct inquiries within their territories.

Throughout its labours the Preparatory Commission dealt only with methods and principles, leaving the actual figures for each country to be inserted at the Conference itself. After five weeks of intensive work, carried out in public session, it had made appreciable progress towards settling some of the questions in dispute. On others, however, no agreement was yet in sight. A single draft Convention was therefore drawn up, showing the articles on which unanimity had been reached, and the various proposals and reservations on the other points; after which the Commission adjourned for six months in the hope that during that interval some at least of the remaining divergences might be smoothed out by diplomatic conversations between the powers concerned.

So far then the work had been moving forward, painfully indeed, but nevertheless without any definite set-back. Discussion had been keen, but frank and open, and hopes that an adequate draft Convention might be gradually hammered out had grown rather than diminished by the close of the session. Meanwhile, however, a new initiative from Washington had cut sharply across the proceedings of the Preparatory Commission. The United States government was under severe pressure from two opposing groups, one calling for an enlargement, the other for a reduction, of the naval building programme. President Coolidge met

this situation by asking Congress to grant large appropriations for new construction, and by simultaneously proposing that the five chief naval powers should confer together for the purpose of extending the Washington Treaty to cover cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. Britain and Japan accepted; France and Italy refused. France considered that such a conference would unfavourably affect the work of the Preparatory Commission. She could not join in negotiations which would treat the question of disarmament in abstraction from that of security, and that of naval armaments separately from that of land armaments. The French Staff had never acquiesced in being placed in the third rank of naval powers and on a footing of equality with Italy. So long, however, as this applied only to the largest ships, their objection had been rather a matter of prestige than of practical importance, since France could not afford to build up even to the Washington limits. But as regards cruisers and destroyers, and still more as regards submarines, a similar limitation would mean a real, and not merely a theoretical, reduction in her relative naval strength. Italy refused because she also insisted on discussing land, sea, and air armaments as a single whole, and was afraid of being pressed to accept lower figures than those of France.

Though held in the League building, with the assistance of the Secretariat, the Three-Power Naval Conference of June–August 1927 was both in theory and practice entirely separated from the League. President Coolidge had in perfunctory terms expressed the hope that it might be a contribution to the work of the Preparatory Commission. But such phrases could not hide the fact that the method he had chosen was in itself an unfriendly and derogatory act towards that body. That its long months of intense and in many ways illuminating study should be treated as of no account by the world's most powerful State, could not but diminish its prospects of success in a task so difficult as to need the concentrated support of all peace-loving countries.

The Conference disclosed a complete disagreement between the American and British naval staffs, and ended in deadlock, after six weeks of negotiation had shown that no compromise was possible between their respective claims. This event was destined to have an injurious influence on the subsequent course of all proceedings on the subject of disarmament. The moral which all concerned were willing to draw was that the Conference ought to have been better prepared. This explanation was, in fact, a very superficial one. The real reason of the failure was that neither the British nor the United States government had made up its mind on the fundamental question of the use to which its armed forces were in future to be put. Each discussed its naval needs as if they were something absolute, unconsciously repeating in

its most extreme form that French demand for security before disarmament to which, in the Preparatory Commission, they had listened with impatience and distrust. The British cruiser programme was calculated as though it might have to protect British commerce single-handed on all the oceans, the United States' programme as though the American navy would have to operate entirely from its own bases.

On such premises the arguments of both sides were logical and convincing; but such premises were bound to lead to competition rather than limitation. A lasting agreement on naval armaments could only follow agreement on the underlying political realities, above all on those problems of neutrality and the freedom of the seas which, as Wilson and House had perceived ten years before,<sup>1</sup> could be solved only through the Covenant. To admit this fundamental truth would have forced each government to reconsider its whole attitude towards the question of collective security—a question which both preferred to treat as though it had been settled once and for all, for the one by its acceptance, and for the other by its rejection, of the Covenant of the League. On the other hand, the doctrine that more complete diplomatic and technical preparation might have led to success had great attractions for the official world. It was a condemnation at once of publicity and of precipitation. It forcibly suggested that, in regard to other aspects of disarmament also, what was needed was not to press on with those more controversial problems which were, inevitably, prominent in the debates of the Preparatory Commission, but to try whether diplomatic conversations between the powers most directly concerned might lead to agreements which would in due course be adopted by the Conference. During the ensuing years the work of the Preparatory Commission was again and again interrupted in favour of such conversations, whose only result was to hamper common action and discredit the League.

The Assembly of 1927 thus found itself confronted with a highly disappointing state of affairs. There was indeed no actual sign of a renewal of competition in armaments, the tendency being still towards reduction rather than expansion. But time was passing: the question of German rearmament, though Stresemann kept it firmly in the background, was beginning to trouble men's minds; the Preparatory Commission seemed to be resigning itself to stagnation, while the Naval Conference had been a double discouragement. There was a wide feeling that the abandonment of the old method of approach had been

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the second of Wilson's Fourteen Points: 'Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.'

a mistake. If two powers such as Britain and the United States, whose strength made them immune from attack and whose desire for peace was unquestioned, could not limit their forces by direct agreement, was it not clear that something more was needed? The Netherlands government proposed that the Assembly should once more take up the rejected Protocol, amending it as required, but seeking to re-establish the triple foundation of peace—arbitration, security, disarmament. Many delegations were ready to welcome the suggestion; but in the face of British and Italian opposition, they surrendered without a fight. Nevertheless, the Assembly insisted on calling in once more the political concepts of collective security and peaceful settlement of disputes to support the attempts at disarmament by the direct method. It instructed the Preparatory Commission to set up a parallel body, to be known as the Arbitration and Security Committee,<sup>1</sup> whose task, briefly expressed, was to propose measures which, by offering better guarantees of security, might allow all States to accept the lowest possible limits for their armaments.

At the same time the Assembly declared that the Preparatory Commission should hasten the completion of its technical work, and that the Council should call the Disarmament Conference as soon as this was done. These words sounded encouraging, but they were only an ambiguous formula to cover an uncertain situation.

No progress had been made since the close of the Commission's session five months before. The problems which then subsisted were still unresolved. The Naval Conference had revealed a conflict of unsuspected gravity between the American and British standpoints, while doing nothing to remove the disagreement between these two on the one hand, and France, Italy, and the lesser naval powers on the other. The differences between the French and British on other aspects of the problem were still unsettled; even if these two powers could reach an understanding, there would remain many important questions on which the United States, Italy, and Japan had yet to be convinced, to say nothing of the special position of Germany, or of the fact that all the States on Russia's European border had declared<sup>2</sup> that their fulfilment of the Convention would depend on its being ratified also by Moscow.

There were three ways in which this situation might be dealt with. The first was for the Preparatory Commission to undertake the second reading of its draft Convention, submitting once more to open debate one difficulty after another, and to continue the process until the prospects of the Conference could be clearly seen. This would have been

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 32.

<sup>2</sup> See Minutes of Preparatory Commission, April 22nd, 1927.

the normal method of League procedure, and was advocated by most of the smaller States. The second method, urged by Germany and Russia, was to cut short the second reading and proceed to hold the Conference itself without further delay, in the belief that this would either lead to agreements which could never be reached save under the exceptional pressure of the Conference, or else clear up the situation by proving that no international treaty on the reduction and limitation of armaments was possible. The third was to go on waiting in the hope that the heavily-armed powers would compose their differences by direct negotiation and thus make further progress easy for all concerned. This plan was, as usual, favoured by the powers themselves, and backed by the President of the Commission, an eminent diplomatist with a strong inclination to follow the line of least resistance.

It was anticipated, therefore, that when the Commission met again, it would merely invite the great powers to hold conversations amongst themselves, and would then adjourn to await developments. This expectation was to some degree upset by the arrival in Geneva of a Soviet delegation headed by Litvinov. The new member began by telling his colleagues that they had, up to now, done nothing whatever to promote disarmament and that the Soviet government had no confidence in their intention to do so. If disarmament were sincerely desired, there was a simple way of achieving it. Let all military, naval, and air forces be disbanded; all arms, warships, and war planes be destroyed; and no weapons remain anywhere, except those in the hands of the police and customs service of each State. This was his government's plan, and he called on the imperialist powers to accept or reject it forthwith. He made no difficulty, however, about postponing further discussion to the next session. Meanwhile, Paul-Boncour and others pointed out that the Soviet proposals were only a more extreme form of the League's earliest attempts on the problem and that they could never come within the zone of practical politics until the fear of aggression had been eliminated.

The Commission reassembled in March 1928. No results had been produced, during its three months' recess, by the method of separate conversations; nor indeed was there any particular reason to think that such conversations had been seriously undertaken. The Commission had already suffered the loss of de Brouckère and Cecil. Now Paul-Boncour, too, was replaced by a member of the French diplomatic service. The departure of these three men took the heart out of the Commission. The only members who urged that it should take up with energy the work it had let fall a year earlier were the small ex-neutrals, whose voice could not count for much on such a question, and Germany,



who pursued her own special object of equality; while Russia demanded that everything done so far should be scrapped and a new start made on the basis of the Soviet proposals.

The Russian plan for complete and immediate disarmament was the subject of a lively discussion. Lord Cushendun, a right-wing Conservative who had taken Cecil's place, led a small group which openly denounced it as a mere pretence and took the occasion to express their general distrust and contempt for the Soviet regime. Others, with greater wisdom, exhorted the Russian delegation to understand that, if they truly wanted disarmament, they must also make their contribution to international confidence. Their bitter and unreasonable attacks on the League, their deliberate efforts to undermine the Covenant, were among the chief obstacles to progress. Some suggested that the real need was that Russia should join the League. And Litvinov, in replying to the debate, asked whether the British government shared that view. No answer was vouchsafed; the question was not taken seriously, nor was there any way of knowing whether or not it had been seriously put. Yet this was, in truth, the very heart of the matter. Many indeed believed, like Cushendun, that the Soviet plan for disarmament had been presented for the sole purpose of providing propaganda against capitalist governments. But what was certain was that the relation of Russia to the League was a key question in the whole problem of security and disarmament. Nothing more happened except that the Commission declined to abandon its own draft Convention in favour of the Russian scheme. It did not, however, proceed to any further work on its own draft, but, in spite of objections from a number of its members, once more left the next step to be taken by direct negotiation between leading powers.

Even those who most distrusted such methods could hardly have imagined how unfortunate the consequences would be. The only negotiations which actually took place were between Britain and France; these led, in July 1928, to an agreement whereby the British accepted the French claim that no limitation should be applied to trained reserves, while on naval questions the French accepted in substance British views which they had resisted in the Preparatory Commission and which the Americans had rejected at the Three-Power Conference. Through a strange series of blunders, this Franco-British bargain was guessed at by the German press before any information on the subject had been given to their government or even to the governments of Italy, Japan, and the United States. There followed a general outburst of anger and suspicion. The two governments made matters worse by declining to state the full facts until their hands were forced by an American journalist in Paris,

who succeeded in securing and publishing a confidential document in which they were accurately set forth. Finally, in deference to the opposition of the United States and Italy, as well as to the powerful reaction of public opinion both at home and abroad, they announced that the proposed agreement was withdrawn and cancelled. Like the Naval Conference of a year before, it had done much harm and no good. Yet even this experience did not lead to the abandonment of the fatal expedient of separate conversations, and the return to the regular procedure of the League.

When the Ninth Assembly met, in September 1928, the pretext on which the work of the Commission had been repeatedly adjourned was looking singularly hollow. The attempt to make progress by diplomatic conversations had merely led to mutual ill temper between Britain and the United States and between France and Italy. Germany too was more suspicious than ever, being convinced, not without reason, that any compromise arrived at by such means was sure to be based on the consent of each party not to press for reductions to which the other might object. It might well have been expected, therefore, that the Assembly would have insisted that the Commission should henceforth abstain from such unpromising abdications of its functions, and should keep the preparation of the Conference firmly in its own hands. But though some delegates of small States spoke strongly in this sense, the naval powers still preferred their own method. The dispute might have been more hard-fought, and its issue might have been different, but for the effect on the Assembly of the signature of the Briand-Kellogg Pact. It was generally believed that, if the Senate ratified the Pact, the time would have really come at last to hold the Conference and take the first steps towards bringing the armaments of all nations under international control. In this light, it did not seem necessary to put up a determined fight at the risk of alienating those governments whose attitude was the key to the whole question. Accordingly, the Assembly was actually brought to express its 'satisfaction' at the 'efforts of certain governments to prepare the ground for the future work of the Preparatory Commission'. Those who accepted only with bitter feelings this piece of diplomatic hypocrisy were consoled by the fact that the same resolution called for a further meeting of the Commission 'at the end of the present year or, in any case, at the beginning of 1929'. All hoped—or professed to hope—that this would be its last meeting and would be followed soon afterwards by the long-expected Conference.

During the next six months, the Kellogg Pact was approved by the Senate, while the Soviet government made special arrangements to

bring it into force between Russia and her European neighbours even before it had become legally effective as between the other signatories. No further negotiations, however, took place between the armed powers; and though the Commission did not re-convene until April 1929, it seemed that no progress of any sort had been made, not only since its last session, but since its session of two years before. Meanwhile, a vast campaign in favour of disarmament had been developing in every continent. The Commission found awaiting it an immense sheaf of resolutions forwarded by bodies representing the Churches, organized Labour, women's movements and peace movements all over the world, both international and national. All emphasized the deep and growing sense of danger caused by the continued failure of the Commission, and entreated that there should be no further delay. Litvinov naturally used all this to give weight to his general criticism of the capitalist States who had rejected the Soviet proposal for complete disarmament. But the actual substance of the great majority of the petitions showed that the authors were taking no such simple view. They were inspired by the same sentiments as had led to the Covenant and the Protocol. They remembered the fatal results of the armed diplomacy of the pre-war years, and demanded not only the international control of armaments but also an international system for the settlement of disputes.

The Commission began by considering a second draft Convention put forward by Russia. This time it was not total disarmament that was proposed, but a large reduction, especially of what were described as offensive weapons, such as bombing aeroplanes, long-range guns, heavy tanks, aircraft-carriers. These were to be abolished in due course; and in the meantime both effectives and material were to be reduced by a fixed proportion, based on existing figures, and more severe for the heavily armed powers than for small ones. Some of these ideas, in particular the attempt to differentiate between offensive and defensive weapons, were recognized as being of practical value, and were destined to be revived later by the United States and to play an important part in the Disarmament Conference. But the Commission declined by a large majority to start its discussions all over again on a new basis, and decided to proceed to a second reading of its own draft Convention of 1927. The minority supporting Litvinov included Germany, China, and Turkey, each of which at this time had its own reasons to dislike and distrust the orthodox majority views.

The debates on the second reading took a somewhat different course from those of two years earlier, in that the armed powers were less inclined to press for any forms of reduction to which some among them objected, and were thus able to agree among themselves on certain

points that formerly divided them. Britain and the United States declared that they would not insist on the limitation of trained reserves or of material already in stock. France and Italy showed some readiness to compromise on the methods of naval limitation. Japan, which with unfailing amiability declined practically every form of reduction, limitation, or even publicity, was always willing to concede the same liberty to others. Some practical suggestions were made for dealing with the difficulties involved by the fact that two of the great powers concerned were not Members of the League. In general, a good deal of progress was being made, not indeed towards any specific reduction of existing armaments, but at least towards the conclusion of a Convention which would fix maximum limits, establish the principle that the armaments of every country should be subject to international control, ensure publicity for defence expenditure, and provide machinery for discussing any problem that might arise in regard to its execution. Such a Convention, it was argued, would soon lead on towards effective reduction. It would be disappointing to the smaller powers, but they had made up their minds to accept it in default of something better. The Soviet Union would have derided it, but would probably have been ready to be a party to it none the less. Germany might well have refused to sign it; all the same it would, in one important respect, have been a first step towards that equality which she demanded. Her inequality consisted not only in the lack of weapons but also in the political fact that her armaments were controlled by treaty and she was not free to increase them except by breaking it. Even an inadequate Convention would have gone far towards bringing the other parties, especially those which were Members of the League, into the same case.

It can never be known whether the somewhat slow and painful discussions of the Preparatory Commission would have led to such a result. This at least is certain, that whereas it began its session with no intention of proceeding to a serious second reading, it found itself, as the days went by, doing exactly that, and hammering the draft more and more into a shape which could be submitted to the Conference. The atmosphere of Geneva was producing its usual consequences. But the process was interrupted, and what seemed to be a new and better prospect was opened, by an unexpected intervention from across the Atlantic.

The new President of the United States, Herbert Hoover, had been one of those Republican leaders who strongly favoured American membership of the League, both during the fight for the ratification of the Covenant and during the Presidential election of 1920. Thereafter, like many others, he had adopted the comfortable view that the shortcomings of the League (which were due above all to the absence of the

United States) proved that the decision to keep out had after all been justified. However, his four years of office were destined to be a period of increased co-operation with the League, and Henry Stimson, his Secretary of State, not only gave his full support to that policy, but would have asked nothing better, had it been possible, than to bring his country into full membership. President Hoover now (April 22nd, 1929) made an attempt to speed up the work which was advancing so slowly. It was time, he declared through Gibson, to find a new approach; to abandon purely technical problems; to recognize that, if nations would sincerely relinquish the use of force, as they had promised to do by signing the Kellogg Pact, the problem of armaments reduction would lose its difficulty. There must be no more delay. Reduction, not mere limitation, was needed if the over-burdened taxpayer was to get the relief he demanded. In particular, the great navies could be reduced without risk since naval requirements were strictly relative, and all the lesser navies combined were no threat to one of the giants. His country would not oppose a compromise arrangement, on lines already suggested by France, to govern the system of naval limitation; and would acquiesce in the views of the principal land powers as regards the military forces and material which they might consider it essential to maintain.

In themselves, these proposals did not amount to very much. Although he recognized that political security was the necessary condition of disarmament, Hoover had no thought of following Wilson's lead by inviting his country to join in any constitutional system for keeping the peace. It seemed at first, however, that the work of the Commission might receive a fresh infusion of energy out of all proportion to the actual substance of Gibson's statement. The call for speedy results, and for reduction as opposed to limitation, was welcome to Germany and to Russia. Litvinov, indeed, had often used the same arguments; but they sounded more convincing when put forward by the most prudent, solid, and conservative of governments. The French were delighted to find that each of the specific proposals was a clear concession to their views. The British rightly saw in Hoover's gesture an opportunity to end the ill feeling engendered by the unhappy Naval Conference of 1927 and the Anglo-French compromise of 1928.

It is tempting to speculate as to what might have happened if the new impetus had been brought to bear directly on the work of the Commission, that is to say on the second reading of the draft Convention and on the fixing of a date for the Disarmament Conference. It may well be that this was, in truth, the last great chance to set up, by co-operative and not by coercive means, a stable system of security and disarmament. In fact, however, the possibility was never put to the test. The naval

powers, including the United States, preferred to regard the President's declaration as an opportunity of resuming their negotiations among themselves. The second reading was carried on for a few more days, but with a loss, not a gain, of energy and purpose; and important sections were not discussed at all, but merely postponed until the hoped-for agreement on the naval chapter should have been reached among the naval powers. Litvinov protested, and many other delegates undoubtedly shared his resentment; but they received no support from the Chairman and the protest was in vain. Like other well-intentioned attempts at resolving a world-wide problem by partial methods, Hoover's intervention thus led in practice to the paralysis of the League's work on disarmament for another year and a half.

It was not until November 1930 that the Commission met again. At that session it was presented with the result of the discussions for the sake of which it had been prorogued eighteen months before—the London Naval Treaty of April 1930. This Treaty extended the Washington agreements of 1921 to cover cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, on terms satisfactory to the three chief naval powers; it was signed also by France and Italy, but only under conditions which made their adhesion meaningless. In all the other questions which had to be prepared for the general conference, no progress had then been made. And while the Commission had been condemned to inactivity, events had been taking place outside which undermined the whole basis of its work. Stresemann was dead. The economic and financial balance of the post-war world was shattered by an unprecedented crisis. The rise of aggressive nationalism had changed the political balance of Europe and was threatening the peace of the Far East. Those millions of humble petitioners had been right: and the nations were beginning to see the price of the indecision and delay of the last five years. Only in one respect did the American initiative justify the hopes with which it had been greeted. The London Treaty ended that unnatural tension between the United States and Britain to which the obstinacy of their respective Admiralties had given rise. This was indeed a result of great importance, though it ought never to have been needed. But there is no reason to doubt that it could have been achieved just as successfully if the naval discussions had taken place within the Commission or even at the Conference itself.

## THE MACHINERY OF PEACE

*Back to the Covenant—Material organization of Council action—Wireless station: Airfield—Studies of Article 11 and Article 16—The Treaty to improve the Means of Preventing War—The Treaty of Financial Assistance to a Victim of Aggression—Model Arbitration Treaties and the General Act—The Briand-Kellogg Pact*

(DECEMBER 1925—SEPTEMBER 1928)

WHILE the Preparatory Commission was painfully struggling with the intractable problems of armaments reduction, the organs of the League did not cease their long effort to strengthen the machinery of peace. The demands of France and her allies for additional guarantees of security were neither silenced by the failure of the Protocol, nor satisfied by the success of Locarno. Their pressure, however, was exerted in a different direction and they began to ask whether—as many supporters of the League had long been urging—more could not be made of the safeguards they already possessed. For the time being, it was clearly useless to try to construct a new general treaty more precise and binding in its terms than the Covenant. All suggestions for the negotiation of further agreements, on the Locarno model, for the maintenance of peace in Eastern Europe or in the Mediterranean area, were met by the uncompromising negative of Britain, Germany, and Italy. It was natural, therefore, that those Members of the League which felt unending anxiety about their future security should be more ready to concentrate their attention on the protective value of the Covenant itself. The others—those who believed themselves immune from attack, who described themselves as producers rather than consumers of security—could decline to extend their engagements: the pledges of the Covenant they were bound to honour.

Accordingly, the Council began in 1926 to organize a new study of the contents of the Covenant, with two practical purposes in mind. The first was to see that all material arrangements necessary for the effective functioning of the League in time of crisis should be foreseen and planned in advance. The second was to examine in detail the intentions and obligations of those Articles (10 to 17) which dealt specifically with the prevention of war, so that the Assembly, the Council, and the individual Members of the League might have no doubts as to the real nature and extent of their duties and their rights.

As regards material arrangements, the first necessity was to ensure that the Council should be able, if the need arose, to meet and act with the least possible delay. The importance of this point was self-evident: and it had been underlined by the dramatic time-table of the Greco-Bulgarian conflict. It was essential that the movements, whether of Council members or of the agents of the League, should not be held up by national regulations, and that communications of all sorts to and from Geneva should be rapid and safe. The Members of the League in a formal resolution (September 26th, 1927) affirmed that they would do all in their power to facilitate the working of the League in time of emergency. The governments agreed without difficulty that aircraft or road transport travelling on League business, or carrying Council members to a meeting, should be entitled to priority and protection, and should, if necessary, be given special markings. Measures were taken by the Secretariat at Geneva, and in the capitals of the Member States, to ensure that telegraphic and telephonic messages should be speedily delivered. Lists were drawn up of persons who might be called on at short notice to hasten to the place where critical events were reported or expected, in order to be able to send information to the Council and to carry out its instructions on the spot.

The Secretariat also held that the League should have a wireless station of its own, capable of sending short-wave messages to the most distant capitals; and that the small airfield, which was all Geneva then possessed, should be enlarged and equipped so as to cope both with the extensive traffic which an emergency would necessitate and with the swift increase of air travel which was in any case to be anticipated. These projects were less easy to realize. They involved expenditure; and, for all their declarations of devotion to the League, the governments were still as reluctant as ever to untie their purse-strings for its sake. At the Assembly of 1928, when these questions were debated, the British and Italian delegations were seeking to reduce the total budget to £1 million a year and to stabilize it at that figure for future years. It was necessary also to reach agreement with the Swiss authorities. Switzerland was anxious on every ground to see the greatest possible development of Geneva as the international centre of world affairs; but she feared to lose anything more of her traditional neutrality than she had already given up on joining the League.

In spite of these obstacles, the plan for a League wireless station was slowly brought to fruition, though it was not till early in 1932 that the station actually began to function. It was constructed and operated at the League's expense: Swiss apprehensions were calmed by a formal declaration of the Tenth Assembly that Switzerland was not to be held



responsible for the use which the League might make of it, and also by a promise that the Swiss government should be allowed, in time of crisis, to appoint an observer with the right to see, though not to censor, all messages sent out. The airfield, on the contrary, was left to develop in accordance with the normal commercial requirements of Geneva. Neither Switzerland nor the Assembly was prepared to spend money on equipping it for the special benefit of the League. If Cointrin is now one of the major airports of Europe, this is due, indirectly, to the men who made the Second World War, not at all to those who sought to organize peace.

At the same time attempts were made to plan in advance the measures which the Council might take to deal with the presumed emergency. This could be done only with extreme prudence, because some Member States, with Britain at their head, were determined to agree to nothing which could possibly be construed as extending their commitments or compromising their future attitude. Two circumstances, however, induced them to co-operate in the work. The first was that it was concerned only with clarifying, and not with extending, the provisions of the Covenant. The second was that, whereas previous studies of this kind had related especially to the execution of Article 16, that is to say to the preparation beforehand of economic or military action against a State which was guilty of actual aggression, attention was now directed towards the means of preventing the aggression from happening at all. The Covenant had often been criticized on the ground that it failed to provide for such preventive action. But it was now seen that the resources of that 'marvellous instrument' had been underestimated, and that by Article 11, which declared that 'any war or threat of war, . . . is . . . a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations', the Council was, in fact, not merely authorized to take preventive measures but positively obliged to do so.

The main pioneer in this development was de Brouckère, whose insistence on its importance had created so much interest that, early in 1927, he, Cecil and Titulescu were instructed to make a special study of the subject. Their report, based in large part on the record of what had actually been done in various concrete cases, proved that the Council possessed far greater legal powers to deal with an emergency than had hitherto been realized. It prescribed not only the steps which should be taken to carry out an impartial investigation into the actual facts of the dispute, but also a series of measures calculated to lessen the danger of hostilities, and ranging from the mildest of warnings to a formal order of the withdrawal of troops. It further showed that, if these should be

disregarded, the Council could recommend the Members of the League to sever diplomatic relations with the offending State, and could authorize naval or air demonstrations or even stronger action than these. The report, which was unanimously approved by the Council and the Assembly, was a startling revelation of the possibilities latent in the Covenant. Its contents have been reproduced to a large extent in the powers conferred on the Security Council by the Charter of the United Nations.

We shall see that, when the time of testing came in 1931, the principal Members of the League were to nullify this key Article of the Covenant by admitting an interpretation of the general rule of unanimity which was contrary both to common sense and to the intention of those who drafted its text. In 1927, warning voices on this point were robustly brushed aside, in the conviction that the Council would never allow its action to be paralysed by the vote of the very State whose aggressive designs it desired to check. The Members of the League emphatically affirmed their acceptance of the preventive system thus outlined and their belief that it constituted an important reinforcement of their security.<sup>1</sup>

After the rich results of de Brouckère's exploration of Article 11, it was natural that the Committee on Arbitration and Security—to which in the meantime the Assembly had given the task of studying those two sides of the triple formula of the Protocol—should think of applying a similar process to Article 16. It was excellent to describe what the Council might do to prevent aggression: but had not the Locarno Treaty itself admitted the possibility of flagrant aggression in spite of all precautions? and was it not necessary to consider, more carefully than hitherto, exactly what steps must be taken to organize the sanctions to which all signatories of the Covenant had pledged themselves? When, however, suggestions to this effect were put forward, the majority of those present preferred to avoid serious discussion of the subject. The British, Canadian, and South American delegates feared that it might end in fresh definitions or proposals which they could hardly refuse without seeming to fail in their duty as Members of the League, yet which might prove in practice to be an unwelcome limitation of their freedom. The French, Poles, Czechoslovaks and others, on the contrary, feared that it might lead to declarations by particular States which would diminish the theoretical and practical value of the sanctions system. Such indeed had already, in their view, been the effect of the Assembly's resolutions of 1921; and they judged it wiser to leave matters where they stood rather than risk weakening the system still further.

<sup>1</sup> See Assembly Minutes, September 26th, 1927.

The only suggestion which they ventured to put forward was that a study of the resources of the various States might be made so that, if the need arose, the economic weapon could be used in the most rapid and powerful way. The economic experts, however, demonstrated that this action would do more harm than good. The facts required were already to be found in the comprehensive body of statistics concerning raw materials, production, exports and imports, and so forth, compiled and published, for peaceful purposes, by the Secretariat. But this work depended on the co-operation of the governments, which might be less willingly extended if the information asked for was to be used, even in theory, to plan the means of applying sanctions against those who gave it.

Although it thus shrank from any but the most superficial consideration of the vital problem of sanctions, the Arbitration and Security Committee concluded, in accordance with the British view, that the powers bestowed by the Covenant upon the organs of the League were fully sufficient, if effectively employed, to ensure the security of its Members and maintain the peace of the world. At the same time, it proceeded to work out two new proposals, one designed to reinforce the preventive action of the Council under Article 11, the other to increase the help which a State attacked in violation of the Covenant might expect, under Article 16, to receive from its fellow Members. In obedience to the prevailing sentiment of the time, these proposals involved little, if any, addition to the essential obligations of the Covenant. But in themselves they were solid and sensible, and could have proved of real value to the Council in the crises which it was later destined to meet.

The first of the two was submitted by the German government and provided, in brief, that Members of the League should bind themselves in advance, in case of dispute, to accept and carry out any recommendations which the Council might make in order to reduce the danger of war—such as the cancellation of mobilization orders, the withdrawal of troops, or even the cessation of hostilities if these should have begun. The suggestion was welcomed by the French; and the Arbitration and Security Committee enjoyed the unusual sight of the German and French delegations giving one another warm support against the British delegate. Faced by this gratifying combination, and in view of the obvious common sense of the proposal itself, even Cushendun, the very embodiment of negation, did not press his opposition. The German plan was put into treaty form under the title of 'General Convention to improve the Means of preventing War', approved in due

course by unanimous vote of the Assembly of 1931, and recommended for adoption by all Members of the League.

The other scheme, put forward by Finland, was intended to ensure the provision of financial assistance to a small State attacked by a powerful neighbour. In such a case, the Members of the League were pledged to sever economic relations with the aggressor and to support one another in mitigating the losses involved; but no positive financial and economic assistance to the attacked State was enjoined by the Covenant. Yet such assistance would surely be required and, unless it had been planned beforehand, to provide it would be both a very slow and, for the victim, a very expensive business. There was the further point that the critical moment might arise before any actual aggression had taken place, and indeed help given at that moment might well be the best means of preserving peace, since it would warn the intending aggressor that he might have to reckon with the resistance of the whole League. It was a complex problem, and it was not until 1930 that the Assembly was able to approve a definite draft Treaty, under which a sum of up to fifty million pounds, backed by the credit of the principal League Members, could be made available by a vote of the Council.

Though worked out with great care, and endorsed by the unanimous vote of the Assembly, these two valuable Conventions never came into force. The German plan was killed by procrastination. Had it been presented for signature within a year after it was first proposed, while the League was still in essence a united body, it would have secured general acceptance. But it was not till 1931 that it was finally put into shape. The favourable vote of the Assembly coincided with the first stage of Japanese aggression in Manchuria. During the years that followed, none among the chief Members of the League were ready to contemplate increasing the powers of a Council whose authority was undermined by their own weakness and disunion.

In the case of the Convention on Financial Assistance, the chief obstacle was Britain. The British government fully approved the scheme: and indeed the Convention owed its form above all to the skill of a British expert, Sir Henry Strakosch. But, rightly anticipating that they would have to bear the lion's share of the cost, the British saw a chance to bring pressure on those countries which were always asking for fresh guarantees of security before considering any plan for disarmament. They insisted, therefore, that the Convention should only come into force simultaneously with the first general disarmament treaty. On this condition, it was signed by twenty-six countries, including four great powers; but the condition was never to be fulfilled.

The Arbitration and Security Committee did not confine itself wholly

to the work of elucidating the scope, and preparing the application, of the Covenant. It devoted much legal learning and much political ingenuity to drafting a number of Model Treaties, which could serve as a guide to all who might wish, or be persuaded, to join in constructing a still more extensive system of safeguards. The Model Treaties were in two groups. The first group consisted of conventions providing for the pacific settlement of all disputes, whether by compulsory arbitration, by judicial decision, by conciliation, or by some combination of these various methods. The second group was designed for the use of States which might be ready, following the example of the Locarno powers, to make special contracts with one another, renouncing all recourse to force and promising mutual assistance if one of the parties should violate its pledge. And both groups were further divided into models which might be open to the signature of only a restricted number of States, or to that of all who chose to adhere.

These drafts, nine in all, were approved by the 1928 Assembly and commended to the attention of the Member States. Further, the Assembly decided to combine the first group into yet another Treaty, in which one chapter contained provisions for conciliation, a second provisions for judicial settlement, and a third provisions for settlement by arbitration. This Treaty, known as the General Act, was the only one of all those mentioned which was destined to come into force. By 1931 it had received the adhesion of eighteen Members of the League, including Britain, France, and Italy.

Though one or two Committee meetings were still necessary in order to give their final form to the draft Treaties proposed by Germany and Finland, the 1928 Assembly marks, for practical purposes, the end of the long attempt made by the organs of the League, under the pressure of France and her European allies, to build up a security system as those countries conceived it—that is to say, a system providing, in terms more precise and binding than those of the Covenant, first, that all disputes without exception should be submitted to peaceful processes of settlement; secondly, that any State which rejected such peaceful processes and resorted to war should be declared an aggressor; and thirdly, that any victim of aggression should be assured of automatic, swift, and effective assistance from the rest of the world. Not until the later stages of the Disarmament Conference itself did any similar movement appear on the surface of League debates.

The Model Treaties elaborated by the Committee on Arbitration and Security, and now endorsed by the Assembly, gave little satisfaction to their authors. In spite of a gallant attempt to revive, over the adoption of the General Act, something of the enthusiasm which had prevailed

at the birth of the Protocol four years before, there was a widespread feeling that the new instruments were destined to remain ineffective. The Protocol had been rejected, but it had exerted a living influence: it had led to Locarno, and to the hopes of other Locarnos in Eastern and Southern Europe. But a dozen draft Treaties with long and complicated titles, distinguished from one another in many cases only by inconspicuous differences of wording—what was to be looked for from these? No doubt they represented a coherent and logical political system: if they could have been generally accepted, they might well have constituted a new protection against the danger of war. But in the absence of public interest or conviction, they remained little better than theoretical exercises, and the time and trouble spent on them provided easy weapons for those who sought to ridicule the League as an impractical gathering of sentimentalists and idealists. If the new system of international relations was to prevail, it must do so not by logical perfection but by the solid support of public opinion for the great principles of the Covenant.

However, the Assembly of 1928, though hesitant and uncertain, was not seriously discouraged. The work on disarmament was making little progress, and that on security and arbitration had led to dubious results; but time still seemed to be on the side of the League. The sense of urgency, of approaching danger, which hung so heavily over the later stages of the disarmament problem, was still absent. Germany was thinking of the evacuation of the Rhineland. Japan was apparently liberal and peaceful. Fascist bellicosity went no deeper than an occasional outburst of the Duce's rhetoric. Prosperity was general, and was expected to continue. The Council had never been more powerful. The Assembly was firmly established as the annual meeting-place of responsible Ministers. The economic and social agencies of the League were growing swiftly in authority, efficiency, and reputation, and were extending their activities in every continent. Finally, the Kellogg Pact had been signed by fifteen countries and opened to the signature of all.

The immense hopes created by the Kellogg Pact, or the Pact for the Renunciation of War,<sup>1</sup> signed in Paris on August 27th, 1928, were based on one simple fact—namely, that the Pact was conceived and brought to birth by the people and government of the United States. Though the first official proposals had come from Briand, they had been inspired from American sources: they had been rescued from oblivion by a surge of American opinion whose gathering volume had beaten down the

<sup>1</sup> In the following pages I have made particular use of Professor J. T. Shotwell's book, *War as an Instrument of National Policy* (London, Constable, 1929). Professor Shotwell writes with the authority of one who played a leading part in the events he relates.

indifference of the State Department; the subsequent negotiations had been increasingly dominated by the American Secretary of State, and the final text had been presented to the world by the American government. The Members of the League had for ten years seen their efforts to organize collective security against war frustrated by the negative attitude of the United States. Now it seemed that the American co-operation for which they had never ceased to ask was at last to be granted.

In the light of this overwhelming consideration, supporters of the League were not inclined to examine with a critical eye the text of the Briand-Kellogg Pact or the declarations and interpretations which accompanied its acceptance. The League powers had made it plain from the first that they could not sign a pact whose terms might be held to contravene or weaken the Covenant; and, during an exchange of correspondence which had lasted several months, all the signatories, including Kellogg himself, reached the conclusion that Members of the League should have no difficulty on that score. Indeed, the provisions of the Pact—that war should be renounced as an instrument of national policy, and that the settlement of disputes should never be sought except by peaceful means—were closely modelled on a resolution proposed by the Polish government and adopted by the Assembly in 1927; and, since the Preamble stated that any country which violated this promise would thereby lose all claim to the benefits of the Pact, it was clear that the Members of the League were still free to take joint economic and military action against an aggressor. The new agreement deprived them of a certain theoretical right to go to war which they had hitherto still possessed. But this, so far as it went, was an extension and not a diminution of the Covenant. In any case, the so-called gap in the Covenant, often talked about as though the founders of the League had deliberately intended to keep open the possibility of war, was hedged about by such a complex combination of circumstances as to be quite negligible for practical purposes.

In truth, while American opinion proclaimed that the Pact went farther than the Covenant in forbidding war, the official interpretation given by the Secretary of State led to an exactly opposite conclusion. 'Every nation', he wrote, 'alone is competent to decide whether circumstances require recourse to war in self-defence';<sup>1</sup> and it was plain that under self-defence he included the defence not only of the national territory but also of vital interests and policies such as the Monroe Doctrine. Similarly, the British government formally announced that it regarded the maintenance of peace in 'certain regions of the world' not

<sup>1</sup> Note of June 23rd, 1928, quoted in Shotwell, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

under British sovereignty as a necessary measure of self-defence. Since, therefore, each signatory was the sole judge of its own self-defence, and since the two greatest among them proclaimed an extensive interpretation of that word, the way was open, so far as the Kellogg Pact was concerned, to military action which would certainly not be consistent with the Covenant. And indeed when Japan undertook the conquest of Manchuria, she claimed the benefit of the right thus recognized, declaring that Manchuria was no less vital to her self-defence than the Suez Canal to Britain or the Panama Canal to the United States.

It being admitted that the Pact did not prevent the full implementation of the Covenant, the essential question, from the League point of view, was whether its violation would lead to any action by the United States.

At an early stage in the negotiations, Senator Capper had moved a formal resolution to the effect that, besides the renunciation of war, the Pact should also provide that a State which entered on hostilities without having tried the procedures of peaceful settlement, should be considered as an aggressor: and that all signatories, including the United States, should withhold aid and comfort from the aggressor thus defined. This resolution, remarkable in that a Republican and Middle Western Senator now came forward to champion the central principles of the Covenant, and even of the Protocol, received much support in the American press. Its acceptance might well have changed the face of history. But it seems to have received no support from the State Department, and but little from other Senators; and it was never put to the vote. The same fate befell a similar, though milder, resolution put forward by Senator Capper, in February 1929, after the ratification of the Pact.

The Kellogg Pact did not, therefore, change the fundamental fact that the Members of the League were still left to guess how the United States would act in any given circumstances, as they had had to guess two years earlier how she would act in the matter of the Permanent Court. Not only did the Pact contain no provision to deter an aggressor, but the basic proposals necessary for that purpose had actually been laid before the Senate with completely negative results. Yet the problem of safeguarding world peace was far too deep and far too complex to be settled by a simple declaration that war was to be renounced henceforth, just as the armaments problem was far too deep and complicated to be solved by a simple agreement to abolish all armies and navies. The American peace plan, and the Russian disarmament plan, might seem at first sight more attractive and even more sincere than the long debates of Geneva. But peace and disarmament could only be achieved by the patient building-up of a great political system; and this was



precisely what the various institutions of the League were painfully labouring to do.

Nevertheless, the enthusiastic reception given at Geneva to the Kellogg Pact was both sincere and justified. Incomplete as it was, the Pact did symbolize a new development in American policy, a new sense of responsibility for helping in the maintenance of peace. Except for extreme isolationists and extreme pacifists, the Americans themselves were at one in foretelling that, in the words of Senator Borah himself, 'it is quite inconceivable that this country would stand idly by in case of a grave breach of a multilateral treaty to which it is a party'.<sup>1</sup> In practice, as experience was to show, any war undertaken in violation of the Covenant would be equally a violation of the Pact, and vice-versa. In their efforts to prevent, or put an end to, the wars of the following decade, in Manchuria, on the Amazon, in the Chaco, in Ethiopia, the Council and Assembly could henceforth base their decisions not only on the Covenant but also on a Treaty to which the United States was a party. They could thus make some claim on the support of Washington: and they did in fact make such a claim in every case. The results, as we shall see, were not always the same. But with so far-seeing a statesman as Henry Stimson at the State Department, the Pact made American co-operation to preserve the peace far easier than it would otherwise have been. It was thus an addition to the effective power of the League, real but not capable of being calculated. And the Council and Assembly, both of which were always profoundly conscious of their need for American co-operation, so judged it, and welcomed it accordingly.

<sup>1</sup> Interview in *New York Times*, March 25th, 1928, quoted in Shotwell, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

THE RETURN OF SPAIN AND SOME  
LATIN AMERICAN PROBLEMS

*The return of Spain—The withdrawal of Brazil—Costa Rica and the  
Monroe Doctrine—Latin America and the League—Dispute between  
Bolivia and Paraguay*

(JUNE—DECEMBER 1928)

UNDER the terms of the Covenant, the declarations of withdrawal made in 1926 by Brazil and Spain could not take effect until two years later, that is to say, until June 1928 in the former case and September 1928 in the latter. It was natural, therefore, that their fellow Members, as these dates approached, should make a special effort to retain them; and, in March 1928, the Council officially appealed to both countries to reconsider their decision and maintain their membership.

It might at first sight seem a matter of no importance whether such reconsideration, if it took place at all, should take place before or after the moment of effective withdrawal: for it was certain that either of the two would at any moment be unanimously readmitted if it so wished. But there was a great psychological difference from the point of view of national pride. Before the two years' limit expired, the decision still rested with the government concerned. After that limit was passed, it would be necessary to make a formal application and await the decision of the Assembly: and however certain the result might be, each of the two governments would have felt this procedure to be painful to its self-respect. Such sentiments might arouse the contempt of a philosopher; but they are a reality of international life, and there are few States, great or small, old or new, which are impervious to their influence. When in the nineteen-thirties each in turn of the countries which had remained outside the League, with the single exception of the United States, showed a desire to join it, the Assembly was willing to adopt, so far as the Covenant allowed, a procedure which meant in effect that an invitation from the League was substituted for an application from the would-be Member; nor did any sensible person consider that the League suffered thereby any loss of its proper dignity.

The Spanish government promptly replied that it acceded to the Council's request without condition or reservation. This reply was an

act of magnanimity both in form and substance, seeing that Spain had not altogether succeeded in either of the demands which had preceded her resignation. She had not secured nomination as a permanent Member of the Council, although the plan adopted in 1926 provided a high probability that she could count on being continuously re-elected. Further, Primo de Rivera had used the menace of Spain's departure from Geneva as a lever with which to force a revision in her favour of the Statute of Tangier; and this matter was still the subject of negotiation. It was not until several months later that it was settled on terms which Spain was ready to accept, although they fell far short of her original claims.

The advantage of the new election system to Brazil was not so clear. She, too, could indeed be sure of re-election so long as Argentina continued to play the role of Achilles in his tent. But that situation might cease at any moment: and when Argentina was participating fully in the work of the League, the pre-eminence of Brazil among Latin American Members would have to be shared. Nevertheless, there was good hope in Geneva that Brazil would return a favourable answer. It was known that Octavio Mangabeira, her new Foreign Minister, was an advocate of this course. He did not succeed, however, in persuading his colleagues and his President. When the two years were up, Brazil declared that she would still entertain the warmest sentiments towards the League and do what she could to support its work, but her decision to withdraw must stand. She proposed to maintain unchanged her adherence to the Permanent Court of International Justice. She proposed also to continue as a Member of the International Labour Organization and of the various economic and social organizations of the League.

On the first point no question could arise. The Statute of the Permanent Court was open to League Members and non-Members alike. On the second there were grave doubts. The Secretariat held that legally, in spite of the exception granted to Germany and Austria, membership of the Labour Organization depended upon membership of the League. Even if this were denied, was it not creating a dangerous precedent to allow any Member to release itself from the political limitations and obligations of the Covenant and yet retain the privilege of co-operation in the economic and social agencies? Were there not a number of other countries, especially those outside Europe, to whom such an example might prove attractive? It was true that Brazil's position would henceforth be the same as that of the United States. But the Council, in opening the agencies of the League to the participation of the latter, had in mind two considerations which could hardly be

applicable in the case of the former. It recognized that American membership was essential to their full development. And it hoped to be thereby bringing nearer the day of American entry into the League itself.

Albert Thomas, on the other hand, strongly favoured the Brazilian claim; and both organizations were reluctant to deprive themselves of the annual payment which she would still make to their common budget. A Brazilian delegation attended the annual Labour Conference which opened on May 30th, 1928; and, though the last acts of the Conference took place after Brazil had ceased to be a Member of the League, no other delegation expressed any doubts as to its right to sit and vote on the same footing as the rest. Thereafter, the most that Drummond ventured to do was to observe, in the Budget Committee of the Assembly of 1929, that, if Brazil were invited to pay her usual proportion of the expenses of the Labour Organization, this must not be held to prejudge the constitutional question. He was not contradicted: but no Member of the League chose to take the initiative of putting a possible difficulty in the way of an important government, whose desires affected no individual interest, and whose contribution to the budget would reduce the share which others would be asked to pay. Thus Brazil was allowed to renounce the political rights and obligations of membership, while enjoying whatever practical benefits might ensue from continued partnership in the social and economic work of the League and the International Labour Organization. In itself, this conclusion led to no untoward results. Brazil continued to show every courtesy to the League. She gave useful support to the agencies in whose work she was permitted to share. In September 1931, she presented the Health Organization with an international centre for research on leprosy, to be equipped and maintained entirely at her own cost but to work under the direction of the Health Committee. She co-operated effectively with the Council in putting an end to the danger of war between Colombia and Peru.<sup>1</sup> But it was a bad sign that a question of such moment should be decided without discussion. An undesirable precedent of silent acquiescence was thus created, and advantage was taken of it, later on, by States which, unlike Brazil, had become actively hostile to the political purposes and principles of the Covenant.

For courtesy's sake, the Council, in sending its appeal to Brazil and Spain, felt bound to invite Costa Rica to return to the fold. The reply was an unexpected and embarrassing challenge. The Costa Rican government asked the Council to explain, for its benefit, the interpreta-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 43.

tion placed by the League of Nations on the Monroe Doctrine and the scope given to that Doctrine when it was included in Article 21 of the Covenant.

The United States government, while insisting on the almost sacred character of the Doctrine, refused or eluded all requests for definition. American opinion vehemently affirmed that its interpretation and application were matters for the United States alone; and would have been up in arms against any attempt to define it from outside. On the other hand, the founders of the League had been persuaded to accept a clause stipulating that the Covenant did not affect the validity of the Monroe Doctrine. They had done so with reluctance and misgiving, overborne by Woodrow Wilson's eloquence, and believing that such a clause was necessary to ensure United States membership: and though their hopes were disappointed, the price they had had to pay could not be recovered. How, therefore, could the Members of the League, whose common action was guided and limited by the Covenant, refuse to say what they understood by a doctrine which was specifically referred to therein?

The relations between the United States and her southern neighbours were at that time far from being as cordial as they became a few years later, so that the question was neither simple nor academic. The Latin American Republics in general were apprehensive, not without reason, lest the Doctrine might be developing into a means of establishing the economic and political predominance of the United States throughout the Western Hemisphere. At the Pan American Conference in Havana a few months earlier, there had been a strong movement of criticism against her intervention in Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, and Panama: and the Argentine government, which led this movement in Havana, had also instructed its delegate to the Committee on Arbitration and Security to declare in positive terms<sup>1</sup> that the Covenant had been wrong in quoting the Monroe Doctrine as an example of a 'regional understanding': it was 'a unilateral political doctrine which has never been explicitly approved by other Member States'.

The Council was, as always, profoundly anxious not to incur the resentment, however irrational, of the United States: but it had to avoid, also, the danger of admitting that the United States could be justified in using the Monroe Doctrine to prevent or limit the application of the Covenant in the Western Hemisphere. Some European powers on the Council would have wished to send a diplomatic and non-committal answer which could give no offence in Washington. But the Latin American members—Urrutia of Colombia, Villegas of Chile, and Agüero of Cuba—warned their colleagues with unaccustomed

<sup>1</sup> See Minutes of this Committee, February 28th, 1928.

energy that this would prove disastrous. All America, they affirmed, was waiting for the answer of the Council: on it depended not only the future attitude of the Latin American Republics towards the League, but also, in some cases at least, their decision as to the signature and ratification of the Kellogg Pact. Their passionate advocacy, supported by the influence of the Secretariat, carried the day. The Council, while declining any attempt to define the Monroe Doctrine, made it clear that the reference in Article 21 could neither extend its scope, nor enhance its validity; and ended by asserting in plain terms that the Covenant conferred equal rights and equal obligations upon all the Members of the League.

This episode did not lead to the return of Costa Rica; though her misgivings concerning Article 21 of the Covenant were now fully set at rest, the Congress, still unwilling to vote an annual contribution of some \$5,000, declined to ratify the official proposal to apply for readmission. But the Council's reply gave much satisfaction to the Latin American Members. From that time on until the period of the Spanish war, their interest in the League, their inclination to use it and support it, were steadily growing. Had the European powers recognized the value of the prospects thus opened before them, they could have taken advantage of this movement of Latin American sentiment to expand and improve their connexions, in every field, with a group of States whose importance, political, economic, and cultural, was already great and was certain to become still greater. But through ignorance and indifference; through a quite unnecessary fear of offending the susceptibilities of Washington; and in some cases through the mistaken idea that their diplomatic services could do all that was required, the countries of Europe signally failed to grasp their opportunities. Little effort was made to convince the Latin American Republics that their collaboration was appreciated or to employ the institutions of Geneva as a link between them and other countries. Their numbers made them effective in such matters as the election of new Members of the Council, as well as in the nomination of Presidents or Judges. They did not use this power unreasonably: but they did on many occasions make united and organized use of it, and this was apt to exasperate some of their European colleagues, whose attention was concentrated on more substantial tasks. But, apart from elections, it often seemed that other delegations—and particularly those of the British Commonwealth—attached insufficient weight to their views on political and economic affairs, and devoted an excessive degree of attention to their record as contributors to the budget of the League. And in this respect their record was, with some exceptions, far from perfect, though it was not nearly so bad as was

generally believed. It must be added that the quality of their delegations was for the most part not a true reflexion of their national capacities. Too often these consisted only of diplomatists who had resided for many years in Europe and had lost touch with the living forces of their own countries. But this state of things was at least as much the consequence, as the cause, of the indifference shown by so many of their colleagues.

Yet in spite of this lack of understanding and encouragement, the Latin American States did not cease to maintain and intensify their relations with the League, until the Spanish War began to exercise its disintegrating influence on this as on all other forms of international co-operation. In 1929, Bolivia returned to the Assembly after six, Peru and Honduras after five, years' absence. In 1931 Mexico was admitted to the League and played thenceforward a notably loyal and disinterested part in its work. In 1933 Argentina resumed full membership. Finally, in 1934, Ecuador ratified the Covenant which she had signed in 1919, and thus completed the roll of Latin American membership.

The favourable effect of the Council's message to Costa Rica was heightened by the action which it took, three months later, when fighting broke out between Bolivian and Paraguayan troops in the region of the Chaco Boreal, the first rumblings of what was later to be a disastrous storm. Its meeting at Lugano in December 1928 coincided with the first report of hostilities. Each country maintained a number of fortified outposts in the disputed area; and the substance of the reports was that Paraguayan troops had attacked and captured a Bolivian post and that Bolivian forces were already moving up for a counter-attack. The Bolivian government had broken off diplomatic relations and had rejected a Paraguayan proposal to submit the quarrel to a commission set up under the treaty drawn up by the Pan American Conference of 1923, and known as the Gondra Pact. Bolivia was not a party to that treaty: and neither country was as yet a party to the Kellogg Pact. Both were Members of the League. But neither had thought of having recourse to the procedures laid down in the Covenant, and thus fulfilling the only obligation for peaceful settlement by which they were reciprocally bound.

It was the Secretary-General who took upon himself the responsibility of laying the question before the Council. Unlike the Secretary-General of the United Nations, he had no specific competence to take any such initiative. But he could feel certain that most members, at least, of the Council would agree that it ought not to disregard what looked like a real threat to peace. It was Briand's turn to preside over the session: and

Drummond and Briand were a team which worked with the confidence of long and friendly partnership. None the less, the Council did not decide to intervene until after a heated debate on much the same lines as that which had preceded its declaration concerning the Monroe Doctrine. It so happened that there was assembled at that moment in Washington a Conference of American States, which was establishing methods of arbitration and conciliation for the solution of their differences—one of many examples of the way in which the Pan American Conferences followed in paths marked out for them by the League: and the Conference was reported to have suggested to Bolivia and Paraguay that they should use its good offices in reaching a settlement. Some Council members urged that it would be best to await the result of this step. They feared to offend the United States, and to expose the Council to a rebuff from the parties, the more so since these had themselves made no move to invoke the assistance of the League. But Briand and Titulescu replied that any delay would be a dereliction of the Council's duty as guardian of the Covenant. The representative of Venezuela, newly elected to the Council, declared that this was the test of whether South American Members of the League were, in truth, on the same footing as other Members or not; and that if, for any reason, the Council failed to act, it would be the end of the League as far as Latin America was concerned. His view prevailed, and the Council sent an emphatic reminder to the two parties of their obligations as Members of the League; warned them against any military action which might aggravate the situation; requested its President to keep in touch with events and call it together in special session if further fighting should occur; and telegraphed the whole correspondence not only to Asunción and La Paz but also direct to the capital of every Member of the League.

On this occasion, the danger of war passed away as quickly as it had arisen. Each country promptly assured the Council that it was resolved to abide by the Covenant; and both accepted the good offices of the Pan American Arbitration Conference, not indeed for the settlement of their territorial dispute, but for that of the immediate crisis caused by clashes between their outlying garrisons. The Council encouraged this agreement, and never claimed to have been the means of preventing the war which had so nearly begun. But witnesses on the spot, reporting the astonishing impression which was produced in each capital by the totally unexpected arrival of Briand's telegram, affirmed that this had in truth been the turning-point of the affair. And this view was borne out by the statements made at the following Assembly by the delegates of Bolivia and of several neighbouring States.

Henceforth there could be no doubt in anybody's mind that the



rights and duties of League Members in the Western Hemisphere were in principle identical with those of all their fellow Members. Nor was there any clear sign to suggest that the principle was questioned by the United States government. Yet there remained a wide gap between principle and practice. Washington held aloof from Geneva and seized every occasion to develop the influence and activity of the Pan American Union. The Latin American Members themselves, while they denied that the Monroe Doctrine could prevent the writ of the League from running in South America, nevertheless considered it preferable, for reasons of pride, that American conflicts should be settled without intervention from Europe or Asia. Thus in practice they weakened the powers of the League which in theory they insisted on upholding.

The deplorable consequences of disunity among the peacemakers were quickly seen. In its last reply to the Council, dated January 7th, 1929, the Bolivian government stated that it proposed to submit the substance of the dispute to the Hague Court. The Court was beyond doubt by far the most suitable organ to deal with the problem and, if both sides could have accepted its jurisdiction, they would have saved themselves from untold misery and loss. But the suggestion was not followed up by the League, and the whole affair was left in the hands of the Neutral Commission of five States, which had been set up in Washington to assist in liquidating the immediate trouble. In a later chapter we shall record the unhappy sequel which followed on these confused and uncertain beginnings.

POLITICAL DISPUTES:  
PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

*Ethiopia's protest against an Anglo-Italian agreement—A new Polish-Lithuanian crisis—The smuggled arms of Szent-Gotthard—General situation as regards minorities protection—Fresh demands by the minorities—A Canadian move—Quarrel between Stresemann and Zaleski—Results of the controversy*

(JUNE 1926—JUNE 1929)

THE general sense of appeasement in European relations, which followed the Locarno treaties and the entry of Germany into the League, left the Council agenda, for a few years, free from any conflict of an acutely dangerous nature. Such controversies as came before it were settled or patched up with no great excitement or difficulty. The present chapter records three such incidents which were of greater interest or importance than the rest. The first of these concerned Ethiopia on the one hand and the British and Italian governments on the other. The second was a recrudescence of the chronic hostility between Lithuania and Poland. The third arose from the disclosure, by pure chance, of a secret and illegal arms traffic between Italy and Hungary.

Finally, something must be said of the protection of minorities and of the grave quarrel on that question between Germany and Poland, which took up much of the Council's energies during the last year of Stresemann's life and of Chamberlain's membership.

Since the day when Ethiopia had been admitted, not without doubt and hesitation, to the League, she had played an obscure and silent part in the Assembly and had not otherwise shared in its affairs. But the highly intelligent Regent, Ras Tafari, who was to succeed to the throne seven years later, well understood the dangers to which his country was exposed and the protective value of its status as a Member of the League.

In June 1926, the Regent was informed by the British and Italian Ministers at Addis Ababa that their governments had recently negotiated an agreement for the promotion of their respective interests in Ethiopia. The British objective was a concession to construct a barrage on Lake Tsana for the control of the waters of the Blue Nile, and a motor-road

across the 70 miles of Ethiopian territory which lay between the lake and the frontier of the Sudan. The Italian objective was much more extensive—a concession to link up the Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somalia by a railway nearly 1,000 miles in length, crossing the country from north to south, and to exercise exclusive economic influence in the west of Ethiopia as well as in the whole of the territory traversed by the railway. The agreement bound the two parties to support each other in demanding these concessions. Although completed in December 1925, it was not communicated to the Ethiopian government until six months later, when rumours of its existence had already appeared in the press. It was at the same time sent to the League to be registered and published in due course.

The immediate reaction of Ras Tafari was to submit the whole matter to Geneva, asking whether the Members of the League thought it right that Ethiopia should be subjected to a pressure which they would not accept for themselves, and whether they considered the Anglo-Italian agreement to be compatible with her independence. His protest was circulated to all the Members, and, like all documents so circulated, it was also issued to the press. The result was a prompt and full retreat by the two powers. Ras Tafari had not asked for a special meeting of the Council; and before its next session took place, both governments had addressed to the Secretary-General notes declaring that it had never been their intention to bring any pressure on Ethiopia or to limit the freedom of action of any other government, but merely to renounce possible competition between themselves. Though these replies could hardly have stood up against a critical inquiry, it was evident that the agreement had been completely killed, and Ras Tafari contented himself with a formal note to the League in which he placed on record the assurances which his protest had elicited.

The Anglo-Italian agreement had clearly been, both in its substance and in the manner of its negotiation, totally inconsistent with the status of Ethiopia as a Member of the League and with the obligations assumed by Britain and Italy in voting for her admission. It was a striking example of the way in which the pre-war diplomatic process went on side by side with the new system established by the Covenant. Later, indeed, when Britain led the resistance to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, Italian spokesmen continually pointed to the agreement of 1925 as proof that she did not really regard Ethiopia as being on the same footing as other Members of the League, and that her opposition was based not on principle but on self-interest. It is true that both parties affirmed their resolve to respect the political and territorial *status quo* in Ethiopia, but it is easy to quote precedents which suggest

that such phraseology was a threat rather than a safeguard. Ras Tafari was well justified in observing that economic influence and political influence were closely bound up together, and that throughout its history the Ethiopian people had seldom met with foreigners who did not desire to take their territory and destroy their independence.

Two years later, in August 1928, Ras Tafari and the Italian Minister in Addis Ababa signed a Pact of Friendship, by which Italy and Ethiopia mutually undertook not to engage, under any pretext, in action calculated to injure or prejudice the independence of the other.

In the autumn months of 1927 the latent hostility between Poland and Lithuania suddenly assumed a menacing aspect. In her unshakeable resolve never to admit that Poland was legally entitled to exercise sovereignty over the city and province of Vilna, Lithuania had continued to declare that, although she had no intention of attempting to retake Vilna by force, she considered herself as being in a state of war with Poland. No diplomatic or commercial relations existed between the two. Their frontier remained closed: roads and railways were cut; traffic in transit between Poland and Latvia was blocked, to the great loss of both. In maintaining, even in theory, a state of war with her neighbour, Lithuania was clearly violating the Covenant; she was also violating the Conventions of Barcelona by preventing the passage of goods and passengers between her neighbours. But to all remonstrances her answer was that she could never change her attitude until she had recovered her ancient capital.

Year by year a steady flow of complaints had come in concerning frontier incidents or ill treatment of the racial minorities on either side. But in October 1927 the Lithuanian government began to feel seriously alarmed. The Polish press published, with appropriate indignation, a trumped-up story of the sufferings of Polish teachers in Lithuania, and as a measure of reprisal many Lithuanian schools in Poland were closed and a number of Lithuanian priests and teachers arrested. The seventh anniversary of Zeligowski's seizure of Vilna was celebrated in that city by specially organized manifestations which were attended both by Zeligowski himself and by Pilsudski, who now wielded dictatorial power in Poland. Pilsudski was not only a man of heroic courage who had done astonishing things for Poland in her darkest days: he held statesmanlike views on foreign policy, and in Zaleski he had chosen a Foreign Minister both wise and moderate. At the same time, he was capable of rash and violent action, particularly in regard to Lithuanian affairs: he was himself of Lithuanian descent and had never reconciled himself to the separation between the two countries. The Lithuanian govern-

ment—itself also a dictatorial regime headed by Voldemaras—had, therefore, good reason for alarm: and its suspicions were confirmed on learning that a number of Lithuanian emigrants had been approached by agents from Warsaw, who promised the support of Poland in overturning Voldemaras, on the understanding that, once in office, they would follow a pro-Polish policy and recognize the legality of the existing frontiers. In these circumstances Voldemaras addressed himself (October 15th, 1927) to the Council, asserting that there was a danger of war and that the very existence of Lithuania as an independent nation was threatened.

In Geneva, and in the western capitals, it was not believed that peace was really in danger, and the Lithuanian appeal was simply added to the agenda of the next ordinary session of the Council, which was due to open some six weeks later. In the interval, it appeared that, following what was at this time their usual bad practice, the French and British governments tried without success to persuade the Lithuanians to withdraw their note and settle their quarrel with Poland through the good offices of Paris, London, and Rome. The Polish government declared that it had not the slightest intention of using force, and that an appeal to the Covenant came strangely from a country which had claimed for years, against all law and reason, to be in a state of war with a peaceful neighbour. On the other hand, the Russians insisted that the menace was real: their press was filled with attacks on Pilsudski and on France, whom they accused of plotting together to bring about the annexation of Lithuania to Poland. They also presented formal notes to both sides, warning them of the 'immeasurable dangers' which might follow any aggravation of the crisis. And on the eve of the Council meeting it was shown that their fears were not without some basis, when Pilsudski issued a violent denunciation of Voldemaras, adding that he had spent a sleepless night in considering whether or not to mobilize the Polish army, and had in the end resolved to await the decision of the League.

Pilsudski himself came to the Council and, in view of the impulsive character of one dictator and the unequalled obstinacy of the other, it seemed likely that the meeting might be difficult and even dramatic. But, with Briand, Chamberlain, and Stresemann present, the Council showed itself master of the situation. After long speeches from Voldemaras and Zaleski, the Dutch Foreign Minister, Beelaerts van Blokland, an able and attractive personality, accepted the task of rapporteur. With the help of much pressure behind the scenes, he induced both sides to agree to a resolution which affirmed that no state of war existed: that Poland recognized and respected the independence and integrity of Lithuania: that a special Committee would examine and report on

the complaints of ill treatment by Poland of her Lithuanian subjects; and that the two governments would enter into direct negotiations in order to restore normal good relations between them. The resolution was shown, before adoption, to Litvinov, then in Geneva for the first time; and it appears that he not only approved it but joined in persuading Voldemaras to vote for it. In consequence, the Soviet press refrained for once from its usual attacks upon everything done by the Council.

The Council decision, adopted with due formality on December 10th, was accompanied by an unaccustomed show of cordiality on the part of the two antagonists, and even by a public handshake between Pilsudski and Voldemaras, which recalled that between Paderewski and Voldemaras in 1920. It was not until March 30th, 1928, however, that the negotiations between the two countries were actually started. They took place at Königsberg, and the German authorities did their best to help. But no Lithuanian representative could ever forget Vilna, or consent to resume normal relations with Poland: and, after many meetings and minor quarrels, to which the Council often had to listen, they led to no better result than the granting of some practical concessions in the matter of goods in transit from Poland through Memel. On the other hand, the danger of war did not again arise until, in March 1938, a more aggressive Polish Minister added his contribution to European disorder by forcing Lithuania to resume diplomatic relations under threat of immediate invasion.

On New Year's Day of 1928 occurred an incident which uncovered for a moment something of the dangerous fires which lay beneath the peaceful crust of Europe. Austrian customs officials, having stopped five trucks, loaded with material innocuously labelled machine parts, at Szent-Gotthard on the frontier between Austria and Hungary, found by chance that they really contained machine-gun parts. The trucks came from Verona and were consigned to a Hungarian forwarding agent at a station on the Hungaro-Czechoslovak frontier; but their final destination was not to be ascertained from the bills of lading.

This discovery led to much excitement in the countries of the Little Entente. They already believed that Hungary was maintaining larger armaments than those laid down in the Treaty of Trianon: and this was for them a matter almost of life and death, in view of Hungary's unceasing campaign for frontier revision and of the adventurous and irresponsible character of the Magyar people, some of whom would gladly have seen Europe plunged again into war if thereby they could hope to regain their lost territories. The Hungarian government dis-

avowed all knowledge of the affair and suggested that the arms were intended for Poland or Czechoslovakia; the latter countries, however, not only denied the suggestion, but pointed out that they were perfectly free to import whatever arms they chose and could have no reason to resort to secret and fraudulent methods. In fact, no one doubted that the machine-guns were meant for Hungary, the more so since they came from Italy, whose policy was to win the friendship of Hungary by supporting her demands for treaty revision.

Allied control on Hungarian soil having recently been brought to an end, the Council of the League alone now had power to order an investigation into her armaments. To the Council, therefore, the Little Entente addressed themselves. But, owing to some divergence among themselves, and possibly to Italian pressure, they waited a month before submitting their request, and did not even then ask that any action should be taken thereon until the regular March session of the Council. In the interval, the Hungarian government, which throughout appeared to do its best to prevent any effective elucidation of the affair, announced that the material would forthwith, in view of such irregularities as the false description in the transport documents, be confiscated, broken up, and sold for scrap. This programme was arrested by a telegram from the President of the Council, but not before it had been carried far enough to make subsequent inquiry more difficult than it would otherwise have been.

The Council had, as already stated, drawn up elaborate plans for investigating complaints concerning the execution of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaties. But most of its Members had hoped that they would never be used: Germany was naturally opposed to any further reminder of the difference between victors and vanquished: while Italy had her own reasons for wishing that no serious inquiry should take place. In these circumstances, the Council was at a loss to know what to do: for all agreed that the affair could not be simply dismissed without further consideration. In the end, a series of half-measures was adopted. The procedure of investigation was not used; but a Committee of three Members of the Council—Holland, Finland, and Chile—was asked to study the question and report to the Council at its June session. The Committee scrutinized all the documents and sent two experts to examine the material at Szent-Gotthard, where it still remained after having been broken up. But it made no serious effort to solve the only problems which were of real importance. Nothing was found to show who was the real consignee, or under what conditions the guns had been bought. It was inconceivable that sixty tons of war material should be exported and imported without the knowledge of the

two governments concerned, especially as there was reason to suppose that other consignments had taken the same route. Yet no government had any information to offer, and the Council finally contented itself with a public statement of the facts as ascertained, a general warning on the dangers of a clandestine arms traffic, and a mild reproach to the Hungarian authorities for their unhelpful attitude.

The Council with good reason showed that it was by no means proud of its performance on this occasion. Chamberlain attempted to anticipate criticism, not of himself but of the Council as a whole, by observing that it had been far from exhausting its capacities in its action on the Szent-Gotthard case, and that, if any similar case should arise in the future, more efficacious methods would be found for dealing with it. None the less, the incident was widely quoted as proving that the League was impotent to control the execution of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaties, and would be equally impotent to ensure the carrying out of a general disarmament convention. But many supporters of the League felt more serious misgivings than this. For it was clear that if the Council had put out its full power, it could have made a very much more effective investigation. Why had it not done so? and why, in particular, had no explanation of any sort been asked from Italy? It was indispensable to discover all details about the circumstances which had led to the dispatch of these trucks from Verona, and about their passage across the Italian frontier—events which could not have taken place without official knowledge. Yet the Italian representative had sat silent through long meetings at which the unsatisfactory character of the inquiry had been emphasized by many of his colleagues; and, what was still more significant, no word of questioning had been addressed to him. The chief Members of the Council chose to accept an undignified failure rather than risk causing embarrassment to an important member of the Locarno group; and each of the smaller powers was afraid of the diplomatic consequences if it uttered such inconvenient truths as might incur the noisy wrath of the Fascist government. It was justly felt that these considerations would not have had such weight in earlier days, when the Council paid more attention to the principles of the Covenant and less to the diplomatic combinations of its Members.

By far the most serious and controversial questions with which the Council had to deal between the Ninth and Tenth Assemblies were those connected with the protection of minorities—a problem always difficult, and specially so when it came close to the sensitive nerve of German-Polish relations.

Council members and their advisers had become accustomed to



devoting much time to the study of the numerous petitions which were addressed to the Secretariat on behalf of various minorities. They served more or less in rotation on the Committees of Three to which each petition was submitted: and between 1921 and 1929 not less than 150 such Committees had been appointed. It might occasionally be possible to decide at once that a petition was frivolous or ill founded; but in the majority of cases careful consideration was required. The government against which complaint was made might contest the facts, or it might declare that the action taken or contemplated was not a violation of its engagements. The Committee might be convinced by this reply, but probably not before it had examined the question at length. And if it still had doubts and needed further information; or if it disagreed with the reply and wished to persuade the government to reconsider its decision—in such cases protracted negotiations had usually to be undertaken. Of necessity this work was, save in a vague and general sense, unknown to the outside world. The only effective arm in the hands of each Committee was its power to bring the matter before the Council or the Permanent Court, and the reluctance of any government to see itself thus publicly arraigned. But every threat implies a promise; the use of publicity as a weapon may often be equivalent to the use of secrecy as a bribe. Whenever a Committee had extracted some concession in favour of a minority, it was bound to keep the episode confidential, unless publicity were, for any reason, desired by the government concerned. In the nature of things, therefore, the more successful the work of the Committees was, the more it was wrapped in silence and discretion, and the less could the minorities be told of what had been done to protect them.

The success of such a system depended above all on the prestige of the Council. It depended, in the second place, on the work of the Committees being serious and sincere; but these qualities could not produce their effect unless backed up by respect for the Council's approval and fear of its censure. During the period with which we are now dealing, the situation was in both respects satisfactory. Thanks in great part to the Minorities Section of the Secretariat, whose impartiality and knowledge of the subject had won the confidence of the minorities<sup>1</sup> and of the governments alike, the Committees could generally be relied upon to study every petition fairly and fully. At the same time the fourteen States which had accepted international obligations in regard to the minorities within their borders were far from indifferent to the possibility of incurring the Council's blame. Lithuania was an exception:

<sup>1</sup> For tactical reasons, the spokesmen of the minorities often attacked the Section; but they showed their real feelings when, in 1928, it was proposed to change the Director (Colban).

but Lithuania at this time was permitted to be something of a spoilt child in her relations with the League. Another exception was Turkey. Though not a Member of the League, Turkey had undertaken, in the Treaty of Lausanne, the same obligations towards the Council and the Court as those of her European neighbours. Mustafa Kemal did not formally decline to fall in with the various procedures which the Council had organized; but he met all questions and complaints with a masterly inactivity. Believing that the new Turkey was now firmly established, he was adopting a policy of toleration towards what remained of the minorities. He induced the leaders of the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish communities to sign a declaration to the effect that they had no wish for special treatment; communicated this to the League; and relapsed into silence.

But with these exceptions, governments against which accusations were brought usually felt bound to do their best to convince the Committees of Three that they were duly honouring their engagements, and that, where wrong was done, it would, in due course, be righted. For some of the complaints submitted were beyond any doubt both serious and true. The minorities to be protected were in many cases the very people who had held the upper hand before the war, and had used their power tyrannically. It was a strain on public opinion to see these groups saved from what to simple minds seemed no more than just retaliation, by an international tribunal which had no such memories to affect its judgement. In addition, the newly liberated or enlarged States had not yet had time to build up an adequate public service, so that even their better intentions were often frustrated by the acts of their officials. Thus, for example, the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, the German minority in western Poland, the Bulgarians in the Dobrogea, were in many cases subjected to arbitrary and unjustifiable ill treatment, while the wrongs done to the Ukrainians in eastern Poland were still more grievous. Nevertheless, the States concerned did not contest the right of the Council to intervene, and were usually persuaded to admit and correct at least a part of what had been done in violation of the Treaties.

All this complex, continuous, and, on the whole, successful activity rested on the maintenance of a precarious balance. The Minorities Treaties, whose text had been drafted before the Covenant had come into force, had made no provision for the organs or institutions which were to ensure that their obligations were respected. And nothing in politics is more certain than this, that rules and regulations are bound to be ineffective unless suitable institutions are planned at the same time. The Council had done its best to fill the gap by organizing the

system of petitions and above all by devising its Committees of Three. These Committees were the essential operating part of its method of executing the Treaties; and, so long as they were permitted to do so, they functioned satisfactorily enough. But they had a congenital weakness. They were no part of the Treaties themselves. Their working depended on the consent of the States whose conduct they were supposed, if necessary, to investigate; and that consent might at any moment be withdrawn. It had been given by the governments concerned only with reluctance, and in the expectation that by facilitating, up to a point, the procedure of the Council, they would protect themselves against the less disinterested interference of individual powers.

The system thus constructed had recently been exposed to a new and increasing strain from the side of the minorities themselves. Their aim was, naturally enough, to force the Committees of the Council into the widest and strongest forms of intervention in their favour. Under the inspiration of the 'League of Germans Abroad', they began to organize their means of publicity and pressure. An annual Congress of Minorities was held; and a permanent secretariat was established to co-ordinate the efforts of the various minorities, assist in the preparation of petitions, and influence so far as possible the action of the Council and its Committees. They disavowed any political aims, protested their loyalty to their respective governments, and based their demands on the ground of humanity and justice. They claimed for every person who had submitted a petition the right to be heard before any decision was taken in regard to it, and to be fully informed of what that decision had been. They urged the Council to set up a permanent Minorities Commission which should deal with all petitions and all minorities questions, and should meet in public or at least, like the Mandates Commission, publish its proceedings and its reports.

There was never the remotest chance that these demands would be accepted. They were not merely an extension of the system of Minorities Treaties, but contrary to its real purpose, which was, not to protect the interests of particular groups, but to give stability to the political settlements established by the Treaties of Peace. The governments concerned would never have agreed to them, and the Council had no possibility of forcing such agreement, even if it had wished to do so. But the appeal to the sentiments of humanity and justice was not in vain; and many generous-minded persons, who were shocked at the ill treatment meted out to certain minorities, warmly advocated these proposals, in which they saw an approximation to the judicial standards of their own countries. Such supporters were convinced that in pressing for a reform of the Council's procedure they were serving the interests of the minorities.

They had no other object in view. But the real designs of many of the leaders of the Congress of Minorities were very different. They knew that their programme was impossible and that their campaign was likely to damage rather than improve the position of the minorities. Such a result, however, was no disadvantage from their point of view. They aimed at keeping alive the difficulties and resentments aroused by the Peace Treaties; and the last thing they wanted was that the minority populations should settle down as loyal and satisfied citizens of their new countries. Unhappily, also, certain of the countries in question were guilty of conduct which contributed to the success of these disruptive efforts. It is not likely that such minority groups as the Germans in Poland or the Hungarians in Roumania would ever have become contented and reliable subjects of what they had been taught to regard as inferior races. But it is certain that the Polish and Roumanian administrations often violated in regard to them both the letter and the spirit of the Minorities Treaties. They were not, like the Ukrainians, exposed to gross cruelties; but they suffered from various forms of hostile and unfair treatment.

The demands of the Congress of Minorities were sponsored, in all good faith, by the International Federation of League of Nations' Societies at its annual conference in the summer of 1928. The question was tentatively raised at the Assembly a few weeks later by several delegations, but no formal proposal was put forward. A further step was taken by Senator Dandurand, the Canadian representative, when the Council met in December at Lugano, Stresemann's doctors having forbidden him to face the wintry rigours of Geneva. Canada, like Switzerland, had the right to be held up as an example of a State in which men of different races and religions could dwell together in peace and loyalty. Dandurand, a French-Canadian and a lawyer, had a high standard in such matters; and, as a member of a Committee of Three, he had been struck by the difficulty of obtaining all the information necessary to judge the petition with which the Committee was dealing. He gave notice that he intended at the next session of the Council to submit suggestions for the reform of its procedure for the protection of minorities. His action would have aroused much interest in any case; it was brought into special prominence by a sudden and dramatic quarrel, at a public meeting of the Council, between Stresemann and Zaleski.

The settlement in 1921-2 of the Upper Silesian problem had included the establishment of a special regime for the protection of the minorities on either side of the new frontier. Although means were provided for arranging all disputes on the spot, the minorities possessed also the right of direct appeal to the Council: and the right so given was fully used,

and indeed abused, more especially by the German minority. This was natural enough. The Germans in Polish Silesia counted a high proportion of landowners, industrial leaders or managers, and professional men. Such a minority was particularly sensitive to any inequitable treatment, and well qualified to make the most of its case. Further, its most active spirits had constituted a special organization, the Volksbund, to assist members of the minority in enforcing their rights and in bringing their complaints before the League. The Poles in German Silesia, on the other hand, were nearly all peasants or workers; they were often illiterate; their expectations were not high, and their skill in presentation was small. Besides this, the Germans had deeply resented the frontier decision: they had not resigned themselves to accepting it as permanent, whereas the Poles were concerned only to maintain it. Hence the Council found itself compelled at each of its sessions to consider a number of petitions, emanating for the most part from the German minority, and often of a trivial nature. At Lugano its agenda contained no fewer than nine, seven of which came from the Volksbund. They were, as usual, the subject of long negotiation, in which Adatci, as rapporteur for all minority questions, gradually worked out solutions which the German and Polish representatives were prepared to accept. Adatci's learning was profound, and, unlike most Japanese, his brain and temper functioned with more than Latin rapidity: the endless haggling over details which this work involved was a sore trial to his patience. But on this occasion he had once more arrived at a series of agreed resolutions, which, on December 15th, were duly adopted in public session.

Zaleski then asked leave to make a declaration. The Council, he said, was being submerged by petitions from the Volksbund which were either groundless or trivial. They could all have been settled locally, but the Volksbund had not attempted to do so because its real object was to use the publicity of a Council meeting in order to make the world believe that the Germans in Upper Silesia were being systematically deprived of their rights. The Volksbund kept alive a conflict of nationalities which would otherwise be steadily disappearing: it created political agitation, it aimed at damaging the Polish State, and was in fact a treasonous organization. Its activities might, if unchecked, become a danger to peace; in the meantime, they were an abuse of the Geneva Convention and of the patience of the Council.

Stresemann met this attack with a flash of that intemperate anger which was never far below the surface in German minds where Poland was concerned. He had shown it less than most, but he felt it none the less; the recovery of Posen, Pomerania, and Upper Silesia were graven on his heart, and though it would surely be unjust to suppose that he

would ever have led his country into war to regain them, he was unshaken in his refusal to extend to Germany's eastern frontier the promises and guarantees of the Pact of Locarno. Apart from these deeper psychological and political motives, it was doubtless convenient to him to make a demonstration which might please his nationalist critics at home. He had been amazed, he said, by the language of the Polish Foreign Minister, which could only be prompted by a spirit of hatred towards the German minority. The Volksbund was exercising its rights under the Geneva Convention; did M. Zaleski propose to prevent this? Was he entering on a war of words with Germany? In certain circumstances high treason and love of country were closely akin, as some leading figures of Europe (he meant Pilsudski) were well aware. Striking the Council table with his clenched fist, Stresemann ended by declaring that he would demand that the whole question of the protection of minorities by the League should be placed on the agenda of the next session of the Council.

The Canadian senator, who sought only to promote conciliation and equity, thus found himself in a somewhat unwished-for alliance with Germany and Hungary. The pre-war record of Hungary in this field was bad, and her present sincerity was more than doubtful. She appealed to humanity on behalf of her minorities abroad; but her own lower classes were still living in miserable conditions under the rule of a privileged oligarchy. She called for the execution of the Treaties, but every Hungarian schoolroom was hung with maps in which the national frontiers were so drawn as to include large areas of Roumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Dandurand might, and did, stress the need for loyalty on the part of the minorities to their new allegiance. He could, and did, affirm that he aimed at reinforcing the stability of the new States, in the conviction that loyalty and stability alike would be best assured through the contentment of all their subjects. But the force of such arguments was only weakened when they were repeated by the spokesmen of Germany and Hungary, many of whom preferred, for nationalist purposes, that the minorities of their race should be discontented and disloyal.

The presentation in March 1929 of Dandurand's proposals for reform gave rise to a long discussion in the Council; to the preparation, by a sub-committee headed by Chamberlain, of an exhaustive study of the origin, objects, past achievement, and future methods of the whole system; and, finally, after difficult and acrimonious negotiations, to the confirmation of the previous procedure with certain minor improvements.

The Council's debate of March 3rd, 1929 was perhaps unequalled in quality and interest by any other in its records, and should be read and understood by anyone who cares to see how at that time the deepest of

European problems could be treated in public session by Stresemann, Chamberlain, Briand, and their colleagues. Racial animosities had been a principal factor in the outbreak of the First World War; and the Council knew very well the underlying dangers which might arise from insubordination on the side of the minorities or from repression on that of the governments. Stresemann, though he would have recoiled with loathing from the Nazi crime of using the minorities as a pretext for war, was certainly aware that the Germans in Poland were in permanent contact with nationalist elements in Germany, and that in giving moral support to their irredentism he was playing a perilous game. His speech was for the most part moderate enough; yet he could not refrain from asserting that the present state of Europe was not to be regarded as eternal and unchangeable. For the rest, however, he did no more, at least on the surface, than demand the full execution of the Treaties and better methods of action by the Council, including the institution of a permanent commission for minorities questions. Chamberlain recalled that the essential purpose of the responsibilities laid upon the League in this question was to substitute a friendly international supervision for the dangerous practice of interference by individual States inspired by racial preoccupations. He offered a full and reasoned defence of the work done by the Committees of Three: emphasized the need for loyalty on the part of the minorities; and protested against Stresemann's reference to possible changes in the European scene. Briand followed a somewhat similar line: he spoke with warmth of the sacred duty of the Council to ensure the proper protection of the minorities, but he added a solemn warning against attempts to organize them in order to create discontent and undermine the national strength of the countries to which they now belonged.

Meanwhile, the States which were bound by the Minorities Treaties gradually made their position clear. Their spokesmen, among whom were Beneš, Titulescu, and Politis, pointed out that they had accepted the Treaties on the understanding that the Council powers, including the United States, were undertaking specific obligations to guarantee their new frontiers. President Wilson himself had stated that this was the fundamentally important fact of the situation; and Clemenceau, in the name of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, had explained to Poland (the first country which was asked to accept such a Treaty) that those powers on whom she would, to a large extent, depend for the secure possession of her territories, were obliged for that reason to make sure that certain essential rights of the inhabitants should always be maintained. Was it not evident that the frontier guarantees promised by Wilson and Clemenceau had never existed? And yet the States in

question had not only continued to execute the Treaties, but had permitted the Council, by instituting its system of petitions and Committees of Three, to extend the work of supervision much beyond what had been originally proposed. If therefore the defenders of the minorities based their case on the Treaties, the governments would answer that they had already consented to even greater derogations from their sovereignty than the Treaties demanded, and could not reasonably be asked to do more. If, on the other hand, the new proposals were to be based upon the general dictates of justice and humanity, they ought not to apply only to those States which had already undertaken obligations towards their minorities, but to all States without exception; and the former would gladly accept any general charter which was equally accepted by other Members of the League.

Against this defence there was really little to be said. The older powers were quite unwilling even to consider any such general treaty. Yet the argument was by no means one of pure theory. The Austrians of South Tyrol, transferred to Italian rule, were subjected to treatment which would have been in flagrant violation of any Minorities Treaty; and it would not have been difficult to find other hardly less striking examples. Here, indeed, could be found one of the chief reasons why, in later years, the influence of the Council in this field diminished and almost disappeared. The fact that it was unable to intervene against the victimization of Jews in Germany<sup>1</sup> took away much of its moral right to intervene against the far lesser wrongs of other minorities.

Strong as their position was, Titulescu and his friends were induced to agree to some minor additions to the regular procedure, the general effect of which was to give greater publicity to the action of the Committees of Three. With these changes Dandurand declared himself satisfied, while Stresemann in self-protection affirmed that they were an important improvement.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the net result of the discussions which had taken up so much of the Council's time was probably unfavourable, rather than favourable, to the true interests of the minorities. Petitions continued to pour in, and indeed increased in number during the next two or three years; and the procedure of discussion with the governments concerned went on as before. But the latter had lost much of their confidence in the good will of the Council; an atmosphere of political pressure on the one side, of suspicion on the other, had begun

<sup>1</sup> In German Upper Silesia the Council had a theoretical right to intervene until the lapse of the Upper Silesian Convention in 1937. And it did succeed (June 6th, 1933) in extracting assurances from the Nazi government of its intention to honour its obligations under that Convention, though it can hardly be believed that these assurances were kept.

<sup>2</sup> See Council Minutes, June 13th, 1929.



to take the place of the old friendly co-operation. The delicate balance of the system had thus been profoundly disturbed; yet for a time it kept going with fair efficiency, partly as a result of the personal connexions established in earlier years, and partly because the prestige of the Council was still undamaged.

## HALCYON DAYS

*The League's Tenth Birthday—Optimism and unity in the Assembly—  
The Palace of the League—Discussions on the Secretariat—Proposal for  
payment of delegates' expenses*

(SEPTEMBER 1929)

THE Assembly of 1929 was immediately preceded by a Conference at The Hague, in which Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium arrived, in agreement with Germany, at what were intended to be final decisions concerning reparation, and bound themselves at the same time to evacuate the occupied territories of the Rhineland by the summer of 1930, five years earlier than was laid down in the Treaty of Versailles. Thus did Stresemann, a few weeks before his death, consummate the titanic efforts of six years. The agreements of The Hague were reached only after the hardest bargaining between the British government and their former allies. At times the conference had looked certain to break down completely. When, in the end, it achieved success, the general relief and satisfaction were proportionately great. 'Now', said Beneš, speaking in the general debate with which the Assembly, as usual, opened its proceedings, 'now the great and dangerous problems of the war settlement can be regarded as solved in principle.' The League's programme of an organized peace, of gradual disarmament, of economic progress, had been clearly marked out. It had been held back by obstacles not of its making. Now, at last, it seemed, the road lay wide open before it.

The general debate and indeed the whole session were charged with a spirit of unity, of purpose, and of hope more complete than the Assembly had ever before attained or was ever destined to regain. The number of Members present, and the quality of their delegations, were higher than ever. Fifty-three delegations, including thirty Prime Ministers or Foreign Ministers, were packed along the hot and crowded benches of the Salle de la Réformation. This was the Tenth Assembly; and in a few months would come the tenth anniversary of the official birth of the League. It was natural therefore that, before or after discussing the subjects in which their own country was particularly interested, the speakers should consider the general position of the League, comparing the expectations which had surrounded its earliest beginnings with the results of its first ten years of life and with its prospects for the future. One

after another, from Europe, from South America, from the Far East, they came forward to declare that, in spite of all disappointments, the League had justified the faith of its founders; that it had rendered great services and was destined to render greater ones yet; that experience of its actual working proved its continuance to be a necessity; that they and the peoples whom they represented believed in it and were determined to maintain it. In the light of subsequent events such declarations can hardly impress the reader as they impressed their hearers at the time. Yet the men who made them were responsible politicians who spoke with practical knowledge and authority. Either they meant what they said or (since formal speeches in the Assembly were addressed as much to the home public as to fellow delegates) they said what public opinion demanded that they should say. In estimating the position of the League in the world at that time, it makes little odds which of these explanations be adopted. In many cases, both were true.

Something, no doubt, had been lost of the bright hopes and the warm affections which had centred round the League in its early years. So also the hatred and ridicule then poured out upon it had dwindled to a thin trickle. Emotions of love and hate were no longer so readily aroused, now that it was firmly established as, at the least, an essential factor in the conduct of international affairs and a beginning of that centralized world organization of which none could deny the necessity. Particular acts of the Council or Assembly might inspire resentment or satisfaction: the stability of the institutions of the League was not thereby affected. The hands of the clock could no longer be turned back.

Looked at in its true light, in the light of the age and of the time-honoured ideas and practice of mankind, we are beholding an amazing thing—we are witnessing one of the great miracles of history. . . . The League may be a difficult scheme to work, but the significant thing is that the Great Powers have pledged themselves to work it, that they have agreed to renounce their free choice of action and bound themselves to what amounts in effect to a consultative parliament of the world. By the side of that great decision and the enormous step in advance which it means, any small failures to live up to the great decision, any small lapses on the part of the League, are trifling indeed. The great choice is made, the great renunciation is over, and mankind has, as it were at one bound and in the short space of ten years, jumped from the old order to the new. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The success of the Reparation Conference at The Hague was by no means the only source of the optimism of the Tenth Assembly. The Western Hemisphere also had made no small contribution. The Kellogg Pact had been ratified by the Senate. All observers agreed that American

<sup>1</sup> Smuts at Oxford, November 9th, 1929.

opinion had never been so well disposed to the League as it now was. The United States had, as in 1924, played a valuable, if unofficial, part in the Reparation agreement. She had broken the deadlock on naval disarmament and thereby, it was believed, had created a new possibility of progress along the whole line. She had reopened the question of accession to the Permanent Court, and it now seemed certain that the failure of three years before was about to be retrieved. All this had coincided with a welcome development in the attitude of the Latin American Members, shown not only by the increased interest and support which they were offering to the work of the League, but in the presence at the Assembly, for the first time for several years, of delegations from Peru, Bolivia, and Honduras.

The favourable conjuncture in Europe and America existed also in the East. The National government at Nanking was making courageous efforts to forge ahead through the vast difficulties of its internal and external problems. It was for the moment meeting with some sympathy and help from Japan; and both the great nations of the Far East were finding that membership of the League was a valuable factor in their relations with the West. The delegations of Persia and India—the latter led for the first time by an Indian—demanded that the Assembly should now begin to think seriously about the affairs of Asia.

Not long before the Assembly, there had been a change of government in London: the Conservative party had suffered an electoral defeat, and in June 1929 Ramsay MacDonald had formed his second administration, with Arthur Henderson as Foreign Secretary. MacDonald and Henderson came to Geneva at a moment which recalled in many respects their arrival five years before, when the Dawes plan had brought reconciliation between Britain and France and new prospects of agreement with Germany. Just as in 1924, they used the improvement in the European situation as a starting-point for inspiring fresh activity in the institutions of the League. Opening the general debate of the Assembly, Ramsay MacDonald gave a highly optimistic account of the Anglo-American negotiations on naval armaments and their hoped-for effect on the whole problem of disarmament. He then announced that Britain, after consultation with other members of the Commonwealth, intended to sign the Optional Clause of the Court Statute. Henderson followed a day or two later, emphasizing the fact that the signature of the Optional Clause marked a complete change of attitude on the part of the British government, which now believed that the acceptance of obligatory and comprehensive arbitration for the settlement of international disputes would be the greatest of all factors in providing security against war and would lead on towards the future Treaty of

Disarmament. Two days later, Willie Graham, President of the Board of Trade, appealed for co-operative action on the economic front, proposing in particular an international agreement on coal and a two years' tariff truce. Hitherto, it had happened only on rare occasions that two members of the same delegation spoke in the general debate. That the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Minister in charge of commercial questions should all three make substantial speeches showed, with an intentional touch of drama, that the new Labour government was resolved to prove itself a leader in international affairs. The contrast was striking between this and the negative and discouraging influence of Chamberlain and Cushendun. It was underlined by the restoration of Cecil to his time-honoured place in the delegation and as British representative in the Disarmament Commission.

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and India signed the Optional Clause at the same time as the British Foreign Secretary (September 19th, 1929). Canada, indeed, had long ago made up her mind to sign it, and had postponed doing so in deference to the arguments of the Foreign Office. All signed with a reservation that the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court should not extend to disputes between members of the British Commonwealth. South Africa was opposed to this reservation, but sacrificed her own view for the sake of imperial unity: the Irish Free State rejected it altogether, and the Irish delegate signed the Clause without it a day or two before the rest. The example set by the Commonwealth Members was followed by eight others, including Italy and France. Some twenty-five Members, including Germany, had already signed the Clause: so that when the new signatures had been ratified, the great majority of League Members had bound themselves to accept, within its limits, the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court. The principle of judicial settlement had thereby made an important advance.

Many were the plans for future development which were discussed by the Assembly. There was Briand's project for European union.<sup>1</sup> There was the British proposal for a Tariff Truce,<sup>1</sup> to be followed by a concerted effort to reduce tariff barriers all over the world. A second British suggestion was to amend the Covenant by including amongst its obligations that absolute renunciation of war other than in self-defence to which nearly all Members had committed themselves by adhering to the Kellogg Pact. Yet a third was to reform and stabilize the organization of the Secretariat. One favourite subject, especially among the Latin American and the Scandinavian delegations, was the codification

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 36.

of international law: much work had been done in this field during the last five years, and it was decided to hold a world conference at The Hague early in 1930, at which the progress made might be embodied in a series of general conventions. The French, who had taken the lead in promoting the successful economic conference of 1927, now asked that the League should organize a second conference, not, as the first had been, a meeting of experts and officials, but one in which each government should be fully and responsibly represented.

Even on disarmament, in the summer weather of the Tenth Assembly, there was less disagreement than usual; criticism of the postponements and compromises which had marked the recent work of the Preparatory Commission came more from Cecil than from the Germans and, having provoked a sharp response from the French, Italians, and Japanese and a good deal of support from many others, he concluded that nothing more could be done until the Anglo-American discussions were completed. Germany, which a year before had refused to accept the Assembly's resolution on the ground that it failed to fix a definite date for the Conference, voted this time for a text which was no more explicit than that of 1928. With reparation settled and the evacuation of the Rhineland promised, Stresemann did not wish for a fight on the question of armaments just yet. The presentiment of death was strong upon him; his pale and stricken look shocked all who saw him; his speech to the Assembly had twice to be postponed because of heart attacks. He had, indeed, less than a month to live. But his purposes were still clear and firm. His next aim was to recover control of the Saar Basin without waiting another five years and without the plebiscite which the Treaty had fixed for 1935. His last words in the Assembly were calm and philosophical, as indeed his Assembly speeches had always been. It seemed as though he found there the justification of his policy of treaty fulfilment and reconciliation, and a return to first principles, which were so necessary to such a mind as his, and which were blurred or hidden in the details of diplomatic negotiation and the unending battles with his opponents at home.

During the Tenth Assembly the foundation stone of the new Palace of the League was laid, to the accompaniment of speeches of the kind which is usual on such occasions.

The business of constructing a building adequate for the activities of the League—already far more extensive than had been foreseen and likely to be much increased in the future—had been held up by various changes and chances. The first modest schemes of the Secretariat having been discarded, a magnificent site was secured on the border of Lake

Geneva and a jury of architects from nine different countries was invited to organize an open competition for the best design. Meanwhile, in 1927, a gift from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. made it possible to include a great library in the new building: the lakeside site was now too small; the owner of the adjoining property refused to sell, and it became necessary to look elsewhere. The final decision was to erect the new Palace on a hillside some half a mile above the lake, in a park which had been left to the city many years before by a public-spirited citizen. The Ariana Park could not become the property of the League, but the League acquired its use in perpetuity, while Geneva, in exchange, was granted similar rights over the site on the shore of the lake.

The loss of time involved by these changes was disappointing but excusable. The next cause of delay was that the Jury of Architects found itself unable to choose a fully satisfactory plan from among the hundreds submitted. The best it could do was to award the first prize equally among nine competitors; nine second and nine third prizes were also given. But though twenty-seven designs were thus rewarded, the League was still without an accepted plan and it appeared hopeless to expect that a professional jury could solve the problem. This ridiculous situation was ended by appointing a committee of five members of the Assembly, with Adatci as their chairman, which induced five of the successful competitors—two Frenchmen, a Hungarian, an Italian, and a Swiss—to combine various features of their respective projects into a single whole and to act as a partnership in taking charge of the actual building. The scheme lent itself to criticism and satire: it was approved by the Assembly with resignation rather than enthusiasm. But no practicable alternative could be seen, and the foundation stone was laid on September 7th, 1929, just five years after the Assembly had first decided to build a hall for itself.

This event put a final end to all discussion as to whether the League should transfer its headquarters, as the Covenant allowed, from Geneva to some more important city. In truth, such a move had never seemed very probable. The candidature of Brussels had not been seriously considered since the day when Wilson refused to call the First Assembly in that capital. But that of Vienna had been put forward from time to time and had received a good deal of support from the press. Would not delegates and Secretariat be more aware, in Vienna, of the movement of the world's social and political tides, which scarcely stirred the surface of the Geneva backwater? Austria herself was more than willing, and it was known that she would gladly place at the disposal of the League all it required of her now superfluous palaces, including Schönbrunn itself. In France, Italy, and the countries of the Little Entente there was

some liking for the suggested move on the ground that it would help to stabilize the position of Austria, which they regarded as the keystone of Central Europe. Germany seemed to favour the establishment of the League in a German-speaking city, even though the chances of the Anschluss might thereby be reduced. In discussions on the budget, reference was sometimes made to the economies which would ensue from transferring the work from a country of high prices and high exchange to one where living was cheap and whose currency was usually at a discount. But no formal proposal in this sense was ever made, and, if made, it would have been quickly defeated. The fact that the League was now in practice making it certain that its headquarters would remain in Geneva did not, therefore, represent any real change in the situation.

The work of building was by no means free from troubles such as had delayed its commencement; and it was not until the spring of 1936 that the Secretariat moved into its new quarters. The architects, quarrelsome among themselves, were ready to unite in objecting to the suggestions of the Secretariat. Actual expenditure, as usual in such cases, was found to be a good deal above the estimates. But, in spite of every unfavourable circumstance, the result was infinitely more satisfactory than might have been expected. The Palais des Nations is the largest public building in Europe. It can claim no outstanding beauty or originality, but its proportions are dignified and harmonious. For the double purposes of a centre for international gatherings, both small and great, and of a permanent office for an international administrative staff, it has proved incomparably superior to anything that had previously existed.<sup>1</sup>

The cheerful atmosphere of the Tenth Assembly extended even to its discussions on the budget. It voted without reluctance a budget of 28 million francs—some £1,200,000 at that time—to cover the expenses in 1930 of the League, the International Labour Organization, and the Permanent Court. A year before a budget of 27 million francs had been passed only after a hard fight and much complaint on the part of some of the richest countries concerning the heavy contribution which they were forced to bear.

The Secretariat, however, now found itself under more serious attack than at any time since the First Assembly. The British government asked for an inquiry into its organization and into that of the International Labour Office, not in any critical spirit, but in order to improve the situation of the staff, which had still no adequate system of contracts, no regular promotion, and no pensions. The discussion on this motion

<sup>1</sup> See also Chapter 55.



provided the occasion for a small number of delegates, who, for one reason or another, objected to the actions or the membership of the Secretariat, to express their dissatisfaction and their grievances.

The growing prestige of the Council had naturally increased the power and prestige of the Secretariat, which in fact had established its reputation more rapidly and more solidly than any other organ of the League. The consequence was that the governments of the Member States began to take a more active interest in the question of appointments; and, in some cases, to press the Secretary-General to nominate persons whom they regarded as reliable, that is to say government officials, especially those belonging to their diplomatic services. This pressure was not easy to withstand, the more so since Italy and Germany, who were particularly inclined to apply it, could claim with truth that they had fewer nationals in the Secretariat than France or Britain and ought therefore to be called on to fill such vacancies as might arise. The old team could not last for ever: some of its brightest spirits—Monnet, Rappard, Madariaga, Nitobe, and Attolico—had left it for other work; and the result was that for five or six years a number of the highest posts in the Secretariat were filled by officials seconded from the diplomatic services of Italy, Germany, Japan, and Spain. There was also a certain influx, into its middle ranks, of officials from these and other countries.

The new arrivals were innocuous enough. Only one of them was a strong personality, the Japanese Under-Secretary-General, Yotaro Sugimura; and Sugimura was a sincere adherent of the League, who would have asked nothing better, had circumstances allowed, than to devote the rest of his days to its service. The others had little power, even if they had so desired, to resist the strong and proud tradition with which the Secretariat was already deeply imbued and which it never lost even under the far more difficult conditions of its last years. In actual working, therefore, the change was more apparent than real; but of this it was not easy to convince the outside world. The smaller powers in the Assembly had always looked on the Secretariat as being, with themselves, the defender of the international spirit, which, as they believed, the great powers were inclined to despise: and they doubted whether this role could be maintained by professional diplomatists, whose training and experience might naturally lead them to think primarily of the interests of their own governments, and who would look to those governments and not to the Secretary-General for future promotion. They saw in the new development a further sign that the great powers intended to guide and control the activities of the League. As for the great powers themselves, each insisted, not as a matter of principle but as a practical necessity, that one of its nationals should occupy a high-

ranking post. But while Britain, France, and Japan wished to maintain the existing system, Germany and Italy tried to diminish the powers of the Secretary-General by transferring the political direction of the Secretariat to a committee of its principal members. The consequence was that the structure and membership of the Secretariat became henceforth, what it had never been hitherto, a matter of obstinate controversy. From 1928 to 1932 there were prolonged debates on the subject in each Assembly; and, between the sessions, further discussion was carried on by special committees. Most of the time thus spent was sadly wasted: for the real difficulty arose from jealousy between the Members of the League, and had little to do with the efficiency of the service. And indeed each inquiry was forced to admit that the standard of efficiency could hardly be bettered.

Through these long debates the work went on with undiminished zeal; and the old leaders of the Secretariat, and the rank and file in general, continued to maintain their standard of loyalty to the League. If in truth there was, amongst its members, a certain dissatisfaction, a falling-away from the crusading energy of its early days, this could not be cured by material improvement or by administrative changes. It was the natural result of political stabilization. The stimulus of fighting for the life of the League, the lesser but still powerful stimulus of fighting against opposition, had gradually disappeared. Time and custom had dimmed the joy in being part of a new and famous institution. The national services of the League Members were no longer outsiders and strangers; they were now familiar with the organization and working of the League; friendly indeed and intimate with the international service, but no longer needing its advice, and ready to resent any intervention or initiative on its part which did not happen to fit with their immediate purposes. The members of the Secretariat were conscious that, as some Assembly delegates alleged, they had lost virtue as keepers of the League's conscience; but that this, if due in part to the introduction among them of diplomatic officials, was due still more to the growing strength and activity of the chief delegations to the Council and Assembly. And how could they object to such a development? Was it not the inevitable consequence of that growth in the importance of the League which had been, and still was, the principal object of their own exertions?

In any case, the outcome of these repeated debates, and vigorous, if often contradictory, attacks, was to prove in no uncertain manner that the Members of the League in general approved the record of the Secretariat and did not desire to make any radical changes. The malcontents were heard with courtesy: but when votes were taken, their

proposals were rejected by overwhelming majorities. The long battle over what was known as the Higher Direction ended in a compromise which involved little change in the existing situation, and which was only to come into force after Drummond's resignation. The chief result on the material side was the establishment—long overdue—of an adequate pension scheme for the staff of the Secretariat, the International Labour Office, and the Permanent Court.

Amongst the critics in the Assembly the most outspoken and persistent was C. J. Hambro, the leader of the Conservative party in Norway. In 1920, Hambro had voted against Norwegian membership of the League; but, from the time when he became a regular delegate to the Assembly, he constituted himself a champion of the small powers against the great, of the Assembly against the Council, and of the principle that the League should be a political rather than a diplomatic institution.

Hambro had shocked Austen Chamberlain in 1927 by protesting against the increasing number of professional diplomatists amongst the delegates to the Eighth Assembly. In 1928 he introduced a proposal to the effect that the travelling expenses of three delegates to the Assembly from each country should be paid by the League, in order to encourage the more distant Members to send ministers or officials from home instead of their diplomatic representatives in Europe. This ingenious suggestion might, if accepted, have produced in the course of time benefits out of all proportion to its cost. It was clearly to the advantage of the League that its meetings should be attended by delegates who came from their respective capitals for that purpose and returned there when the session was over. Extended, as it would have had to be, to the annual conference of the International Labour Organization, Hambro's scheme would have brought each year to Geneva five or six responsible politicians or officials whose knowledge of international work would otherwise be derived only from the press or from diplomatic dispatches. It would have much enhanced the role of the Assembly as a meeting-place of men from different countries and different continents; and in a few years there would have been, even in the distant capitals, a powerful group of persons who understood the nature of the League and were ready to support its objects. Men who had been to Geneva and seen the new international institutions at work at close quarters rarely failed to become convinced adherents of the League. But the proposal was killed by the representatives of the very countries which had most to gain from its adoption. The Latin American delegates, most of whom were resident in Europe, had no desire to find their places

in the Assembly taken by new arrivals from home. They could not openly reject the plan, but they opposed it behind the scenes: and it could not be expected that the European Members would insist against the will of their colleagues from overseas.

The seed sown in 1928 germinated twenty years later, when the General Assembly of the United Nations wisely decided that in future years the travelling expenses of delegates should be paid from the common budget.

## ECONOMIC AFFAIRS: THE GREAT DEPRESSION

*League attitude towards economic problems—The World Economic Conference of 1927—The Great Depression and its effects on League affairs—Tariff truce proposed—Briand's plan for a United States of Europe*

(MAY 1927—JANUARY 1931)

IT is often said that the Peace Conference of Paris made a fatal mistake in concentrating its attention on the ethnical, strategical, and political considerations which are the traditional field of diplomacy, while neglecting the economic and financial consequences of its decisions. No such charge could be brought against the League. From the earliest days, the laconic authority given by Article 23 of the Covenant had been utilized for the establishment of economic, financial, and social organizations on a scale which had not been foreseen when the Article was drafted; and rarely, if ever, did the Council give its verdict on any political question without availing itself beforehand of the expert advice thus ready to its hand. In drawing the Upper Silesian boundary the Council provided for elaborate arrangements to ensure the economic prosperity of the frontier regions on both sides of the line, and in its many frontier decisions of less importance it was always mindful of the repercussions of its action on the trade or communications of the areas concerned. From first to last the organs of the League were vividly aware of the importance of economic and financial problems both in themselves and in their effect on the maintenance of world peace.

Unhappily, a vast sector of the field lay outside the action, the competence, and even the influence of the League, which in this, as in many other spheres, was vitally affected by events which it was not permitted to control. Reparation and inter-Allied debts were formally and completely excluded from its consideration. The Financial Committee, the Economic Committee, the Secretariat, were well aware of the errors which were being committed in regard to these questions. But however clearly they saw each fault or weakness, they might never say 'Thou ailest here, and here', still less propose a remedy. They might, as at the Brussels Conference of 1920, prescribe the general principles of financial policy which governments, in their own interests, would be wise to

follow. They might lay a healing hand upon some particular wound, in Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, or Greece: but always on the condition, and in the knowledge, that they must make no attempt to trespass upon the forbidden ground, or intervene in the settlement of the problems as a whole.

Inextricably involved with these financial complications were the questions of trade policy—of tariffs, preferences, prohibitions, subsidies, dumping, of production and prices, of access to raw materials. In this field also the governments of many Member States watched with a jealous eye the least tendency on the part of the League to limit their freedom of action, and reacted against it in no uncertain manner. But though, in such questions, the League had no power to take decisions, or to bring direct pressure to bear upon individual governments, its right of discussion and recommendation could not be denied. It could and did, through Assembly debates, through the reports and proposals of the Economic Committee and other organs, and through the holding of a succession of conferences on special subjects, develop something like a general doctrine and exercise effective influence on the economic policy of many States. The high-water-mark of its achievements in this direction was touched by the Economic Conference of 1927 and by the steps taken during the next three years to put into effect the principles which that Conference had unanimously approved. By such means, the Economic Committee, or the Second Committee of the Assembly, came as close as they could possibly venture to the sacred limit of national sovereignty, and tried even to press the limit a little further back.

All these efforts were doomed to be swept away in the overwhelming disaster of the great depression which began in the United States at the end of 1929. It may now be useless to discuss whether that disaster could have been averted by greater determination on the part of the League or better understanding, on the part of individual States, of the effect of their national policies upon the rest of the world. But one general conclusion seems unavoidable and undeniable. Whatever the remedies ought to have been, they could never have been applied except through an international organ of the highest rank and standing, both technically and politically. The Council, composed of Foreign Ministers or deputies acting on the instructions of Foreign Ministers, could have no such authority in the economic field. Yet it was not until the spring of 1930 that, for the first time, a League conference on commercial policy was attended by the responsible Ministers; and it was not until just before the outbreak of the Second World War that formal plans were made for the creation of an economic authority which should be equal in standing with the Council and should exercise direct control

over the economic and social action of the League. While, therefore, it cannot be said that the League at any time neglected or underestimated the importance of this section of international relations, it did underestimate the importance of creating adequate institutions to deal with it; and did not, until too late, attempt to establish a permanent organ such as might have become a central world authority in economic and financial affairs.

During the League's first years, the violent fluctuations of many national currencies had made it necessary to concentrate above all on questions of finance and exchange. But by the end of 1924 the currency situation had become sufficiently stable to make it natural and possible to enter on the deeper problems of economic policy; and the Assembly of 1925 resolved that the time had come to hold a general Economic Conference. The next eighteen months were spent in preparation on an extensive scale, including the making of a report by each country, giving full details of its own position and its special needs; and the first World Economic Conference was held in May 1927—one of four major international conferences<sup>1</sup> convened by the League in that year. It was attended by experts from fifty countries, including the United States and Russia. All were designated by their governments, and most were high officials in their respective national services. But they spoke and voted in their personal capacity. By this device the Conference avoided, on the one hand, the danger of being impractical and academic, since its members knew all about the economic policy of their own governments and were not likely to support or accept proposals which were contrary thereto; and, on the other hand, that of being paralysed by excessive caution, since their governments were not committed by whatever conclusions they might reach, and they therefore were not obliged to refer to the administration at home on each point that arose.

Since the Conference did not aim at direct action, there was no need for unanimity on the text of its resolutions; but, in point of fact, a very high measure of agreement was found to exist. The vast majority of the experts present declared that the general level of prosperity and trade was far below the actual productive capacity of the world; that this was particularly true of Europe, but that the reduction of Europe's purchasing power was holding back the other continents; that this grave state of affairs was due to the war, not so much on account of direct waste and destruction (now, on a world view, more than replaced), as of

<sup>1</sup> The others were: the Third General Conference on Communications and Transit (August 1927); the International Press Conference (August 1927); and the Conference on Import and Export Prohibitions, referred to below (October 1927).

industrial and commercial dislocations which had not yet been corrected; and that the first necessity was to clear away the mass of obstacles to international trade which had grown up on the frontiers of the European States, especially those which had become independent as a result of the Treaties of Peace. Above all, the general tendency to increase tariffs must be stopped, and, if possible, reversed.

The final report of the Conference, which contained, first, a survey of the world's economic situation, and, secondly, a series of suggestions for improving it, formed, like that of the Financial Conference of 1920, an authoritative statement of orthodox economic doctrine and its application to the existing conditions of commerce, industry, and agriculture. It was adopted by a unanimous vote: even the Soviet delegates were in favour of some sections and abstained from voting against the rest. It was received with acclaim by governments, by leaders in commerce and industry, and also by the spokesmen of organized labour. Twenty-nine countries announced their willingness to join in collective action for carrying out its recommendations. Strong pledges of support came from the International Chamber of Commerce. The future course of the economic work of the League now seemed clearly marked out: to help and encourage in every way the translation into administrative action of the Conference report. To cope with this task, the Economic Committee was enlarged and strengthened by the addition of an American member. A new and much more numerous body, the Economic Consultative Committee, was also set up, with members representing not only government policy but also labour, industrial, and commercial interests. This body was indeed a replica, on a small scale, of the Conference itself, and the Secretariat foresaw the day when its annual meetings would be the guide and inspiration of economic policy throughout the world.

The immediate practical results included the important Franco-German Commercial Treaty of 1927 and a considerable number of other treaties between individual countries for reciprocal tariff reductions. Wider measures also, undertaken in order to follow up the report, met at first with unexpected success. In October of the same year a further Conference was called for the purpose of getting rid of the complicated system of restrictions and prohibitions on imports and exports, which constituted one of the worst barriers to international trade. This was a strictly official meeting, since its object was not to discuss principles but to draw up a formal treaty. The debates were long and obstinate; but in spite of the immense difficulties of the subject, they ended in agreement; and by July 1928 nearly thirty States had signed a Convention which (with minor reservations) bound them to abolish all prohibi-



tions and restrictions on both exports and imports, and to refrain from imposing them in the future.

Economic nationalism, however, is a stubborn growth, well able to resist even the impressive unanimity of so many eminent authorities. Two years after the Conference closed, there was evidence that the impulse towards the breaking-down of tariff barriers had already spent itself. Reduction in some countries was balanced by increases elsewhere. In Europe the forces making for higher protection had been checked, if not reversed; but a new and formidable wave of protectionism was gathering in the United States.

In these circumstances, the Assembly of 1929 sought to put new life into the effort to realize the recommendations of the Conference. The British delegation, representing a Labour government which had recently come into power and was anxious both to show its support for the League and to reduce unemployment at home, proposed that, in the first place, all States should agree not to increase their tariffs during the next two years; and that, in that period of truce, a concerted endeavour should be made to carry out the whole programme of reforms which the experts had drawn up. This proposal was accepted 'in principle'—a phrase of ill-omen; it was agreed that it should be put into formal shape by the Economic Committee and submitted, as soon as possible, to a general conference. At this same Assembly Briand first put forward his scheme for a United States of Europe. Briand's own vision of a federated Europe was political rather than economic: to reduce the danger of war was his overriding aim. But other European delegations, led by Stresemann, welcomed the idea above all as opening new doors to economic salvation. Was not Europe, for all its resources of intelligence and experience, inhibited by its division into small competing units from achieving the material prosperity which modern science had brought within the reach of all mankind?

Each of the two projects was put forward without foreknowledge of the economic storm which was about to break, and which was destined to turn all the hopes of the Tenth Assembly to dust and ashes.

It would be quite outside the scope of this book to enumerate the causes, or trace the history, of the Great Depression. Since the Covenant gave no definite powers or responsibilities to the League in economic affairs; since reparation and inter-Allied debts were expressly excluded from its action; and since the Member States had jealously resisted all attempts to extend its competence; the Council and the Assembly were hardly more than spectators of a series of catastrophic events. It could not be affirmed that, whatever powers they might have in theory

possessed, they would have been able, in fact, to unite in carrying out measures radical enough to prevent these disasters. But at least it was true that the crisis was not of its nature outside the scope of human control, and that nothing short of concerted international action could have saved the situation.

The influence of the depression began to make itself felt, so far as the League was concerned, in two different ways. Its direct and immediate consequence was to tear down the structure of economic co-operation which was gradually being built up. Its indirect consequence was to poison and embitter relations between Germany and France, Italy and France, and, in general, between the so-called dissatisfied powers on the one hand and the satisfied on the other; to encourage the worst forms of nationalist and bellicose ambition in Germany, Japan, and Italy; to weaken the cohesion, and confuse the purposes, of the peace-loving States. This second consequence also began to manifest itself with great rapidity, but there was an interval of about a year before its effects were seen in the actual working of the League. From then on they were traceable in unbroken sequence, as international relations grew steadily more unstable.

The first casualty in the economic field was a draft Convention on the Treatment of Foreigners. This measure aimed at carrying out one of the proposals of the Economic Conference by securing for foreigners, once admitted to any country, equality of treatment as regards the exercise of any business or profession, taxation, property rights, freedom of travel, and so on. In accordance with the usual practice, the draft convention was first submitted to all the governments, and was only put before a formal diplomatic conference in November 1929, when there seemed a good prospect that it would be quickly and widely accepted. But when it came to the point, a number of European States rejected one after another the more liberal proposals of the draft, until those who already gave equal rights to foreigners within their boundaries declared that they were now being asked to sign an instrument which was a backward, and not a forward, step. The Conference adjourned, not to meet again.

The second and greater casualty was the Convention for the Abolition of Import and Export Prohibitions and Restrictions. This Convention, which embodied some of the most important recommendations of the Conference of 1927, had been regarded as a most unexpected and hopeful achievement. But, though signed by twenty-nine States and ratified by seventeen of these, it never received the eighteenth ratification which was needed to bring it into full operation. Several States, including Germany, had made their ratification conditional on that of Poland; and this act was never forthcoming. A number of signatories, including

Britain and the United States, did, nevertheless, bring the Convention into force between themselves, as from January 1st, 1930, anticipating that the final steps would be taken in due course; but their expectations were disappointed, and they in turn decided to free themselves from obligations which the rest refused.

The third and greatest casualty was the Tariff Truce. The suggestion made at the Assembly by the British delegation was put into the form of a draft agreement and submitted to a conference which met in March 1930. The purpose was not merely to stabilize existing tariffs but rather to keep the low-tariff countries from increasing their rates and lead those with higher tariffs to make reductions. The attempt was a complete failure. In Washington the Hawley-Smoot tariff bill, raising the tariff walls to unprecedented heights, was on its way through Congress: consequently the United States did not participate in the conference, and its example was followed by practically all the non-European countries. This was a fatal handicap, the more so since, on the most-favoured-nation principle, any concessions agreed upon by those which did attend would have had to be accorded equally to non-participants who were offering nothing in return. But even amongst the European countries there was no hope at that time of such an agreement as the British government was seeking to promote. All the predominantly agricultural States of Eastern Europe were in grave difficulty owing to the heavy fall in the price of cereals and their inability to find a market for their surplus production: they were determined to keep down their imports of whatever nature to the minimum, and hence much more inclined to raise duties than to lower them. France and Germany arrived at similar conclusions for very different reasons. The final result was no more than an agreement to use the machinery of the League in order to get rid of a certain number of minor inconveniences; it is possible that some increases in tariffs which would otherwise have occurred were renounced or postponed; but reduction or even stabilization were as far off as ever.

These meetings were enough to show that the whole movement towards a freer flow of international trade had now been actually reversed. Expert opinion, without distinction of nationality, had unanimously affirmed in 1927 that 'the chief impediment to the growth of the world's prosperity was to be found in its tariff policies'.<sup>1</sup> It had formulated what can properly be called a League policy on this question, namely, that tariffs should be stable, uniform, and as low as possible. But in one country after another the needs and pressures of day-to-day affairs led to decisions which were directly contrary to these principles.

<sup>1</sup> Sir A. Salter, *Recovery; the Second Effort*, rev. ed. (London, Bell, 1933), p. 172.

The economic organs of the League poured out warnings and exhortation. But their advice, being of necessity addressed to the world in general and not to any individual States, appeared more theoretical than it really was, and could easily be ignored. In the years before the depression its effects, though by no means negligible, had fallen far short of what might reasonably have been expected considering the unanimity and authority of the source from which it came. Now, when some central guidance was more than ever needed, each State was looking desperately to its own defences and few were willing to listen to the voice of the international institutions.

No skill or power was available to hold back the darkening clouds of distress, poverty, and unemployment which were spreading over the greater part of the world. And the coming storm not only swept aside the gradual and partial action of the League in the economic sphere, but also began with almost equal swiftness to undermine the slow process of rebuilding the political stability of Europe.

The idea of a United States of Europe did not originate with Briand, and did not completely lose its vital force when his proposals were one by one abandoned and forgotten. Theoretically, indeed, the plan might be considered as having only an indirect connexion with the history of the League. Its more enthusiastic adherents always believed that its success depended on the establishment of new institutions, co-operating with those of the League, but independent of them in all essential respects. Briand's first moves suggested that he himself shared their view. But the European States thought otherwise; and, to the limited extent to which the project was translated into action, this took place entirely within the framework of the League. Until revived by Churchill after the Second World War, it appeared in history solely as a result of Briand's advocacy and of the subsequent decisions of the Assembly.

Officially, Briand proceeded by slow and cautious steps. It was no secret that he intended to launch his scheme on the occasion of the Tenth Assembly. In private conversation, and in talks with journalists, he let it be seen that it was very near to his heart, and that he hoped to make its realization the chief purpose of his remaining years. In the Assembly itself he touched no more than the surface of the question. 'With misgiving and anxiety', he suggested that some sort of a federal link ought to be established between the States of Europe, and invited the European delegates to hold a meeting amongst themselves in order to give some preliminary consideration to the idea. When the meeting took place (September 9th, 1929), he asked no more than that each delegation should promise to reflect on the question before the next

Assembly, and that he himself should meanwhile be entrusted with the task of formulating a plan, of inviting the governments of the twenty-seven European Members of the League to give their views thereon, and of reporting the result to a similar meeting in the following year. All agreed to this: and almost all preferred to wait for the promised plan before committing themselves further. Stresemann alone was clear and positive. It was his last speech in Geneva, which at the end of his life seemed to be the home of his spiritual peace. Germany, he said, was quite prepared to discuss the idea, especially from an economic point of view. A European Customs Union, European stamps, a European coinage—these were needful if Europe was to hold her place with the rest of the world. Every great conception seemed mad at first: but the union of Europe now was no more impossible or romantic than the union of Germany had seemed a few decades since.

It was not until six months later, in May 1930, that a memorandum embodying the plan was distributed from Paris to the other European capitals. In the meantime, an ominous change had spread across that troubled continent. The hope and confidence of the autumn had faded. Distress and unemployment were increasing and men's minds were filled with anxiety for their future. National hatred, jealousy, and suspicion were overlaying the slow growth of appeasement. Briand's project had been promised to Europe, when prospects looked hopeful, as the personal contribution of the man whom the world looked upon as the foremost champion of reconciliation and peace. It came out, under a darkening sky, touched by the unmistakable hand of the Quai d'Orsay. Much of Briand still remained, words that look strange in a diplomatic document. 'This is the decisive hour, in which Europe, if she will listen, can still be the mistress of her own destiny.' There were valuable suggestions of consultation for the economic benefit of all. But the central point of the memorandum was the assertion that no measures for economic improvement could be effective until political security had been achieved. Europe must first build up her organic structure, preferably by a series of pacts of guarantee on the Locarno model, which could then be united in a single common system: only then could any proposals for economic solidarity be usefully considered.

Good reasons could be put forward to justify this thesis—the same reasons, in fact, which supported the French demand for more security before they could reduce their armaments. But the parallel was uncomfortably close. It was France, the most heavily armed power, which demanded security before disarmament: it was France, economically and financially the strongest power in Europe, which demanded security before economic co-operation. The memorandum read as

though Briand's plan, conceived for the equal advantage of all, had been twisted to serve the special purposes of French policy; and the impression thus created did much to weaken the constructive impulses which his action at the Tenth Assembly had aroused. The German reply raised the questions of disarmament, of treaty revision and equality of rights, and of the protection of minorities. Italy, too, which had been hostile from the beginning, declared that any European union on the political plane must include disarmament first and foremost, and must finally wipe out the division into victors and vanquished.

The French memorandum had contemplated the creation of a European Conference, in which all European Members of the League should meet at regular intervals: of a permanent political committee, restricted in membership, as an executive organ; and of a small secretariat. Nearly every government in its comments on the memorandum emphasized that above all nothing must be done which could weaken the effectiveness and authority of the League. Many of them criticized the parallelism between the French proposal and the structure of the League; would not such institutions either take over a part of the powers of the Assembly, Council, and Secretariat, or else find themselves with no real function to perform? The general preference was for a single conference or committee, including all the adhering States, organized as a part of the machinery of the League and served by the League Secretariat. It was also suggested by Germany and Italy that Russia and Turkey, though not Members of the League, should be invited to join the new European institution.

These suggestions indicated plainly enough the political alignment of Europe in the summer of 1930. Germany, freed from Allied occupation, passed on to her next demand, equality of armaments. With Stresemann gone, her tones were already beginning to reflect the growing influence of the parties of nationalism and militarism, led by Hugenberg and Hitler. Italy, playing her seesaw diplomatic game with a skill worthy of a better cause, was in open dispute with France over naval armaments, and was building up a group of satellites—Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria—in rivalry to the Francophil group of the Little Entente. It suited her therefore to adopt the German thesis—parity of armaments and revision of the Peace Treaties. Henceforth the Italian representatives in Geneva were usually to be found in the same camp with Curtius and Bernstorff. Russia was still consistently voting with Germany in the Preparatory Commission, and in general was at this time on better terms with Italy than with any great power except Germany.

The British government reserved its attitude. It was in fact unfavourable to the idea of European Union, not wishing to see a new organi-

zation grow up side by side with the League, nor to find itself pulled into courses which other members of the Commonwealth might regard with indifference or even dislike. Further, the wording of the French memorandum had revived the fear that the plan might prove to be a red herring drawn across the path of disarmament: and disarmament, as Henderson proclaimed in the first days of the Assembly, was now the primary aim of his government in the international field.

The climate of the Eleventh Assembly was very different from that of a year before. Briand himself had evidently given up most of his earlier hopes. The great majority of the European delegations stood firmly for essential changes in the French proposal. As regards the constitution of the union, they would accept it only in the form of a subordinate body attached to the League. As regards its purposes, they insisted that it should be primarily concerned with the economic organization of Europe, and not with the political problems of security. There was a moment when Briand was on the point of abandoning the project altogether. If he had done so, it would not have been because of these modifications of his plan: they were not unreasonable in the circumstances, and he knew that a responsible statesman must often be ready to accept compromises which arouse the scorn of political theorists and party journalists. But he might well have felt that his real object, the building of a united Europe, had no chance of success at that moment. However, he decided to take what he could get. The whole question was referred to the Assembly and thus was brought for the first time within the constitutional orbit of the League. It formed the main subject of discussion in the general debate; and since the European Members had already stated their views, interest centred chiefly on the reactions of those from other continents. The Latin American delegations gave encouragement to the plan. They pointed out that the Pan American Union possessed, at least in theory, no political functions, and did not in any sense represent a combination against other continents. If the European Union followed this model, it could only be welcomed by the rest of the world. The Asiatic delegations, on the other hand, were far from enthusiastic; and the same was true of those from the overseas members of the British Commonwealth. Had anyone except Briand been the champion of the enterprise, it is likely that they would have shown some positive objection, the substance whereof would have been that Europe was already enjoying more than her share of the benefits of international collaboration, and that the new plan was likely to perpetuate this undesirable state of affairs.

In the end the Assembly agreed that the matter should be further pursued by a Commission which adopted in due course the modest

name of Commission of Inquiry for European Union. It was to be a League Commission composed of all the European Members: but it was authorized to associate with its work, if it so desired, both European non-Members and non-European States whether Members or not. After a formal meeting in September, in which it elected Briand as Chairman and Drummond as Secretary, it held its first serious session in January 1931. At this session the Commission decided to concentrate on studying the economic crisis and its effects on Europe; and it also decided that Russia and Turkey should be invited to participate. The invitation to Russia was resisted by France and her friends, as also by Switzerland; and was carried only through the support given to Germany and Italy by Arthur Henderson on behalf of Britain.

The subsequent activities of the Commission were, for practical purposes, merged in the general work of the League for economic co-operation, and need no separate description. On the political side there remained this one important achievement, to have brought Russia and Turkey into closer relations with the League and through the League with Western Europe.



## THE REVIVAL OF NATIONALISM

*A quiet winter—Nationalism in German elections—New fears of war—British call for disarmament—Last meeting of the Preparatory Commission—Preparations for the Conference—The Armaments truce—Popular demand for disarmament and reactions against it*

(OCTOBER 1929—SEPTEMBER 1931)

IN spite of the economic setbacks of that autumn and winter, the Tenth Assembly was followed by a period of unusual quiet. It was generally believed that prosperity would return with the spring: and indeed a temporary improvement did then occur, though the downward movement was soon resumed. There was no interruption or relaxation in the activities of the special agencies of the League; on the contrary, they had more work on their hands than ever, and in this work the countries of Asia and America were co-operating more fully than in the past. But League action on disarmament was brought to a standstill by the separate negotiations between the naval powers; while the meetings of the Council were singularly devoid of incident. They were also both fewer and shorter than at any other time before or since: for it had been decided to reduce the number of regular sessions, and to hold them in January, May, and September of each year instead of in March, June, September, and December. This change had for years been advocated by Austen Chamberlain, but he had not been able to overcome the opposition of the smaller powers. Its adoption in the autumn of 1929 was a further sign of the period of quiet through which the League was passing; and the sessions of January and May 1930 were each concluded in four days, whereas those held at shorter intervals had lasted for a week or more. The reason was simply the absence of any contentious dispute. The agenda was not less full, nor even less important, than usual: but it consisted of subjects on which thorough preparation had been made, by the various Commissions and by the Secretariat, and which the Council, in consequence, could settle in a morning or afternoon. Under these conditions, its proceedings were speedy and harmonious.

The departure of Chamberlain had been a great loss; but Arthur Henderson brought other and not less valuable gifts. He cared little for details, but much for the general result, and for the maintenance of the spirit and efficacy of the Council. He possessed a long experience of

international meetings, and an almost instinctive negotiating sense, which told him when to speak and when to keep silent, when to concede a point and when to press it with language that was sometimes un-diplomatic but never uncontrolled. Warm-hearted, friendly, and simple in all his ways, he enjoyed the work and life of Geneva, and was never in a hurry to leave. Above all, he was an enthusiastic supporter of the League, and believed that the future of Britain and the world depended on its success.

At Henderson's first Council session in September 1929, Stresemann was already very ill, and could take part in few meetings. Early in October he died, an incalculable misfortune for Germany, since she lost in him the one leader who not only saw the danger of the nationalist propaganda but also could hold back the rising tide with indomitable will and pugnacity. Stresemann's successor at the Wilhelmstrasse and the Council was Dr Curtius, his friend and a member of his party, who doubtless intended to maintain his policy, but, as events were to show, did not possess the strength to do so. Curtius knew well that his office and even his life were perpetually in danger. It was a natural but a perilous expedient to ease the strain at home by adopting an aggressive tone towards other States, and to attribute to the victors all the difficulties and miseries of Germany.

Another newcomer to the Council was Dino Grandi, an enigmatic figure who was to play a considerable role in the affairs of the League and of Europe for the next nine years. On the surface the Council appeared to gain in authority and energy from the change. Scialoja, with all his experience and wisdom, was a tired and disappointed man, who had long ceased to exercise any real influence in Rome. Grandi had recently been elevated to the rank of Foreign Minister; for years he had been Under-Secretary, Mussolini remaining the titular head of this as of most other departments of State. He was still a young man, agreeable, vivacious, and apparently frank. He took a lively part in the proceedings, speaking with eloquence the language of disarmament, co-operation, and peace; and many in Geneva believed in his sincerity. But, whatever his opinions may have been, he was the obedient servant of the Duce, and could hardly have doubted that his master's dearest dreams were of military glory and territorial conquest. However, Italy at this time professed herself firmly attached to the methods and purposes of the League, and Grandi was convincing enough as the spokesman of such a policy.

The settlement of reparation and the evacuation of the Rhineland did not produce the hoped-for improvement in Franco-German rela-

tions. On the contrary, the Nationalists and the Nazis seized the occasion to intensify their attacks against the Versailles Treaty, against France, and, above all, against Poland. Three months after the withdrawal, in June 1930, of the last Allied soldiers from German soil, a new Reichstag had to be elected; and the weeks which preceded the vote were filled with a campaign whose bitterness was a shock to Europe. The press of the extreme parties had long shaken off the restraints of decency: and Nazis and Communists, whose mutual hostility did not stop at violence and even murder, agreed in their hatred and contempt for the more moderate parties. Even among these, the election campaign was the sign for a startling outbreak of nationalism. The electorate was assured by all parties that the difficulties of the time were solely due to the injustices of the Treaty. The loss of Upper Silesia and other eastern territories, the burden of reparation, were made responsible for the crisis in agriculture and the jump in unemployment. Germany was represented as a disarmed State surrounded by heavily armed neighbours, who had promised to reduce their own armaments and were now breaking their word in order to keep her for ever in insecurity and inferiority. Meetings and demonstrations were organized in the evacuated Rhineland and along the Polish frontier. The call for equality, translated by the official spokesmen of Germany in the Assembly and the Preparatory Commission into demands that others should reduce their armaments, was in Germany itself unmistakably aimed at the restoration of the powers and glories of the German army. It was not only unpopular but physically dangerous to be suspected of pacifism or liberalism, or to admit the least possibility that Germany might have contributed in part to her own misfortunes. In the orgy of xenophobia and militarism one party consistently outbid the rest; and in September the Nazis emerged as the second strongest group in the new Reichstag. Brüning, the courageous leader of the Catholic Centre party, who had recently accepted the onerous function of Chancellor, could still contrive a majority, and Curtius remained in office. But parliamentary government in Germany had received a heavy blow.

Fascism and Nazism already recognized each other as natural affinities; the Duce's self-confidence was heightened by the advance of Hitler. He had denied, in early days, that Fascism was an article of export: now he boasted that, on the contrary, the Fascist doctrines were replacing, all over Europe, the outworn ideas of democracy and liberalism. With great skill and insight he put himself at the head of all those who demanded the revision of the Peace Treaties—thus winning the attachment of Germany and her former allies, and much sympathy also in the neutral countries, the members of the British Commonwealth and the

United States. He claimed also to be in favour of disarmament, while labouring, with zealous perseverance, at the difficult task of militarizing the Italian people.

The effect of all this in France was to reinforce that irreconcilable section of opinion which believed that Germany was incurably militaristic and aggressive, that she could be restrained only by a policy of unrelenting severity, that Briand's hopes of European reconciliation were a pacifist dream, and that the only security for France was in her arms and her allies. Nationalism on one side of the frontier, as always, strengthened the nationalists on the other: however genuine the hatred of each for the other, Chauvinist parties are each other's best election agents; and Briand was fighting a losing battle at home, while becoming more and more anxious about developments in Germany. The result was a stiffening of the French attitude on disarmament and an intensification of their incessant demand for security first. They had for years been alarmed by the growth of the Stahlhelm and other organizations to whom patriotism was synonymous with revenge. Stresemann had always refused to take these seriously, declaring that they were simply manifestations of the traditional German passion for marching about in uniform, and could only become a danger if the difference between the military position of Germany and that of her neighbours was too wide and lasted too long. It is arguable that Stresemann's view would have been justified by events if his policy of fulfilment had met with a more responsive attitude from the French side, and if he could have been helped to prove to his countrymen that he was leading them on the right path—the path which could bring Germany back not to hegemony and vengeance but to equality and self-respect. In any case, the private armies had now become a factor which the French were bound to take into account. The professional army which had been forced on Germany by the Peace Treaty, against her will and against French advice, had given her 100,000 soldiers with long service, hand-picked by the Reichswehr staff from the millions of eligible recruits, steeped in the powerful tradition of the most famous of armies, and capable of providing at a moment's notice the officers and N.C.O.s for a force ten times as great. The sudden uprush of militarism and hatred which now inspired the Stahlhelm, the Nazi Storm battalions, and various other 'military sport' organizations, meant that two million men were ready to take the place of the conscripts whom the Republican government had not been allowed to train—men who hated the Republic and its democratic ideals as much as they hated the victorious Allies. If ever their leaders were to gain power, to control the Reichswehr Ministry, and thus to combine the potentialities of the long-service professional army with

those of the militarist volunteers, the disarmament of Germany would, so far as man-power was concerned, have totally ceased to exist.

The economic crisis was filling the ranks of the private armies, intensifying the resentment and despair of the millions of young men in Germany and elsewhere who saw no prospect of employment, sharpening the desire of the defeated for revenge and the determination of the victors to maintain a settlement which had cost so dear. Europe in the autumn of 1930 was filled with talk of the danger of war. Cautious and experienced Foreign Ministers, Hymans of Belgium, Beelaerts of Holland, and others, warned the Assembly in September that fear and anxiety were real and widespread, and that such fears were in themselves dangerous things. Litvinov in the Preparatory Commission two months later described the situation in still darker colours, declaring that every American visitor to Europe that year had gone back convinced that a new European war was inevitable and imminent.

In these circumstances the British government tried once again to bring disarmament on to the centre of the stage. Henderson, at the beginning of the Assembly of 1930, after a polite and half-hearted reference to Briand's European plan, turned with passionate earnestness to the question of armaments. He spoke of the fresh efforts which had been made to ensure security—the Kellogg Pact, the new British attitude towards arbitration, the General Act and the Treaty of Financial Assistance. There was no corresponding achievement in regard to disarmament; and British ratification of the two latter instruments, and of any other engagements of a similar kind in future, would be made conditional on the coming into force of a Disarmament Convention. Some progress had been made on the naval side, but this by itself was nothing—'unless naval disarmament can be made general, unless it can be completed by the reduction and limitation of land and air forces, the peace treaties will not have been executed, the Covenant will remain unfulfilled, and the peace of Europe and of the world will not be safe'. Sir Robert Borden for Canada, General Hertzog for South Africa, and other statesmen from the Dominions followed Henderson in declaring that without disarmament there was little hope for security or peace. Their speeches amounted to little less than a demonstration of support for the German thesis that France had failed to carry out the pledges of reduction contained in the Peace Treaties and in the Covenant. Without doubt the general opinion in Britain, and indeed all over the world except in the countries concerned, was that France and her allies had never really intended to reduce their armaments, and that their insistence on security first had been only an excuse for postponing the issue. Hence there was sympathy with German complaints, and no strong

reaction even when these took the form of warnings (such warnings might equally be called threats) that, if the armed powers did not accept reduction, Germany would cease to consider herself bound by the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles.

France, with André Tardieu as Prime Minister, and with the spectacle of the rising tide of nationalism on her eastern frontier, was not likely to be convinced of error. 'You rejected the Protocol, refused any support to the plan for a Locarno in Eastern Europe, could not agree with the United States on naval limitation. Even now we do not know what you would do if Germany were to attack Poland. There has been some change in your attitude, but your offers are too uncertain and come too late'—such, in substance, was the French reply. And whatever might be the verdict on the past, that reply was heavily reinforced when it became known that the National-Socialists had increased their strength in the Reichstag from 12 members to 107. Henderson had spoken some days before the election: would he have spoken as he did if he had guessed what the results would be? Curtius delayed his speech until the figures were known. They must have filled him with apprehension, as they did all those in Germany or elsewhere who cared for peace and democratic progress. The effect on his attitude in Geneva, and on that of other German delegates from then onwards, was to infuse their chronic discontent with added hostility and harshness.

Two months later, in November 1930, the Preparatory Commission gathered for its final session. The revisionist-plus-disarmament group was clearly formed—Italy, mild and reasonable in manner; Russia, sarcastic and uncompromising; Germany, embodying righteous indignation. Cecil, for Britain, declined to join this front. He had always endeavoured, in his fight for reduction, to give no such encouragement to German ambitions as could later be used to justify her rearmament; he would not admit that the work of the Commission had been useless or that Bernstorff was entitled to speak as the champion of virtue and pacifism against the militarism of France. Under his leadership the Commission revised, completed, and even considerably improved its Draft Convention. It inserted the substance of the Naval Treaty of London. It added a new principle throughout, that of limitation of the annual budget for the armed services. This provision was opposed by Germany because her expenditure on armaments had not been limited by the Treaty of Versailles, and she could thus in part make up by quality what she lacked in quantity; but it was mainly by American opposition that it had been kept out hitherto, and Gibson still declared that his government would not accept it, though he no longer objected

to its inclusion in the Draft. A still more important addition was a chapter providing for the establishment of a Permanent Disarmament Commission, with the general duty of supervising the execution of the Convention and investigating any case in which one country might complain that another was not keeping within the prescribed limits.

Nevertheless, the final results of five years' debate in the Preparatory Commission were deeply disappointing to a majority of the governments and to the great mass of public opinion which had followed the work with hope and anxiety. The Draft Convention contained no indication as to the actual figures which the armed forces were not to exceed, these being left to the decision of the Conference. It provided no limitation of trained reserves; in regard to land armaments it limited the cost of acquiring war material in the future, but left existing stocks untouched; as for air armaments, it limited the number and horse-power of first-line planes, but not those in reserve. On all these grounds it was formally declared by Bernstorff to be totally unacceptable to Germany. Worse than all its omissions, from the German point of view, was the addition of an article stipulating that the Disarmament Convention would not affect the obligations by which signatory States were already bound. By the British and Americans this article was intended to safeguard the naval treaties of Washington and London. But to France and her friends it meant the maintenance of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and therewith the denial of equality of status to Germany. Bernstorff, spurred on by angry manifestations at home—the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Reichstag adopted a Nazi motion asking for his immediate recall to Berlin—reacted hotly. Anyone, he said, who supposed that his country would sign a Convention which allowed the victorious powers to remain heavily armed while requiring Germany to renew her signature of the disarmament clauses of Versailles, was under a complete and dangerous illusion.

The situation at the close of the session was summed up in a series of declarations by the leading delegates. The Soviet delegation maintained its opposition to the Draft Convention as being inadequate in every possible respect. The United States and British spokesmen agreed that it was far from perfect; but the Conference, when it met, would have the opportunity to improve it, and, by inserting figures which would represent the greatest possible reduction, to make a real start with disarmament. Italy hoped that the Conference would end that inequality which was the real cause of competition in armaments. France and Japan observed that the steps which the Conference could take would be only a modest beginning, but would have this essential merit,

that thenceforth the level of each country's armed forces would be a matter of international concern instead of being subject only to the sovereign decision of the individual State. Poland and others supported the French view, and the Polish delegate asserted that the Conference could not succeed unless an end were put, in those countries which demanded total disarmament, to propaganda leading to disorder or even war.

It was thus with no sense of confidence or satisfaction that the Preparatory Commission closed its five years of hard, if intermittent, toil. None of its members except the French and their allies were content with the result, or wished that the Draft Convention should be accepted as it stood; none, not even the French, could have the slightest expectation that this would happen.

In January 1931 the Council resolved that the Disarmament Conference should be convened for February 2nd, 1932, overruling a German proposal to hold it three months earlier. It was generally expected that the president would be nominated on the same occasion; but the candidature of Beneš, favoured by the French, was strongly opposed by Germany, Italy, and Russia, and no decision was possible. In May, having observed at their January session Arthur Henderson's exceptional gifts as a chairman, his colleagues unanimously invited him to accept this arduous and thankless task.

After five years, during which the preparation of the Disarmament Conference had absorbed so large a part of the energies of the League, the last year of waiting was, so far as the League itself was concerned, a period almost of relaxation. Some final measures still had to be taken. An expert committee was set to work to consider the practical application of the newly agreed principle of budgetary limitation. It reported with refreshing unanimity that this could be done without serious difficulty, and drew up a scheme for adoption by the Conference. Meanwhile, the Secretariat was compiling a statement of the facts and figures of the armed forces of the world; but it was not permitted to ask for the figures of existing stocks of land armaments because these, under the terms of the Draft Convention, were not to be limited or published. With this grave omission, the work was duly completed by the time the Conference met. An attempt was made also to collect information concerning civil aviation, which was regarded as having much importance in connexion with the limitation of air forces.

There were also material preparations to be made for an international gathering of unexampled magnitude. Every recognized State was summoned—all the Members of the League, six future Members (Afghani-



stan, Ecuador, Egypt, Mexico,<sup>1</sup> Russia, and Turkey), two past Members (Brazil and Costa Rica), and the United States. There was some alarm in Genevese hearts when it was realized that Cannes, Barcelona, Lausanne, and other cities were making strenuous efforts to be chosen as the meeting-place, and that governments and journalists alike were showing some inclination to support their claims. The experience of prices and accommodation in Geneva in crowded periods had been far from satisfactory. Under the stress of competition the local authorities were induced to promise various new facilities if the Conference were held in Geneva, and these promises they loyally carried out when the time came.

The Secretariat had intended to propose the establishment of an organizing committee to settle any question which might arise in the interval. But the great powers, especially the United States, preferred that whatever remained to be done should be done by agreement among themselves: and the proposal was never formally put forward. The Council allowed itself to believe that a year's delay would enable those powers to clear up, by negotiation outside the League, some at least of the differences between them; it doubtless also hoped that the economic and political stresses of the moment might grow easier with time. Such hopes and beliefs were doomed to disappointment. As had happened before, so soon as the pressure of some forthcoming meeting in Geneva was relaxed, negotiation on armaments was relegated to the background. The only problem on which serious discussion went forward was that of the French and Italian navies. After months of argument, the British actually succeeded in finding a solution to which both sides gave their agreement. But Briand's policy of conciliation, though popular in the provinces, was scorned and vilified in Paris. France alone still rode high above the economic crisis: and the French Parliament, with short-sighted self-confidence, was unwilling to compromise. At the psychological moment the German government announced its intention to lay down a second 10,000-ton battleship: and the Reichstag, in spite of the Reich's disastrous financial position, voted the money required (March 20th, 1931). Thus encouraged, the French Admiralty was able to force Briand to withdraw the consent he had already given. The agreement might have done much to improve relations between the two countries; its failure was justly resented in Italy and confirmed the tendency to make common cause with Germany against France.

Having thus proclaimed its resolve to make great additions, in the near future, to its naval strength, the French government addressed to the League a memorandum which foreshadowed the attitude it

<sup>1</sup> Mexico had become a Member when the Conference met.

intended to take at the Conference itself. France, it declared, had already, in the words of the Covenant, reduced her armaments to the lowest point consistent with national security, and had done so on the clear understanding that Germany would continue to be bound by, and would in fact respect, the limitations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. She would consider no new limitations unless she received new guarantees of security, such as the establishment of an International Force at the orders of the League.

Thus, when the Twelfth Assembly met, in September 1931, no progress whatever towards agreement between the chief powers had been made since the close of the Preparatory Commission ten months before. On the contrary, the gulf had widened; in the press, and in the corridors of the Assembly, there was much talk of postponing the Conference until the international situation had improved, though little suggestion as to how the improvement would come. On the assumption that the Conference was inevitably bound to fail, the suggestion might have been justified. But Briand, Cecil, and many other responsible delegates, refused to admit that failure was inevitable, and the history of the Conference must be held to have proved that they were right. Had it, in fact, been postponed, it would certainly never have met at all; and the final crisis in Germany, which it nearly succeeded in averting, would have come two years earlier than was actually the case. No government moved for any change in the date: and, having disposed of this danger, the Assembly made a brave attempt to brighten the general prospects by a resolution urging all governments to bind themselves to refrain from any increase in their armaments during the twelve months beginning November 1st, 1931. This proposal originated from Mussolini, who at this time constantly advocated reduction and even resisted the temptation to make militaristic speeches at home. In spite of the customary French opposition, the Assembly showed itself strongly in favour of an armaments truce; and marked the importance of the occasion by inviting all non-Member States to join in the discussion. The United States and some others accepted: while Russia, though unable to send a delegate at such short notice, announced her approval of the truce itself. In due course the French also notified their consent, and, by November, every important country had given the promise asked for by the Assembly.

Amidst many discouraging phenomena, and while the main attention of all governments was of necessity concentrated on the economic crisis, with its train of unemployment, disorder, dwindling trade and collapsing exchanges, there was going on a world-wide movement in favour of

disarmament. Cecil and Philip Noel-Baker in England, Herriot and de Jouvenel in France, with men of less eminence but not less sincerity in many other countries, who believed that in general the peoples were far more anxious than were their leaders that the Conference should result in a massive reduction of armaments on land, at sea, and in the air, had planned an international campaign with the object of bringing the pressure of public opinion to bear as effectively as possible on all the governments. The Churches, the trade unions, women's movements, associations of teachers, youth organizations, ex-service groups, and hundreds of lesser bodies, international or national, gave their support. The movement was strongest in the Anglo-Saxon nations; but almost everywhere public opinion was deeply stirred. Monster petitions, sometimes with signatures counted by millions, were carried to Geneva from every continent and from nearly every country. Such manifestations were frowned on by the official world, which pronounced them based on sentiment and ignorance. They were met in one case at least by a significant counter-demonstration. The climax of the campaign was a great international meeting, held in Paris on November 26th, 1931, with Herriot as chairman and, as speakers, Cecil, Senator Borah (by radio), Scialoja, representatives of the Churches, the ex-service men, and other international groups. This meeting was broken up by carefully organized bands, which insulted and shouted down the speakers, whether men or women, and whether French, German, American, or British. It was an alarming indication of the extent to which the spirit of Nazism and Fascism had infected even the French; and even more disquieting was the fact that the conduct of the rioters was defended and praised by a large section of the press.

It could not be doubted that in this and other ways the many elements which were hostile to disarmament were planning to wreck the Conference. But all their exertions, open or secret, might have had but little effect had it not been for the fatal influence of the economic breakdown. This it was which exacerbated every dispute, playing into the hands of the parties of subversion and disorder, making patience seem a weakness. This it was that enabled the militarist party in Japan to choose the moment to start on its adventure in Manchuria, which cast a yet deeper shadow over the prospects of the Conference.

## TWO IMPORTANT COUNCIL SESSIONS

*German-Polish conflict over minorities—Appeasement at the Council—  
Declaration of European Foreign Ministers—The Austro-German  
Customs Union—Other important questions at the sixty-third Council—  
Danzig—Aggravation of the financial crisis*

(SEPTEMBER 1930—MAY 1931)

BY the autumn of 1930 the period of short and easy Council sessions was over, never to return. The new principles of world co-operation embodied in the Covenant were being challenged with growing aggressiveness and confidence by the hostile forces of nationalism and militarism. Few could then have foreseen that it would be in Asia first, then in South America, that open warfare would break out once again; and if the consciousness of impending danger hung over the Assembly, this was owing to the increase in European tensions, and above all to the irrepressible enmity between a reborn Poland and a mutilated Germany.

The German elections in September had been an ugly scene of political passion and physical violence. The successes of the National Socialists at one end of the scale were in no wise counterbalanced, from the international point of view, by those of the Communists at the other. These extreme wings might and did regard each other with deadly hatred, but both were equally opposed to the moderate policies of the Social-Democrats, the Centre, the People's party, and other constitutional parties. And indeed, so far as the vital question of relations with Poland was concerned, the moderates were hardly less obdurate than the extreme nationalists. The Socialist government of Prussia kept up a constant propaganda against the severance of East Prussia from the rest of the country. Stresemann would never consider a Locarno of the east, and tolerated an endless dispute over trade and transit which contributed not a little to the general economic troubles of Europe. And, during the election, the most sensational speech about the revision of the eastern frontiers of Germany was made by Treviranus, a moderate Conservative, and Minister of Transport in Brüning's Cabinet. His words were bitter and provocative; and the reaction in Poland, as also in France, was correspondingly strong. The reassuring declarations of many delegates at the Assembly, including Briand and Curtius, pro-

duced little effect. They were too familiar, and too general in their terms, to counteract the nervous strain from which Europe was suffering—a strain that was kept up by unscrupulous press campaigns in France, Germany, and elsewhere, and sharpened by the prospect of a winter marked by widespread unemployment and hunger.

In November it was Poland's turn to hold not only a general election to the Sejm at Warsaw but also a provincial election in Silesia. It was not surprising that the chauvinist Polish parties fought their campaign on a programme of defiance to the hereditary Prussian enemy, personified by Treviranus and Hitler, nor that a campaign so fought should give rise to numerous unpleasant incidents between the Polish majority and the powerful German minority in the provinces of Poznan (Posen), Pomorze (Pomerania), and Silesia. These incidents were not all on one side: two Poles, and no Germans, actually lost their lives. Only the minority, however, had the right to claim the protection of the League, and its representatives promptly forwarded a long statement of their grievances to the Secretary-General. But even before their petitions reached Geneva, the German government had angrily demanded that the question should be put on the agenda of the January session of the Council.

Thus the Council found itself faced with an acute and dangerous dispute between two major European powers. The gravity of the occasion was shown by an influx of journalists on a scale which recalled the days of Germany's entry. Over forty German correspondents were present, most of them new to Geneva and hostile to the League. There was general expectation of a stormy and unsuccessful session, not lessened by the fact that Drummond had left two months earlier on a long visit to South America, and was missing an important League meeting for the first and only time in his career. On the other hand, it was fortunate that, since Curtius did not wish to preside over a session in which Germany took such a passionate interest, that role passed by alphabetical rotation to the British representative, and Henderson proved himself an ideal President. The public debate between Curtius and Zaleski, who was still Poland's Foreign Minister, occupied a whole day (January 21st, 1931), each making a prepared statement in the morning and each replying in the afternoon to the case presented by the other side. Curtius's speeches breathed a cold hostility: he seemed anxious to provoke Zaleski to some unguarded retort, and was evidently afraid of being accused of weakness and timidity if he showed the conventional forms of courtesy to his opponent or even to the Council. German opinion, he said, was in a state of extreme excitement, bound as it was by intimate ties to 'the Germans who now live beyond our

frontiers under foreign sovereignty'. Having described at length the wrongs inflicted upon the minority, he contrasted their treatment with the generous protection afforded to the Polish minority on the German side of the frontier. Poland claimed that the incidents complained of were merely a spontaneous reaction to 'political movements in Germany which are alleged to be directed against the integrity of the Polish State'. To this he answered, first, that the reaction had not been spontaneous but was inspired from above, and encouraged by no less a person than Grazynski, the Voivode or Governor of Silesia, who ought, as holder of that high office, to have kept aloof from the election campaign; and, secondly, that though all Germans were united in the demand for a revision of the frontiers laid down in the Treaty of Peace, they were equally united in their determination to adhere unconditionally to peaceful methods.

This last statement was obviously contrary to the facts, but Zaleski refrained from questioning it, contenting himself with declaring that the frontiers of Poland had been settled once for all. He then cut most of the ground away from his opponent's feet by admitting that there had been a considerable number of infringements of the Upper Silesian Convention. They were neither so numerous nor so serious as the Germans alleged, and could not be compared, in gravity, with the violence and bloodshed which had marked the recent elections in Germany. They had been deliberately exaggerated in the German press. But they were much to be regretted; his government had instituted official inquiries into every case: the guilty either had been, or would be, punished; and satisfaction would be given to the demands of the minority.

Zaleski's words clearly took much of the poison out of the dispute. Curtius maintained his hostile tone in the afternoon meeting, but it sounded forced and hollow. After three days of hard negotiation, the Japanese rapporteur was able to present a report which both sides were prepared to accept. It contained a brief summary of the German complaints and the Polish answer, and of the steps which should be, and were being, taken by Poland to give compensation in cases where wrongs had been committed, and to punish the guilty persons. It further stated in guarded language that the Voivode of Silesia had indirectly encouraged anti-German manifestations and should refrain from doing so in future.

The acceptance of this report by Zaleski was an act of courage; and indeed the whole Polish attitude towards Germany at this juncture was statesmanlike and moderate enough. (Their conduct towards the Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia during this same election was a much more scandalous affair.) The Council's decision was considered as a

success by German opinion; it did much to strengthen the position of Curtius as Foreign Minister; something also to restore confidence in the League, since it proved once more the inestimable value of being able to debate such problems openly, in concert with other and disinterested powers.

While the Council was taking this definite, if limited, step towards the re-establishment of peaceful conditions, the Commission for European Union, which was meeting in Geneva at the same time, was the scene of a parallel effort in the same direction. Its meeting had brought together practically all the Foreign Ministers of Europe, including, of course, those who were also representing their countries at the Council. The main business of the Commission had been to invite Russia and Turkey to join it, and to lay down a programme of work aiming at the economic recovery of Europe. But it seemed to some of its members that such a gathering could do something effective to put an end to the talk and fear of war. On Henderson's initiative, a resolution was drawn up by Briand, Curtius, Grandi, and himself which, after pointing out that economic recovery was being hindered by lack of confidence and by irresponsible talk about the possibility of war, ended with the words 'We declare, as Foreign Ministers or responsible representatives of European States, that we are resolutely determined to use the machinery of the League to prevent any resort to violence'. This notable affirmation, combined with the unexpectedly satisfactory outcome of the German-Polish dispute before the Council, did have the effect of dissipating to some extent and for a limited time the general feeling of anxiety—not so much because it was enthusiastically accepted by the rest of the Commission as because it had been jointly sponsored by France and Germany as well as by Italy and Britain.

The agenda of January 1931 included other important business besides the Silesian dispute. The date of the Disarmament Conference was, as we have seen, settled at last. There was a serious debate concerning the termination of the British mandate in Iraq, and the position of the minorities in that State when it should have become independent: the mandatory power answered with confidence, but later events were to show that the Mandates Commission and the Council had been better inspired in asking for assurances than the British representatives in giving them. Some time was spent over another question which was also to give the Council much work in the next few years, that of slavery and misgovernment in Liberia; and still more over the complaints of the German population of Memel. The Memel question concerned only a small area and a population of less than 150,000 souls. But its trouble-making potentiality was high, owing partly to the imperturbable

obstinacy of the Lithuanian government, but especially to the fierce indignation felt by all Germans at the thought of men of their race being governed by Lithuanians. That Germans should become Polish subjects was hardly bearable: that they should become Lithuanian subjects was not really bearable at all. In consequence, the stolid resistance of Zaunius, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister (Voldemaras had been overthrown and was now in prison), was quite infuriating to Curtius. Yet the Lithuanians generally had some argument of substance to put forward, and the Council was accustomed to listen with patience and courtesy to what each disputant had to say. We shall not dwell upon the many disputes concerning Memel which the Council was called upon to decide. The Lithuanian government failed in many respects to carry out its engagements. The German Memellanders (they had half the population but all the power) were high-handed and provocative. The Statute itself was a very imperfect instrument; but it could have worked well enough if both sides had so desired.

In the present case, Henderson finally intervened to put an end to an acrimonious debate which could lead to no agreement: he insisted on postponing the whole business to a later session, expecting, not in vain, that it would be more or less patched up in the meantime by the efforts of the Secretariat and of the four Allied powers which were parties to the Statute.

The tradition of open debate was still effective at the Council table, which thus provided the last remaining means of bringing a sense of proportion to bear upon the growing ill-humours of Europe. The Geneva meetings of January 1931 had given fresh hope that the difficulties and anxieties of the time might be faced in a spirit of co-operation between the principal European powers. The phalanx of German correspondents who had come to curse the League were reported to have gone home in a very different state of mind, convinced that here was the one place where Germany could count on friendly and equitable treatment. But this not unfavourable beginning was followed by a succession of events of ill omen for the League and for peace.

The first of these was the announcement in March of an agreement between Germany and Austria to form a Customs Union. This news was a complete surprise to other governments: there had indeed been talk of the project in business circles, but the diplomatic services had learnt, or reported, nothing, and the emotion of the various Foreign Offices was correspondingly acute. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and France were sensitive to anything which could possibly suggest the Anschluss of Austria to Germany: it was their continual nightmare, and



a Customs Union was to their minds a very long step towards making the Anschluss a reality. The two parties asserted that the plan had no political character; all the discussions of League organizations, especially in connexion with the scheme of European Union, had shown the need for getting rid of customs barriers; they were thus following the best authority, and their Union was open to any other States which cared to join it. This reply was totally unconvincing to the other side: the press was more and more violent, tempers were rising, and, but for the skilful use made of League procedure by the British government, the peace of Europe would have been in serious danger.

Austria was forbidden by the Treaty of St Germain to alienate her independence (i.e. to unite with Germany) except with the consent of the Council of the League. Besides this, in accepting the financial help of the League in 1922, she had promised not to grant to any State a special regime by which her economic independence might be threatened. Accordingly, Henderson announced that, however excellent its motives might be, the legality of the Austro-German agreement appeared to him to be open to doubt, and that, in order to clear up the juridical situation, he was asking the Secretary-General to include the question in the agenda of the May session of the Council. Germany and Austria replied that they had carefully worded their agreement so as not to conflict with these engagements, that there was no need therefore to refer the matter to the Council, and that they intended to go forward according to their plan. But though the German press inveighed against the tyranny of the victorious powers, neither government could seriously oppose the British suggestion. When the Council met, Henderson felt so sure of his ground that he broke with its traditions by bringing up the question on the first day of the session (May 18th, 1931). There followed a debate which may be compared with any in the Council's history. The controversy which had shaken the peace of Europe so long as it was maintained by speeches and newspaper campaigns in the capitals of the countries concerned, was frankly, publicly, and not ill-humouredly discussed. Briand, Beneš, and others on the one side, Curtius and Schober, the Austrian Chancellor, on the other, set forth their case with moderation: the proposal to submit the legal problem to the Permanent Court was unanimously accepted, and Henderson was able also to secure from Schober the promise to take no further steps towards the new regime until the Court's answer had been received.

The opinion of the Court was given on September 5th, after long hearings and debates; eight Judges declared that the proposed Union was contrary to Austria's engagement of 1922, while seven were of the opposite view. The majority was not only the smallest possible, but it

included the French, Polish, and Roumanian Judges: and although, to the layman, the arguments of the majority appear more solid and convincing than those of the minority, the latter comprised several of the most eminent, learned, and impartial members of the Court. In any case, a judgement so given was damaging to the reputation and authority of the Court: and had the issue depended on that judgement alone, the two States concerned might have claimed that its true effect was to justify rather than condemn their action. In the meantime, however, the situation had been profoundly changed by the financial disasters of the summer. Austria's need was for direct help such as Germany could not possibly give her: Germany herself was in an almost desperate case, and by no means inclined to spend her energies on maintaining a policy which was now of no practical importance to either country. A day or two before the judgement was known, Curtius and Schober declared at a meeting of the Commission for European Union that, for the general good, they had decided to abandon their plan. Thereafter, neither the opinion of the Court, nor the practical consequences which might be derived from it, needed to be considered by the Council.

From one point of view the affair of the Austro-German Customs Union was an important success for the League, inasmuch as it was a dangerous crisis surmounted by safe and reasonable methods. But in itself it was evidently no more than a negative result. Was there any real justification for the violent reactions set in motion by any move that suggested the possibility of the two countries uniting? The answer must depend in great part on the view taken as to whether or not the German Republic could have grown into a stable and peaceful modern State. There were some who had never believed in such a possibility: and some who had believed in it during the early years of the Republic had now lost hope. But if, and so long as, it did in truth exist, sound reasons could be adduced for promoting the Anschluss instead of passionately opposing it. Apart from the fundamental political problem, it was unfortunate that every effort to reduce the world's tariff barriers seemed to be doomed to failure for one reason or another. The general proposals of the Assembly and the Economic Committee were frustrated by special obstacles such as the German-Polish commercial disagreement and the soaring tariffs of the United States. Attempts to make separate arrangements to provide markets for the hard-hit agricultural countries of Eastern Europe were blocked by the most-favoured-nation principle, and by the apprehensions of the non-European producers. And now a direct move towards tariff abolition was prevented by political fears.

Meanwhile, the economic depression was growing swiftly more acute

and was developing into a financial crisis of unprecedented severity. But before considering the impact of these events upon the League, we shall return for a moment to the record of the Council's session of May 1931. It was a session of considerable interest in itself, but still more so in the light of later events. For this was to be, in a sense, the last normal meeting of the Council. For the last time its Members were still united in a common effort for peace. For the last time they could speak with a single voice, drawing their authority from a Covenant which each declared itself determined to respect and uphold. For the last time, seeing how the United States and Russia were being ever more closely drawn in towards participation in their work, they could believe that, above and beyond the day-to-day controversies with which they had to deal, all the world was linked in its support for that historic movement of which they were the symbol and the instrument—the slow progress of the human race towards its age-long ideals of peace and brotherhood.

This, which may be called the last peace-time session of the Council, was also the last in which Arthur Henderson represented Britain. It had already lost its oldest and most familiar figure, Quiñones de León, who, as Spanish Ambassador in Paris, had shared in the discussions on the draft Covenant, in the Organizing Committee which had helped the Secretary-General to prepare the first meetings of the Council, and in practically every Council meeting except for the two years during which Spain had provisionally withdrawn from the League. Quiñones was an aristocrat of the old school, a courtier rather than a statesman, who took it for granted that he should be spared the annoyances of detailed negotiation or the solid work of preparing a report. But he showed an acute and conciliatory mind and a sincere devotion to the League; the unfailing perfection of his manners and his temper endeared him to all, and enabled him on more than one occasion to bring about agreement when a more earnest toiler might have failed to do so. He followed his King into exile, and the Spanish Republic was now represented by its Foreign Minister, Alejandro Lerroux, who brought with him a special pledge of loyalty to the League from the new government.<sup>1</sup> This pledge was confirmed in the following December when the Constituent Assembly took the unprecedented step of including in the new Spanish Constitution a provision to the effect that war was never to be declared except in strict accordance with the Covenant.

The Council found itself once more at grips with the intractable affairs of Danzig. The Free City usually reflected in miniature the political complexion of the Reich. For the past three years a left-centre coalition had been in power; and, in spite of the unchangeable dislike

<sup>1</sup> See Council Minutes, May 20th, 1931.

and suspicion which Poles and Danzigers cherished for one another, their official differences had been dealt with in a reasonably accommodating temper. A quiet and sensible High Commissioner, Count Manfred Gravina, who possessed the confidence of both, had contributed to this rare state of calm. But Danzig also had had its elections; the same swing to the right had occurred there as in Germany, and a Nationalist government was now in office, dependent upon the Nazi group which, in the new and smaller Volkstag, held 12 seats out of 72 instead of 1 out of 120. The immediate result was an outbreak of ill temper on both sides. Nazi and Nationalist meetings openly proclaimed that Danzig must return to Germany: Polish chauvinists declared that it must be annexed to Poland. There were street rows in which the Poles, a very small minority within the frontiers of the Free City, were generally the worse sufferers. Polish indignation grew. The press demanded that Gravina should call in Polish forces, as he was entitled to do, under a Council decision of ten years before, if he judged that the Danzig government could no longer maintain order. Finally, on April 13th, 1931, the Polish diplomatic representative in Danzig resigned on the ground that he could no longer secure the safety of Polish lives and property in the Free City.

This was obviously a form of pressure on the High Commissioner. But Gravina knew that the Danzig government was perfectly capable of assuring order if it chose to do so, and was determined not to take the dangerous step of calling in Polish troops unless it was absolutely necessary. Instead, he made a report to the Council, setting forth the situation in general and in detail, and asked that it might be considered at the May session. This move produced a calming effect. The prestige of the Council was still intact and neither side was prepared to flout its authority. The rapporteur for Danzig affairs was the British representative, a circumstance which involved a heavy burden upon British delegations, but which had a restraining influence upon the disputing parties, and was a constant source of strength and encouragement to successive High Commissioners. Further, both sides had a special reason for prudence in that they were engaged in another dispute of fundamental importance to both, which was certain to come before the Council for decision before very long. This dispute concerned the newly created port of Gdynia and its effect on the position of Danzig as the maritime outlet for Polish commerce.

The impossible had been achieved: a sandy unsheltered beach had been converted into a great port, rivalling Danzig in capacity and excelling it in the quality of its equipment. The traffic of Gdynia was already fully half as great as that of the Free City: the figures of the

former were growing rapidly, while those of the latter remained approximately stationary. Danzig now saw itself in danger of ruin, and appealed to the High Commissioner to declare that Poland was legally bound to make full use of its port before using Gdynia or any other outlet to the sea. The one reason why Danzig had been detached from Germany was to serve as the port of Poland: if Polish trade now went elsewhere, why should Danzig not be restored to Germany? Poland, on the other hand, claimed that she still needed Danzig and that the trade of the Free City was still far greater than in pre-war days: but she needed Gdynia too, both for present commercial purposes and as a reserve outlet if (as experience showed was not unlikely) she were ever deprived of the facilities of Danzig by the disloyal actions of its people. She was free, therefore, to make exactly what use she thought good of either port.

This dispute, on which much depended for both sides, had not yet reached the stage of submission to the Council; but the prospect that this would probably happen in the near future softened their intransigence. After numerous interviews with Zaleski and with Dr Ziehm, the head of the new Danzig government, Henderson brought them to accept a resolution which in substance approved the attitude of the High Commissioner and advised each side to show itself more reasonable and co-operative towards the other. Both Zaleski and Ziehm assured Gravina of their complete confidence in him, and the Council asked him to serve for a second term of three years. Thus one more crisis was passed in this, the most distasteful and unsuitable of the tasks imposed by the Peace Conference upon the League—a task which, in the conditions laid down in the Treaty, could never be brought to a safe and satisfactory conclusion.

In other chronic disputes of the time some signs of appeasement were presented to the Council. Poland and Lithuania, though the latter country steadily refused all concessions which could either imply or promote reconciliation with its neighbour, promised to be vigilant in preventing any incident on their guarded frontiers, and to allow immediate inquiry by the Council if any incident should nevertheless occur. In point of fact it was now a year since any troubles had been reported from this area. In regard to Memel also the Lithuanian government was more accommodating than usual: it agreed to ask for the expert advice of the Financial Committee and of the Secretariat in settling its dispute with the Memel Diet, a step which could be counted upon to lead to a reasonable solution.

Finally, the Polish government submitted, as promised in January, a long statement of the measures it had taken to meet the complaints of the German minority in Silesia, Poznan, and Pomorze. It was able to

quote unexpected proofs that its action had been appreciated, and that the minority also was now in a more co-operative mood. The rest of the Council would have been glad to accept this as a satisfactory conclusion to that particular quarrel. But this did not suit Curtius, and he took advantage of the fact that the Polish statement had not reached the Council until it was already in session, to demand that the question should be adjourned till September, so that he might have time for reflection. It was hardly fair play, since he obviously knew everything about the actual state of things on the spot. But it was a demand that in the circumstances could not be refused, and the last service of Henderson to the Council was to put an end to an unpleasant dispute by saying so in his usual emphatic manner.

Henderson had brought with him the instruments whereby Britain, Australia, and New Zealand acceded to the General Act of 1928. This was to him an event of great importance, and he insisted that the documents should be placed in the Secretary-General's hand with due ceremony at a public meeting of the Council. Briand then announced that France also had acceded to the Act, and Grandi that Italian accession was already decided and would take place formally a few days later. At the same meeting the accession of India was deposited by Sir Atul Chatterjee: it was an agreeable change to see an administrative act of the Indian government performed at Geneva by an Indian and not by a British official. Thus, said Henderson, year by year, stone by stone, the Members of the League were building on a firm foundation the structure of an enduring peace. It was particularly appropriate, he added, that these steps towards the reinforcement of the principle of arbitration should be taken during a Council session which must have proved to everybody, first, that no country could remain indifferent to disputes between others even if it did not seem, at first sight, to be directly involved; secondly, that reference of a dispute to an impartial international organ was profitable to both sides; and thirdly, that the governments of great States were now ready to submit their differences to the League and could count on full popular support in doing so.

Henderson's words were not unjustified, particularly after the anxiety which had been felt in recent months, first over the German-Polish dispute, and later over the proposal for an Austro-German Customs Union. But the foundations of peace, which he believed were growing firmer, were in reality being undermined by the flood of economic and financial troubles. Individual governments, and the various organs of the League, displayed a feverish activity in the search for expedients which might avert the worst disasters and start an upward movement

away from the depression. The decisions of the governments could be promptly applied; but, each resorting to remedies calculated to benefit its own situation at the expense of others, their joint effect could only be to make a general recovery even more difficult. The recommendations of the Assembly, the Economic Committee, and the Commission for European Union were doubtless based on wider and sounder principles: but they remained a dead letter. Two conferences in 1930 and a third in March 1931 had vainly tried to reach agreement on the stabilization of tariffs. Their President, Dr Colijn, a former Prime Minister and one of the bravest and wisest European figures of the day, had laboured with the obstinacy of a true Dutchman; but he was now compelled to inform the Council that 'Circumstances will have to improve considerably before the work of the League for collective action in tariff matters . . . can be resumed'. The Commission for European Union elaborated an impressive programme of action dealing with international loans, with the disposal of agricultural surpluses, with unemployment and the placing of foreign workers, and with public works. But though the ground had been carefully and thoroughly prepared, and though the plans themselves were drawn up by the greatest experts of Europe, they were blocked by one obstacle after another. One scheme which looked particularly promising was the creation of an International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company through which capital might be supplied to farmers on reasonable terms (instead of the 15 or 20 per cent which they had to pay in Eastern Europe), thus reducing their costs, increasing their capacity to buy the machinery they required, and indirectly assisting the industrial countries which would have found the money. The plan had been drafted by the skilled bankers of the Financial Committee; it was signed, during the summer of 1931, by twenty-three European governments; and Switzerland hastened to grant all legal facilities for the establishment of the Company's headquarters at Geneva. But it was never put into operation. When the moment came to subscribe the necessary capital, the financial storm was at its height and those who had been expected to put up the funds declined to spend time or money on a new and untried institution.

Europe and the world now saw, in the words of Solomon, its poverty coming upon it as a traveller and its want as an armed man. While bank failures had been frequent in America through the previous winter, it was not until May 1931 that the financial situation in Europe began to get seriously out of control. In that month the famous Austrian Kredit-Anstalt closed its doors; its breakdown was the signal for a succession of similar disasters in other countries. In Germany a series of private bankruptcies were salvaged by the use of public credit. The ensuing

public bankruptcy was staved off by the intervention of President Hoover, who was forced, much against his will, to recognize that inter-Allied debts were closely connected with reparation, that both were pressing with crushing weight upon the struggling finances of the world, and that the United States, with six million unemployed and bank failures counted by the hundred, was directly affected by the troubles of other countries. His proposal, put forward on June 20th, for a year's moratorium in the service of all inter-governmental debts provided a short breathing-space. But the improvement was not of long duration. By the time the Assembly met the downward movement was again in full swing. The Labour government in London had been driven from power before the end of August: and on September 21st, Sir Arthur Salter, no longer a League official but a member of the British delegation, informed the Assembly that Britain was abandoning the gold standard.



## THE LEAGUE IN DIFFICULTIES

*Anxiety and inactivity of the Twelfth Assembly—The admission of Mexico—First news of the Mukden incident*

(SEPTEMBER 1931)

**A**MIDST the bitterness and fear which spread over almost the whole world in the summer of 1931, it was not likely that the League should escape unscathed; and it was, in fact, the object of attacks from many different directions. In Paris, the conservative wing which now held the reins inveighed against it as being the instrument whereby Germany was destroying the Versailles settlement, and planning to recover equality in arms and to reconquer her lost territories in the east. In Germany, it was accused of being still a mere League of victors, banded together to refuse justice to the defeated; the nationalist press growled that Germany should cut free from the humiliating connexion, and the government itself began to hint at withdrawal if it did not receive satisfaction in such questions as that of the German minority in Poland and the Austro-German Customs Union. In Hungary, it was charged with doing nothing for the minorities; in Poland, with doing so much that the security of the State was endangered by a disloyal section acting under international protection. Even in Britain, the organs of Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere, always unfriendly to the League, now started a campaign in favour of abandoning it completely, on the ground that it was antagonistic to imperial unity and co-operation. Their arguments were not taken seriously in Parliament; and the Dominion governments themselves not only set a high value on their separate membership of the League, but found in their common adherence to the Covenant the best basis on which all members of the Commonwealth could maintain their unity in foreign policy. Nevertheless, the peevish attacks of journals with enormous circulations did something to obstruct and discredit the work of the international organizations. Thus, at the moment when its first great conflict was approaching, the League was trebly weakened—first by the economic crisis which forced each country to devote its chief energies to its own internal problems; secondly, by the bitter ill feeling between Germany and her neighbours; thirdly, by the fact that it had become a highly unpopular institution in wide sections of public opinion. There were many who openly or secretly rejoiced in its reverses

and hoped for its failure, without any clear idea of how their own and their countries' fate might thereby be affected.

No previous Assembly had ever met in such a depressed, listless, and uncertain mood as that of September 1931. The delegates had behind them a year of financial crises and political alarms, each painfully and partially surmounted, but leaving, in most cases, the general situation more tense and anxious than before. Many of them had already taken part in half a dozen meetings in Geneva during the previous eight months: they had found an abundance of plans, but no common and effective will to action. And now, at the moment when relations between France and Germany were worse than they had ever been since Poincaré's occupation of the Ruhr, Britain, the best, perhaps the only, mediator, was paralysed by her own misfortunes. The new Cabinet was deeply engaged at home: it had to face not only the financial crisis which had brought down the Labour Administration, but also a parliamentary struggle of abnormal bitterness. Foreign policy was neglected: the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Reading, could not spare the time to visit Geneva, where the Foreign Ministers of twenty-five European States, including Russia and Turkey, were gathered for the Assembly or for the Commission on European Union. For the first and last time in League history, the British delegation to the Assembly did not contain a single member of the government or even of the House of Commons.

Briand himself was now almost a spent force. Physically he was old and tired. Like Stresemann, two years before, he still seemed to draw on a fresh reserve of energy during the meetings of the Assembly and the Council; but at home the real power was in the hands of men like Laval and Flandin, and Briand was Foreign Minister in a government whose general policy was totally contrary to his own. To outward appearance, France held a stronger position in the world than at any moment since the war. Her financial resources were undamaged. Her military supremacy in Europe was unchallenged. Nothing could be done without her. But nobody, not even the French themselves, believed that this position could last indefinitely; and in the meantime she found no way to use the occasion for purposes of constructive leadership, and her influence was almost wholly negative. She had torn up her provisional agreement with Italy on naval limitation. She had spoiled the effect of the Hoover moratorium; while every other important power had accepted it promptly and joyfully, France had done so reluctantly and with reservations, and the fortnight of negotiations required before it could become effective was enough, at that difficult time, to destroy much of its psychological and practical value. She had tried to use her financial power to put an end, for the time being, to German demands for

treaty revision and for equal military status; and, though this had failed, she had used it successfully to compel Curtius and Schober to drop their plan for an Austro-German Customs Union. As in the days of Poincaré, it seemed that her one objective was to preserve intact every provision of the Treaty of Versailles. A few weeks before the Assembly, she had sent to the League a note about the future Disarmament Conference which showed that she was not prepared to make the slightest concession to the German point of view. And if the Franco-German conflict were to flare up once more over the question of armaments, it was at Geneva and not elsewhere that the issue would have to be faced.

As for Germany, a summer of continuous financial crises had put Brüning and his government into a terrible situation. He had to take the responsibility of imposing measures of severe hardship on the country—increased taxation, cuts in salaries, wages, and unemployment benefit—while the Nationalists, Nazis, and Communists combined to declare that all these miseries were due to his government's foreign policy and especially to the ratification of the Young plan. The campaign against Brüning and even against Hindenburg was more violent and unscrupulous than ever. The Soviet press, redoubling its attacks on Nazis, the Centre, and the Socialists alike, proclaimed that in Germany the breakdown of capitalism and the triumph of the Communist revolution were now at hand. Curtius addressed the Assembly in the name of a government which was trying to follow the right course in the teeth of popular feeling. He described the privations which the German people were undergoing and foretold still more tragic conditions for the coming winter; and he insisted that the Disarmament Conference must not be postponed and must lead to big reductions by the heavily armed powers and the establishment of theoretical equality for Germany. His speech was not immoderate in substance, but it was bitter in tone and was much resented by the French.

One after another the Foreign Ministers of an anxious Europe, and the delegates of overseas countries who saw their trade diminished to less than half its normal proportions, urged that what was needed above all was a renewal of international confidence. Financial experts warned the world that recovery was impossible unless the statesmen could promise that there would be no breach of the peace. Eight months before, a general declaration by the European Foreign Ministers that they were determined to maintain the peace and respect the Covenant had done something to improve the atmosphere. But repetition of such assertions deprives them of all effect, and no proposal was now made to repeat the January resolution.

With no great energy or conviction, but with the ease that comes of

habit, the Assembly worked its way through its usual agenda. It admitted a new Member, the first addition to the League for five years. Mexico had been excluded from the list of original Members by agreement between the British and American delegations in Paris; and, justifiably resenting this arbitrary act, successive Mexican governments had declined to make application for admission, though they knew that their country would be welcomed. Now, on the initiative of the Republican government of Spain, which had made sure that the invitation would not be refused, the Assembly made the first move, adopting unanimously a resolution inviting Mexico to join the League. Thenceforward, no Latin American Member was so active and courageous in its support of the Covenant as Mexico.

Although there was much nervous pessimism among the delegations, the Assembly was steady and calm enough to reject any suggestion of postponing the Disarmament Conference and to adopt the principle of an armaments truce. It also passed the final text of the 'Convention to improve the Means of Preventing War', which had been proposed by Germany four years before. This Convention, if promptly and widely accepted, would have strengthened the hands of the League at moments of danger, the more so because it provided that at such times the votes of the States directly concerned in the dispute should not affect the validity of the Council's decisions. For, contrary to what had been understood a few years previously—contrary also, as many international lawyers held, to reason and good sense—it was now generally admitted that in all the preventive action of the Council under Article 11 there must be unanimity, including the vote of the interested parties. Unhappily, much time had been lost in discussion, mainly owing to the usual French insistence that the new Convention should lay down a system of sanctions against any State which failed to carry out the instructions of the Council. The proposal was finally abandoned and the Convention was opened for signature on September 26th, 1931. But it was too late; events in the Far East were undermining the authority of the Council, and the Convention, though signed in the course of the next years by half the Members of the League, was never destined to come into force.

At the same time, the Assembly gave up the attempt, which had been going on for the last two years, to bring the Covenant into strict accordance with the Kellogg Pact. This decision was a wise one, and it would probably have been better if the proposal had never been made. For if, as most people who had experience of the League, including the Secretariat, believed, any war which was a clear breach of the Kellogg Pact was certain also to be a breach of the Covenant, then there was no

practical need for any change. If, on the other hand, as Arthur Henderson had thought when he raised the question, there was real danger that war might be made in breach of the Pact but not in breach of the Covenant, then the proposed change would extend the obligations of League Members to join in sanctions; and though the French and their friends rejoiced in such an extension, it was quite unacceptable to the members of the British Commonwealth, as well as to most of their fellow Members of the League.

Occupied with these questions and with its usual routine business—planning the future work of the economic and social agencies, reviewing the action of the Council on questions of mandates and minorities, voting a budget swollen to a record figure by the estimated cost of the Disarmament Conference—the Assembly was drawing quietly to its close, when, on September 19th, the first news of a Sino-Japanese incident at Mukden reached Europe. In the next days it became clear that there was danger of serious conflict. But the true gravity of the situation was not yet apparent; and the Assembly separated in a more hopeful mood, encouraged by its own capacity to carry on its work even under the most difficult circumstances, by the reassuring declarations of the Japanese government, by the cheerful bearing of the British people in their time of crisis, and by the fact that Briand and Laval were about to pay a friendly visit to Berlin.



PART IV

THE YEARS OF CONFLICT

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MANCHURIA

*A turning-point in world history—Japanese ambitions in Manchuria—The Mukden incident—Debates in the Council—A unanimous resolution—The United States at the Council—The Japanese veto—War-fever in Japan—The Council in Paris—The Lytton Commission—Stimson and Non-Recognition—Battles at Shanghai—China appeals to the Assembly—Creation of ‘Manchukuo’—The Lytton Report—The verdict of the Assembly—Japan leaves the League—Consequences of the Manchurian conflict*

(SEPTEMBER 1931—MAY 1933)

THE Japanese occupation of Manchuria, which began in the night of September 18th, 1931, was a turning-point in the history of the League and of the world. For the first time not only the action of the Council and Assembly, but the fundamental moral and political conceptions on which the Covenant was based were exposed to a powerful and determined attack—an attack that was none the less deadly for the protestations of good will and peaceful intentions by which it was accompanied.

Certainly the founders of the League did not suppose that the new system would put an end to the danger of war. But, seeing and sharing the immense revulsion against war which filled men's minds after the Armistice of 1918, they conceived the danger as one that would arise unexpected and unwelcome to all except a small minority, and that the barriers of the Covenant—disarmament, arbitration, open discussion, delay, and the prospect of sanctions—would be reinforced by public opinion even in the countries which were parties to the dispute. It was recognized that in every country there were many who disliked or disbelieved in one or more of these methods, and were therefore unfavourably inclined to all or part of the League system. The fighting services objected to disarmament. The diplomatic services shrank from publicity, disliked the discussion of national interests by States not directly concerned, mistrusted the extension of arbitration. Pacifists who

put their trust in arbitration and were zealous for disarmament detested the system of sanctions. Some newspapers of wide circulation were consistently hostile to the League not on such grounds as these, but because they believed that a general attitude of jingoism appealed to their readers, and that they were gratifying the popular taste in pouring scorn on an institution in which their own representatives were liable at any moment to be outvoted by those of foreign countries. But all these forms of hostility and criticism, though they weakened the action of some important governments, and therefore of the League, did not produce, and had not hitherto ever looked likely to produce, an actual reversal of the policy of any of the fifty-four Members. None had as yet chosen to abandon, still less to oppose, the building up of the League as an organic system for the maintenance of peace. In opening the 1931 Assembly, Titulescu, invested with the unique honour of a second term as President, declared that the world was passing through a terrible crisis, but 'on this occasion . . . we are fighting for peace, for the nations no longer face one another in fratricidal strife; they are fighting, for the first time, side by side against an adverse fate, which only full co-operation can hope to circumvent'.

These words were still true at the beginning of September. The common front still held; in spite of friction and ill feeling between individual countries, the thought of war was still repugnant to them all, and the basis of universal co-operation through the League still, therefore, subsisted. But from the moment when the Japanese Army in Manchuria took charge of the national affairs, the common front was broken.

Before the Covenant came into force, every State could claim for itself the sole right to decide whether to make war or not. It was under no obligation to accept or even to invite the judgement of others. This right, unquestioned till then, had been formally renounced by every Member of the League, and effectively, if not formally, renounced also by the United States and Russia. It was now claimed and exercised by Japan. Though the complicated circumstances of the dispute might make it difficult for other States to agree on their duty as Members of the League, there could be no possible doubt that Japan was breaking the Covenant both in its letter and its spirit; and her successful defiance of the League was an encouragement to all those groups and individuals elsewhere who saw their personal or national advantage in a return to international anarchy. The system of the Covenant, which had been accepted in substance by the governments and peoples of the whole world, was now openly challenged. The Council and the Assembly might still be from one point of view a supreme international court, endowed with the right to pronounce a verdict on the policies of all



States. From another point of view they were, at the same time, the organs of an institution on trial for its life.

Thus, on a sudden, the League entered upon the third stage of its history. The first years had been spent in building up its own structure and methods. In the second period, it had functioned steadily and successfully, carrying out the duties imposed upon it by the Covenant or confided to it by other treaties, slowly extending its authority over all the international aspects of human affairs. Now began the period of struggle. In the five years from September 1931 to July 1936, Japan, Germany, and Italy in turn moved into the anti-League camp and exerted themselves to destroy the Covenant and thereby to dislocate the unity of the peace-loving majority. It is a story of defeat, recovery, and finally of defeat once more after victory had been almost in sight.

In the press of sudden and violent action by the aggressive powers, the regular succession of Council and Assembly meetings was rudely broken. For months together the Council, the Assembly, and that still greater gathering, the Disarmament Conference, were in almost continual session. This third decisive section of our story must therefore be related rather as a series of overlapping episodes than as fitting into the accustomed rhythm of the annals of the League.

The first of these episodes was the Manchurian conflict, the acute stage of which lasted from September 1931 to May 1933. Next, the Disarmament Conference, in two clearly distinct phases—the first from February to December 1932, the second from January 1933 to Germany's withdrawal from the League (October 1933). Overlapping with these, the Chaco war and the dispute between Colombia and Peru, with which the Council and Assembly were constantly occupied from the autumn of 1932 until the summer of 1934. There followed the entry of Russia, the settlement of the European crisis brought about by the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia (October 1934), the Saar plebiscite, the rearmament of Germany. Finally, we reach the climax—Italy's attack on Ethiopia, the League's resistance, and the collapse of the Covenant system in consequence of its defeat by the combined action of Mussolini in Africa and of Hitler in the Rhineland.

The rape of Manchuria was a turning-point in the history of Japan and of China as well as of the League. Indeed it was in a sense a more decisive event in the former than in the latter. The blow to the League was destined to prove severe, but not fatal. But the peace of the Far East was irretrievably shattered, and the unprecedented misery and destruction which have smitten the two great Eastern countries were the direct consequence of Japanese action in the autumn of 1931. The

historian of China and Japan needs, therefore, to study in detail the antecedent causes of this fateful change in Japanese policy. In her case, as in that of Germany a few months later, the economic crisis played into the hands of the party of violence. Japan was particularly sensitive to the fluctuations of her foreign trade; and the sudden drop in the prices and quantities of her exports had brought widespread poverty and discontent. But apart from this temporary disturbance, there were profound and complex reasons for the highly emotional attitude of the Japanese people in regard to Manchuria—the frustration of Japanese ambitions after her victories over China and Russia; the double demands of an increasing population and a rising standard of living; pride in the nation's military and naval power, its firm discipline and unequalled courage, together with the natural sentiment that these possessions meant nothing unless they were used; and the conviction, vague in its formulation but deeply rooted in the national mind, that Manchuria was foreordained to provide the solution of her problems and that no other solution could exist. To Japan her interests in Manchuria all counted as rights: she had built up by force, and threats, and bribes, a network of treaties of uncertain extent and doubtful validity, and she felt convinced of her moral right to enforce her own interpretation of them all.

Manchuria, indeed, was part of the Chinese Empire, but not, in Japanese eyes, an integral part. It was practically independent of the National government, being subjected to the despotism first of a bandit chief, Chang Tso-lin, and then of Chang Hsueh-liang, his effeminate and inexperienced son. Their rule was devoid of purpose or ideal, lacking popular support, maintained only by methods of tyranny. And yet, thanks in great part to the Japanese railway system and the various industrial and administrative organizations which went with it, this same Manchuria was filling up with Chinese settlers from within the Great Wall, who found there at least a far better chance of order and security than they had experienced at home for the last twenty years. Thus the territory to which Japan looked for salvation, and which had always in her eyes been a region apart from what she called China proper, was becoming, rapidly and irresistibly, Chinese in population and sentiment. Sooner or later it would be completely merged in that Chinese commonwealth, weak, formless, unorganized, torn by faction, which yet possesses in the common consciousness of its hundreds of millions of individuals an impregnable centre of resistance to attacks from outside. Already in various ways the unifying process was at work: it was hampering Japan's present enterprises, and threatened to be fatal to her future ambitions.

This profound clash of interests over the future of Manchuria was for both countries as severe a test of statesmanship as any that history records. Some attempts were made, during the months that preceded the outbreak of September 1931, to find a new basis of agreement, but these never got beyond the stage of preliminary conversations. At that date, there subsisted a multitudinous complex of disputes concerning finance, communications, railway rates, the right of Japanese to settle, lease land, or travel in Manchuria, similar rights for Japan's Korean subjects, the functions of Japanese administrators, magistrates, teachers, police, and soldiers, and many other questions of a like character. Underlying these, and making their solution particularly difficult, was the fundamental difference over the future fate of the country—China's determination to maintain her sovereignty over her North-East Provinces and to bring them into complete unity with the rest of the country, Japan's determination, undefined but immovable, to control their economic resources and their political development either by indirect influence or, if need be, by direct annexation.

From the point of view of League history, however, these claims and counter-claims based upon past events are no part of the story. It was never the task of the League to judge between them. Had both parties invited it to do so, it could undoubtedly have found adequate and practical solutions for the various problems involved, and have established the future of Manchuria on a peaceful basis. China, helpless to resist the ruthless use of Japan's military and diplomatic resources, declared herself ready to accept and carry out all recommendations and decisions which the Council might make. Japan, however, was resolved to impose her own terms. Her apologists, both Japanese and foreign, were never tired of insisting on the complex origins of the trouble, on the many obligations which China had undertaken and never fulfilled, on her broken promises and unpaid debts. But the recital of these claims served only to confuse the issue so long as Japan did not ask the League to act as judge. They helped to conceal what was from the point of view of the world as a whole the essential fact, namely, that Japan was violating the Covenant by settling her dispute by force and not submitting it to arbitration, judicial decision, or examination by the Council. These tactics met with a good deal of success: as later in Italy's war against Ethiopia, criticism of the victim was, in part, effective in justifying the illegal action of the aggressor. And Japan was encouraged, and European opinion was confused, by the attitude of large sections among the European communities in the Far East, which, having long resented the rising nationalism of China, were glad at first to see a return to a policy of force, and ridiculed the idea that the League of Nations could

usefully intervene. It was not many years before they bitterly regretted that its intervention had failed.

The first news of fighting in Manchuria reached Geneva on September 19th, 1931. It was the day fixed for the opening meeting of a new Council; the annual elections had taken place a few days previously and China had been elected by a unanimous vote. Even in a period of general anxiety, the calamities of China had aroused the sympathy of the world. The Yangtze and the Yellow River had both been in flood on a catastrophic scale; the dead were reckoned in hundreds of thousands, the starving and homeless in millions; and the threat of epidemics was now added. The Assembly had passed a special vote of sympathy; the technical committees of the League were organizing such assistance as they could, and the Council had nominated a Director-General to take charge of the flood relief service on the spot. But although affairs in the Far East had thus come in for their share of the Assembly's attention, it was with surprise and consternation that the delegations learned that the Japanese army had sallied forth from the zone of the South Manchurian Railway, which was all they had ever claimed the right to guard, and had occupied Mukden, Antung, and other places, driving out the Chinese garrisons with numerous casualties and disarming those that remained. It was impossible, on the basis of these early telegrams, to form an estimate of what was really happening. At the request of the Council the Japanese representative, K. Yoshizawa, and the Chinese representative, Alfred Sze, stated briefly what they knew and promised to get full information without delay.

Thus within a few hours of the first shots at Mukden, the affair was already being discussed in the Council at Geneva. Yet even now it seemed as though London rather than Manchuria were the most critical point in the international scene. The week-end was filled with rumours of naval mutiny and financial crisis; and on Monday, September 21st, the Assembly heard with amazement that Britain was abandoning the gold standard. On that same day Alfred Sze, having received information and instructions from his government in Nanking, announced that the situation was much more serious than had at first appeared, and called upon the Council, under the terms of Article 11 of the Covenant, to take such action as it deemed wise and effectual to maintain the peace.

The real nature of the Japanese enterprise was not at once apparent to the world. It was evident that the Army was acting on a deliberate plan. The incident which provided the pretext for starting operations was obviously unimportant; indeed, even at that early stage it seemed

highly doubtful whether there had been any real incident at all. But it was still impossible to tell whether the Army merely intended to make a violent demonstration with the object of bringing the Chinese in Manchuria to a more submissive frame of mind, or whether it had wider and more permanent ambitions. It may be that the Japanese Army itself could not at this point have answered the question. It is certain that it had acted without the sanction of the Cabinet. It is even possible that the Kwantung Command, which had a tradition of radicalism and independence, had deliberately forced the hand of the General Staff in Tokyo. In any case, during the first days of the operation, the government sincerely intended to limit its scope and bring it to an end by recalling the troops into their own zone. The Prime Minister, Wakatsuki, the Foreign Minister, Shidehara, and the Foreign Service as a whole, were indignant at the Army's behaviour. Their sense of loyalty to the nation obliged them to defend it abroad; but in sending reassuring reports to Geneva and promising the prompt withdrawal of the troops, they meant to keep their word. Nor did they deny the competence of the Council to deal with the affair. They insisted, however, that the first step was to start direct negotiations between China and Japan, the Council being kept informed of their progress but not taking part. Such is the usual view taken by powerful States of how best to solve their difficulties with their weaker neighbours.

The troops of Chang Hsueh-liang made little or no resistance. Though overwhelmingly superior in numbers, they could not be compared with the Japanese in discipline, morale, or equipment; they had no belief in their own capacity to stand up to a Japanese assault, and made hardly any pretence of doing so. Making a virtue of necessity, both Chang Hsueh-liang and the Chinese government gave orders that no resistance should be offered. From Nanking, General Chiang Kai-shek issued a message to the nation calling upon it to remain calm, maintain public order, and see that no attacks were made on Japanese or other foreigners. It was, he said, an hour of unprecedented gravity for the Chinese people; but they had placed the matter in the hands of the League and were confident that justice would be done. The Generalissimo's appeal was heard. Though the National government had been faced with a danger of civil war from two directions, the news of Japanese aggression served to unite the hostile factions under the leadership of Nanking, and the population showed admirable self-control. It was as the spokesman of the whole country that Sze addressed the Council on the morning of September 22nd. Sze was an excellent representative, clear, quick, and courteous; capable of eloquence, and knowing how to impress his hearers by the very moderation of his

language. The situation, he said, was even graver than his letter of the previous day had indicated. More cities had been occupied, the local authorities had been arrested, the town of Changchun had been bombarded with great loss of life. He called upon the Council to act with speed and declared that China accepted in advance whatever decision it might see fit to make.

Yoshizawa, who had previously been Japanese Minister in Peking and had become the regular Japanese representative on the Council following Adatci's election as Judge of the Permanent Court, was stiff and hesitating in manner, lacking not only Sze's eloquence but also his charm. It was a favourite theme of the Japanese and of their many supporters in Europe and the Far East that the Japanese case was really much stronger than the Council realized, but that Yoshizawa did not know how to bring out its full weight or, in general, how to play the Geneva game. This claim was quite unfounded. Yoshizawa, though a slow speaker, was not slow in seeing a point; and showed the greatest ingenuity in raising difficulties of procedure or interpretation. The Council was always ready to give him time and the Japanese case was, in fact, put forward by him as efficiently as anybody else could have done it. His answer now was first to enlarge on the vital importance of Manchuria to Japan and on the broken promises of China. The military action was only a local incident which the Japanese government intended to settle without delay by means of direct negotiations with Nanking. Premature intervention would lead to dangerous excitement in Japan. In any case, having not yet received full instructions, he must ask for a short adjournment.

To this the others reluctantly agreed. Japan was clearly playing for time, but in view of the distance between Tokyo and Geneva it was impossible to press for immediate answers. Meanwhile the Council called on both sides to do everything in their power to prevent the situation from growing more serious; authorized its President to continue in consultation with Yoshizawa and Sze; and decided to keep the United States officially informed of all its proceedings.

The tension which now filled men's minds in Geneva was fully shared in Washington. Japanese aggression in Manchuria was a threat to some of the dearest objects of American policy—the upholding of the Kellogg Pact, and the maintenance of the integrity of China and of the general settlement of Pacific problems embodied in the Washington Treaties. Further, Stimson, the Secretary of State, was a cordial friend of the League for its own sake. He was, for both reasons, sincerely desirous of supporting the efforts of the Council and the Assembly: and the latter were no less anxious to keep in harmony with the purposes of Washing-

ton. But though the American government did much to encourage the organs of the League, the fact that it stood aside, sharing neither the rights nor the duties of the League powers, was a fatal handicap to joint action. And this dualism led at the very outset to a grave misfortune. It was generally expected that the Council's first move would be to organize a Commission of Inquiry, composed of men already on or near the spot, with instructions to report to it upon the actual conditions in the vicinity of the railway zone, on which completely contradictory statements were made by the spokesmen of China and Japan. This measure would have been in accordance with the classic precedent of the Greco-Bulgarian conflict, to which the Manchurian crisis, in its early stages, bore an evident resemblance. It would have been in accordance also with common sense, since direct communications with Manchuria were controlled by the Japanese and authentic information was urgently needed. China demanded that such a Commission should be sent. Japan naturally opposed it; but Cecil, representing Britain, was ready to contemplate sending a Commission even if Japanese assent could not be obtained and, had the United States been prepared to co-operate, the Council would without doubt have gladly followed his lead. Norman Davis, who was in Geneva on other business, called up Hoover and Stimson in turn on the Trans-Atlantic telephone and begged them to seize what he described as a wonderful opportunity, by allowing an American representative to sit with the Council and by participating in the proposed Commission of Inquiry. Stimson, however, was persuaded that the sending of a Commission would make it harder for Shidehara to impose his will on the Army: he refused to join, strongly urged that the Council should abandon the plan, and made it plain that he was in favour of encouraging direct negotiations between China and Japan. He did not conceal his views from the Japanese Ambassador in Washington: and this diplomatic success led at once to a notable stiffening in the attitude of Japan both in Geneva and in Tokyo. Her greatest fear had been the establishment of a common front between the Council and the United States.

It was not till three days later that Yoshizawa informed the Council that he had now received his government's instructions and was able to submit a formal statement of its views. Having recited the official Japanese account of the events of September 18th and the following days—an account which pictured the Japanese army as reluctantly taking a minimum of precautions to protect itself and its compatriots against Chinese attack—he declared that there was no military occupation; that Japan had no warlike intentions and no territorial designs; that she had already withdrawn most of the troops back to the railway

zone and intended to withdraw the rest as soon as the lives and property of Japanese subjects in Manchuria were no longer in danger, which it was hoped would be very soon. His government was anxious to enter into direct negotiations with China; and the best thing the Council could do would be to refrain from all intervention.

In reply, the Chinese representative asserted that his government was ready to guarantee the safety of Japanese lives and property, and pointed with justifiable pride to the self-control shown by the Chinese people. Only from the British colony of Hong Kong had any attacks on Japanese been reported. Japan had therefore no excuse for not withdrawing her troops at once; when she had done so, his government would be prepared to negotiate, but not before.

These declarations brought some temporary relief. The Council had no reason to disbelieve the assurances of the Japanese representative and, indeed, so far as the Tokyo government was concerned, they were probably meant to be sincere. It accordingly made a highly optimistic report to the Assembly, which, as in the days of Corfu, was anxiously watching its proceedings. And on September 30th it adopted a resolution, with the assent of both parties, repeating the reassuring statements that had been made, and particularly those of Yoshizawa to the effect that his government had no territorial designs in Manchuria and intended to continue the withdrawal of its troops in proportion as safety was assured to Japanese nationals. It called upon both sides to prevent any extension of the conflict, and decided to meet again a fortnight later unless the situation were cleared up in the meantime. As regards inquiries on the spot, it yielded to the intransigence of Japan. It was understood that some Members of the Council would dispatch Military Attachés or other observers to the scene of action, and would pass on to the Council any information which they might send back and which could be of importance for its work. A number of such observers were sent, and doubtless made useful reports to their home governments; but nothing of the slightest value was received by the Council from this source. It was once more proved that the business of the League could be done only by the organs of the League and that it was useless to entrust it to the agents of individual governments.

Following the interruption of the Council session, the situation in Manchuria grew steadily worse. The Japanese Army belied Yoshizawa's promises, proceeding to what became more and more obviously a military occupation. Their ultimate purposes were now beginning to be foreshadowed by attempts to bribe or intimidate the local Chinese into forming new administrative organs under Japanese control, and by their evident intention to destroy every trace of the regime of Marshal Chang



Hsueh-liang. General Honjo, the Japanese Commander at Mukden, declared that the Marshal's authority was no longer recognized by Japan. A considerable remnant of the civil and military organization of Liaoning Province was still under his direct command at Chinchow near its southern border. To make its purpose unmistakably plain, the Japanese Army sent eleven planes to bomb Chinchow on October 8th; and accompanied the bombs with leaflets warning the population to have nothing to do with Chang Hsueh-liang under pain of severe penalties to come.

As for the government at Tokyo, its position was becoming more and more self-contradictory. It still made efforts to control the Army; it declared General Honjo's statement to be unauthorized and publicly deplored the bombing of Chinchow. At the same time it introduced into the international aspect of the question new complications which gave the Army everything they wanted. In the first place, the withdrawal of the Japanese forces was made conditional not merely on the safety of Japanese lives and property, but on previous agreement by China to certain fundamental principles without which it was claimed that there could be no restoration of confidence and no enduring conditions of safety. Thus the promised evacuation was to be preceded by negotiations of indefinite scope which were to take place under military pressure. In the second place, Japan put forward the doctrine that the boycott of Japanese goods, which was now effective throughout China, was a breach of the Kellogg Pact, and that since China was thus trying to force the settlement of the dispute by other than pacific means, Japan was entitled to take such counter-action as she might consider necessary.

The grave news of the bombing of Chinchow caused the Council to meet again on October 13th. Its President, Lerroux, was unable to leave Madrid and, France coming next in alphabetical order, the Council found itself under the chairmanship of Briand. This seemed a good omen. It was also encouraging to learn that the United States was now prepared to send a representative to sit at the Council table. A few days earlier, on October 5th, a strongly worded message had been addressed to the Secretary-General by Stimson. The League, said the Secretary of State, should 'in no way relax its vigilance and in no way fail to assert all the pressure and authority within its competence towards regulating the action of China and Japan. . . . The American Government, acting independently through its diplomatic representatives, will endeavour to reinforce what the League does . . . .' Briand, therefore, after a first day spent in hearing the charges and countercharges of Sze and Yoshizawa, proposed to his colleagues to invite the United States to

participate in their proceedings. The Kellogg Pact, he pointed out, was no less in question than the Covenant, and the welcome offer of co-operation from Washington could be most effectively carried out by such a direct form of consultation.

The suggestion had already been discussed in secret meeting, and Yoshizawa had opposed it, ostensibly on constitutional grounds, though his real reason was, of course, his government's fear lest such open encouragement from the United States might strengthen the action of the Council. He raised a number of questions on the legal consequences of the precedent which would be created by inviting a particular non-Member State to sit on the Council simply on the ground that the Kellogg Pact (to which almost all States, Members of the League or not, were parties) had been invoked. His questions were by no means easy to answer, and in any other circumstances the Council would have agreed to his demand that the Hague Court or a commission of jurists should be asked to report on the constitutional issues involved, and to say, further, whether the decision could be taken by a majority vote or whether, as he believed, it was a matter not of procedure but of substance, and therefore required unanimity. As it was, the other Members of the Council, with the exception of Germany, were unwilling to acquiesce in delays which would have seemed discourteous to the United States and would have exposed the Council itself to the criticism that it was spending its time in arguments on matters of form at a moment when military operations and air bombardments were being daily reported. The invitation was therefore treated as a question of procedure and its dispatch approved by 13 votes to 1. It was promptly accepted, and on October 16th Prentiss Gilbert, the American Consul in Geneva, took his place at the Council table.

By all supporters of the League, official or private, the fact that a delegate of the United States was taking part for the first time in the proceedings of the Council was hailed as an occasion of profound historic importance. Briand, and after him the other members, welcomed Gilbert's presence as marking a new advance in the organization of world peace. But, through no fault of Gilbert, an enterprising and public-spirited official, these hopes were quickly cast down. Stimson was disconcerted by the strength of Japanese opposition: the isolationist press attacked him; and the very warmth with which his decision was greeted in Geneva increased his embarrassment. The State Department reverted, therefore, to its usual prudence. Gilbert's instructions were to the effect that his government could not join in formulating any action envisaged under the Covenant, but was willing to give its moral support and to take counsel, if required, on the method of bringing public

opinion to bear in the prevention of any breach of the Kellogg Pact. In fact, his participation in the meetings which he attended, both public and secret, was limited to reciting these instructions and expressing his appreciation of the welcome offered by each member of the Council. And Stimson was only persuaded not to withdraw him from the last meetings of the session by pressing representations of the disastrous effects of such a move on public opinion.

Gilbert's arrival was followed by a series of secret meetings; he was present, but took no part in the discussion. The Council, basing itself upon Yoshizawa's earlier assurances, pressed Japan, first, to agree to a time-limit within which the promised withdrawal should be completed; and secondly, to state with precision the conditions upon which she now declared that that withdrawal must depend. These endeavours were unsuccessful; the Japanese were ready to repeat their promises and assurances in general terms, but refused to make any binding statement. On October 24th, after six days of continuous discussion, the Council met in public and Briand submitted a resolution. His text recapitulated much of the contents of the previous resolution of September 30th but added two outstanding points: first, that Japan should begin the withdrawal without delay and complete it by the next meeting of the Council, which was fixed for three weeks later; second, that the moment the withdrawal had been completed, the parties should enter into direct negotiations for the settlement of all the questions at issue. Since Japan would neither consent to a time-limit for withdrawal, nor admit that the opening of negotiations should await the moment when military occupation had been brought to an end, she refused to accept this resolution and formally voted against it.

It has already been mentioned that the League had recently adopted the theory that an effective decision under Article 11 required the consent of all Members of the Council, not excepting the Member whose aggressive intention it was designed to control. Each Member thus possessed a veto which took away all legal effect from the unanimous vote of the impartial Members and deprived the Council of its power of preventive action during the stages of a dispute which preceded the eventual outbreak of hostilities. This had certainly not been the intention when the Covenant was drafted; no such theory had been admitted in dealing with the Greco-Bulgar crisis, nor when the possible methods of action under Article 11 had been laid down by the Council and the Assembly.<sup>1</sup> But the great powers, including the United States, were by no means prepared to risk war with Japan by undertaking coercive measures under any article of the Covenant or otherwise. They had not

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 32.

abandoned the hope that the Japanese assurances might yet prove reliable, and that the affair would soon take a turn for the better; nor did they feel sure that China's own interests would be served by precipitate action against Japan. Public opinion expected results, but there was no evidence that it understood and accepted the risks which a more active policy might involve. Had the principal governments so desired, they could have found unimpeachable grounds for overriding the legal absurdity of the veto; the unanimity of all the disinterested Members of the Council would unquestionably have justified strong measures such as those laid down in 1927. It is possible, though far from certain, that each of them could have won public support for such measures in spite of the loss and danger which would have to be faced. But they were fully resolved to make no such attempt. Each of them had troubles and difficulties of its own. The United States and the members of the British Commonwealth were struggling against the severe effects of the economic depression. France, looking uneasily at the revival of nationalism in Germany, was unwilling to antagonize an important military power. Germany was submerged in unprecedented financial straits and fierce political quarrels. To the smaller countries it was of vital importance that the League should show itself capable of vigorous action, above all in a case of aggression by a greater power against a weak one. But in the nature of things they could only follow the lead of one of the great powers. Thus there arose, as during the crisis of Corfu, a certain rift between the two groups of League Members over this question, which grew deeper as time went on—impatience on the part of the great powers, mistrust on that of the others.

The Council separated on October 24th and met again in Paris according to plan on November 16th. In the interval things had taken an unmistakable turn for the worse. Japan was in the grip of war fever. Troop trains were surrounded by cheering crowds and the press was full of stories of individual heroism, such as that of the wife of an officer ordered to Manchuria who committed suicide, not out of grief for his departure, but so that he might be free to give his whole time to his military duties. Yoshizawa's 'no' at Geneva was the high-light of a play greeted daily with wild applause. At home, the government was losing its hold. In Manchuria fresh troops were arriving and the area of occupation was rapidly extending. Under one of the usual pretexts a Japanese force was sent far north and, at a place where a branch railway crosses the Nonni river within a short distance of the Chinese Eastern Railway, the Chinese for the first time put up something of a fight. After receiving reinforcements the Japanese crossed the C.E.R. and occupied Tsitsihar, capital of the Northern Province of Heilungkiang,

and at least 250 miles from the nearest point in the railway zone. There were skirmishes in Tientsin, no more serious in themselves than many that had occurred in Manchuria, but more alarming to the Western world because the trouble was thus spreading south of the Great Wall to a city where valuable foreign interests were concentrated. Further, the Japanese were laying hands on the revenues of the Three Provinces, thus diminishing the resources of the Central government and reinforcing the new administrative machine which was being set up in Manchuria, Chinese in name but really under Japanese control.

Reassembling in Paris, the Council was no longer strengthened by the presence of an American delegate. Stimson preferred, on this occasion, to keep touch with its proceedings by diplomatic methods. Accordingly, General Dawes, the Ambassador in London, took up his quarters at the Ritz Hotel; there he received from the Secretariat detailed accounts of all that passed, but he was personally unfriendly to the League and did nothing to help the Council. The new British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, attended the first days of the session: and the Japanese sent their powerful and influential Ambassador in London, Matsudaira, not to represent them at the Council, but to exert activity behind the scenes.

The Council was bereft of leadership and painfully uncertain of its course. It seemed faced with the choice between confessing itself unable to make any further attempt to control the march of events, or bringing the question under Article 15 of the Covenant, which would allow decisions to be taken without the vote of the parties and would involve the direct threat of sanctions. The first alternative was clearly impossible; but the second seemed to the chief Members of the Council too dangerous to be seriously considered, all the more so since Stimson had just announced that his government was convinced that the matter could be settled without the use of military pressure.<sup>1</sup> China herself could have elected to take this course and, in fact, did so two months later. She could not, however, disregard the risk that the application of economic sanctions to Japan might lead to invasion and to war in the full sense of the word. Indeed, neither then nor later did China break off diplomatic or other official relations with Japan, though trade relations had been brought almost to a standstill by the boycott.

At this point, Yoshizawa arrived with a proposal, put forward in the first place as a personal suggestion of his own, that the League should send a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the whole situation both in

<sup>1</sup> On November 19th Stimson told Dawes that if the Council decided on sanctions, its action would be overwhelmingly supported by public opinion in America and the United States government would not interfere. But it is not apparent that Dawes made any use of this message. (See *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1931, vol. i, pp. 498 sqq.)

Manchuria and China. Such a plan, which would have been welcomed two months before, now involved accepting the indefinite prolongation of a situation which was undeniably contrary to the Covenant. But in the dilemma in which the Council was held, it seemed to offer the only hope. Was it not likely that the arrival of an important League Commission might exert a moderating influence on the Japanese Army and lead in due course to a gradual reversal of the trend towards aggression? These views began to prevail after two days of secret debate, during which it became known that they were strongly endorsed by the United States. Accordingly, on November 21st, Yoshizawa put forward his proposal officially at a public meeting. Sze, while insisting that no solution of the dispute was possible until all Japanese forces had been withdrawn, was nevertheless favourable to the dispatch of a Commission, no doubt for the same reasons as the neutral Members of the Council. These reasons, indeed, almost certainly were those of Shidehara and of some members at least of the Japanese Foreign Service, although, as usually happens at such times, the most chauvinistic members of that Service were elbowing their way into positions of control. Briand and his colleagues proceeded to draft a resolution providing for the dispatch of the Commission and defining its terms of reference. There followed nearly three weeks of humiliating and painful negotiation during which the Japanese disputed this text word by word and continually asked for time in order to consult Tokyo. They felt that the Council now had greater reason than themselves to fear a rupture of the discussions, and made full use of their advantage.

Meanwhile the Council was faced by an alarming development of the military situation. On the pretext of rescuing their compatriots in Tientsin, the Japanese Army prepared to drive through Chinchow and Shanhaikwan down the Mukden-Peking railway to Tientsin itself. A force had been concentrated at Mukden and was actually on its way south. At the request of China, the Council insisted on the establishment of a neutral zone at Chinchow, and its chief Members dispatched their Military Attachés to Chinchow to see that the zone was respected, though Japan would not allow them to function as a League Commission. This pressure from the Council, reinforced by a strongly worded message from Stimson, led to the sending, for once, of a firm order from Tokyo, and the expedition was stopped.

It was not until December 9th that the final details were settled, and on that day the Council once again met in public. On December 10th it adopted a resolution—this time again a unanimous and therefore legally effective resolution—the essential part of which related to the dispatch of a League Commission of Inquiry to the Far East. The Com-

mission's task, as defined by the Council, was only to study and report on all the circumstances of an international character which threatened peace and good relations between China and Japan. It had no power to control the military movements of either side or to initiate negotiations between them. Its mission did not explicitly include the duty, or the right, to make recommendations for a settlement of the dispute. Its appointment therefore could in no way be considered as involving the recognition by Japan of her obligation to submit the dispute to the Council. She had taken and was continuing to take direct action, contrary both to the Covenant and to the Kellogg Pact. And Yoshizawa, while still promising withdrawal as soon as possible, claimed that his Government was not precluded from operating against bandits and other lawless elements—a declaration which foreshadowed clearly enough the determination of the Army to extend its control wherever it might feel inclined.

Briand, as President of the Council, repeated that neither the Covenant, nor the doctrine laid down by the Council in its handling of previous disputes, could authorize any State, however well grounded its grievances, to seek redress by other than peaceful means. He undoubtedly hoped that the Commission, by its presence in the Far East, might produce results much more decisive than were indicated in its terms of reference, which were obviously inadequate from the point of view of the fulfilment of the Covenant. Such, indeed, were the hopes of the other members of the Council also. Even so, the representatives of the smaller powers accepted the resolution with great reluctance. The Latin American members, in particular, mindful of recent controversy between several Central American Republics and the United States, expressed their misgivings at a decision which seemed to condone the military occupation of Chinese territory and the results achieved by the use of force; and made the condition, so dear to diplomatists and so completely meaningless in effect, that their affirmative vote must be considered as an exceptional case and not as creating a precedent. On the same day, the United States government issued a statement giving its cordial support to the Council's resolution, and in particular to the dispatch of a Commission of Inquiry.

Such was the outcome of the last session of the Council in which the chair of France was occupied by the noble figure of Aristide Briand. In spite of constant ill health, he had sacrificed himself unsparingly during the long and painful meetings of October, November, and December. Before the close, his colleagues, led by Cecil and Scialoja, had told him one after another of their affection and gratitude, as though by some prophetic instinct they had known they were soon to lose him. On

January 12th, 1932, he resigned his office and less than two months later he was dead. The love and trust of his fellow countrymen was then seen. But it had been powerless to arm him effectively against the narrow-minded nationalism of his political opponents, who encouraged Japanese aggression, admired and helped Mussolini, despised the League, and attacked without mercy or scruple the leader who had carried through the treaties of Locarno and the Briand-Kellogg Pact, whose name stood for European reconciliation, for essential humanity, and for all that the world admired in France.

The crisis had now lasted three months; and the League had already suffered a severe loss of prestige and of public confidence. Its enthusiastic supporters had demanded immediate action against Japan, and had declared that this was the test of its value, its power, and its future. Its enemies, while doing all they could to prevent it from acting, were equally quick to announce that its inability to act was the proof of its futility. Both sections agreed, the one with alarm and the other with satisfaction, that the prospects of the Disarmament Conference were greatly compromised. Only two positive results could be shown: a new co-operation with the United States, and the creation of the Lytton Commission. Yet these were very important achievements. The first was, in great part, the fruit of the long and careful efforts of the Secretariat and above all of Drummond. Ten years before, the State Department had not even deigned, or dared, to send the most formal acknowledgement of the communications of the Secretary-General. Now he could without offence propose that the United States should take a seat at the Council table itself. Throughout the Far Eastern crises, as through the South American disputes which followed, and through the vicissitudes of the Disarmament Conference, there was perfect understanding between the Secretariat and the State Department. If co-operation was in practice inadequate and ineffective, this was due to no failure in the method of liaison, but to the essential fact that the United States had refused to share the responsibilities of the Covenant or to participate in the institutions of the League.

As for the Commission of Inquiry, which was destined to make a contribution of high value and importance in the future development of the conflict, its beginnings were regrettably slow. Not until early in January 1932 was it constituted. Its members, drawn exclusively from the great powers, were Lord Lytton, General McCoy, General Claudel, Count Aldrovandi-Marescotti, and Dr Schnee, the two latter being diplomatists by profession. Lord Lytton having been elected Chairman, the Commission was thereafter usually known as the Lytton Commission,



and its report as the Lytton Report. After a preliminary meeting in Geneva, the European members left for the Far East on 3rd February. The delays were disheartening for China, embarrassing and even discreditable to the Council. The Chinese also justly resented the fact that the Commission did not travel by the Trans-Siberian Railway, much the quickest route to Manchuria, but by the westward route, arriving first in Japan and proceeding from there to Shanghai and Nanking before finally reaching Manchuria in April. Four months had then elapsed since the Council's decision, and in that period the position had undergone important changes. It was natural that the Chinese should feel that there had been a failure in energy and decision, and that they should associate this with the other symptoms of irresolution which characterized the attitude of the chief powers. Yet it is difficult to believe that the Commission could have prevented the steady unfolding of Japanese plans. In any case, its final report was to prove so outstanding a service to the Chinese cause as to do more than compensate for the shortcomings of its start.

While the appointment and dispatch of the Commission was getting slowly under way, Japan had as usual quickened the pace as soon as the Council's session came to an end. On the very next day the government resigned and was replaced by one drawn from the Seiyukai party, which possessed no majority in the Diet but enjoyed the support of the Army, having long advocated a policy of firmness towards China in place of Shidehara's patient liberalism. In the next few weeks the Japanese forces destroyed the last vestiges of Chang Hsueh-liang's administration. They moved southward through Chinchow and reached Shanhaikwan, the eastern terminus of the Great Wall. In the north they occupied Harbin. By the end of February they had not only installed Chinese administrations under direct Japanese control in each of the Three Provinces, but had induced the new Governors to hold a meeting at Mukden and declare that Manchuria was henceforth an independent State completely separated from China.

Early in the new year, the United States government, which had hitherto been doing little more than offer its friendly endorsement to the exertions of the Council, took a new initiative of historic importance. In a note addressed, on January 7th, 1932, both to China and Japan, it declared that the United States would not recognize any agreement between them which might impair American treaty rights in China, nor any situation brought about by means contrary to the Kellogg Pact. Before sending it, Stimson told the British and French governments of his intentions and his hope that they and others would follow the

American lead. The sequel was unbelievable to anyone who did not realize the spirit in which the principal Foreign Offices were dealing with Far Eastern questions. The British reply took the form of a statement, published in the press and communicated to Washington, to the effect that the government were anxious that foreign commerce should not be shut out of Manchuria; that the Japanese had given public assurances on the subject; and that it was not therefore considered necessary to address to Japan a note on the lines of that issued by the United States. Not a word was said about the Covenant, or the Kellogg Pact; not a word about the integrity of China. In view of this apparent disavowal of the American action, France and others remained silent. A few weeks later, after the Shanghai battle had begun, the Council Members adopted an attitude modelled on that of the United States, and this was later confirmed in set terms by the Assembly. But meantime one more chance of an effective common front had been stupidly wasted. Japan, greatly heartened by this event, returned a sarcastic answer to Washington, and thereafter frequently repeated (and subsequently broke) her promises concerning foreign trade in Manchuria.

Three weeks later Japan dealt a new and deadly blow at the peace of the Far East. At the end of January, when the Council opened its new session—the sixty-sixth of the series—and while delegates were gathering in hundreds for the opening of the Disarmament Conference, heavy fighting broke out at Shanghai. This new phase of the conflict started, like that in Manchuria, from the aggressive action of Japanese forces—the Navy being this time on the front of the stage. As before, various incidents of a minor character were the pretext for attack, and Chinese resistance, which this time was stubborn, was the pretext for pushing the attack ever deeper into Chinese territory.

In the end, after receiving extensive reinforcements from home, the Japanese troops remained masters of the field. But the Shanghai battle as a whole proved a setback to their ambitions. Their operations were carried on from the International Settlement and were thus reported by many independent and competent eye-witnesses. Their campaign opened by bombing the densely populated Chinese district of Chapei, in which thousands of civilians perished, and the ruthless cruelty of their actions was brought home to the whole world. Again, though to China the loss of Manchuria might seem a far greater affair than anything that could happen at Shanghai, the opposite was the case in the minds of the Western powers, who had vast trading interests in the port. Many of those in the Far East, in the Foreign Ministries, and in the general public at home, who had viewed with indifference, perhaps even with satisfaction, the lesson which was being administered to China in the

north-east, became alarmed when war came to the Yangtze Valley. In the third place, the terrible stories of Chapei, the resentment and horror aroused all over the world, could not be kept altogether from the knowledge of the Japanese people: some signs of doubt and regret began to show themselves, the more so since the Navy had started an operation which it had not the resources to carry through, and the Army was displeased at having to spend great efforts in coming to its rescue. Most important of all, the Chinese troops held on with magnificent courage against the repeated onslaughts of the Japanese. The latter, though far more heavily armed and possessing complete command of the air and of the rivers, were again and again driven back. It was not till after over a month of hard fighting that the Japanese Commander used his naval power to outflank the Chinese entrenchments: even then the Chinese made a skilful withdrawal and took up positions in which they were quite capable of continuing the battle. When in the early days of March an armistice was at last arranged, the Chinese had shown for the first time that they could stand up to Japanese regular troops. The effect on the morale of the nation was immense.

Never, perhaps, had a Council session opened in such difficulty and uncertainty as that of January 25th, 1932. At this most critical moment, its natural leaders had lost confidence in themselves and seemed resigned to their own inability to take charge of events. Pierre Laval, who was now for a few weeks Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of France, did not come at all. Simon, secretive and undecided, left his colleagues bewildered and discouraged: he appeared at two or three meetings, and then gave way to one or other of three different substitutes—Cecil, who was neither a member of, nor favourable to, the new government, J. H. Thomas and Lord Londonderry, who were at best indifferent to the League and inexperienced in foreign affairs. All the delegates were gravely preoccupied with the problems of the Disarmament Conference, which was due to open a week later. All realized how much the possibility of agreement on armaments reduction was lessened by the events in the Far East and the helplessness of the West; the sense of impending crisis deepened as the moment when the implacable dilemma—reduction of French, or increase of German, armaments—must be faced, drew swiftly nearer. Great decisions had to be taken both in Europe and Asia: and the men who had to take them seemed painfully unequal to their gigantic responsibilities. Nor were the smaller powers on the Council able to fill the gap. Their representatives were anxious enough to fulfil the Covenant, but there was no strong personality who could make the great powers listen and answer as Nansen or Branting might have done.

The American government, though no more ready than the rest to contemplate economic sanctions, was now deeply concerned to see the general danger to the new system of collective security; but it was hopelessly frustrated by not being a Member of the League. Neither the Kellogg Pact nor the Nine-Power Treaty provided any machinery for action. Stimson made a tentative move towards starting formal consultation with the signatories of the latter Treaty. They were bound by it to respect the territorial and administrative integrity of China: and Japan was not merely disregarding this obligation but was asserting that it was no longer valid, because conditions in China were such as could not be foreseen when she and the others had signed the Treaty. The same discreditable argument was appearing in newspapers which were generally believed to be in touch with the views of the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay. But after a few days of discussion by telephone and cable with Simon, Stimson came to the conclusion that his project was unwelcome, and decided to give it up. 'I seemed doomed to inaction', he wrote later.<sup>1</sup> But he made no new effort to establish open co-operation with the Council; and while the action of the United States was rendered ineffective by the fact that she was not a Member of the League and could not make use of the Covenant, that of the League was equally frustrated by the absence of the United States and Russia.

It was characteristic of the lowering of the Council's prestige that its discussion of the conflict during January and February was mainly carried on by the two parties, and that both spoke in words and tones of bitter hostility. China, disconsolate and apprehensive, meeting little sympathy in the great organs of the European press, saw in the Council only a sounding-board through which she could make the world listen to her wrongs. Dr W. W. Yen, the new Chinese delegate, had not the calm and moderation of Sze, but he was a highly effective advocate. The Japanese delegate now was Sato, an old Geneva hand, well known and well liked by those who had sat with him on the Disarmament Commission and many other League bodies. With natural impassiveness and nothing to show whether he agreed with or hated the instructions he received, his arguments and affirmations were in substance wounding and contemptuous towards China as those of his predecessor had never been. It was humiliating to the League that no member of the Council intervened to correct accounts of the events in Shanghai which all knew to be untrue, to reject assertions that China was not an organized State and could not be treated as such by her fellow Members of the League, or to appeal to the obligations undertaken by other States under the Nine-Power Treaty.

<sup>1</sup> H. L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis* (New York, Harper, 1936), p. 165.

The Council's hopes were aroused from time to time by reports, usually submitted by the British representative, of armistice negotiations at Shanghai. But each proposal was refused by Japan and followed by intensification of her military pressure. At last, on February 16th, the twelve neutral members of the Council were persuaded by the Secretariat to make an urgent appeal to the Japanese government. They pointed out that China had from the first put her case in the hands of the League and agreed in advance to accept its proposals for settlement. Japan had in the past been punctilious in fulfilling her international obligations: but in this dangerous crisis she was not making use of the methods of the Covenant. They appealed to her high sense of honour and the confidence which her fellow Members had placed in her conduct hitherto. And on Simon's initiative they reminded her that no infringement of the territorial integrity or change in the political independence of a Member of the League, if brought about by external aggression, ought to be recognized as valid by its fellow Members. Thus in cautious language Britain, France, and the rest of the Council followed the lead given by Stimson six weeks earlier. Further, by addressing themselves to one party only, they deliberately showed that they held it primarily responsible for the situation.

Meanwhile, China had taken steps in application of the Covenant. On January 29th she asked that the question should be dealt with under Article 15: and a few days later, in exercise of her rights under that Article, she asked that it should be considered by the Assembly instead of by the Council. The first step meant that there would now be a clear procedure, laid down in detail in the Covenant, not capable of being held up by either of the parties, leading to a formal pronouncement by the League as to the rights and wrongs of the case, and opening eventually the door to the use of economic or other sanctions. The second step was in effect an appeal to the rank and file of the League, whose impatience with the inaction of the leading Members was growing into indignation. Sato tried to raise legal obstacles to each request, but the rights of China were unquestionable, and the Council endorsed them without hesitation.

Under Article 15 the Secretary-General was charged with the immediate duty of making arrangements for a full investigation of the dispute, and Drummond set to this task without delay. His first thought was naturally to use the Lytton Commission, which was about to leave for the Far East. But whereas the relatively slow inquiries which that body would be able to make in Manchuria might be the best, and indeed the only possible, way of providing an adequate investigation of events in the north, they were clearly inadequate to meet the situation

at Shanghai. He therefore formed, with the agreement of the powers concerned, an Investigation Committee, consisting of the consuls at that port. By good fortune, one of his most gifted subordinates was on the spot—Robert Haas, the head of the Communications and Transit Section of the Secretariat. Haas, who was in China on a mission of advice to the National government, had been instructed to stay there and act as Secretary to the Lytton Commission on its arrival. With Haas as Secretary, the Consular Committee met without delay, and began sending reports which were useful as a source of impartial information to the Council. Its messages were signed by the Italian Consul, who presided by right of local seniority—a name little known at that time, but destined in a few years to become only too familiar, that of Galeazzo Ciano.

These measures having been taken by the Secretary-General, the Council convoked the Assembly for March 3rd, 1932, and a new wind of energy blew through the corridors of the League. By a fortunate coincidence, the Shanghai battle came to an end at this time. For the moment, Japan was unwilling to incur further odium—so much at least the pressure of international opinion had achieved: and the Chinese forces were remaining strictly on the defensive. This fact, which gradually became clear during the week of the Assembly's meeting, enabled it to concentrate on the political aspect of its work. And here it received both guidance and encouragement from America. A week before the meeting Stimson published his famous letter to Senator Borah and officially communicated it to the League. It was a warning to Japan and was at the same time deliberately intended to suggest to the Assembly that, by adopting the principle of non-recognition of any new situation brought about by means contrary to the Kellogg Pact, it should build up a formal barrier against military conquests such as might impress not only Japan but also any other prospective aggressor. The Assembly was ready to accept this principle without hesitation: the Covenant afforded even better grounds for such an attitude than the Kellogg Pact, and the twelve neutral members of the Council had already given a lead in the same direction. The speeches of one delegate after another took the same line: and Simon put the general purpose into definite form. The Assembly resolved that 'it is incumbent upon the Members of the League not to recognize any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the Covenant of the League or to the Pact of Paris'; and this remained as an accepted principle in the League system until 1938, when many Members abandoned it by recognizing the Italian annexation of Ethiopia.

Freed, by the appeal to Article 15, from the paralysing necessity of securing the assent of both parties to its decisions, the Assembly, with Hymans of Belgium as its President, was able to move forward with a briskness and confidence which contrasted with the long inaction of the Council. The anxiety of the smaller powers to see the Covenant upheld, and their readiness to support any measure to that end, were unmistakable. The Assembly did not, however, attempt to plan, or even to threaten, direct steps against Japan: the Covenant ordained that its first function under Article 15 was to 'endeavour to effect a settlement of the dispute', and the bloody business of Shanghai being now terminated, its best course for this purpose was evidently to await the report of the Lytton Commission. But it swept away the Japanese argument that China was not an 'organized people', and could not therefore claim the rights of League membership, by formally resolving that 'The provisions of the Covenant are entirely applicable to the present dispute.' China did not ask that measures of coercion should be undertaken, but that the Assembly should, by recognizing that the Covenant had been broken, begin 'to mobilize those moral forces by which, we still believe, this conflict can be solved and ended'. Since its function was still to investigate the dispute and try to reach a settlement, the Assembly could not at that stage recognize in precise terms that Japan had violated the Covenant. Short of this, the total effect of its debates and its conclusions had undoubtedly been to mobilize public opinion as the Council had failed to do. All the nations of the world had spoken with the same voice, said Stimson later, in welcoming the resolution adopted on March 11th; and China also took comfort, the more so since the Assembly repeated the call for Japanese withdrawal and affirmed that it was contrary to the spirit of the Covenant that the settlement of the dispute should be sought under the stress of military pressure.

The Assembly set up a special Committee to help in bringing about a definite armistice at Shanghai, to prepare the task of seeking a settlement of the whole dispute, and in general to take over from the Council the work of the League in connexion with the Far Eastern conflict. This was the first time that the practical business of dealing with a specific political problem had thus been transferred. The Assembly included in its Committee all the twelve Council members other than the parties; it added six of its other members, and designated its President, Hymans, as Chairman. It thus studiously avoided anything which might look like discourtesy to, or criticism of, the Council. Nevertheless, it was only too evident that the new role of the Assembly was a direct consequence of the weakness and hesitation which the

Council had displayed, and that these in turn were due to the absence of leadership from Britain and France. The change was symbolically marked by the fact that the new Committee held its first public meeting around the horse-shoe table which had never till then been used by any other body than the Council itself.

For the moment, it was necessary to concentrate on the problem of the armistice at Shanghai; and its terms were settled on May 5th, after eight weeks of argument over details, in which solutions were finally found by the unprecedented collaboration of a great-power Committee sitting in a British cruiser at Shanghai with the Assembly Committee in Geneva. For its real work, the latter had to wait until the report of the Lytton Commission had been received. This alone could form the basis of proposals for a settlement. It was known that the report could not be completed and delivered in Geneva before the middle of September, and allowing time for it to be translated and printed, and to be submitted to the Council, the Committee could hardly expect to get to work on it before November. This interval was the first period of calm in the handling of the Sino-Japanese dispute by the League. In the Far East, too, things were relatively quiet, though the Japanese Army in Manchuria was always spreading its control north, east, and west of the railway zone. But Japan went steadily on with the formation of the so-called independent State of Manchuria, and early in March the new State announced itself to the world, and even to the Secretary-General, under the name of Manchukuo, with its capital at Changchun. No other government took any notice of this announcement, but, though the Lytton Commission exerted itself in Tokyo to prevent the establishment of a *fait accompli* before its report was issued, the Japanese government in August dispatched an important General as its special Ambassador to the new capital, with the mission of concluding a treaty of friendship between Japan and Manchukuo. Formal recognition followed on September 15th, 1932.

In spite of its artificial character, the creation of a nominally Chinese State was a clever move. Japanese 'advisers' held all the real power; at the same time the spokesmen of the Japanese government were able to convince home opinion (which only wanted a façade) that their policy was not an aggressive one, and to confuse the legal and practical issues before the League. It was not the first time such a method had been followed; but it was perhaps the best and, for a time, the most successful example.

The report of the Lytton Commission was signed in Peiping on September 4th, brought by Trans-Siberian Railway to Geneva and



translated and printed with every precaution of secrecy. Awaited with world-wide excitement, the report, when published, was, in the generous words of Stimson, 'found well worthy of these anticipations. It became at once and remains today the outstanding impartial authority upon the subjects which it covers.'<sup>1</sup> Thus, just over a year after the Japanese attack on September 18th, 1931, the rest of the world was at last in possession of an authoritative record of events and an impartial verdict on their real nature. It may be true that the great powers, if they had so chosen, could have given to the Council and Assembly all the facts contained in the Lytton Report. But they did not choose, finding it safer to keep their knowledge to themselves. In any case, no information from individual States could have carried weight equal to that of the unanimous judgement of five competent witnesses who had had special facilities for investigation and unlimited powers of consultation with the governmental authorities of both parties.

The Report contained a full account of the situation in Manchuria before September 1931, describing frankly the unsatisfactory features of the Chinese administration and giving their just weight to the various claims and complaints of Japan. It then proceeded with a narrative of the events in Manchuria on and subsequent to September 18th, 1931, based on the evidence of many of the chief actors and on that of eye-witnesses. It described the salient points of the Shanghai battle. It devoted particular attention to the origins and development of the State of 'Manchukuo', which had already been proclaimed when the Commission reached Manchuria. It also covered with equal thoroughness the question of the economic interests of Japan both in Manchuria and in China as a whole, and the nature and effects of the boycott. Russian interests, it added, were also important and must be taken into account. Finally, the Commission submitted a study of the principles and conditions to which, in its judgement, any satisfactory solution should conform, and made various proposals and suggestions as to how an agreement embodying these principles and conditions might be brought about.

In spite of the care which had evidently been taken to preserve complete impartiality between the conflicting views of China and Japan, the effect of the Report was a substantial vindication of the Chinese case on all fundamental issues. In particular, the Commission stated that the operations of the Japanese Army following on the Mukden incident could not be regarded as measures of legitimate self-defence. As regards the State of Manchukuo, it concluded that the new State could not have been formed without the presence of Japanese troops

<sup>1</sup> Stimson, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

and the activities of Japanese officials; that it had no general Chinese support; and that it could not be considered to have been called into existence by a genuine and spontaneous independence movement.

The courageous action of the Commission in submitting a carefully elaborated programme of settlement was the governing element in the subsequent proceedings of the League. From the moment of the publication of the Report, which met with universal praise, it was clear that the Assembly and the United States would base their future policy upon its findings. These involved the re-establishment of Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria, and were therefore promptly rejected by Japan. While her armies were planning further action in the north, she made ready for a last stand at Geneva. Tokyo followed its usual tactics, asking for time in order to prepare its answer to the Report and to send a new delegate to put its case to the Council and the Assembly. This was Matsuoka, who was reckoned as the clearest political brain of Japan and had special importance as the leading advocate of an uncompromising policy towards China. To meet him, China also sent a new delegate, Wellington Koo, the cleverest of her diplomatists. He had been the Chinese assessor to the Lytton Commission and had accompanied it during its visit to Manchuria.

Their first collision was in the Council, to which the Report of the Commission was addressed. It was known that the Council would not itself discuss the Report but would pass it on to the Assembly as being now in charge of the whole question. Matsuoka, however, naturally seized the first occasion of developing the Japanese reply (November 21st, 1932). As a display of debating power, his speech was such as fully to justify the reputation which had preceded him. He recapitulated at length the story of China's weakness and disorder, laying stress on the Communist danger and the perennial state of civil war between the Communist forces and the armies of Chiang Kai-shek. He emphasized the fact that, as a result of the difference between conditions in China and other countries, foreign troops were stationed on Chinese soil and foreign ships in Chinese waters. He referred to the clashes in past years in which British and American forces had been concerned, particularly at Nanking in 1927. Had not the United States also been forced to use threats to put an end to a Chinese boycott of American commerce? The Japanese action was exactly the same in principle. It was self-defence. Kellogg had said that every sovereign State was alone competent to decide whether circumstances required recourse to war in self-defence; and the resolution adopted by the Senate in ratifying the Kellogg Pact affirmed that the right of self-protection might extend in its effect beyond the limits of the territorial jurisdiction of the State

exercising it. These views had been reiterated by Chamberlain, who had also declared that there were certain regions of the world the protection of which against attack was to the British Empire a measure of self-defence. Did not these pronouncements completely cover Japan's action in Manchuria? All this, though set forth with new vigour, was not new in itself; but it was new and strange to see a British Secretary of State listening in silence to such travesties of British action and policy. Matsuoka went on to contest the judgement of the Report concerning Manchukuo. That State was not created by the Japanese; it was becoming steadily more happy and prosperous; it was the only peaceful solution of the problem. Japan could not consider any settlement which involved its abolition. The Chinese delegate replied at length to Matsuoka's arguments; but he was naturally content for the most part to rest his case upon the principles and judgements of the Report.

The action of the Assembly now moved steadily towards the conclusion which had long appeared inevitable. Its movement was, however, very slow, because Matsuoka continually asked for delay, holding out hopes that he would be able to submit acceptable proposals; and the Assembly was anxious not to be accused of haste or unfairness. The receipt of the Lytton Report was followed by one more general debate (December 6th-8th, 1932) in which the cleavage between the small and great powers grew yet more marked. The former were being criticized in London and Paris on the ground that they were advocating a course of action the pains and perils of which would fall on others. This argument was hardly distinguishable from telling the small powers that they had no right to intervene: and by them it was rejected and resented, inasmuch as in their view the risks run by small countries at times of international crisis were not less but much greater than those of countries which possessed powerful military and naval establishments. Their spokesmen, one after another, demanded effective action by the League, making it plain that they not only accepted the Report but regarded it as proving that Japan had violated the Covenant. The bigger powers were more cautious. Simon's speech, in particular, consisted mainly in picking out and emphasizing those paragraphs which described the shortcomings of China. His purpose was, it seemed, to soothe the feelings of Japan and thus keep alive the possibility of a settlement by conciliation. The effect, however, was to put fresh heart into the Japanese delegation and to inspire in Washington, Nanking, and elsewhere a new wave of distrust of British policy; the more so since his speech was followed by a still more outspoken defence of Japanese action by the Canadian Minister for External Affairs.

After the general debate, the Special Committee spent two months in a last endeavour to reach an agreed settlement on the lines of the Lytton Report. Finally, it put the question categorically to Japan whether she would or would not accept, as one of the bases of settlement, the establishment in Manchuria of a large measure of autonomy consistent with the sovereignty and administrative integrity of China. The reply being a reaffirmation that the maintenance of Manchukuo was the only way to guarantee peace in the Far East, the Committee was obliged to abandon the attempt at conciliation, and to prepare for the Assembly a draft of that 'statement of the facts of the dispute and the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto' which, under the Covenant, it now had to draw up and publish.

The statement submitted to the Assembly was completely based on the Lytton Report. It adopted the whole of the description therein contained of the events which had led up to the clash of September 18th, 1931, and of those which had followed it—the occupation of Manchuria, the battle of Shanghai, the founding of the new State of Manchukuo. It recapitulated the efforts, the hopes, and the disappointments of the Council. It did not omit the failures of Chinese policy before the conflict began, but vindicated her action since that date, and left no doubt as to Japan's violation of the Covenant. It set forth its recommendations for a just settlement in the terms of the Lytton Commission's proposals, maintaining above all the principle that Manchuria was in China's sovereignty and that the new State was neither legally constituted nor representative of the will of the inhabitants. It called on the two parties to open negotiations for carrying out the settlement thus recommended, with the help of a Committee set up by the Assembly. (This Committee was practically speaking a continuation of the Special Committee itself.) Finally, it affirmed that the Members of the League would not recognize the new State either *de jure* or *de facto*, nor do anything else that might prejudice the execution of the Assembly's recommendations.

On February 24th, 1933, this statement was adopted by the Assembly without further discussion. Siam alone, always nervous about Chinese infiltration, and inclined to sympathize with any action liable to reduce her outward pressure, abstained from voting. China voted for it and declared herself ready to comply with the recommendations. Japan voted against it and refused to comply. It was known that Matsuoka's instructions were to quit the Assembly if the draft statement were adopted. This he did with dramatic emphasis: after briefly repeating that Japan still intended to work for peace, and was convinced that

her policy in China was the only one which could guarantee peace in the Far East, he walked out of the Assembly meeting, followed by the numerous members of his delegation who had seated themselves in various parts of the hall. A month later, on March 27th, 1933, Japan announced her decision to withdraw from the League.

As before, Stimson immediately issued a declaration endorsing, on behalf of the United States government, the conclusions reached and the settlement recommended by the Assembly of the League. He was about to hand over his office to Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State of the incoming Democratic Administration: but Roosevelt and Hull were in full accord with his action, and accepted without delay (though with the usual reservation) the invitation addressed to them by the Assembly to take part in the Committee set up by that body.

The same invitation was sent to Moscow—the first occasion on which the Russian government was officially asked to co-operate with the League in regard to the Sino-Japanese conflict. It had, indeed, been understood all along that Russia was more directly concerned with the fate of Manchuria than any other power except China and Japan. It was realized also that Russian co-operation would strengthen the hands of the Council. But while the American government had, from the very outset, adopted a friendly and encouraging attitude towards the exertions of the Council, no word of support had come from Moscow. Russian policy in the Far East was governed by the fear of offending Japan; at the same time the Russian press had not ceased to declare that the Council powers were hand in glove with the imperialists of Tokyo and had no intention of thwarting their advance. It was useless, therefore, for the Council to think of asking for Russian help. A request from the Lytton Commission that Soviet diplomatic and consular agents in the Far East might be authorized to give it the benefit of their knowledge was refused with contumely. The Russian government now rejected also the invitation of the Assembly: but it did so in a form far more conciliatory than that of most of its past communications. It even remarked that ‘a certain concordance may be observed between the starting points of the decisions taken by the League and the views of the Soviet Union’, and it ended with the promise to associate itself with any action or proposal emanating from international bodies or individual governments for the speediest and most equitable settlement of the conflict. Here may be discerned the beginning of that change of attitude openly announced by Stalin nine months later.<sup>1</sup>

The verdict of the Assembly, and the withdrawal of Japan, marked the close of the active intervention of the League in the Manchurian

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 48.

conflict. The work of the new Committee neither received nor deserved the attention of the public. It laid down (not without some obstruction from the spokesmen of Foreign Ministries where the traditional attitude towards Chinese problems still survived) the principles which the Members of the League should follow in response to the repeated approaches of the Foreign Minister of Manchukuo. This done, it retired into oblivion until resuscitated in 1937 for the consideration of the new war which then broke out between China and Japan.

In the Far East also there was a corresponding period of comparative quiet. Japanese occupation of Jehol had been completed, with little resistance from the troops of Chang Hsueh-liang, by February 1933. In April, there was serious fighting south of the Great Wall; and to avert the threat to Peiping and Tientsin, Chiang Kai-shek accepted, on May 31st, 1933, the armistice agreement known as the Tangku Truce. For the next four years relations between the two countries were outwardly peaceful. Diplomatic exchanges, which had never been totally broken, were renewed. But both sides knew that the lull could not be of long duration.

No one who cared for the League and believed, as most thinking men still believed, that the Covenant offered the best and probably the only hope of a lasting peace, could fail to be deeply moved by the final withdrawal of Japan. Her claim that she had been from the first a faithful and honourable Member could not be denied. Until those fatal days of September 1931, she had played a zealous and scrupulous part in its work, 'proud,' in Matsuoka's words, 'to be associated with the leading nations of the world in one of the grandest purposes in which humanity could unite'. Her delegates had set a standard of courtesy, industry, and thoroughness which no others surpassed and few equalled. During the long and often uninteresting debates of Council, Assembly, Conference, or Committee, when many of their colleagues might be inattentive or absent, the Japanese delegation would always be there, following the dullest proceedings with care and concentration. Many times had Ishii, Adatci, Sugimura or Sato, by their courage and good sense, helped the Council through difficult discussions: their patience, for example, in reconciling the divisions between Germans and Poles over minority questions, had been the admiration of all. Now all this was ended. A plan, conceived by the most insular of armies, had been carried through with determination and courage worthy of a better cause. National feeling had been roused to fever-heat by a skilful and passionate propaganda. Respected political leaders had been assassinated, or terrorized into acquiescence. And success seemed to be complete: Manchuria was totally

dominated. A new State, with its civil administration and its army, had been constructed and presented to the world as the spontaneous creation of the inhabitants, while in truth the Japanese Army controlled at every point the fate, and the resources, of this vast and populous area.

From the diplomatic point of view the cost of these immense gains might not at first sight seem excessive. There was no prospect of any attempt to force Japan, by military or economic pressure, to relinquish her grip. Many influential groups and newspapers in the Western countries were short-sighted enough to take pleasure in the defeat of the League and to applaud the realistic power which had exposed its weakness. Yet, having got away with so much, Japan was neither happy nor confident. The friendly and equal intercourse with other powers at Geneva had meant very much to her, and her new isolation was painful. She tried, indeed, to maintain her membership of various social and technical organizations of the League: but the effort was artificial and was gradually abandoned. And, like all successful aggressors, she was always being drawn forward to fresh conquests. Even while Matsuoka was urging the Assembly to believe that her one aim was peace and that she alone knew how to attain it, her troops were overrunning the province of Jehol which, though lying outside the Great Wall, was not a part of Manchuria. They had already occupied Shanhaikwan by force, and were soon to be fighting south of the Wall. And though these events were followed by a temporary *détente*, resulting from China's exhaustion and from Chiang Kai-shek's concentration on the civil war against the Communists, it was only a matter of time before the struggle was to begin again on a far larger scale, with fatal results to both, but above all to Japan herself.

For China, wronged, defeated, and despoiled, the balance-sheet was yet not altogether so unfavourable as it at first appeared. Her appeal to the League had at the outset served to steady and unite the country, and to cover the humiliations inflicted on Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang. The failure of his troops to resist the Japanese was in essential contradiction to the basis of the League system; for the Covenant took it for granted that the Member whom others were to help should itself make the fullest efforts in self-defence. With this exception, China's conduct throughout the affair was worthy of all praise. To place the question in the hands of the League was for General Chiang Kai-shek and his government an international duty; it was also an internal necessity. They were not prepared to stake the future of the country on the defence of Manchuria. Chiang had, on this vital problem, an absolutely clear and decided view. He believed that the day might come when he must lead China into war against Japan, even with the full certainty of

disaster, knowing that the soul of the nation had a better hope of survival through heroic defeat than through inglorious submission. And, indeed, when the greater crisis arose in 1937, his courage was not found wanting. But he did not believe that that day had yet come. On the other hand, no Chinese government could consent to the loss of the North-Eastern Provinces; a policy even of temporary acquiescence would have led to the destruction of the National government, to anti-foreign riots, and to disorder and chaos throughout the country. As it was, there were moments when China seemed to be on the brink of internal collapse, as when in September 1931 a mistaken press telegram from Geneva led to riots in Nanking in which the Foreign Office was rushed and the Foreign Minister severely injured. It was a godsend, therefore, to be able, with dignity and honour, to discharge the main responsibility upon the League. The results were disappointing in many ways. But at least the public opinion of the world was, as China had asked of the Assembly, mobilized in her favour and against Japan; and this gave her the moral right to hope and plan for the recovery of Manchuria, just as the doctrine of non-recognition ensured that from the legal point of view her sovereignty there remained unimpaired. These were great gains; and she won for herself a greater gain yet when the heroism of the 19th Army destroyed the conviction of her own people that they could not stand up against the military might of Japan. Tragic as they were, these years did much to give the Chinese nation strength to face the final trial which Japan was soon to impose upon it.

What, finally, was the outcome for the League? It had, in the end, produced, in spite of all obstacles, an impartial and authoritative verdict. It had drawn up terms of settlement which had been endorsed by practically the whole world, and which might one day, as it seemed, lead to a satisfactory agreement between the two States. It had succeeded in giving effective voice to the general indignation over the aggression at Shanghai: its warnings and appeals, the world-wide publicity which had been concentrated like a searchlight on Shanghai, had led the Japanese to limit their advance and eventually to leave the Yangtze Valley in peace. A new degree of co-operation had been established with the United States: and though no American delegate was ever again sent to sit at the Council table, the advance made by Hoover and Stimson was more than maintained by their successors. Russia also, in her fear of Japanese encroachment on her Far Eastern provinces, was more ready than before to see some virtue in the League. And many of its wisest supporters, such as Edward Grey, while they deplored the weakness and confusion manifested by the chief Members of the Council, refused to admit that a case of such peculiar complexity could



be a final test of the Covenant, or that the failure to coerce Japan must necessarily mean that sanctions would never be effectively applied against a great power.

But all these considerations were heavily outweighed by the fundamental losses inflicted on the League. Its Members were pledged to maintain, against foreign aggression, the territorial integrity of all their fellow Members: the aggression had taken place, vast territories had been torn from the victim, and yet all they had done was to refuse to recognize the new State. 'War in all but name', as J. H. Thomas had said in the Council in February 1932, had been carried on at Shanghai and from one end of Manchuria to the other: yet the chief Members of the League had never seriously contemplated the use of sanctions. In consequence, men's faith in the Covenant as an effective barrier against war had been profoundly shaken. The small powers, in particular, had learnt to doubt, not so much the efficacy of the League system, as the will of the great powers to apply it. They understood the difficulties of the time and the complex circumstances of the dispute: but they believed that, beyond all this, there was in London, Paris, and Rome a certain current of sympathy for the State which had dared to use its military preponderance to impose its own justice. The Council itself, hitherto the corner-stone of the whole structure of the League, never fully recovered the respect and authority which it had lost through its weakness and uncertainty in the early days of the conflict. The rift between the great powers and the small was intensified by the events of the Disarmament Conference. Henceforward, save for a brief space when it was healed by British leadership in resistance to the Italian attack on Ethiopia, it grew steadily wider. Its consequences were manifested throughout the subsequent history of the League. And they are deeply embedded in the constitution of the United Nations.

## THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE, FIRST YEAR

*An unfavourable moment—First debates of the Conference—New chances of agreement—Brining's proposals and their fate—The Hoover plan—Adjournment without progress—Germany refuses collaboration without equality—German collaboration resumed—An irrelevant interlude*

(FEBRUARY—DECEMBER 1932)

WHEN at last the Disarmament Conference met, on February 2nd, 1932, more than thirteen years had passed since the close of the First World War. At that time public opinion everywhere had demanded, and expected, that the creation of the League would put an end to the burden and danger of great national armaments. Rightly or wrongly, the massive reduction of war establishments had been regarded, ever since, not only as the test of the League's success, but as almost the principal object of its existence. Men had looked forward, year after year, to the day when the signature of the first general Disarmament Treaty should consecrate and consolidate the peaceful organization of the modern world. And as that Treaty could only be made at a world conference, the holding of the Conference had come to be in itself the symbol on which their hopes were fixed.

In 1924 the Assembly had actually resolved to hold the Conference in the following June. In 1925 it had hoped that the Conference would meet during 1926; and successive Assemblies thereafter had echoed the impatience felt by the popular masses in most countries at the recurrent postponements which their rulers had imposed or accepted. Year by year the difficulties of agreement had grown: and never more swiftly than in the last year, during which the organs of the League had been condemned to almost total inaction in regard to disarmament. The plea that the great powers must be given more time to prepare the understandings necessary for success had again and again proved little more than a pretence. Its utter falsity was finally demonstrated by the fact that in the early weeks of the Conference three of the powers concerned—France, the United States, and Italy—put forward fresh schemes of their own, reproducing, of course, the main propositions which they had always maintained, but with various new proposals and arguments on which the others had not been consulted. Thus the long and laborious preparatory work was almost as though it had never been, the Draft

Convention drawn up by the Preparatory Commission was brushed aside, and the Conference had as material for its discussions a series of plans which the delegations now saw for the first time.

Three facts in particular overshadowed the Conference and made the inevitable official declarations of optimism sound singularly unconvincing. The first was the Far Eastern conflict, now at its most acute phase on the Shanghai front. The second was the steady advance of aggressive nationalism in Germany and the reactions thereto in France, Poland, and elsewhere. The third was the widespread financial disaster which had fallen on Europe since the previous May. Financial stress might well have been expected to lead to a new acceptance of the need for international co-operation, both economic and political, and to reductions in the amounts voted for armaments. In fact, however, its consequences had for the most part been a growth in bitterness and nervousness; each country blamed and criticized its neighbours, and impoverished governments spent more and more on defence. In these circumstances there were many who thought that it was still too soon to hold the Conference. On paper they had much better arguments than those which had led to postponement hitherto. But the question could only be academic. The pressure of the German claim to equality, and the pressure of the general demand for disarmament, were far too strong to be kept down any longer. They had to be faced: and they had to be faced in the open. To separate these vital issues, however attractive in theory, was now a complete impossibility in practice. They had been put off for too long.

By the number of participating States, the Conference was without doubt the greatest in history. All the sixty-four recognized countries of the world, except four of the smallest Latin American Republics, were present. By the eminence of the principal delegates; by the numbers and qualifications of their expert advisers; by the importance for the whole world of the work they had assembled to perform; by the public interest, as shown by the crowds of journalists who reported its proceedings; it was at least the greatest since the Peace Conference of Paris. Nevertheless, the opening sitting of this historic gathering was held back for one hour after the time which had been announced, in order to allow the Council to meet and hear statements on the situation at Shanghai. This was the very meeting in which the British representative declared, with truth, that 'war in all but name' was going on in the Far East. It was an ill-omened beginning.

Arthur Henderson had been driven from the Foreign Office, but this did not nullify his appointment as President of the Disarmament

Conference. Indeed, it would hardly have been possible to combine the two posts, not only because of the amount of work involved by each, but still more because the President of the Conference needed to be aloof from the rivalries of the delegations: the fact that such a combination had seemed acceptable in May 1931 showed how much less discord had existed even so short a time before. Loss of office naturally lessened Henderson's personal influence, the more so since the chief representatives of his own country did not try to enhance his authority. But his own force of character, his honesty and fairness, and his single-minded anxiety for the success of the Conference, were recognized and respected by all. The important post of Secretary was entrusted, under Drummond's personal direction, to Thanassis Aghnides, a gifted Greek diplomatist who had served in the Secretariat since its earliest days and had risen to be Director of its Disarmament Section.

Before the Conference settled to work, Henderson insisted that it should assemble to receive the representatives of numerous organizations who came to present petitions and manifestoes for its success. They had been sent by the ex-service-men's associations in all the countries which had fought in the world war, by religious bodies, by peace societies, by trade unions and other labour confederations, by women's organizations—millions upon millions of signatures, moving and eloquent witness to the prayers and hopes of mankind, but soon forgotten when the diplomatic battles began.

The first broadside was fired by France. Tardieu, Minister for War and head of the French delegation, presented a new and elaborate plan, of which the salient features were that all the most powerful and dangerous weapons—bombing aeroplanes, battleships, heavy guns, &c.—should be set aside by the countries that owned them, to be used only on the orders of the League or in self-defence against sudden attack; that a standing international police force should be placed at the disposal of the Council; that further national forces should be earmarked to reinforce the international police if required; and that the general system of security should be strengthened by compulsory arbitration, definition of the aggressor, an efficient organization of sanctions, and their extension to cover breaches of the Disarmament Convention as well as of the Covenant. The Tardieu plan, though some of its important suggestions were new, was consistent with the thesis which France had supported when the Covenant was drafted, and with her general policy ever since. As an exercise in political theory there was much to be said for it: and, as the reader will have observed, a number of its principal features have been embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and have been hailed by many as making of the Charter an instrument

superior to the Covenant for the maintenance of peace. But in February 1932 it was open to two overwhelming objections. First, there was no possible chance that such a complete reorganization of the whole Covenant system, with the great additional commitments involved, would be endorsed by the members of the British Commonwealth, by Italy, Germany, Japan, or any save a small minority of League States, or accepted, so far as they were concerned, by Russia or the United States. Secondly, it made no attempt to deal with the German problem: French policy was still to insist that the Reich must remain strictly bound by the limitations imposed at Versailles. The general feeling therefore was that France had put forward her plan not with any hope that it might be carried out, but as a justification of her determination to retain her own armaments and make no concession to Germany. The subsequent course of events did nothing to weaken this conviction.

The French plan was followed by statements of British and American policy from Simon and Gibson. Both suggested a cautious step forward from the point at which the subject had been left by the Preparatory Commission fifteen months before, the line of advance in both cases being towards what was now becoming known as qualitative disarmament—that is to say the abolition or reduction of weapons designed rather for attack than for defence and therefore specially suited for aggressive warfare. Gibson also proposed a new criterion for limiting the numbers of men under arms by allowing to each country a fixed and absolute contingent for internal order plus a variable contingent for defence. Neither dealt with the question of German obligations. The next speaker was Brüning, who reiterated his claim for equality, but continued to demand that this should be achieved by the reduction of the armaments of others, and abstained from anything in the nature of a threat to rearm. He suggested that a complete system of qualitative limitation already existed for his country, and that those who declared themselves ready to enter upon that road had merely to generalize the prohibitions imposed on Germany—such as the 10,000-ton limit for warships, the 4-inch limit for guns, the total abolition of military aviation, tanks, submarines. Grandi, for Italy, put forward practically the same case. Italy accepted the German claim to equality, and advocated the total prohibition of all the most powerful types of armaments whether on land, on sea, or in the air. She rejected the French demand for fresh guarantees of security before arms could be reduced: Britain and the United States had not been so frank, but that they shared the Italian opinion was clear enough from their perfunctory references to the Tardieu plan. A statement from Matsudaira demonstrated once more the stubborn conservatism of the Japanese military authorities.

The last of the great powers to speak was Russia. Litvinov severely criticized the French plan, and repeated his invariable plea for total disarmament or, failing that, the abolition of the more aggressive types of weapon.

The general discussion was then carried on for many days by a series of speeches from the representatives of the fifty lesser powers. Poland, the Little Entente, and Belgium, supported France, as they had done throughout the years of preparatory discussion. The suggestion for an international police force was praised by a number of others, but never seemed to have any real driving-power behind it. On the other hand, the conception of qualitative limitation, and of the abolition of the most powerful weapons, was unmistakably welcome to the smaller States, as it was, indeed, to the general mass of public opinion among the great ones. On this question, as on most international problems, the official views of small States and the man-in-the-street's view elsewhere were in close accord.

After three weeks of general debate, the Conference,<sup>1</sup> in spite of its gloomy and dispirited beginnings, had reached a point at which unexpected prospects of success seemed to be opening before it. Contrary to expectation, the technical arguments and squabbles over matters of detail, which had almost paralysed the Preparatory Commission, had not been revived. The United States, the British Commonwealth, Russia, and Italy were all standing at a point where agreement with, and concerning, Germany, appeared to be within reach, so long as the latter did not in practice pitch her demands too high. And the line of possible agreement lay through the method of limitation, reduction, and abolition of the more powerful weapons—the method which was sure of the greatest measure of popular support in every country, and which held out the highest hopes of future peace, as well as of relief from unreasonable financial burdens. If France and her allies could be moved from their insistence on maintaining the strict letter of Versailles; if the British Commonwealth could be moved from its refusal to consider any proposal involving new commitments or even the clear definition of those which already existed; if the United States could pledge itself not to offer active opposition to the sanctions of the Covenant; the Conference might look forward to results acceptable to the whole world with the one exception of Japan. As for Japan, though no concession could

<sup>1</sup> The general debate closed on February 24th and thenceforth the Conference only met in plenary session once more—a purely formal meeting at the moment of adjourning for the summer recess. Thereafter it was the 'General Commission' which took decisions: but since this body contained representatives of all the delegations, it was exactly equivalent to the Conference; and to avoid confusion we shall continue to speak of the 'Conference' and not of the 'General Commission'.

be expected from her at the moment, it was inconceivable that her single voice could have held up a convention which the rest were ready to sign; it would be easy to plan some special provisions to ensure that her refusal should not endanger the security of the rest.

That such a hopeful view of the prospects at the end of February 1932 was no idle dream, is conclusively proved by the fact that within two years almost all the concessions needed to bring it to reality had been made—but made reluctantly, one by one, at long intervals, in order to tide over moments of crisis, instead of being planned as the necessary parts of a single balanced whole.

It was important that further steps should be quickly taken to follow up the possibilities opened up by the general debate. Unfortunately, interruptions now took place. The Special Assembly on the Sino-Japanese conflict began on March 3rd and occupied for nine days the full attention of the principal delegates. In any case, the energies of Brüning, and the seething passions of Germany, were absorbed in a presidential election; and, a second ballot being necessary, it was not until April 10th that Hitler was defeated and Hindenburg's re-election secured. France, also, was on the eve of a general election, and Tardieu, who had just become Prime Minister, naturally gave his chief attention to the home front. Meanwhile the plenary Conference had granted itself a long Easter recess and its leading figures had for the time being quitted Geneva. They left behind them their technical advisers, formed into four Committees—on land, sea, and air armaments, and on armaments budgets, respectively—whose principal task was to classify the weapons of each service into two categories, the first including those specially suitable for offensive action and therefore for aggression, the second including those of a mainly defensive character. The Air Committee was further instructed to discuss the total abolition of military aviation, and the internationalization of civil aviation.

The defeat of Hitler was welcome news, and despite the fact that the Land, Sea, and Air Committees had at once fallen back into the stubborn and negative spirit of the Preparatory Commission, the Conference itself had not lost its momentum when it reassembled on April 11th. The American delegation gave it a fresh impetus by making the definite proposal that all tanks and all mobile guns over 6 inches in calibre should be declared to be weapons of an aggressive character, and that the Land Committee should be charged with drawing up a plan for their abolition. The British, Italian, and many other delegations gave the scheme a favourable reception, and were ready to consider also corresponding decisions concerning sea and air armaments. But the French were

displeased, and Tardieu erected once more the impalpable yet impassable barrier: a better organization of peace must precede any reduction of armaments. He had his way, and the Conference, instead of pursuing the American plan, adopted a series of inconclusive resolutions. As regards the abolition of offensive weapons—the one really new and effective principle which had emerged during the Conference—it could say no more than that, without prejudice to other proposals, it approved the principle of qualitative disarmament, i.e. the selection of certain classes or descriptions of weapons the possession of which should be either prohibited or internationalized. Such words were very far from giving the service Committees that clear and authoritative guidance without which their work was certain to be completely sterile.

And now, suddenly, the long conflict over German armaments rose to a point of climax. Stimson, who had been the titular head of the American delegation, but had not yet been able to free himself from the work of the State Department for long enough to come to Europe, arrived in Geneva on April 15th. Ramsay MacDonald took the occasion to join him. Their presence at Geneva together gave Brüning the opportunity he had long awaited. For two years he had held firm against enormous difficulties, a rock to which the sound elements of the German nation could hold amidst the storms of economic ruin and calculated violence. Now the re-election of Hindenburg seemed to have strengthened his position. The coming of spring had eased the material hardships of the people. Was not this the moment of destiny, when he could dare to be moderate in his demands, and when the chief statesmen of the world were gathered at a Conference in which he, too, was a principal delegate? So Brüning came back to Geneva, and the stakes for which he contended were the fortunes and the future of German democracy.

His proposals were put, in secret, to MacDonald and Stimson: both Tardieu and Grandi were temporarily absent, but they were kept informed of the discussions. He asked that the period of service in the Reichswehr should be reduced from twelve years to six, and the number of men in service, either in the Reichswehr or in a militia force, increased from 100,000 to 200,000. Further, Germany should have the right to purchase any type of weapon which other States might keep under the Disarmament Convention: but if these included any forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles, she would content herself with 'samples'. Her existing obligations would remain otherwise unchanged, but would be legally based not on the Versailles Treaty but on the new Convention.

Brüning's scheme was promptly accepted, as a basis of settlement, by the British and American delegates, and also by Italy. They begged Tardieu to return to Geneva at once. But Tardieu had laryngitis; and he



was also in the last stages of an election campaign. It has further been recorded that the French had been told by one of Brüning's opponents, who was alarmed at his prospects of success, that he was about to fall and that they would find his successor easier to deal with. Whatever may have been the real reason, Tardieu declined to come. A few days later he was defeated, and resigned: and it was not until early June that France again had a Prime Minister. Meanwhile Brüning had had to go home empty-handed, and his fate was sealed. On May 30th, 1932, Hindenburg dismissed the man to whom he owed his electoral victory and set up, with von Papen as Chancellor, a government of the most reactionary character, possessing no parliamentary support and resolved on policies which he had been elected to oppose. German democracy had received its death-blow.

By misfortune, the secret of these critical events was unusually well kept. In spite of the evident importance of Brüning's move, the statesmen concerned did not think it necessary to appeal to or to consult the public opinion of their countries. They appeared to find it quite natural to renounce, for the time being, their attempt to deal with the thorny problem of Germany's demand for equality of status. Stimson left for home in an optimistic mood. MacDonald, returning to London, could still express the view that the test of success for the Disarmament Conference was whether or not France, Italy, and other lesser powers could be induced to sign the London Naval Treaty.

The Plenary Conference having no further work to do for the moment, the service committees remained in sole command of the field. They presented a sad spectacle. Each in turn fell back into the sterile manoeuvring which the Preparatory Commission had made so unpleasantly familiar. At Paris in 1919 there had been no difficulty in drawing up lists of the arms which Germany should be forbidden to possess; and it was undeniable that the object in view had been to deprive her of those of an offensive character. But the high staff officers of whom the Land, Sea, and Air Committees were chiefly composed, were above all concerned to see that their own countries suffered no reduction of military strength. In the Naval Committee, for example, the British and Americans argued that the battleship is a defensive, the submarine an offensive, weapon: lesser naval powers took the exactly contrary view; to France both were defensive. Debates in the Land Committee over tanks and guns followed the same sort of lines: while the Air Staffs as usual found their work held up by exaggerated fears of the military potentialities of civil aircraft. No agreement was reached in any of the three committees. For these miserable results the experts held their principals responsible.

It is certain that the instructions from the Conference to the committees were far too indefinite: and those given to individual experts by their respective governments were doubtless equally unlikely to lead to a positive outcome. But the Staffs and the service chiefs in the leading countries did not wish for any other results, and the substance of their instructions was largely dictated by themselves. In Europe at least the political power of the General Staffs, though difficult to trace and estimate, was undoubtedly very great.

By mid-June the Conference was totally bogged in a morass of technical obstacles and complications, which were all the more paralysing in that they were for the most part not really technical at all, but put forward to block the concrete suggestions for reduction of existing armaments. Henderson saw no possible line of advance except through further conversations between the chief delegates of the heavily armed powers. He disliked these conversations; he was not himself being kept informed of their progress, and this he rightly considered as derogatory to the dignity of the Conference and of its President. Many of the lesser delegations shared his views: but there was nothing they could do to restart the regular work. Moreover, the Lausanne Conference was about to meet, in the hope of settling finally the question of reparation: and since Lausanne is only an hour by car or train from Geneva, the leading members of the German, British, French, and Italian governments were once again in a position to seek agreement by personal contact on the problems of disarmament as well as those of reparation.

In point of fact the conversations were held almost exclusively between Gibson for the United States, MacDonal and Simon for Britain, and Herriot and Paul-Boncour for France. There had been some expectation of a change in the French attitude since Herriot had replaced Tardieu. An electoral success of the left-wing parties had before now turned the course of French policy in the direction of an understanding with Germany. Certainly Herriot was, by temperament and conviction, more inclined towards conciliation than his predecessor. But he could only move slowly, partly because of the obviously untrustworthy character of the new German government, and still more because it was already clear that he would be compelled by circumstances to make great concessions, on paper at least, in the matter of reparation. It was too much to expect that he should at the same time give way on the question of French armaments, the more so since there was still not the slightest sign on the part of the British government that they would be ready to offer any new assurances of support against aggression.

It was soon apparent that no progress was being achieved and the Americans now made a fresh effort to break the deadlock. Their new

plan, like the Hoover Moratorium of the previous year, and like the proposal for a naval agreement at the Washington Conference ten years before, was sprung on the world with dramatic suddenness. Even their partners in the conversations at Geneva were given no more than forty-eight hours' notice. Henderson was asked to summon a general meeting—the first for six weeks—and on June 22nd Hoover's proposals were announced simultaneously by himself at Washington and by Gibson at Geneva. It was time, he declared, to cut through the brush and adopt definite measures. By the Kellogg Pact all nations had promised to confine themselves to self-defence: and the Conference had shown that all were agreed on the principle of reduction on lines which should strengthen the power of defence and weaken the power of attack. He proposed, therefore, the abolition of specifically offensive weapons and the reduction of the rest by a third. Those to be abolished were tanks, large mobile guns, and bombing planes, as well as all means of chemical warfare. All land forces above a certain minimum for the maintenance of order—for which the numbers allowed to Germany furnished a model—were to be cut by a third. Battleships were to be cut down by a third, both in total (not individual) tonnage, and also in number; other surface warships by a quarter; submarines to a maximum for each State of forty in number and of 35,000 tons in total tonnage. All bombardment from the air was to be unconditionally forbidden. If the plan were accepted, the United States would be obliged to scrap over 300,000 tons of warships, over 1,000 heavy mobile guns, 900 tanks, 300 bombing planes. The financial saving would be enormous, and the chances of peace greatly increased.

The American proposals revived for a space the almost imperceptible pulse of the Disarmament Conference. Their definite and simple character was a breath of fresh air after the weeks of complicated and unreal discussion in the service committees. To all that vast body of public opinion which had placed high hopes in the Conference, and was correspondingly depressed at its failure, they seemed exactly what it had been waiting to hear. The smaller powers in general welcomed them with enthusiasm, though it was not till later that they had any opportunity of formally declaring their support. Grandi, having received Mussolini's consent by telephone, repeated the proposals one by one, announcing at each pause, amid the cheers of the Conference, the unreserved acceptance of Italy. Litvinov also approved them, observing with truth that they bore a considerable resemblance to those he had himself put forward to the Preparatory Commission in the spring of 1928. Germany's acceptance was a foregone conclusion. Simon gave a courteous welcome to the American initiative, but indicated the need for a reduction in the size of individual

ships as well as in total tonnages. Paul-Boncour, speaking for France, could not fail to point out that nothing was said about security: what would the United States do if a nation which had followed her call for disarmament, and thus weakened its power to defend itself, were suddenly attacked by a neighbour or a combination of neighbours?

Herriot, indeed, shrank no less than Tardieu had done from making a substantial reduction in the armed strength of France without fresh guarantees of help if she or her allies were attacked. The change of government in Germany was to France an ominous and alarming sign: and the inability of the League to protect China from the aggression of Japan confirmed her view that something more than the Covenant was required. The United States had nothing to offer: Hoover's disarmament proposals had been popular, but the pacifist feeling in the country had a strong tinge of isolationism, and he was not prepared to risk any move towards the acceptance of new obligations. Nor was the British government, whose main preoccupation, at this time, was to force the Lausanne meeting through to agreement. So far as disarmament was concerned, its attention was concentrated on the details of the Hoover plan, which it disliked and on which it had many changes to suggest. It did not want to abolish either tanks or bombers, nor to forbid air bombardment; and it did wish to abolish submarines. It wanted to cut down, for the future, the size of capital ships and cruisers, but not to scrap those already in service. Meanwhile Japan had declared herself totally opposed to the whole plan.

It was soon plain that Hoover's effort had not had the power to set the Conference once more on the move. After five months of debate, no conclusions were in sight, and it was becoming impossible to keep the delegations at Geneva any longer without a break. Many of those representing the smaller States had already begun to thin out, disappointed and resentful: for weeks they had been doing little more than wait about for information concerning the conversations of the great powers. Even in the matter of the American proposals, after the first announcement by Gibson and the first comments by the great powers, all public discussion had been held up for over a fortnight. When at last their opportunity came, and they stood forward one after another to proclaim their enthusiastic acceptance, the positions adopted by France, Britain, and Japan had already taken most of the wind out of Hoover's sails.

The smaller powers were indignant, not only at having had to wait so long without a public meeting, but also at realizing that an initiative, from which they had hoped so much, had been frustrated before they had been able to say a word in its support. They found a spokesman in Salvador de Madariaga, who had been head of the Disarmament

Section of the Secretariat during the first six years of its existence, and had written a wise and brilliant book on the subject. As Spanish delegate both to the Council and the Conference, Madariaga was allowed an unusually free hand, and effectively laid bare the shortcomings of Britain, France, and even the United States on many occasions when others who agreed with him did not venture to speak. A number of European States—Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Switzerland—joined with Spain in forming a group based on the common conviction that the Conference could only succeed by keeping affairs in its own hands, and that it would be fatal to leave disarmament once more to be discussed in secret conversations among the great powers. But they could do nothing to restart the machine: and they had no intention of creating a crisis by pushing their protests too far. When the Americans, British, and French proposed that the Conference should adopt a resolution summing up the progress made and laying down what was to be done to prepare the autumn session, they and the other delegations could only accept the suggestion.

It took a fortnight of negotiation, carried on mainly by Simon and Beneš, before the resolution was ready—the difficulty being not that there was much to report, but that so much had to be left on one side. Nothing could be recorded about German equality of rights; nothing about any concrete decisions for reduction; nothing about guarantees against aggression. It was affirmed in general terms that the Conference was unanimously determined to achieve substantial reduction, and that a primary objective should be to reduce the means of attack. Guns and tanks were to be forbidden above certain limits, but what those limits were to be remained undeclared. Even the reference to the abolition of air bombardment was expressed in guarded language, so as to leave open the possibility to retain bombing planes and to use them for police purposes. We need spend no more time over this unhappy resolution. But if the document itself was insignificant, the voting which took place when, on July 23rd, it was at last presented to the Conference, was charged with meaning. Forty-one delegations accepted it; but most of them did so with open dissatisfaction. They regarded it as an admission that, so far, the great Disarmament Conference had been a dismal failure. But they were unwilling to prolong the deadlock, lest they should thereby destroy all prospect of further efforts being made. Russia and Germany voted against it: Italy, followed by Albania, Afghanistan, Austria, Bulgaria, China, Hungary, and Turkey, abstained from voting.

The Russian point of view was consistent with that which they had maintained from the beginning. It was once more, said Litvinov, the postponement of all real decisions and the renewal of those private

discussions to which recourse had been had so often and always without result. 'I vote for disarmament', he concluded, 'but against the resolution.'

The abstention of Italy marked a definite change of policy. Hitherto, while striving to inspire the Italians with a martial spirit and to build up his military equipments, Mussolini had permitted Grandi, as Foreign Minister and chief delegate, to emphasize on every occasion Italy's loyalty to the League and anxiety for the success of the Conference. Grandi was now removed from both offices; the first was taken back by Mussolini and the second assigned to Marshal Balbo. Balbo's speech declaring that Italy could not vote for the resolution was couched in a very different tone from those of Grandi; and both he and Mussolini published at this period articles in the Italian press in which they poured scorn upon the Conference and the League alike. From this time forward Italian policy became more and more harmonized with that of Germany, and her attitude in the Conference and in the Council was for the most part indifferent and even obstructive. Grandi was sent as Ambassador to London, where he could serve Mussolini's purposes the more effectively for having been in the past so eloquent a champion of disarmament and peace.

Finally, Germany not only voted against the resolution but announced that she could not collaborate any longer in the work of the Conference until the principle of equality of rights had been definitely recognized. Her point of view was expressed by Nadolny, leader of the delegation ever since Brüning had left Geneva. He was a dull and disagreeable diplomatist; but he was speaking the truth in claiming that the German delegation had, on the whole, followed conciliatory and non-provocative lines and had done its best, in spite of great difficulties, to contribute to the success of the Conference. He had always made it clear that the essential condition for Germany was that the new Convention should take the place of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and that the division of the world into victors and vanquished should finally disappear. Yet, said Nadolny, it was the impression of the German delegation that no progress in this direction had been made, and even that agreement on equality of rights was actually more remote after six months than when the Conference began.

The question of German armaments now became the dominant issue in world politics. The opportunity to deal with it as part of the general problem of disarmament had irrevocably gone by. The German decision to quit the Conference until their claim to equality of rights had been recognized in principle, came as a dramatic shock to a world which had

grown used to concealments and postponements. In sober fact, it did not produce a new situation, but made plain the fundamental and inescapable reality. Even then, the responsible statesmen were reluctant to face it: as late as the following September the British government, in a formal note, could still express the opinion that for Germany to raise a question of such magnitude at that time was an unwise and untimely act. But in truth no German government could possibly avoid raising it, nor could the Allied governments possibly avoid taking their share in deciding it: for to do nothing inevitably meant that German rearmament would proceed in defiance of the Treaty. The French and, to some extent, the British governments continued to insist on the legal validity of the Treaty, and still spoke as though it were in their power to grant or refuse permission to Germany to break away from the restrictions thereby imposed. But no legal arguments could affect the conviction, held not only in Germany but by the world in general, that the Allies had broken the pledges made both direct to Germany and in the Covenant of the League. Twelve years after the Covenant had come into force, every Member of the League, except the defeated countries, was still a completely free agent to build up its land and air armaments as it wished; and in spite of many individual reductions due to economic reasons, the total amounts spent on the fighting services of the chief powers were still enormous.

In these circumstances, the provisions of the Treaty were no longer decisive. They had not lost all effect; it was still more convenient in many ways for Germany to act by consent than without it, and the legal position was therefore still one of the factors in the situation. But those Allied leaders, whether in office or in opposition, who spoke as though Germany could be kept disarmed by a mere refusal to discuss the bases of a settlement by consent, were deluding themselves and criminally misleading their fellow countrymen.

During the first weeks after the Conference adjourned, notes were exchanged between the German and French governments, but no progress was made towards disarmament. Meanwhile the tone and temper of the chauvinists on both sides became even more bitter: in Germany they threatened immediate rearmament, in France they declared that Germany must be held strictly to the limits of the Treaty and that France must increase, not reduce, her armed strength. The British government was still sitting on the fence: the Americans remained aloof from the dispute: and Mussolini proclaimed that the German claim was totally justified and must be granted without delay. Von Papen, however, still refrained from open defiance; and by November a considerable change appeared. The French had now worked out a new plan, one condition

of which was that Germany and all other continental States should have a short-service conscript army—a step towards equality, and one particularly desired by Germany. Simon followed by stating in the House of Commons (November 10th, 1932) that the British government accepted Germany's claim to equality of status, on the understanding that she did not actually rearm, and on condition that she and other European nations should once more solemnly renounce the use of force for the settlement of disputes. These moves cleared the way to a resumption of negotiations. Germany still held aloof from the Disarmament Conference, but her new Foreign Minister, von Neurath, was representing her in the Council and in the Special Assembly on Manchuria: it was not difficult, therefore, to organize conversations, and MacDonal and Herriot came out to take part in them. Norman Davis represented the United States, and Baron Aloisi Italy.

In America, the presidential election had just taken place, and the long reign of Franklin Roosevelt was about to begin. Norman Davis, a Democrat and close confidant of Roosevelt, had already become the chief member of the American delegation. He was a well-known and popular figure in Geneva, and before becoming a member of the delegation had, as a private citizen, shared in a variety of League activities, including the drafting of the Memel Statute and the work of the Financial Committee. As Special Ambassador in Europe he was henceforth to play a considerable part on the international stage. His love of public affairs and his moderate and conciliatory spirit recalled Colonel House—without House's almost morbid love of secrecy, but also without his concentrated driving-power. His purposes were always admirable: but it often seemed that he accepted too easily his country's freedom from the obligations and difficulties of League Members. That freedom was a diplomatic, sometimes even a moral, advantage; but it was a continuous drag on the efficiency of the international institutions, and hence also on the achievement of the fundamental objects of American policy.

Aloisi, too, with his high Roman countenance and his bright blue eye, was to become a familiar figure at Geneva. He was a man both able and ambitious; having served his country as sailor and diplomatist, he knew more of the real world than the party clique in Rome; and under an impenetrable reserve he was probably hostile to the dangerous tendencies which were already forming in the mind of the Duce. He had the qualities of a responsible Minister, but he was in fact no more than Mussolini's personal representative in the latter's capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Von Neurath was little seen at Geneva, and heard still less. He was



reputed to cherish a personal dislike of the League: and his general bearing was that of a man who considered it beneath his dignity to sit in company with the representatives of small powers and to discuss the affairs of his country in their presence. In spite of the impassive arrogance of his demeanour, his main preoccupation, then and later, was to steer a safe course for himself among the dangerous currents of German politics. He knew how to talk to his fellow diplomatists: but, as his later history was to show, he was not the man to take risks in the service of peace.

By December 11th the four European powers arrived, with American help, at an agreed formula. Its main contents were twofold: first, that the aim of the Conference should be to conclude a Convention in which Germany should possess 'equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations' (this meant that the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaties would be replaced by the future Convention); secondly, that all European States should solemnly reaffirm that they would never, under any circumstances, attempt to settle their differences by a resort to force. Although this formula left all points of substance still to be debated, it gave the assurance on which Germany had insisted as a condition of further participation in the Conference; while France maintained her demand for security, and Britain could point to one more promise that the concessions granted would not lead to new claims backed by threats. A full meeting was therefore held three days later.

There was general satisfaction at Germany's return. But the fifty delegations which had awaited the result of the Five-Power conversations were not altogether reconciled to their passive role; and it was agreed that the President of the Conference should take part in any future negotiations which affected its work. This done, the Conference adjourned until January 31st, 1933. The first year of its work had ended where it should have begun. The fleeting opportunities which might have led to its success had been missed, and they were not destined to return.

Before entering on the history of the second year of the Disarmament Conference, it is necessary to turn to that of other major events which came to the fore during this crowded year—the World Economic Conference, the war in the Chaco, and the all-but-war between Colombia and Peru. By a strange miscalculation, it was at the very time that these cares and duties were about to be laid upon the League, in addition to the Manchurian conflict and the Disarmament Conference as well as all its ordinary functions, that the new government in London

felt constrained to raise yet one more protest against the cost of the international institutions. It 'viewed with anxiety' the steady increase in the joint budget of the League, the International Labour Organization, and the Permanent Court, which had actually grown from \$5 million in 1923 to \$6½ million in 1931. Since there was no extravagance in administration, this must mean that the League was extending its activities: and in these stringent times it ought rather to curtail them. Why not, therefore, set up a small committee of business men to advise on how to effect economies in the policy and organization of the League, the Labour Organization, and the Court?

This proposal was put forward by Anthony Eden, at the opening of the Council session of May 1932, the first which he attended as British representative. He soon saw that it was quite untenable, and acquiesced in its being whittled down to a mere inquiry into the scale of salaries paid to the Secretariat. The only practical result was to give further currency to the common talk about the high cost of membership, the falsity of which the British government could easily have demonstrated had it so desired. Such was the paradoxical beginning of Eden's long and eminent association with the affairs of the League, to which he was destined to render services of a very different character.

THE WORLD ECONOMIC  
CONFERENCE

*The League's advice ignored—Origins of the World Economic Conference—Failure of the Conference—The economic work of the League*

(JUNE 1932—JULY 1933)

IN economic and financial affairs, as in political, the years 1931-3 presented a conjuncture of deepening crisis. In this field, at least, the need for international remedies was admitted by all: but the will to find them and the power to apply them were weaker than ever. In the Far Eastern conflict and in the Disarmament Conference the forces making for co-operation and for the fulfilment of the Covenant, though on the retreat, were still putting up a close and continuous fight. In regard to the economic crisis, their effort seemed now to be spent. No one had the courage to revive those attempts to loosen the shackles on international trade which had been frustrated, one after another, during the two previous years. One country after another joined in the competition to reduce imports and increase exports: each one, as the Economic Committee pointed out, could easily succeed in doing the first, while the combined result was, of course, that exports were everywhere dwindling. Meanwhile, as the general sense of security diminished, the policy of 'each for himself' was pursued with redoubled vigour. Italy, Germany, Japan, and others, foreseeing or planning the beginnings of a renewed armaments race, were striving to escape from dependence on other countries by producing and manufacturing as much as possible for themselves. At Ottawa, in August 1932, the British government made agreements with the rest of the Commonwealth which set the seal on its abandonment of free trade. At the same time, the great tradition whereby the products, and the markets, of the Colonial Empire were open to all the world on equal terms, was also cast aside. For these decisions, as for the increased tariffs of other countries, powerful arguments might be adduced. But the effect, taken as a whole, was a triumph of unreason. Statesmen and experts affirmed with one voice that the crisis being world-wide, and each nation's prosperity being dependent on that of all the rest, the only remedy was through international action and international institutions. Such action, as the League's work had abundantly proved, could only be based on a liberal conception of the

nature of international relations, and could only express itself in a reduction of tariffs, trade barriers, exchange controls, and the rest. Now the world had turned towards an intensified use of these expedients. At the same time, it was maintaining its expenditure on armaments, in face of repeated warnings from the Financial Committee of the League that in doing so it was gravely compromising its chance of recovery.

Their advice being thus ignored, there was little for the economic and financial institutions to do except deal as best they could with such limited problems as were left in their hands. Their work at this time consisted largely in efforts to restore the financial equilibrium of countries which they had helped to set on their feet some years earlier, and which were now again in trouble—Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece. On the whole this was successfully achieved, though owing to difficulties of transfer all defaulted, in greater or less degree, in the service of the loans which had been floated under the auspices of the League.

Most governments were not only unable to act upon their own principles; they were unable even to face self-evident facts. Everybody knew that further payment of reparation was impossible and everybody knew that the war-debts to the United States could not be paid once reparation had stopped. But no responsible spokesman could admit these truths; and for this, amongst other reasons, both subjects were carefully kept out of League discussions by the powers concerned. After several postponements, the last of the big series of reparation conferences met at Lausanne in June 1932. Having scrapped the Young plan, which had laid down the scale of German payments up to the year 1988, it cut Germany's debt for reparation to a total of £150 million: this last obligation was even more short-lived than the rest. At the same time it invited the League to summon a World Conference on Monetary and Economic Questions, at a date and place to be subsequently fixed.

During the years which had passed since they had organized the Conference of 1927, the League Secretariat and the committees which it served had, of course, frequently considered the possibility of holding a new and greater Economic Conference; but they had as yet seen no such chances of success as would make it seem advisable to put forward any formal scheme. This had been done, however, by the International Labour Organization, at its Annual Conference in April 1932. The Workers' delegates were not content to accept a situation in which twenty-five million workers were unemployed and the rest insecure. They pressed with great insistence a resolution containing four main points:

1. A great programme of international public works to be put in hand without delay;

2. The League to take over and settle the questions of reparation and war debts;
3. A world conference to set up a stable international monetary system.
4. A world conference on production and trade.

These proposals were considerably mitigated before being adopted by the Conference: even so the government delegates of Britain and most of the Dominions abstained from voting, as did practically the whole of the Employers' group. The first proposal came to nothing. Various League bodies, including the Council itself, spent much time in studying a large number of plans for public works in different European countries, such as the construction of roads, railways, bridges, and ports, the draining of marshes, &c.; but, though many of these were recognized to be practicable and desirable, their execution could only be financed by advances on government credit which were not forthcoming. The second proposal was never taken seriously by the governments concerned; the question of reparation was disposed of at Lausanne, while that of war debts was simply left to drift. The third and fourth, however, were the first formal suggestions for the World Conference which was to meet in London a year later.

The decision that a World Monetary and Economic Conference should be held was taken by the powers assembled at Lausanne—Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Japan, and Belgium—as a tail-piece to their positively last agreement on reparation. They invited the League to convoke it; and, without waiting for the invitation to be accepted, they resolved to begin the necessary preparation by setting up an organizing committee composed of their own experts, together with two more to be appointed by the United States. But the rest of the world looked with some misgiving upon a plan thus drawn up by a group, small in numbers though great in importance, and it was seen that the whole business would have to be placed under the direction of the League. This was arranged by Simon at the next Council meeting in July 1932, and duly confirmed by the Assembly. The possibility of declining responsibility for the task thus thrust upon them was certainly never contemplated by either body. The Assembly, in particular, was warned by one delegate after another that the growing political tension and the consequent ineffectiveness of the Disarmament Conference were due above all to the direct or indirect influence of the economic depression. There was little confidence in the prospects of an Economic Conference: but once the decision had been taken, the League organs could do no other than join to the best of their ability in making it a success. The British government showed itself prepared to give an energetic lead: Simon became

Chairman of the organizing committee, and it was understood from the first, and was indeed the general wish, that the Conference should be held in London. The United States—now in its four-yearly period of paralysis before and after the presidential election—agreed to take part in the Conference and in the preparatory work, on condition that government debts and tariff rates were excluded from its agenda. Russia was not invited to join in the preparation, but was represented at the Conference itself by an active delegation led by Litvinov.

Certainly the men chosen to draw up the programme of the Conference, and to undertake such preliminary studies and discussions as might give it the best chance of success, were the most eminent experts the world could offer. But even while they wrestled with their heavy task, the ground beneath their feet was shaken by a series of portentous events. When their meetings began, in the autumn of 1932, Germany had temporarily quitted the Disarmament Conference, to which she returned in December of the same year. In December, France declined to make further payments on her war debt to the United States, and it was plain that the other principal Allies would follow her example. In January 1933, the German Republic suffered its final crash: Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich; the elections of March set the seal on the triumph of the Nazi party. In March Japan announced her withdrawal from the League. In April the United States abandoned the gold standard. In June Germany stopped payment on her foreign debts. Such were the stormy and dangerous events which immediately preceded the opening of the World Economic Conference. All that could be set against them was an American proposal—accepted, with many reservations, by the rest of the world—to revive the Tariff Truce of 1930; and Roosevelt's famous appeal of May 16th to Heads of States to see to it that the two great Conferences—the Disarmament Conference in Geneva and the World Economic Conference in London—should not be allowed to fail.

It was small wonder, therefore, that the experts who had been charged to prepare the work of the Conference had found no new road to salvation; and that when, on June 12th, 1933, the delegates of sixty-four countries met face to face, they did so in an atmosphere of uncertainty and pessimism. To most it seemed that the first and fundamental task must be to restore a stable international monetary standard. Without this, how could prices rise to a steady and reasonable level? how could creditors continue to lend, or borrowers plan to repay? how could international commerce be revived and maintained? But all hope of agreement in this sense was soon extinguished by a pronouncement from Roosevelt which made it plain that the United States was not yet willing

to co-operate in any such scheme. Since there was now no prospect of stabilizing the exchanges, progress on other main questions became impossible. France refused to discuss a general lowering of tariffs. Britain was obdurate over the proposals to finance international public works. All semblance of united effort faded away and the Conference closed some five weeks after it had opened.

During the fruitless debates on questions of world-wide concern, some useful discussions on special problems had taken place between limited groups. An International Wheat Agreement, designed to prevent over-production and to maintain steady markets in the interests of producer and consumer alike, was adopted by the chief exporting and the chief importing countries. Some advance was made towards similar agreements on sugar and other important commodities. But of the major purposes for which it had been planned the Conference achieved nothing.

Roosevelt has been blamed ever since by his opponents in America for having sabotaged the Conference. It is true that his refusal to discuss monetary stabilization was a blow from which it could not recover. It is true also that that refusal was dictated by considerations of internal policy and was contrary to views which he had expressed only a few weeks earlier: and that his appeal of May 16th had specifically called for the stabilization of currencies. It was, indeed, the misfortune of the Conference to have been brought together at a particularly inauspicious time. The full participation of the United States was an essential condition of its success; yet it was held at the moment when a new leadership was just entering upon that historic process of trial and error known as the New Deal. It is easy now to understand that Roosevelt and his advisers could not at that time bind themselves to move in a particular direction on matters such as currency, tariffs, or debts, for the simple reason that they did not know their own mind, or the mind of Congress, on any of these subjects. They were quite clear on the need to raise the prices of primary products; but as to method they were at a purely experimental stage. In point of fact, Roosevelt decided to re-establish a fixed gold value for the dollar in January 1934, only six months after the close of the Conference: and this might perhaps have been the right moment to hold it. It is by no means always true (though it is very commonly affirmed) that an important international conference should only be held when substantial agreement has already been arrived at behind the scenes. To admit this would simply be to return to the old methods of diplomacy, to deny the value of public discussion, and to ignore the strong forces which international gatherings can and do, in most cases, set up in the course of their own activity. Any session of the Assembly or the Council, any committee or conference called by the

League, could, as a general rule, be trusted to discover, during its proceedings, practical possibilities which had not been foreseen before it met. Even an unsuccessful meeting might, as Litvinov once reminded the Disarmament Conference, be of great value in educating public opinion and in making agreement more likely in the future. But the coincidence of time between the London Economic Conference and the first experiments of the New Deal was a handicap there was no getting over.

In spite of the failure of the Economic Conference, the situation was past its worst and some signs of improvement were to be seen. The fact that no more payments were being made on account of reparation or of war debts gave valuable relief. There was a partial recovery in the prices of primary products. Internal borrowing was made easier by a big fall in interest rates, the most notable sign of which was the conversion of a great part of the British national debt from a 5 per cent to a  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent basis. International trade also underwent a modest improvement. But all such advance was miserably poor compared with the possibilities which scientific and social developments had brought within men's reach. It is beyond the scope of this history even to touch upon the question how far effective progress—that which is directly felt and enjoyed by the common man—was being held back by the retention, within the social framework of each country, of privileges and prejudices which have had their day. In the nineteen-thirties, at any rate, it was in the field of external policy that the most obstinate and immediate obstruction arose. Each country was trying to build up its own financial and economic strength. Some were doing so with the deliberate object of reinforcing their military and diplomatic power, whether for eventual aggression, like Germany and Japan, or for defensive purposes, like France and Russia. Others, like the United States and the members of the British Commonwealth, did so with no such conscious political purpose: but the result was the same. Economic nationalism was firmly in the saddle: and such improvements as could be brought about under these circumstances were unstable and short-lived. They were never sufficient to get rid of unemployment or to remove the growing sense of insecurity which was poisoning men's lives.

What, in these conditions which it had vainly striven to prevent, could the League do? It was useless to renew the attempt to create world-wide co-operation in economic policy by means of specific plans which could be effective only when accepted and applied by a large number of governments. The economic and financial institutions of the League did not indeed abandon their convictions or change their aim:



but they were forced to turn to new methods. Henceforth, their activities were concerned more with the individual than with the State. They began to work in close conjunction with the Health Organization, the International Labour Office, and the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome. The result was a series of practical studies and specialized conferences on such questions as housing, rural hygiene and rural conditions in general, standards of living, and nutrition. Simultaneously they organized the scientific study of the underlying causes of the economic and financial troubles of the world. The work of the Economic Intelligence services of the League, issued in a long list of annual statistical publications, continued to grow in authority: while special inquiries dealt with the nature of trade cycles and recurring depressions, the distribution of raw materials, the gold standard, and many other problems which, with all their expert resources, the various governments had shown themselves unable to grasp and control.

We shall return briefly in due course to the final development of this part of the League's work.<sup>1</sup> Its effects were already visible before the Second World War; it was not entirely interrupted even by the war, and it has profoundly affected the conceptions which have shaped the structure of the United Nations. The change of method following the failure of the general Economic Conference of 1933 was adopted almost unconsciously: it may be quoted as one more proof of the deep, innate, collective wisdom of the international society, far harder to understand, yet a far safer guide, than the superficial logic of national interest.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 60.

## WAR IN SOUTH AMERICA

*Latin America and the League—Early stages of the Chaco conflict—Pan American efforts at settlement—The Neutral Commission in Washington—The Council takes over—The League Commission in South America—Paraguayan victories—League plan rejected—The Arms Embargo—Peace by exhaustion*

(JUNE 1932—JULY 1935)

*The Leticia conflict and its settlement—League rule on the Amazon*

(SEPTEMBER 1932—JUNE 1934)

IT was as though Japan had given a signal. Before the Assembly could complete its report on Manchuria, hostilities had begun in two widely separated areas of South America. In Geneva, such news seemed at first too bad to be true. It was many years since two Latin American States had been at war with one another. The American Republics might be prone to internal disorder; they might seem, in external relations, unreasonably reluctant to reach final settlements; but it had begun to be almost taken for granted that they would keep the peace among themselves. While the European and Asiatic Members of the League struggled with the problems of disarmament and security, their American fellow Members were accustomed to claim that they offered an example to be followed: they were devoted to arbitration and international law, and their expenditure on armaments was negligible. In so far as they held to the League, it was not as a means of preventing war in the Western Hemisphere. To some it was a symbol of their status in the community of sovereign States and an opportunity to share in constructing the Permanent Court and other international institutions. To some, it was a counterweight to the massive influence of the United States. They were glad to have the right to profit by, and contribute to, its work in matters of health and social progress. They were among the most zealous supporters of its endeavours to promote international comradeship in the fields of science, art, education, and university relations. But they rarely thought of it as a guarantee of their own peace. It is true that they disliked the vague and inaccurate reference to the Monroe Doctrine which President Wilson had forced into the Covenant, and utterly rejected the idea that the League must refrain from political intervention on the American continent. But there was, nevertheless, something repugnant to their pride in such intervention: and

they listened readily to suggestions that the Republics of the Western Hemisphere ought, for their own dignity's sake, to settle their own differences among themselves.

The two South American conflicts with which the League now had to deal were the dispute over the Chaco territory between Bolivia and Paraguay, and that over Leticia between Colombia and Peru. In the former case, a strong effort was made in Washington to keep the affair out of the jurisdiction of the League; and this was one of the main causes of the failure of all concerned to avert or end the war. In the latter case, the League was throughout helped, not hindered, by Washington: and this was one of the main causes of its success in putting an end to hostilities and achieving a peaceful settlement.

The greater part of the work done by the Council on both these disputes was carried out by a committee of three members; but since the Committee spoke for the Council, and could do nothing without the Council's approval, it will not be necessary to distinguish between its acts and those of the Council itself. It was composed of the representatives of the Irish Free State, Spain, and Guatemala. It is noticeable that it contained no great power; these certainly had plenty to think about, but their relative aloofness was doubtless also due to the fear of offending the United States by taking a too active interest in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. It was observed that Simon never appeared at the Council table when these disputes were under discussion. The main work of the Committee was done by two men, the Irish representative, Seán Lester, and Madariaga. They were a good team, the brilliancy and courage of the Spaniard being reinforced by the sound judgement and political flair of the Irishman. They had no easy task in dealing with the representatives of Bolivia and Paraguay. The former, Costa du Rels, was a distinguished writer, clever and eloquent but unconciliatory and prone to indulge in sarcasm, always the greatest of errors in international affairs. The Paraguayan, Caballero de Bedoya, was temperamental to the point of violence, and was apt in times of crisis to retire into the country, leaving no address either in Geneva or Paris (where he was Minister) from which he might be summoned to a meeting. Neither delegate seemed to be aiming at a settlement, but only to score debating points against the other side. Their speeches and letters were, indeed, so bitter that at one moment the Council invited them to avoid the use of offensive language in the future. Each replied that the Council was no doubt thinking of the other.

The representatives of Peru and Colombia were more helpful. García Calderón of Peru, an author famed throughout Latin America, was also a man of temperament. He had a very bad case and knew it; he was

forced to substitute eloquence and emotion for serious argument, and he did it with great skill. But it was believed that he was doing his best to make his government see reason; and he behaved with perfect courtesy to his opponent. This was Eduardo Santos, than whom no more admirable representative, whether of a great or small power, ever sat at the Council table. Faultless in temper and manners, clear and convincing in discussion, firm on principles, but always looking towards peace and conciliation, the record of his speeches and letters might form a model for any statesman who has to present his country's case to the outside world.

The Chaco war may be regarded as the triumph of nationalist unreason over every sentiment of morality and common sense. An agreement which would have given complete protection to the economic and territorial interests of both parties, injuring not one single individual and nothing but the abstract national pride of the two countries, could have been drawn up at any moment. The belligerents themselves were not only suffering the physical and economic miseries of war but, except on the rare occasions when the joys of victory paid one or the other a fleeting visit, were morally unhappy and ashamed. Each desired to make peace: but pride and obstinacy forbade. Meanwhile the attempts at mediation of the neighbouring States, of the American Republics as a whole, and of the League, were rendered abortive, partly through the impenetrable obduracy of Bolivia and Paraguay, partly through the confusion due to this very multiplicity of effort. The Chaco war was perhaps the clearest of all the cases in which the world's will to peace could easily have prevailed if it had been concentrated in a single institution, but was doomed to failure by its fatal dispersal.

The war was fought for the possession of the vast area known as the Chaco, which separated the acknowledged territories of the two countries. Each claimed the whole area; and each was in effective control of a small sector nearest its own territory. Paraguay had, with the aid of foreign capital and to some extent of foreign settlers, colonized the south-eastern fringe; and between the most advanced Paraguayan settlement and the nearest Bolivian territory which had been in any way developed, lay the enormous plain, perhaps 100,000 square miles in extent, uninhabited save for a few Indian camping grounds, and unexplored save for the widely spaced tracks which led to the military outposts of either country. Although Bolivia and Paraguay, with populations of three and one million souls respectively, could have no prospect for centuries to come of making practical use of the Chaco, each maintained a considerable number of small forts in its central areas and spent great efforts in advancing its own outposts and trying to obstruct any similar

advance from the other side. The nerve centres of the two rudimentary military systems lay, for Bolivia, along the River Pilcomayo, which forms the south-western limit of the Chaco, and for Paraguay along the River Paraguay, which flows due south along its eastern boundary. Perhaps the only serious practical interest at stake was Bolivia's desire for a port on the River Paraguay at some point between two and three hundred miles north of the Paraguayan capital. Here the river emerges from Brazil to become the frontier between Brazil and the Chaco; and even here, more than a thousand miles from the sea, it is navigable for steamers of 1,000 tons. Bolivia could make no use of such a port for many years to come. It would be separated by 400 uninhabited miles from her nearest township. But it would give her an opening to the Atlantic: and this might one day do something to compensate her for the fact that she had been shut off from the Pacific. She was the only Latin American State which had no access to the sea.

For fifty years attempts had been made to agree on a frontier. Definite lines had, indeed, been laid down in four or five different treaties signed by the representatives of the two countries. But each treaty in turn had been refused ratification by the congress of one or the other. More and more the ambition to extend their sovereignty over the whole Chaco became a fetish of the small ruling groups on either side, so that to advocate a reasonable solution began to be considered both in La Paz and in Asunción as an unpatriotic act.

The movement of patrols between the isolated outposts of the Bolivian and Paraguayan armies was bound sooner or later to lead to local skirmishes which might easily develop into something more serious. This had happened at the end of 1928, when the two capitals had been startled to receive lengthy telegrams of warning from the Council, then in session at Lugano. The question was simultaneously taken up by a Conference of American States, which was also in session at the time; and both parties agreed that a commission appointed by this latter Conference should assist in securing a peaceful settlement of the incident. This body, known as the Neutral Commission, consisted of the representatives in Washington of Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Uruguay, with a high official of the State Department as Chairman. It succeeded in liquidating the local incidents which had nearly led to a state of war but, in spite of long efforts, it was still unable to make the slightest progress towards deciding the main question in dispute.

In June 1932 further skirmishes occurred, and this time there appeared to be a readiness on both sides to extend the action of their patrols into military operations on a somewhat larger scale. The explanation of this ominous development must be found in the fact that both countries had,

in the interval since 1928, been buying munitions in very considerable quantities. Neither Bolivia nor Paraguay could manufacture arms. The finances of both were in a deplorable condition; they could neither meet the interest on their public debt nor do anything to improve the miserable living standard of their peoples. They could not even pay the few hundred pounds of their contributions to the League budget. Yet each was able to borrow and spend millions of dollars in buying war material—chiefly from Britain and the United States and, in lesser quantities, from many other countries, including France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Norway, and Switzerland.

Bolivia and Paraguay were both Members of the League. The Covenant was, indeed, the sole obligation against war which was common to both, since Bolivia was one of the few States which had never adhered to the Kellogg Pact. Each sent notes to the Secretary-General protesting against the acts of the other: but neither submitted the dispute to inquiry by the Council as they were bound to do. Instead, it was promptly taken up by the Neutral Commission, which pressed its warnings and advice upon the two governments. The representatives of all the American Republics were called in to reinforce the influence of the Commission; and on its suggestion they adopted the famous declaration of August 3rd, 1932, in which they appealed to Bolivia and Paraguay to follow the American tradition of peaceful settlement of frontier problems, and declared that they would not recognize any territorial arrangements which might be obtained by force of arms.

Unfortunately, the Neutral Commission was a weak organization, dominated by its Chairman, Francis White, of the State Department. Its remonstrances were little heeded in La Paz and Asunción: yet it held with jealousy to the doubtful prerogative of concentrating in its hands the whole international effort to preserve the peace of the Chaco. Pressing messages came from White to the American diplomatists in Geneva, giving an optimistic view of the situation and urging them to stave off any intervention by the Council.

Meeting in September 1932, under the chairmanship of de Valera, the Irish Prime Minister, the Council thus found itself in a position of doubt. It was its duty to uphold the Covenant, and to use the machinery of the League for that purpose; yet the Neutral Commission in Washington was asking it to stand aside, and in this respect at least the two parties appeared to agree. The great powers on the Council were more than willing to avoid shouldering further responsibility: the Sino-Japanese conflict, and the Disarmament Conference, were quite enough: but the representatives of the lesser States, in particular de Valera and Madariaga, were full of zeal.

In these circumstances, Drummond suggested that the Council's action should take the form of supporting the proposals of the Neutral Commission, and that the Commission on its side should do its best to consult the Council and keep it fully informed. The suggestion was accepted, but was better respected in Geneva than in Washington.

At the Assembly of 1932 and at a number of Council meetings during the following months—at this time, owing to the Disarmament Conference and the Special Assembly on Manchuria, the Council was more or less continuously in session—the representatives of Bolivia and Paraguay protested their loyalty to the Covenant, each asserting the determination of his country to keep the peace if only the other party would cease from attacking it. Meanwhile on both sides military action and military preparations were being carried on to the best of their power. The Neutral Commission was still confident in December that it could ensure the cessation of hostilities and the peaceful settlement of the Chaco problem. It had rejected the advice offered by the Council that a commission should immediately be sent to the spot, preferring to continue discussion with the delegates of the two States in Washington. It disregarded another important suggestion, that steps might be taken to prevent the importation of arms or ammunition by either of the belligerents. It was, however, overestimating its own capacities; each of its proposals was refused by one side or the other; and Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, the principal neighbours of Bolivia and Paraguay, were neither joining in, nor particularly well disposed towards, its efforts. By the end of the year it was forced to change its methods; but it was not yet ready to surrender its mandate to the Council of the League. It was still convinced that the nations of America could and should safeguard peace in their own hemisphere. While remaining theoretically responsible for the conduct of affairs, it appealed to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru to take up the burden on its behalf (December 31st, 1932).

The Council was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the position. Two Members of the League were engaged in hostilities, while the League organs, which alone had the right and duty to intervene under a treaty to which both were parties, were brushed aside, and even kept to a great extent in ignorance of events. The Council continued to urge that a Commission of Inquiry, on the lines of the Lytton Commission, should be sent to the Chaco; and both parties accepted the proposal in principle, but asked that it should be held up as long as the four neighbours were endeavouring to effect a settlement. A first attempt was also made to act on the previous suggestion that fighting could be stopped by preventing either side from importing war material. On February 25th, 1933, Britain and France called upon the Council to organize an

embargo by Members of the League, while Hoover and Stimson exerted themselves to persuade Congress to authorize similar action by the United States. The Council was ready to follow the Franco-British lead; and a general consultation of all Members was promptly set on foot. But in the meantime the Senate, having first consented to the President's request, changed its mind and rejected it. Thereafter, the embargo proposal was dropped, and another fifteen months of bloodshed were to pass before it could be revived.

Save for these half-hearted and abortive suggestions, the Council was compelled to remain inactive for another four months while Argentina and Chile, passively supported by Brazil and Peru, tried to find a formula of agreement. Like the Neutral Commission, they produced a scheme which in itself was perfectly reasonable. But Bolivia was suspicious of her neighbours and especially of Argentina; a good deal of Argentine capital was invested in that strip of the Chaco which was administered by Paraguay, and Buenos Aires had undoubtedly given the latter diplomatic support and technical, perhaps also financial, assistance. A yet stronger reason for the intransigence of Bolivia was the fact that her troops at this time were pressing the Paraguayans back; her Commander-in-Chief, a naturalized German general named Kundt, was confident of victory. She rejected the plan of the four neighbours and asked that the Neutral Commission should try again. The latter, however, had had enough. Its Chairman was reported to have retired for a rest cure—a circumstance easily to be understood by anyone charged with negotiations concerning the Chaco war. The Neutral Commission at last let it be known that its labours were at an end and that the way was clear for action by the League.

At this point, Paraguay, alarmed by the growing strength of the Bolivian forces, and aware that munitions were reaching that country in large quantities, decided to declare by vote of Congress the existence of a state of war (May 10th, 1933). She believed that this would prevent the transit of war material through the Pacific ports of Chile and Peru. Her announcement was, indeed, followed by declarations of neutrality by all the neighbouring States; but neither Chile nor Peru considered that they were obliged to prevent the transit of munitions. Argentina, on the other hand, did put a stop to the export not only of war material but also of foodstuffs on which the southern wing of the Bolivian army had come to depend, and at a later stage this decision was to cost Bolivia dear.

The Bolivian delegates somewhat naïvely claimed that the Paraguayan declaration of war made it incumbent upon the League to apply against her the sanctions of Article 16. The Council, however, was well aware



that the declaration was no more than the formal recognition of a state of things which had existed in fact for nearly a year. Both countries were violating the Covenant, since neither had carried out its obligation to submit the dispute to one of the pacific methods of settlement provided therein; and the real question for the Council was to put an end to the fighting and, if this could not be done, to know who was responsible not so much for the outbreak, as for the continuation, of the war. The Council, therefore, now trying for the first time to take seriously in hand a situation of increasing gravity, insisted, at a meeting held on May 20th, that the first step must be to dispatch a League Commission to the spot, for the purpose of organizing an effective armistice in the Chaco, and, if possible, of negotiating an agreement for the submission to arbitration of the frontier question.

Paraguay accepted at once the proposal to send out a Commission. At the same time she confirmed her willingness to submit the whole dispute to arbitration; but she made it a condition that hostilities must first be stopped and adequate measures taken to prevent their starting again. Bolivia, also, after long discussion, reluctantly agreed to the dispatch of a Commission. As for arbitration, she intended that this should apply only to that part of the Chaco which was at present out of her grasp, and she therefore claimed that, before arbitration could take place, the two parties must agree to delimit the zone in regard to which the judges should pronounce their award. Until such agreement was reached, she declined to stop fighting; her army was operating hundreds of miles from its base and an armistice, which might be broken at any time, would strengthen the military position of her opponent, whose lines of communication were shorter and better. Further, though this was of course not mentioned by the Bolivian delegate, General Kundt was about to launch an offensive from which he expected great results.

In spite of the uncompromising attitude of the two governments, the Council had reason to think that the armies and the general public on each side were longing to put an end to the war. It believed therefore that the arrival on the spot of a League Commission would very likely prove decisive, and it persuaded the two governments to accept this, without committing itself definitely to the thesis of one or the other. It was certainly incongruous and unnatural that the League should not insist that hostilities must be stopped immediately. But this was a consequence of the unfortunate fact that the Covenant was being applied ten months too late.

In July the League Commission was ready to start. It consisted of military and diplomatic personalities from Britain, France, Italy, Mexico, and Spain, with the Spaniard, Alvarez del Vayo, as Chairman,

and J. A. Buero, Legal Director in the Secretariat and a former Foreign Minister of Uruguay, as Secretary. But at this moment Bolivia and Paraguay suddenly submitted to the Council a request, in identical terms, that the Commission should be delayed for a time and that the four neighbouring countries should again be invited to attempt a settlement. It was never clear who had induced the two belligerents to agree on this strange course of action. The Council could not refuse a request which they put forward in concert. Yet the neighbouring powers seemed far from willing to accept the new mandate and on September 30th, after some exchanges of correspondence between themselves and Bolivia and Paraguay, informed the Council that they must decline it.

The Commission's chances of success were greatly reduced by this waste of time: instead of reaching South America in August, it arrived at the beginning of November, at a moment when the prestige of the League had just been heavily shaken by the German withdrawal. The seventh Pan American Conference was due to open the following month at Montevideo, thus affording one more opportunity to either party to appeal, if it chose to do so, from the jurisdiction of the League to that of the American Republics. Above all, the military situation had undergone a startling change. The Bolivian offensive had failed, with heavy losses; the closing of the Argentine frontier had cut off an important source of supplies; and their powers of organization were unequal to maintaining their army in the field at the end of their over-stretched lines of communication. The Paraguayan commander, General Estigarribia, was proving something of a military genius, capable of making the best use of the astonishing fighting qualities of this small nation. During its first month in South America the Commission had visited the Paraguayan capital and inspected the front from the Paraguayan side. Early in December it reached La Paz and began its conversations with the Bolivian government. At this moment news began to arrive of a sweeping Paraguayan victory, and on December 18th the President of Paraguay telegraphed to the Commission at La Paz, proposing an armistice until the end of the year, and asking the Commission to invite both parties to meet it as soon as possible either at Montevideo or in Buenos Aires, in order to negotiate the terms of peace. Bolivia accepted both proposals, and with high hopes the Commission summoned an immediate meeting at Montevideo.

It is pleasant to record that the Pan American Conference, at least in its public manifestations, actively co-operated with the Commission. On December 15th, 1933, by unanimous vote, including those of the United States and Brazil, it declared itself 'ready to co-operate with the League of Nations in the application of the Covenant'. At its closing session, it

gave a place of honour to the members of the Commission, whose entry was greeted with enthusiastic applause. At the same moment another League Commission was administering on behalf of the Council the disputed territory of Leticia on the Amazon. Certainly any idea that the League had no competence to act in the Western Hemisphere was exploded for ever. If later the American Republics slowly and reluctantly returned to a kind of hemispheric isolationism, this was due to no revulsion against the League, but to their fear and hatred of that growth of nationalist militarism in Europe which the League itself was trying in vain to check.

At Montevideo, however, the bright prospects of peace quickly faded. The terms put forward by the Commission were flatly rejected by Paraguay, which in the flush of victory refused to prolong the armistice except on the condition that the whole of the Chaco should be evacuated by the Bolivian army and should be policed by Paraguayan forces. It was in vain that the experienced French, British, and Mexican soldiers on the Commission warned the Paraguayan government that, as their troops advanced farther from their bases, while their enemy fell back nearer to his, their present military advantage would disappear, and at the best a period of stalemate would set in. Finally, the Commission handed to both governments a draft treaty embodying its recommendations for the cessation of hostilities and also for a definite settlement of the whole dispute. It held a last conference with the two delegations on February 21st, 1934, and, finding both completely obdurate, returned to Geneva and reported its experiences to the Council.

The report of the Chaco Commission is in its way as remarkable a document as that of the Lytton Commission. Its prophecy concerning the development of the war proved completely accurate, and when both parties were finally compelled to make a peace of exhaustion, its plan for a settlement was closely followed. But this was still in the future. For the time being the Commission reported that there was only one practical measure to bring the war to an end—by preventing both sides from acquiring further stocks of munitions. It described how the armies engaged 'in this singularly pitiless and horrible war' were 'using up-to-date material—aeroplanes, armoured cars, flame-projectors, quick-firing guns, machine-guns, and automatic rifles'. The automatic weapons, in particular, were available in great quantities. All this material was supplied to the belligerents by American and European countries.

The Council now determined to renew its previous attempt to put an embargo on this traffic. Each of the Council Members had then been willing to stop its own exports, some straight away, others after current

contracts had been completed. But most of them, believing, probably quite wrongly, that public opinion would resent loss of trade for the benefit of rival exporters, made their action conditional on that of other arms-manufacturing countries. It was finally found that the agreement of some thirty-five governments was required before the embargo could become effective; and so long as these conditions were maintained, progress was blocked by the refusal of the United States. However, the Commission's report had produced a deep impression, and the inconclusive efforts of 1933 made it possible to reach a general agreement in 1934. Eden took the question up with energy; he had a zealous ally in Castillo Nájera, the Mexican representative on the Council, a resolute and public-spirited figure who had succeeded Lester as President of the Committee of Three. Under their leadership, the Council decided, on May 19th, 1934, to make a fresh and urgent appeal to all the arms-producing States. Meanwhile opinion in the United States was seriously aroused; men learnt with indignation that, while their government was trying to put an end to the war, a single number of a Bolivian newspaper contained the advertisements of five different American firms describing the qualities of the arms which they had to sell. Before the Council's appeal could reach Washington, both Houses of Congress unanimously adopted a resolution giving the President power to prohibit the sale of arms or munitions to Bolivia or Paraguay; and Roosevelt issued his prohibition without waiting to see what other countries would do. In fact, a number of Members of the League were already imposing the embargo, and the others came into line one by one. Germany and Japan, still counted among the Members of the League, sent replies which, though grudging in form, were satisfactory in substance. Russia, now about to join, gave a prompt and unconditional assent. By August 1934, though some vexatious reservations marred its effects, the embargo was virtually complete.

Meanwhile the war itself, and the League's vain efforts to bring it to a close, dragged on. In the summer of 1934 Bolivia, whose military situation was steadily growing worse, followed the example of China and Colombia by invoking Article 15 of the Covenant, and requested also that the question should henceforth be dealt with by the Assembly in place of the Council. Thus the time was approaching when after long and disastrous delay the League must draw up its own recommendations for the settlement of the dispute, and call on each party to accept them or to risk the consequences—consequences which under the Covenant were definite and severe, but which in the utter confusion of the Chaco affair were likely to prove uncertain and negligible.

Even under Article 15, one last attempt at conciliation must first be made; and this task the Assembly entrusted to a special committee of its

Latin American Members. For the first time, Argentina was putting her powerful influence behind the efforts of the League, and not only Argentina but also Mexico, Chile, and Peru were all represented by delegates of unusual ability and authority. The United States and Brazil, however, refused the Assembly's invitation to co-operate; and no conjoint pressure upon the belligerents could even now be achieved. Paraguay, having once more stated her case at immense length to the Assembly, refused to attend the meetings of the Committee. But the Latin American delegates and the Secretariat, painfully and intimately acquainted with every aspect of the dispute, proceeded to draw up an elaborate treaty covering every possible detail. The cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal and demobilization of the armies, the temporary policing of the evacuated zones, were to be organized and supervised by a neutral military commission. At the same time, a Peace Conference was to meet in Buenos Aires; and the treaty contained full provisions to ensure a fair solution of the territorial dispute, and to safeguard the interests of both countries in regard to communications and commercial development. On November 24th, 1934, this Treaty was adopted by the Assembly as constituting its formal recommendation for a just settlement. As such, it was solemnly presented to the two parties: the Latin American Members of the League appealed to La Paz and Asunción to accept it; and even the United States and Brazil agreed to take part in the neutral military commission and in the Peace Conference of Buenos Aires.

Paraguay, as usual, demanded changes and insisted on her demand: and the Committee of twenty-three States which the Assembly had set up to act on its behalf was forced to interpret her answer as a formal rejection. Bolivia, on the other hand, announced her acceptance. Thus Paraguay, by continuing hostilities against a Member which was ready to comply with the Assembly's verdict, was more clearly than ever violating the Covenant and exposing herself to sanctions. Her neighbours were not ready, after all that had passed, to break off economic and financial relations, and no serious proposal to this effect was put before the Assembly Committee: it did, however, invite all Members of the League to lift the arms embargo for the benefit of Bolivia and to maintain it for Paraguay. Thereupon the Paraguayan government, protesting that it was being unfairly condemned and unjustly punished, notified its decision to withdraw from the League. Such conduct was unreasonable; but those who recalled the intransigent and aggressive attitude of Bolivia in the days when she was confident of victory, could not but feel a certain sympathy with the indignant answer of Paraguay.

In the field, however, the situation was now developing as had been foretold by the Chaco Commission a year before. As the communication-

lines of the Paraguayan army lengthened, and those of their opponents shortened, the military advantage began to swing in Bolivia's favour. By June 1935 both nations, bleeding, ruined, and exhausted, were ready to admit that victory was beyond their powers. The neighbouring countries, Argentina and Chile at their head, seized the psychological moment and induced them to stop fighting and demobilize their armies. Later that year, the Peace Conference met in Buenos Aires. Both in the Chaco and at the Conference action went forward in accordance with the Assembly plan: but the League was no longer formally associated with the proceedings. Paraguay and Bolivia were as obstinate as ever: each continually obstructed the negotiations and threatened to withdraw its delegates. But since each was utterly unable to restart hostilities, these wranglings were now harmless enough. Finally, after a succession of revolutions in both capitals, peace was formally signed in July 1938.

The conflict between Colombia and Peru, which led to sporadic fighting during several weeks but was fortunately settled before this fighting had led to war in the full sense of the word, concerned the possession of a large district, known as the Leticia Trapeze, stretching from the Putumayo river on the north to the Amazon on the south. This district had been ceded to Colombia by Peru, as part of a general frontier settlement between the two countries, by a treaty signed in 1922 and finally ratified in 1928. It was totally undeveloped and almost uninhabited; but its importance to Colombia was considerable, because it provided her with access to the main stream of the Amazon which otherwise she could reach only down the Putumayo or other tributary rivers. The post of Leticia consisted of little more than a few Indian huts, but the Colombian authorities had begun to develop it in a very small way as an Amazon port.

Though the main territory of Peru looks westward towards the Pacific, she possesses on the eastern side of the Andes the immense province of Loreto. The life of this great area centres upon the Amazon; its capital is the port of Iquitos, some 200 miles upstream from Leticia. Loreto has often shown itself recalcitrant to the authority of Lima, with which its communications are long and difficult. The Peruvians of Loreto resented the appearance of a new Amazonian power, and in September 1932 an armed band crossed the river, drove out the few Colombian officials, and occupied Leticia.

The government at Lima disavowed this action, and for some weeks it seemed that the incident would be settled by friendly negotiations, and that the Colombian authorities would be allowed to return to their

posts in peace. But as their police expedition, which had taken some little time to organize, was on its way up the Brazilian waters of the Amazon and approaching Leticia, it was warned (January 6th, 1933) by the Peruvian military commander at Iquitos that the reoccupation of Leticia would be opposed by arms. This unexpected attitude was promptly supported by the government itself. Peru did not deny the validity of the treaty; but she declared that she could not permit Peruvians who had acted from purely patriotic motives to be attacked by force, and suggested that the situation at Leticia should remain unchanged while negotiations for a settlement took place between the two governments. Though Colombia could not be expected to agree to such a suggestion, she did, in fact, hold back her expedition for the time being, while Brazil, which was uneasy at the prospect of fighting on her frontier, made an attempt to mediate. Brazil put forward the very sensible proposal that Leticia should be surrendered by the Peruvians—it was now occupied by a detachment of the Peruvian army—to a Brazilian unit, and that the latter should a few days later return it to the representatives of its lawful sovereign. This plan was accepted by Colombia, while Peru insisted on modifications which amounted to rejection. Her troops were not only entrenching themselves in the neighbourhood of Leticia, but had now constructed a defence post far to the north at Tarapaca on the Putumayo.

All these events took place during the period in which the Council was being prevented from intervening in the Chaco dispute, and it had looked hitherto as though it was to suffer similar frustration in regard to Leticia. Lester, on behalf of de Valera, the President of the Council, had in accordance with precedent dispatched telegrams reminding both Colombia and Peru of their duty as Members of the League (January 14th, 1933). Each party had sent to Geneva statements justifying its own action and protesting against that of the other; and Peru had formally invited the Council to order the suspension of all measures of force. The same Committee of Three—Ireland, Spain, and Guatemala—which the Council had set up to deal with the Chaco affair was now asked, and consented, to accept a similar responsibility in regard to the Leticia dispute; and on January 26th the representatives of the two countries, García Calderón for Peru and Eduardo Santos for Colombia, set forth their case at length before the Council itself. But in spite of all these preliminaries, the Council was still at a loss how to act, knowing that negotiations were going on both in Rio de Janeiro and in Washington, but not fully informed as to their progress or prospects in either case.

At the beginning of February, however, Brazil announced that she was abandoning her attempt to mediate; and thenceforth the State

Department also confined itself to supporting the endeavours of the Council and its Committee. The parties themselves seemed also to prefer intervention by the League to any other.

From the point of view of international law, the case was a very simple one, and the Council lost no time in affirming that Colombia had the fullest right to take measures to restore her authority upon her own territory, and in calling upon Peru to put no obstacle in her way. The Peruvian attitude, however, became more and more intransigent. From their bases in Loreto, Peruvian aircraft made bombing attacks on the Colombian ships moving towards Leticia, with the result that the latter again retired into Brazilian waters. The Colombians bombarded and retook Tarapaca, but Leticia remained firmly in Peruvian hands. In both countries the war fever was rising. All young men were drafted for military service; large credits were voted for the purchase of arms; on February 19th the Colombian Legation in Lima was sacked by the mob. In Geneva, Santos asked that the question should be dealt with under Article 15 of the Covenant, and begged the Council to lose no time in making its formal report, setting forth the circumstances of the case and its recommendations for a just settlement.

The procedure of Article 15 was now familiar to all Members of the League, having just been applied by the Assembly in the conflict between China and Japan. The first duty of the Council was to try and find a settlement with the consent of the parties. It proposed to them that the Peruvians should hand over Leticia to a Commission of the League; that this Commission should administer the whole area for a period of a year, keeping order by means of a few Colombian troops which would be placed under its command and regarded as an international force; that during this year negotiations should take place between the two States; and that at the end of the period, if no other agreement had been reached, the Commission should restore Leticia to the Colombian government. This compromise, accepted by Colombia, was refused by Peru, and it was evident that no agreed settlement was then possible. Accordingly, on March 13th, only three weeks after the adoption by the Assembly of its final report on the Manchurian dispute, the Council gave its verdict on Leticia. It recommended that Peru should withdraw all her forces and all support from those who had illegally occupied a section of Colombian territory, and that only after this evacuation had been completed should negotiations take place on the various grievances which Peru had recently brought up against the conduct of Colombia. Colombia naturally voted for this report and Peru against it. But under Article 15 the votes of the parties had no legal effect and, since the report was unanimously adopted by the other Members



of the Council, it followed that if Peru went to war to prevent Colombia from executing its recommendations, she would be violating the Covenant and would expose herself to the sanctions of Article 16.

The Council followed the example of the Assembly by setting up an Advisory Committee consisting of its own members, with Lester as Chairman, to ensure that the Members of the League should do nothing to hinder, and what they could to help, the execution of its report. The United States and Brazil were invited, and promptly agreed, to send representatives to this Committee.

During the next weeks things looked black, and war seemed certain. Colombian ships on the Putumayo were repeatedly fired upon from the Peruvian bank and bombed from the air. The Peruvian detachments along the river were strengthened. One Peruvian fort, Guepi, was so menacing that Colombian forces were landed and succeeded in capturing it after a sharp fight. Still more menacing was the fact that four Peruvian ships of war, a cruiser and three submarines, were sent through the Panama Canal into the Atlantic with orders to sail up the Amazon and join the Peruvian forces at Iquitos. This news caused great anxiety in Geneva, for if these ships reached Iquitos it would undoubtedly mean that when the Colombian expedition approached Leticia there would be something like a real battle, the more so since Colombia was increasing her naval forces and had just acquired two destroyers newly built in a private British shipyard. The Advisory Committee was urgently summoned (May 8th, 1933), and requested those Members at whose ports the Peruvian flotilla might need to call on its way to the mouth of the Amazon, to refrain from giving it the assistance without which it would not be able to proceed. Its first call was at the Dutch port of Curaçao. The ships were refused entry to the port but, having anchored some miles off the shore, they were furnished with sufficient fuel, water, and other supplies to move on to Trinidad. In spite of the Committee's request, no orders had yet been sent from London to the Governor of that colony. No precedent could be discovered for refusing supplies in such circumstances—a fact which was not surprising inasmuch as no such circumstances had arisen since the foundation of the League. By the time the required instructions had reached Port-of-Spain, the Peruvian ships had arrived, been given all they asked for, and left for the Amazon. The Committee's endeavours to prevent the onward progress of the flotilla thus came to nothing. Since no one else in the Committee seemed ready to do so, Drummond departed from his usual impassive calm, and took it upon himself to tell the representatives of the British and Netherlands governments, in no uncertain terms, that they had failed in their duty, and that, if the Peruvian expedition reached its

journey's end and Leticia became the scene of a naval fight, they would bear a heavy responsibility.

But for once in a way good luck was on the side of the Council, and the peace of the Amazon was saved by an assassin's bullet. Sanchez Cerro, the dictatorial President of Peru, was murdered on April 30th, and it was soon seen that public opinion—which, according to the Peruvian government, had hitherto made concessions impossible—was in truth alarmed and resentful at the prospect of being led into an unnecessary war. After further negotiations, the new President let it be known that Peru was now prepared to accept the recommendations which she had previously rejected. Lester promptly convoked the Council; Santos and García Calderón exchanged congratulations and thanks, and on May 25th, 1933, amidst a chorus of satisfaction, the two representatives signed at the Council table a formal agreement for the settlement of the dispute.

Thirty days later, the League Commission, which included members from the United States, Brazil, and Spain, reached Leticia. The Peruvian commander loyally carried out his orders to surrender the place. A League flag was hoisted and for a year the devoted members of the Commission, living under conditions of great discomfort, administered the Leticia Trapeze. Meanwhile negotiations duly took place between the two countries under the chairmanship of de Mello Franco, who had once been Brazil's regular representative on the Council, and was now her Foreign Minister. In due course, though not without some moments of anxiety (so hard it is to calm nationalist ambitions when once aroused), Leticia was handed over by the League to its lawful sovereign.

In relinquishing its mandate, the Commission recorded with modest pride that under the League flag the population of the little town had increased fourfold. Damage had been repaired, a hospital, three schools, and other useful buildings had been erected; not a single case of violence had taken place; and the Commission had felt itself throughout to be upheld by the respect, confidence, and affection of the inhabitants of Leticia.

## THE SECOND YEAR OF THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

*Franco-German disagreement—The British Plan—Mussolini's Four-Power Pact—Hitler's 'peace' speech—Henderson's journey—The proposal for a 'trial period'—Germany refuses, leaves the Conference, and resigns from the League—Breakdown of direct negotiations—Roosevelt and the trade in arms—The Conference adjourns*

(JANUARY 1933-JUNE 1934)

THE second year of the Disarmament Conference reflected, as it was bound to do, the ominous developments of the international situation in general.

While first Japan and then Germany turned against the League and in their several ways began to obstruct and threaten all those forms of co-operation which the League was intended to save, Britain and the United States made efforts to save the Conference—efforts which might possibly have succeeded a year before, but proved quite inadequate for the tougher problems of 1933. Russia, too, began to speak the language of Geneva, while Mussolini, inclining more and more towards Hitler, based ambitious projects upon his own and others' illusions as to the warlike capacities of Italy. And finally, in October, came the withdrawal of Germany from the League, and therewith the irreparable breakdown of the Conference and of all attempts to realize the hopes of world disarmament.

These tragic events were already casting their shadows before them when the Conference reconvened at the end of January 1933. The first weeks were spent in obstinate disagreements between the French and German delegations over the procedure for putting into effect the formula of December 11th. Meanwhile, Japan was first threatening, and then announcing, her resignation from the League; and her armies were occupying Jehol and advancing on Peiping. At the same time, the Nazis in Germany were making themselves masters of the country, and their brutal treatment of 'pacifists' or 'internationalists', their fierce repudiation of Stresemann and all his works, and their militaristic attitude in general, seemed to make all talk of disarmament hollow and unreal.

This certainly was the sentiment of France, driven more and more on to the defensive, politically against the Italo-German campaign for treaty revision, and militarily against the sudden revival of German

fighting power. For Germany, though not rearmed, was now remilitarized. The French had always accused her of having violated the Treaty by concealing arms which she was under the obligation to destroy; but they had never substantiated their claim and their famous dossier on the subject (the British had one too) was generally believed to contain nothing of great military importance. On the other hand, the advent of a nationalist and reactionary government in Berlin meant that the fighting power of all the remaining para-military organizations would henceforth be merged in that of the Reichswehr.

Within Germany it was still uncertain whether this fusion would be effected through the professional soldiers becoming the masters of the Stahlhelm and the Storm-troopers, or through Hitler becoming (what the Weimar Republic had never been) the master of the Reichswehr. For the outer world, it mattered little which of the rival forces won the day. In either case France saw the revival of the German nation-in-arms, and realized that her capacity to enforce the disarmament clauses of the Treaty had dropped sharply. In face of this brutal fact the question how far she had herself contributed to the conditions which had helped Hitler's rise to power seemed merely academic. Her vast preponderance in armaments was her main hope of security against the German preponderance in man-power and industrial resources. Could it now be expected that she should consent to lessen the gap?

In these circumstances the French were quite unable to bring themselves to pursue the policy embodied in the agreement of December. Herriot had fallen, and the delegation was now led by Paul-Boncour, by Pierre Cot, the young and energetic Socialist Air Minister, and by René Massigli, an influential official in the Quai d'Orsay; but no French government would have acted otherwise. They did not repudiate the agreement, but took advantage of its ambiguities to raise numerous difficulties of procedure and of substance, and to insist once more on the need for fresh guarantees of security. Six weeks of fruitless discussion had brought matters once more to the verge of deadlock, when the British delegation under Eden and Alexander Cadogan, a high official of the Foreign Office, who had been the secretary and the trusted adviser of many successive British delegations, persuaded their chiefs in London to depart from the negative and discouraging attitude which they had adopted ever since the Conference opened.

They drew up a draft Convention, providing for the maximum of reduction which seemed to be both possible from a study of previous discussions, and desirable in the light of the special views of the British government. The Convention included, for the first time, actual figures of effectives, and also of aeroplanes, together with limitation of mobile

guns by calibre (4 inch) and of tanks by weight (16 tons). Naval limitation was based on the continuance for the next three years of the situation created by the Treaty of London. An attempt was made to satisfy German demands by stipulating that the new Convention should take the place of the disarmament obligations of Versailles, so that the limitations on German armaments would be based on the same treaty as those of all other powers. Germany was to be allowed to substitute a short-service army for the Reichswehr, and was to enjoy equality in respect of home-based effectives with other great powers, except for Russia, whose land forces were fixed at two and a half times those of any other State. She could look forward to actual equality of armaments in a period of five years, though it was not apparent that this would apply to air and sea as well as to land. Supervision and investigation were to be entrusted, as already agreed, to a Permanent Disarmament Commission under conditions which would ensure its being able to act effectively. At the same time the plan sought to give France something of the additional guarantees of help against aggression which she had never ceased to demand. It did this, not by any new assurance of British support, but by the adroit use of Stimson's doctrine that signature of the Kellogg Pact involved for the United States the duty of consulting with other signatories if ever a breach of the Pact were to take place.

Thus each hint of advance towards agreement on the part of the United States, France, or Germany was brought into the British draft. It was a patchwork of the policies of other countries; and, if it embodied British policy, it was only in the negative sense. From the coming into power of the National government in August 1931, that policy had shown no clear purpose or conviction beyond the desire to see other countries arrive at an amiable settlement of their various differences. Only in regard to Russia was the Foreign Secretary ready to act with firmness. In April 1933, an injustice done to certain British subjects in Moscow was countered by a trade embargo, the very measure which was regarded as too dangerous even to consider in the case of Japan. Meanwhile there was a deliberate, if cautious, tendency to minimize the obligations of League membership; and later in the same year Simon, in words chosen with microscopic care, raised fresh doubts as to whether the British government still intended to fulfil its obligations not only under the Covenant but also under the Locarno Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of the limitations under which they worked, Eden and his colleagues had produced a practical plan which might well have won general acceptance if it had been put forward twelve months earlier. It would, for instance, have been admirably calculated to realize

<sup>1</sup> See his speech in the House of Commons, November 7th, 1933.

the main lines of the settlement proposed by Brüning in April 1932. Even now, it raised fresh hopes among the general public, though it may be doubted whether these were shared by the responsible leaders of the chief powers. It was presented on March 16th, 1933, with as much dramatic earnestness as possible, by Ramsay MacDonald in person. But though the delegations were grateful to the British for undertaking the labour and responsibility involved by the production of the new draft, their attitude remained cautious. After a week spent in studying its terms, only Italy gave her full acceptance. The other chief powers reserved their judgement. It was, however, agreed that the British draft should be taken as the basis of all future discussion. The Conference thereafter adjourned for a month to enable each delegation to consider what amendments, if any, it wished to propose.

During this interval, the German press—now under a control enforced by terror—seemed to be not unfavourable to the British plan, although it asserted that more concessions must be secured during the coming debate. But when the debate began in Geneva, Nadolny, who had been maintained as head of the delegation, showed himself stiff and uncompromising. At home, not only the Nazis themselves, but such survivals of a more normal regime as von Papen and von Neurath, expressed themselves in menacing and bellicose language. The love of war for war's sake was seen to have remained alive in Germany, when it was all but extinct in the rest of Europe: alive in the minds of the ruling clique, cultivated by them in the hearts of millions of the new generation. These manifestations were particularly discouraging to British opinion, which had long been convinced that the German demand for equality of rights in the matter of land armaments was largely justified, yet shrank from pressing disarmament upon the neighbours of what was now an openly aggressive power. The British government accordingly made no strong effort to promote the acceptance of its own draft. And for this there was another reason—Mussolini's proposal of a Four-Power Pact.

Two days after submitting the British plan to the Conference in Geneva, MacDonald and Simon were in Rome; and there they were presented with a document which, it appeared, the Duce had long been meditating. This was a draft treaty between Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, whereby the four Western powers of Europe should, in substance, bind themselves

1. to co-operate in the maintenance of peace, and, so far as Europe was concerned, to make other States conform to their decisions;
2. to accept and carry out the principle of treaty revision within the framework of the League;

3. to permit Germany to reach effective equality of rights, by stages, whether the Disarmament Conference were successful or not;
4. in general, to act together in all economic and political affairs, and also 'in the colonial sphere'.

The plan was conveyed at the same time to the French and German governments. An attempt was made to keep the affair as quiet as possible; but the press was at once aware that some move of importance had been started in Rome, and its chief objects were quickly guessed. The result was a period of diplomatic turmoil from one end of Europe to the other.

The method of preliminary agreement between great powers was attractive to the British government. Germany was delighted, not only with the method, but also with the prospect of treaty revision and equality of rights. The French were, of course, suspicious of being pushed too far and too fast in these directions: and their hesitation soon turned to opposition when they saw the effect of the proposal on Poland and the Little Entente. These four countries immediately concluded that agreement between the four western powers on treaty revision could only mean that territorial sacrifices would be imposed by force, or the threat of force, upon Germany's neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe, in other words, upon themselves; and their reaction was as vigorous as might have been expected. It was soon evident that the acceptance of the Italian proposals would shatter the existing framework of Europe and the League. And even at this price, it would not have produced the effects which Mussolini and MacDonald had in mind: for there was no more real prospect of unanimity between the Four in some new form of consultation, than existed already in the Council, the Assembly, and the Disarmament Conference. The fact that the Four would be totally unable to agree on any plan for revision was due, not to the rights assured by the Covenant to small States as to great ones, but to causes far more profound. The Europe of 1933 was still far removed from the Europe of 1938, in which for the first and last time, the western powers did in fact carry out, at Munich, the principle of Mussolini's Pact.

The French seemed, therefore, to be facing a difficult choice: to incur the hostility of Mussolini by rejecting his proposal, or that of their Allies by accepting it. But such a dilemma was child's play to the skilful draughtsmen of the Quai d'Orsay. They gave the pact a courteous greeting and then proceeded to remould it so that it was made to appear as a method for carrying out the Covenant and the Treaty of Locarno. The new articles contained no more than a faint echo of the original provisions; their substance and their procedure had been alike trimmed to the familiar forms of the League institutions. Mussolini professed himself satisfied: the Little Entente made no further objection: Poland alone

continued unreconciled. Whatever its contents, she objected to any agreement between great powers to which she was not a party. French acceptance of the Pact, even in a modified form, did much to chill Poland's sentiment for her chief ally, to weaken her attachment to the European system established by the Treaties of Peace, and to prepare the way for her brief and dangerous friendship with Hitler.

The revised Pact was finally signed in Rome on June 8th, 1933. Four months later, Germany's withdrawal from the League removed any possibility that it could ever be applied. The only result of the Duce's intervention had been to add to the confusion of Europe and to contribute not a little to the apathy which, in spite of the British initiative, soon settled again over the proceedings of the Disarmament Conference.

Meanwhile, on May 16th, the new President of the United States issued an appeal to the heads of all the fifty-four States represented at the Conference, and shortly to be represented also at the World Economic Conference. He urged them not to let these great conferences fail, since the consequences would be disastrous to peace and stability, both political and economic. As regards disarmament, he called for fulfilment of the British plan, accompanied by commitments to continue the process of reduction until all offensive weapons had been completely eliminated, and also by a new and all-inclusive pact of non-aggression. A few days later, on May 22nd, Norman Davis informed the Conference that his government would not only adhere to the British proposal for consultation in case of a breach of the Kellogg Pact, but would promise to do nothing to obstruct the action of the League against an aggressor State if, as a result of that consultation, it agreed with the League's verdict. This was a statement of great importance, since the Members of the League, and in particular those which belonged to the British Commonwealth, had been reluctant to think about applying sanctions for fear of finding themselves in conflict with Washington over the freedom of the seas. But it was not enough, now, to overcome Simon's dislike for sanctions and his instinctive trend towards isolationism. If this was a short-sighted view, it must be admitted that the American advance, brave as it was, was also far from adequate. The two Conferences for whose success Roosevelt appealed were no isolated phenomena. For their preparation, for their proceedings, and for the execution of whatever results they might achieve, they were absolutely dependent upon the existence of the League; and the support of the United States could only be truly effective if she were also a full participant in the permanent as well as in the temporary working of the World Organization. The American contribution, like the British, was too little and too late. And



when the failure came, America, even more than Britain, fell back into the role of spectator, hoping that the crash might be averted, but that, if not, it might yet pass her by.

The day after Roosevelt's appeal, Hitler in his turn accepted the British draft as the basis of the future Disarmament Convention. The savage cruelties which had marked the Nazi triumphs, Göring's invitation to his police to shoot anybody they thought dangerous, the martial orations of von Papen and others, had provoked a world-wide outbreak of mistrust and hostility towards the new Germany. Hitler saw that he was going too fast, and must make an effort to get on better terms with other important governments, and especially those of Britain and the United States. This he achieved in a single speech. He defined the Nazi attitude towards the problems of treaty revision and disarmament, in terms which were firm, clear, and reassuring. His speech was a political masterpiece. Even now it is impossible to read it without feeling that the speaker was sincerely anxious for disarmament and peace. Hitler was a master of conscious deception: he was a master also of that still more deadly deception which is unconscious, because at the time the speaker really means what he says. In his great series of speeches to the outer world—especially those of the earlier years of his reign—the two were mixed in proportions which he himself, still less any listener or reader, could hardly have dissected. That of May 17th, 1933, was his first major attempt to extend outside Germany the effects of his oratorical power. It was, from that point of view, successful beyond anything that he could have expected or his opponents could have feared. It comforted the hearts of all who were still hoping, against their own instinctive convictions, that the new Germany might become part of a tranquil Europe. It was the beginning of a phenomenon before which posterity will stand for ever astonished. From then on, Hitler was able to commit one action after another of such a nature as to make war more and more certain, and yet, by the art of his speeches, to renew again and again the hope that, in the end, he would show himself a man of peace.

Like Roosevelt, Hitler followed his speech by giving instructions to his delegation which seemed favourable to the British plan. But there were other obstacles, and progress was very slow. Japan raised new difficulties over naval limitation. Britain herself, alone against the whole Conference, insisted on the retention of air bombardment for police purposes. France demanded, among other things, that the provisions for inspection and investigation should be strengthened. Russia, alarmed by the insults and menaces of Hitler, was now close to the French view: Litvinov spoke but little of disarmament, and devoted his efforts to promoting a regional security system based on specific definitions of

aggression to which the British and Italian delegations, in particular, were firmly opposed. Public opinion, confused and disheartened, was no longer felt to be pressing upon the reluctant delegations. All those who, on whatever ground, had long contended that powerful armaments were the only sure basis of national security, were now in undisguised antagonism. A year before they had found it necessary to pretend to favour disarmament, while urging reasons for postponement, magnifying difficulties, demanding impossible conditions. By the summer of 1933 their anxiety had turned to open contempt.

At the beginning of June it was evident that no real advance was being made. The centre of interest, especially that of the non-European countries, was shifting to the World Economic Conference, due to open in London on June 12th. If in London the world could find and adopt means to a renewal of prosperity, would not the political scene become more settled and a new way be opened towards disarmament? Such hopes made it easier to accept a fresh adjournment of the Disarmament Conference, even though adjournment was almost equivalent to admitting that the British plan had failed. It was decided to meet again in October. In the meantime Arthur Henderson bravely undertook the mission of attempting to negotiate with the chief powers in the hope of eliminating some at least of their points of disagreement. He did his best in London, Paris, Rome, and Berlin. His own opinion, though he was debarred by his position as President from expressing it publicly, was that it was better to make an agreement with Germany than to accept the only possible alternative, that is to say to admit the definite failure of the Conference. He faced the fact that, if the Conference separated without an agreed Convention, Germany would certainly proceed to rearm. From Bernstorff onwards, her spokesmen had left no doubt on this point. Her moral right to rearm, if other great countries would not disarm, had been widely admitted in the period before the Nazis came to power; even now there was no serious possibility that France or Britain would use force to maintain the disarmament section of the Versailles Treaty. Lord Hailsham, the British War Secretary, had indeed threatened that this would be done: but it was no more than an empty bluff. In these circumstances it was quite possible to feel a profound mistrust for Nazi promises and yet to hold that any agreement that was not in itself unreasonable, and that would at least create a powerful new body with extensive rights of investigation, was better than none.

But the French would not for a moment listen to any such view. They believed that Germany was not only drilling her youth by millions, but was also already beginning the manufacture of arms prohibited by the Treaty. The Nazi leaders were openly inspiring the youth of the nation

with the desire for war, aggression, revenge. And Hitler was already trying to achieve the first stage of his pan-German dream—the inclusion of Austria in the Great Reich. In these circumstances the French government began to think of an important modification of the British plan. They suggested that, while maintaining the obligation to disarm and so to reach a state of equality with Germany in due course, the process by which this result was to be reached should be extended to eight years instead of five. Further, it should be divided into two four-year stages: in the first, there should be no actual reduction, and no increase in German armaments, though the short-service system should be substituted for the Reichswehr. At the same time, the Permanent Disarmament Commission should be set up and should prove itself capable of investigating and controlling the forces and material existing in all the signatory States, including Germany. If this four-year trial period gave satisfactory results, the actual reductions as laid down in the British draft would be carried out during the second period.

This proposal could not possibly be accepted by Germany. It was far more unfavourable to her than the British plan. It left her for another four years in a position not only of practical but also of juridical inferiority, since she would still be held to the limitations of the Peace Treaty and would be subjected to regular investigation on that basis. Further, she had no certainty that the armed powers, more especially France, would not, at the end of the trial period, claim that she had violated her obligations and that they were therefore no longer bound to disarm in their turn. However, the French proposal was adopted by the British and American governments. Italy also acquiesced in it, though Mussolini had long been affirming that the German claim to equality of rights ought to be granted without delay. The Germans made their rejection plain enough; and discussions with Goebbels and Neurath, who were in Geneva in September as delegates to the Assembly, did nothing to change their attitude. They reiterated their acceptance of the British draft, not without certain modifications in Germany's favour: but they refused all consent to the proposed trial period. They did not, it seems, threaten to leave the Conference or the League if the new plan were maintained: but even if not repeated on this occasion, such threats had been made often enough both by official speakers and by the controlled German press. That the British, French, and Americans should have persisted with their plan, in spite of its rejection by Germany, is perfectly understandable. They might well esteem it better to separate without any agreement rather than to make a treaty which Hitler could not be trusted to honour. But it is surprising indeed that, at least to all outward appearance, they were quite unaware of the consequences

which their action was certain to produce, and that when, on October 14th, Simon put before the Conference, at a public meeting of its Bureau, the substance of the new proposals, he still hoped that they might serve as a basis of agreement with Germany.

Simon's speech might have made Hitler hesitate, if skill in presentation could still have affected his decision. The plan was unfolded by imperceptible gradations: it seemed to develop inevitably by a simple process of common sense. But the subtlest advocacy was now wasted. Hitler wanted to stand before his countrymen as the champion sent to redress the wrongs of Germany. He needed a plain issue on which the whole nation would be united: and such an issue was now ready at his hand. A few minutes after Simon had spoken, a telegram, evidently prepared in advance, was sent from Berlin to the President of the Conference. Recent events, it declared, had proved that the Conference had no chance of achieving its purpose; the heavily armed States had no intention either of disarming or of fulfilling their pledge to satisfy the German claim to equality of rights; and Germany was accordingly compelled to withdraw from the Conference. Later in the same day Hitler announced that Germany was also, for the same reason, abandoning the League in which she had suffered such profound humiliation. He proclaimed once more his devotion to peace and his willingness to accept total disarmament if others would do the same. And he invited the nation to be prepared in a few days to approve or reject his policy by a popular vote, the result of which was, of course, a foregone conclusion.<sup>1</sup>

The Disarmament Conference did not come to an end on the withdrawal of Germany; but all sense of reality had departed from its subsequent meetings. It had indeed been left completely on one side during the negotiations which led up to the crisis. Russia and Japan; Belgium, Poland, and the rest of Germany's neighbours; and all the fifty States which composed the Conference, had been no more than helpless and ill-informed spectators, powerless to influence the course of events. Yet their fortunes and their safety hung on the result no less than those of the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. They resented their exclusion, but they could do nothing to change the accomplished fact. With Germany's departure, the United States fell into a mood of increasing isolationism. Norman Davis returned to Washington, and Roosevelt and Hull seemed to abandon, for the time, their running fight with a Congress which believed that total neutrality was the path both of virtue and of safety. Italy declared that the Conference without Germany was meaningless, and her delegates were instructed to act only as observers. Henderson and the French stood virtually alone in wishing

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 565 n.

to go on with the work. The wheels indeed were turning with increasing speed in the opposite direction. Not reduction, but increase of armaments became the order of the day in one country after another. The service budgets of Germany, France, Britain, and the rest rose steeply in the early months of 1934. For years the economists had warned the world that its expenditure on military equipment was fatal to prosperity. But now industry was stimulated, and unemployment reduced, as the nations of Europe started on their new armaments race. Such recovery might be false and fleeting: it might add little to the volume of international trade: it was certainly both patchy and inadequate. But after the years of depression it helped men to forget the gravity and imminence of the dangers let loose upon the world by the failure of the Disarmament Conference.

Negotiations were soon resumed between Germany, France, and Britain: there was no meeting between them, and the discussion was carried on by diplomatic correspondence—the only attempt at co-ordination being a journey undertaken by Eden, in February 1934, to consult with the French, Italian, and German governments in their respective capitals. German demands were growing stiffer, and the contrast between the courtesy of her official communications and the belligerent tone which prevailed inside the country was becoming more and more marked. France was involved in internal scandals and riots, with consequent changes of government: but these did not affect her attitude on this vital question. She refused to consider any form of compromise: she was willing neither to reduce her own weapons nor to assent to any German rearmament beyond the Treaty limits. The British, having adopted the French thesis in October, had by January moved far across towards the acceptance of the German claims, and had hastily dropped the proposal for a trial period to which France still obstinately clung. Italy did no more than give her general assent to the British search for a compromise: Mussolini had gone too far in support of the German demands to draw back now, but he was beginning to be alarmed at the speed with which the Reich was recovering its dominant position in Central Europe. At no time did the discussions seem likely to succeed. The *coup de grâce* was dealt by the publication of the German budget for 1934-5, which showed an increase of 90 per cent over the military estimates for the previous year. Over £10 million was provided for aviation, although all military flying was forbidden to Germany by the Treaty of Peace. Even after this announcement, Louis Barthou, who was now the Foreign Minister of France, would have been ready to continue the negotiations; but he was overruled by Tardieu. In a note to London, dated April 17th, 1934, he declared that the German

government had taken the law into its own hands and was plainly determined to rearm in violation of its treaty obligations; that it had thereby destroyed any possibility of further negotiation; and that France must now concentrate her exertions on her own security.

All prospect of direct agreement between the four western powers having thus disappeared, there was nothing to do but to report the failure to Henderson and allow him to call the Conference together once more. He summoned, on May 29th, a general meeting which, though the words were never spoken, was generally realized to be the last. It provided the occasion for one more quarrel between the French and the British. Germany, said Barthou, had made disarmament impossible. If she would come back to Geneva on the terms which had been offered her by common agreement in the previous October, well and good. If not, was the Conference to admit the dictation of the only power which had abandoned it? It must continue: and since it could not reasonably discuss disarmament, the only thing to do was to work out more definite plans for security. To the British such language seemed quite unreasonable. Nothing, they answered, could be done without Germany. If there was to be no further parley with her, the Conference would be only wasting its time in empty pretences. They were most anxious that it should continue. They still believed that a Convention was possible. But this meant accepting the facts of the situation; and German rearmament was a fact. To return to the October plan was impossible. As for security, they were not prepared to undertake any new obligations, though they would promise to consult the other parties if the Convention should be violated.

Barthou was angry, and his tongue was sharp. France, he said, might change her Ministers, but she did not change her principles. Others might have stable governments but unstable policies. He made fun of Simon and quarrelled with Henderson. Afterwards he made generous amends, but his views were as uncompromising as ever. The Conference must go on; and it must neither consent to German rearmament, nor ask for any reduction from France. But though many delegations, including the Scandinavian, wanted to propose stronger agreements on collective security than the British would accept, there were few, if any, who thought it could be of any use to continue the Conference and do nothing about Germany. Litvinov believed that all talk of disarmament was now useless. But that did not mean that nothing should be done; and the Conference should now convert itself into a standing organ for the preservation of peace. Norman Davis agreed with Simon on most points. The United States would join in a world-wide pact of non-aggression; they would consult with everyone if peace were menaced;

but they would neither co-operate in the negotiations between European powers, nor consider any commitment whatever involving the use of force. Italy refused to take any further part until Germany had resumed her place. Japan politely indicated her intention to wait till the Europeans had agreed among themselves. China gave her full adherence to the French and Soviet views: the impotence of the League to save her from the aggression of a stronger neighbour showed that the Covenant was not enough and that further means of protection must be devised before there could be any talk of disarmament.

In face of the disorder revealed by the spokesmen of the great powers, there was little that the lesser could do. Save for the United States and China, no country outside Europe took part in the last debates of the Disarmament Conference. The Latin American Republics listened in silence. No member of the British Commonwealth spoke except Britain. As for the Europeans, the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente spoke only of security and of their recent Pacts. Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria proclaimed their general dissatisfaction with everybody else. The neutrals still asserted that disarmament was the first necessity, and that security would follow. But they knew that they had little to hope, and much to fear. They believed that the great powers were blindly and selfishly endangering the peace of great and small alike. They were already beginning to think that since the disarmament Article of the Covenant had not been carried out, they might be safer if they, in turn, freed themselves from the obligation to join in resisting aggression. It was the only threat of which they were capable. But it did not much impress the armed powers at that time; and, as later events were to show, it was a threat heavily charged with danger to those who made it.

It was very clear that the Conference could not continue. Those who had wished and worked for its success could only agree, on this point, with those who had wished and worked for its failure. The withdrawal of Germany, her rearmament, the uncertainty as to her future intentions, had for the time being torn apart the fabric of international unity. Henderson himself could see no other expedient. He had practically ceased to concern himself with home politics. His whole heart was wrapped up in the Conference. He still believed that it had the lives of the entire youth of the world in its keeping. But so long as the chief powers remained disunited and irresolute the Conference could do nothing.

But while all agreed that the Conference must adjourn, nobody proposed that it should close its doors for ever. It was characteristic of the League of Nations that it was never ready to confess to defeat in any important purpose. This characteristic was a joy to its critics, an

embarrassment to its friends, a problem to its servants. But the persistency with which it recurred proved that its roots were deeper than was generally understood. For an individual it is easy—often too easy—to declare that, in regard to some particular undertaking, he has tried his best and now can do no more. For a single government, such an attitude is usually difficult. For the supreme international institution, it is impossible. The conflicts, dangers, uncertainties which first set it to work remain, if it fails even in part. It must always be ready to try again. Hence the tendency of the League to adjourn debates and never close them was both inevitable and right, nor will any international organization escape from the same necessity. But from the point of view of public opinion, it was a weakness; the more so since in every such case it was necessary for the Council (or whatever other organ might be concerned) to express a confidence, hope, or trust which it was far from feeling. Of what use could it be to try again and yet announce beforehand that it had little hope of success? So an element of pretence was added to hesitation and delay.

In the case of the Disarmament Conference, it was easy enough to avoid any clear-cut confession of failure. There might indeed be no prospect of a general convention. But there were many subsidiary questions on which the Conference had been at work—subsidiary in comparison with the major political crisis, but of great importance in themselves. They included the abolition of air bombardment; the internationalization of civil aviation; the publicity of armaments budgets; the publicity and the control of the manufacture of arms and of the trade in arms, whether by the State or by private corporations; the nature and powers of the Permanent Disarmament Commission. On all these problems work had been going on even after the withdrawal of Germany. On several of them agreement seemed to be in sight. It was decided, therefore, that the Committees concerned should continue to meet; that their results should in due course be laid before the Bureau of the Conference; and that the President should be authorized to convoke that body when he thought advisable to do so.

Even now, at the eleventh hour, a fresh impetus was being given to the study of one subject of special importance and difficulty, that of the manufacture and trade in arms. Public interest in this burning question had been stimulated by several recent events. One was the report of the Chaco Commission, showing that the war would have ended long ago but for the great quantity of armaments supplied to each side by private firms. A second was the arms embargo which the Council had after long frustration succeeded in imposing on the export of war material to Bolivia and Paraguay. A third was the inquiry conducted in Washington



by the Senate Committee presided over by Senator Nye; it was still in its opening stages, but had already disclosed many discreditable facts about the operations of certain American and European manufacturers. On both sides of the Atlantic evidence had recently been published to show that important organs of the press had come under the control of leaders of the arms industry and had thereafter adopted a policy of hostility to the League, encouraging the aggression of Japan and pouring scorn on the Disarmament Conference. It was in response to a notable upsurge of public opinion that President Roosevelt, on June 30th, 1934, invited the Disarmament Conference to take up the whole question afresh, and promised the full support of the American government.

Roosevelt's proposals were discussed, first by the Bureau of the Conference; then by a special committee. In these restricted bodies the negative influences which were now triumphant all along the line had an easy task. In November the United States delegation put forward a detailed draft, inspired by the conventions formerly drawn up by the League and rejected by Washington; and on this basis the special committee had worked out, by the following April, a convention which was considered acceptable by all except Britain, Italy, and Japan. But further consideration of this project, as of that for the publicity of military budgets, was submerged by the rising tide of international disorder and national rearmament.

In truth, the Conference, in prescribing that certain of its committees should continue to spend time on such partial measures, was consciously ignoring the fundamental issue. Their labours on these uncoordinated elements, even supposing they should end in full agreement, could lead to no effective result, so long as there was no Disarmament Convention. But that problem could only be left to the future: to force it now would only be to reopen the old fruitless argument. As for Litvinov's proposal for a Permanent Peace Conference, it died a natural death a few months later when Russia became a Member of the League. Thus, on June 11th, 1934, the Conference separated, gloomily aware that it was not likely to meet again. It had patched up its superficial disagreements. Its elaborate machinery was still intact, ready to be used if some unexpected change should occur in the international situation. But the prospects were dark indeed. The armaments race was unchecked: the pace was quickening. Whatever might have been the earlier errors of the French, their views were now borne out by facts visible to all but those who would not see. Nothing but a great effort to re-establish the League as a strong guardian of security could save the world from the growing threat of war.

## CHANGES IN THE SECRETARIAT

*Drummond resigns and Joseph Avenol succeeds him—Other Changes*

(JUNE 1933)

IN June 1933 Sir Eric Drummond handed over the office of Secretary-General to Joseph Avenol, a Frenchman who had been his second-in-command for some ten years. Drummond had announced his resignation a year before. He had remained in charge longer than he wished so as to ensure that the machine should be in full normal working order when the change took place. For the allocation of the chief offices in the Secretariat had recently been the object of acrimonious debate.

The Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, and the three Under Secretaries-General were nationals of the five permanent Members of the Council. There had been changes, through resignation, in each of these posts except the first, and in every case a Frenchman had been succeeded by a Frenchman, a German by a German, an Italian by an Italian, a Japanese by a Japanese. There was no acknowledged rule to this effect, but an unwritten right had grown up which the great powers were not prepared to renounce. Was it not reasonable, they argued, that the States which were concerned with every aspect of the League's work, which made the highest individual payments to its budget, and bore the major responsibility for carrying out its decisions, should have a corresponding place in its principal executive organ? The other Members acquiesced, but with reluctance. Some among them maintained that the proceedings of the League were already too much under the influence of the great powers. They saw no reason why the Secretariat should require, over and above the Directors of its various Sections, any other high officials besides the Secretary-General and his Deputy. They considered that the other three offices were not necessary or integral parts of the Secretariat, but were practically diplomatic posts whose occupants were in the service of their own governments rather than of the League: the more so since their holders in 1932 were all professional diplomatists, which had not been the case in the early days.

The argument was vigorously sustained on both sides. The party of reform, led by Hambro of Norway and Rappard of Switzerland, showed how even in international affairs plain speaking can be not only a duty but a pleasure. The great powers were solid in maintaining the threatened

posts, but they had their own subject of dispute. Italy and Germany, having no hopes of securing the Secretary-Generalship, demanded that political affairs within the Secretariat should be conducted by a committee of the high officials, while Britain and France insisted that the Secretary-General must be the sole responsible authority. Their view may have been no more disinterested than that of the others, but it was undoubtedly sound. When the dust of two years of conflict subsided, it was seen that the Assembly of 1932 had arrived at decisions which in most respects preserved the existing situation. In future there were to be a Secretary-General and two Deputy Secretaries-General, and one of these three was always to be drawn from outside the ranks of the permanent Members of the Council. It was agreed that each permanent Member should have the right to see one of its nationals enjoying the title and pay of an Under Secretary-General, but these officials were always to be in charge of Sections and thus fully integrated into the structure of the Secretariat. Other concessions to the claims of the lesser powers were that the Legal Adviser was to be in all respects on an equal footing with the Under-Secretaries, and that no country might have more than two of its nationals amongst the principal members of the Secretariat, that is to say, the holders of the seven posts mentioned above and the remaining Directors of Sections. At the same time, for economy's sake, a certain reduction was made in the salaries attaching to all these posts.

Once this obstinate controversy had been settled, the way was clear for the nomination of a successor to Drummond. Many States would have wished to appoint another British Secretary-General—a tribute to Drummond's personal achievement, and to the relative impartiality of his country. The name of Alexander Cadogan came to everyone's mind. But the Frenchmen, Jean Monnet in the early days and Joseph Avenol from 1923 onwards, had worked loyally and well. Their claim was very strong. A second British appointment might in any case have proved difficult. It became impossible when, on the sudden and lamented death of Albert Thomas, in May 1932, the International Labour Organization appointed Harold Butler to take his place as Director—an Englishman succeeding a Frenchman under whom he had served as second-in-command. That promotion was incontrovertibly just, and greatly strengthened the case for Avenol. He was firmly supported by the British and was finally nominated, in December 1932, by the unanimous decision of the Council and Assembly.

During the ensuing months Drummond, in full agreement with Avenol, but not without some tough argument in the Council, completed the new directorate. The two Deputy Secretaries-General were a Spaniard,

Don Pablo d'Azcarate, and an Italian, Massimo Pilotti. Azcarate, having joined the Secretariat in the middle ranks, had risen to be Director of the Minorities Section, and had had much success in that most difficult post. Pilotti, a lawyer of profound learning, had made his peace with Fascism, but was by temperament utterly opposed to its aggressive and bombastic character. Like other Italian members of the Secretariat, he was watched and spied upon by the numerous Fascists who frequented Geneva as delegates, consular officers, or propagandists, and who sought to win the approval of the men in power in Rome by parading their dislike for the League. Pilotti did his best to reason with his former chiefs: but he could do little to change their purposes.

The withdrawal of Japan involved the resignation of Sugimura, who was not replaced. A German, Ernst Trendelenburg, was appointed in charge of economic affairs. He was one of the most powerful officials in Germany, sometimes described as the dictator of the national economic policy: great hopes were placed in him, but before he had time to show his capacities, Germany left the League and he was forced to resign. An Englishman was put at the head of the Political Section. The Legal Adviser was J. A. Buero, a former Foreign Minister of Uruguay, a good lawyer and a politician well versed in American affairs: he had represented his country at many international gatherings and was on the best of terms with the Latin American delegations.

In contrast to the former group, the new heads of the organization did not include a single member of the diplomatic profession. By this change the Secretariat suffered a diminution not only of outward show but also of influence and authority in its dealings with the foreign ministries. On the other hand, it gained in internal unity and cohesion. National and personal rivalries disappeared almost completely and were replaced by mutual friendship.

The departure of Drummond was universally regretted: the Council and the Assembly felt as acutely as the Secretariat itself that they were losing an experienced guide at the moment when he was most needed. Yet it could not be denied that after fourteen years of hard work and heavy responsibility he had more than earned the right to a less troubled existence. During those years he had carried out diplomatic duties far more complex and continuous than those of an Ambassador, and had borne at the same time unprecedented administrative burdens. And in each part of the double task he had been, on the whole, conspicuously successful. He put on no diplomatic airs; he was always optimistic, his industry was incessant, and he had no love of secrecy for its own sake. He was far from being either as frank, or as simple, as he appeared. But he never betrayed a confidence, and the representatives of nations in

conflict would visit him in turn to explain their position and ask his advice. Officials or delegates, consulting him on the most diverse subjects, invariably left him with the sentiment of seeing their way more clearly than before. As his qualities became known, he grew to be the friend and confidant of most of the leading figures of the day, and acquired a unique knowledge of contemporary European politics.

It was Drummond's deliberate policy to keep himself and the Secretariat as much as possible in the background, and to ensure that full responsibility for all decisions was taken by the Council, the Assembly, or the body to which they might delegate authority in particular cases. His conduct was inspired by the traditions of the British civil service: by his own sense of constitutional propriety: and by a certain tendency to avoid responsibility and to mistrust enthusiasm. Yet there were bold and creative spirits in the Secretariat, such as Rajchman, Salter, Sweetser, and others, who had won his confidence and could count on his support. Private persons, enthusiastic or discontented, often blamed the inaction of the Secretariat: government representatives, on the other hand, complained that it exercised too much influence. It may be concluded that Drummond's judgement was not greatly at fault.

Administratively, the Secretariat created under his direction, and largely by his own decisions, had stood the test of time. Its organization, its finances, its methods, were under close inspection by fifty Treasuries: and it was never denied that its work was done with efficiency and skill. In retrospect, and by comparison, it seems amazing that work of such quality, and in such quantity, should have been performed year after year by an organization so limited in numbers and resources. Drummond made no attempt to be a personal leader: he asked for loyalty to the League, and to the Secretariat as one of its essential institutions, not to himself. He inspired no fervent devotion: he aroused no strong antagonism. The Secretariat was content to see in him a chief cautious in prosperity, imperturbable in adversity; who did more than his share of work, was scrupulous in giving credit where it was due, and could be trusted to maintain its reputation for impartiality and prudence. Above all, it saw in him the man who knew his job: who had taken part in every important act of the League from its earliest days; who had worked and discussed as an equal with Balfour and Bourgeois, with Briand, Chamberlain, and Stresemann, with Cecil, Nansen, Beneš, Scialoja, and all the leaders of the Council and the Assembly: who, in the last years of uncertainty and defeat, had sometimes seemed to be the only link with the solid ground of the past.

Avenol took over his post at a period of exceptional difficulty. The first months of his tenure were marked by the failure of the London

Economic Conference, the breakdown of the Disarmament Conference, and the withdrawal of Germany. It was his misfortune, also, that the Council was at that time weak in personnel and hesitating in policy. In the long run, under tests from which few men could have emerged with success, he did not prove equal to the cares and duties of so great an office. He did not win the trust and liking either of the delegations or of the staff. Yet he was a man of high ability, and in his first years he did his best to follow the steps of his predecessor. He was a master of administrative finance; aided by one or two unexpected windfalls, the Secretariat under his guidance was freed, in that respect, from the endless anxieties by which it had been obstructed and beset. In any case, the Secretariat was an institution widely and deeply rooted: it did not depend for its spirit or its efficiency upon individual leadership. Under Avenol it maintained to the full the technical qualities which it had developed under Drummond. Nor did it ever lose its unity and *esprit de corps*, though at the end these were considerably impaired by that ideological conflict whose corroding power no institution and no nation could altogether resist.

## NEW MEMBERS

*Six new Members—The return of Argentina—The League's power of recovery—Reasons why new Members joined and old ones remained*

(1931-1934)

IN spite of difficulties both great and small, the vitality of the League was still unimpaired, and it did not cease, during this time of struggle, to grow and develop as the working centre of international affairs. Its membership was now beginning its second period of increase. Mexico's entry in 1931 was the first for five years. Turkey and Iraq were admitted in 1932. In 1933 Argentina resumed the full status of membership; she had never formally withdrawn, but had acted for practical purposes as a non-Member ever since her delegation had walked out of the First Assembly. These and later accessions were, like the rapprochement with the United States, in part the result of the policy of the Secretariat, which had generally sought to treat the non-Member States in the most friendly possible way, and to associate them, so far as they were willing, with the various activities of the League. It took great pains to see that they were given the opportunity of consulting the agencies of the League, of being represented on the Committees whose work might affect their interests, and of participating in conferences called by the Assembly or the Council. This practice was frequently criticized on the ground that it reduced to a minimum the disadvantages of non-membership, and hence, also, the advantages of membership. But it prevented what otherwise might so easily have occurred, the growth of a spirit of antagonism between the many who belonged to the League and the few who were still outside. So long, at least, as the reasons for which the latter failed to accede to the Covenant were reasons of internal politics, and not of hostility to the purposes and ideals of the League, the policy adopted was probably the right one. It now bore fruit, as United States co-operation increased, and the other non-Member States began one by one to enter the fold.

Turkey and Argentina were both important additions. The former had grown steadily in influence since signing the Treaty of Lausanne in 1924. Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk, had shown himself unique amongst dictators, both within his own frontiers and in relation to his neighbours: he knew when to stop. Having steadfastly refused the interested offers of help pressed upon her by the principal Western

powers, Turkey was independent, orderly, and self-confident. She was on cordial terms with Soviet Russia, which had proclaimed that all Russian ambitions concerning Constantinople were now at an end. Other Balkan States looked on her with respect. Greece, after centuries of hatred, which might have been intensified by the Turkish victories of 1923, had become her firm friend: and, surprising as it may seem, the greatest contribution to this change of heart on both sides had come from the million-and-a-quarter Greeks who had been driven from their homes in Asia Minor and had settled in Greece. For perhaps the first time in her long history, Turkey was an element of stability and peace, all the more valuable because of her strategic position at the gates of western Asia. Moreover, although Atatürk had, within the frontiers of Turkey, done much to destroy Islam as a political power, as a social tradition and even as a religious faith, so that she no longer either claimed or desired to be the leader of the Moslem peoples; yet her long predominance among them could not be so quickly wiped out, and her accession strengthened the links between the League and the Moslem world, which had hitherto been represented only by Persia and Albania, and by the regular inclusion of a Mohammedan among the delegates of India to the Assembly.

The return of Argentina was all the more welcome because it had now become clear that Brazil's resignation was not likely to be reversed. Argentina had suffered far less than others from the economic crisis, her public finances were unimpaired, her wealth already great and potentially enormous. She spent little on armaments, and her national pride, high as it was, did not involve any tendency to militarism or territorial expansion. She aspired to pre-eminence in the Southern Continent and seemed well qualified to exercise it. Yet, with all her advantages, she proved to have little real help to offer to her neighbours or to the League. No outstanding statesman came forward to lead her at home or to represent her abroad. She lacked the moral energy which great ideals or great traditions inspire. Her chief motive seemed to be jealousy of the United States, and her attitude in international affairs negative rather than positive.

The adjunction of these important States, each a leader in its own region of the world, was of high value to the League: it was both a tribute, and an addition, to its credit and vitality. For quite other reasons, the accession of Iraq was an event of historic interest. It was the birth of a new State, still poor and weak, but now accepted as a full member of the international community. Such a change, as the President of the Assembly observed, could hardly have happened in a peaceful and constitutional way except within the system of the League. Since 1920



Britain had guided, as mandatory power, the development of Iraq, allowing administrative responsibilities to devolve gradually upon the Arab leaders. It was a burdensome and expensive task, which public opinion had for some time been anxious to bring to a close. Indeed, some Members of the League, and the Mandates Commission itself, were inclined to be critical of the British government not for holding on to its controlling power too long, but for abandoning it too soon. They doubted whether the new State could be altogether trusted to give protection to the Christian minorities within its frontiers; and the tragic story of the Assyrian community proved that they had good reason for doubting. There were cynics who tried to show that in giving up the mandate Britain was retaining all its advantages while escaping from the supervision of the Mandates Commission and of the Council. But by fair-minded people the emancipation of Iraq and her admission to the League were recognized as a proof that the Mandates system was not, as some had believed, annexation in disguise; and that the prestige, experience, and administrative talents of a great country could under that system be generously used in helping a weak people to reach self-government.

In 1934 Russia joined the League, an event of first-class importance in the political evolution of the post-war world. Afghanistan was admitted in the same year. Ecuador also, after waiting fifteen years, decided to ratify her signature of the Versailles Treaty in order to become a Member. This decision was a consequence of the Council's success in preventing an outbreak of war between Colombia and Peru. Ecuador had frontier disputes with both of these, and though she made no serious move towards getting them settled, she judged it wise to make sure that her status at Geneva was equal to that of her neighbours. With her entry the last blank disappeared upon the League map of Latin America: all the Latin American Republics were now Members except the two, Brazil and Costa Rica, which had resigned.

It is interesting and important to consider the meaning of these adhesions to the League at a time when its chief undertakings seemed to be a succession of defeats. And for this purpose we may use the familiar analysis of its functions into three main divisions: the maintenance of peace, the promotion of common action in the social and economic fields, and the provision of a general centre to deal with whatever question any State might wish to bring to the attention of the rest of the world. (Such an analysis, be it remembered, is purely a matter of theory. The different needs of international life—the need for joint action, the need for consultation and co-operation, the need for a permanent centre in which

all States, great or small, can pursue their common interests—can never be effectively fulfilled except by an organization which includes them all. Certainly the League, in its days of strength and of weakness alike, was essentially and unalterably a compound of these purposes: they can usefully be distinguished in theory, only so long as it is understood that they were inseparable in practice. In the same way we may analyse the working of a modern State, distinguishing the executive, the legislative, and the judicial functions, without supposing that any one of them could exist in the same form if either of the others were to disappear or be profoundly modified.)

Inasmuch as States not Members of the League were able to take part up to a point in all its social and economic work—Brazil, the United States, and to a less extent Russia were already doing so—it was not for this purpose that Mexico, Turkey, Argentina, Iraq, Ecuador, and Afghanistan wished to become regular Members. Nor had they primarily in mind the question of peace and security. This was, no doubt, the strongest motive in the case of Russia. In accepting the Covenant she desired to reinforce its effectiveness against aggression and thereby to enhance her own safety. The others, particularly Turkey, doubtless shared this sentiment to some extent. But their principal object was simply to claim their due place in international life. The League was a Society; they sympathized with its aims, they appreciated its methods, and they were glad therefore to bring their contribution to its various activities. But above all they desired to enjoy the full status of membership in the community of nations and to take their part in the slow process of organizing on a world-wide basis the future of the human race.

This great motive was absent in the case of the United States, whose power and position in the world were such that she could decide for herself just what contribution she would make, and what refuse, to the growth of world institutions. Yet she also was coming closer to the League. In February 1932, before his nomination as Democratic candidate, Franklin Roosevelt had stated that though he had fought hard for the Covenant in Wilson's day, he did not wish the United States to join the League as it had since developed. The responsibilities of office, however, brought him swiftly into active sympathy and co-operation with its undertakings: and it is likely that in his bold and secret fashion he was in fact keeping before his mind, as an ultimate goal, full membership of the League itself. In 1933 an American delegation took part, for the first time, in the annual conference of the International Labour Organization; and in 1934 the United States joined that Organization as a regular Member. In the following January the Senate took up once more the protocol of adhesion to the Permanent Court, which had been signed

on behalf of the United States over five years before. Roosevelt gave his support: the Foreign Relations Committee favoured ratification by a two to one vote, and it seemed certain that the Senate would follow its advice. Then, at the last moment, these prospects were shattered by the sudden deployment of a skilfully organized campaign of opposition. Borah led a minority of 36 senators: 52 voted in favour, but this was seven short of the needful two-thirds majority (January 31st, 1935). This proof of isolationist strength, together with the stream of discouraging news from Europe, finally destroyed all hope that the question of American membership might enter the field of practical politics. But Roosevelt and Cordell Hull continued to intensify their collaboration in all those activities of the League which did not involve direct responsibility for the maintenance of peace.

The same motives which were bringing the non-Member States one by one into the League were, of course, present among the existing Members. The loss of confidence and prestige caused by the failure of the Disarmament Conference and by Japan's successful defiance of the Covenant, were serious enough. But they neither prevented the adhesion of new Members nor led to the withdrawal of the old. Japan and Germany left the League not because it was ineffective, but because it was an obstacle in their path. In the case of Japan this was evident to all. In the case of Germany it was partially concealed by the widespread sentiment that she was justified in protesting against her treatment in the matter of disarmament. But when Hitler made this the reason not only for abandoning the Disarmament Conference but also for leaving the League, he was giving outward expression to a very different aspect of German policy. The Nazi government had broken with the International Labour Organization in June 1933, months before it withdrew from the League. It was in fact rejecting those principles of security, of co-operation, and of the steady growth in power of the international institutions, which were the basis of the League, and deliberately returning to the pre-war condition of international anarchy and of the free hand.<sup>1</sup>

Neither then nor later did any Member State leave the League on the ground that it was failing to carry out the purposes of the Covenant. Until the period preceding the Second World War, when the diplomacy of so many States began to be dictated by passion, prejudice, and fear

<sup>1</sup> In burning Berlin, a few days before his suicide, Goebbels said to Fritzsche: 'After all, the German people did not want it otherwise. The German people by a great majority decided through a plebiscite on the withdrawal from the League of Nations and against the policy of yielding, and chose instead a policy of courage and honour; thereby the German people themselves chose the war which they have now lost'. (Nuremberg Trials, vol. xvii, p. 187, referred to by Curt Riess, *Joseph Goebbels* (London, Hollis & Carter, 1949), p. 423. This judgement was certainly true of the Nazi government.

instead of by reason, the vast majority continued to act on the belief that an effective centre of international life was a necessity for the modern world. And that centre could only be the seat of the League, with its Assembly, its Council, its Secretariat, and its many social and technical agencies.

Such is without doubt the explanation of the unexpected toughness and resiliency of the League institutions in the face of shocks and defeats each of which, according to the fervent declarations of friends and enemies alike, was likely to be its death-blow. And for this reason, the historian, looking below the surface of events, will discern the importance of the unending current of routine and everyday business which continued, until the very outbreak of war, to occupy the attention of the Council, the Assembly, and their various ancillary organs. There were many, indeed, who felt impatient at seeing the Council plodding steadily through its regular agenda when matters of life and death remained unsettled. It seemed to them unreal to spend hours discussing in detail the administration of a mandated territory, or the application of a minorities treaty, or some quarrel over Danzig or Memel, while battles were being fought at Shanghai and the dispute over German rearmament was at a critical point. It was stranger still to find the Japanese and Chinese representatives, in the intervals of their bitter debates on the Far Eastern conflict, continuing to act as rapporteurs for their usual questions, and taking their normal part in the rest of the Council's proceedings. Yet the work had to be done, and on a deeper view this was in truth a proof of the vitality of the League and of the wide sources from which that vitality was drawn. Its institutions were so effectively intertwined with all the agreements and arrangements through which international business was carried on, that the legitimate concerns of nations and individuals all over the world would have suffered if they had neglected these day-to-day functions.

When the biggest questions on the Council agenda—the wars in the Far East and the Chaco, the threat of war on the Amazon—are set on one side, there remained for each of its regular sessions some twenty or thirty items affecting the interests of as many countries in Europe, America, Asia, or Africa. Many of these might, in comparison, seem to be of little moment—the establishment of an institute for the study of leprosy in Rio de Janeiro, a dispute about the ownership of a local railway across one of the new European frontiers, a report on measures to combat the drug traffic in Egypt or China. . . . The essential fact was that the Council was known to be available to deal with them: the dates of its sessions were fixed, and though it might in rare instances decide that some particular proposal fell outside its competence, it would never

do so without giving a public hearing to the State which desired to raise it. Further, not a few of these questions were of vital importance to particular countries, even though they might not deserve a place among the decisive events of the inter-war period. Three such episodes, chosen for their intrinsic interest or for the amount of time which the Council devoted to them, may here be briefly described—the Council's efforts at reform in Liberia, the dispute between Britain and Persia over the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's concession, and the settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq.

## SOME PROBLEMS FOR THE COUNCIL

*Reform in Liberia (1929-1934)—The Anglo-Persian Oil Company  
(November 1932-April 1933)—The Assyrians of Iraq (1932-1937)*

**L**IBERIA, that poor and neglected African step-child of the United States, having followed its 'next friend' into the war, sent a delegation to the Peace Conference at American expense and was included among the original Members of the League, though both Britain and France judged that the country was still incapable of self-government and had better have been placed under mandate, with the United States as mandatory power. Thereafter, it received little help from outside until in 1926 the American tyre-making firm of Firestone made it a loan of \$5 million in return for various concessions, the chief of which was the lease of a million acres of land for growing rubber. In the same year, the Anti-Slavery Convention on which the League had been working since 1922 was completed and signed. These two events brought the affairs of Liberia into unaccustomed prominence, for on the one hand the terms of the Firestone loan were much attacked by some organs of the American press, and on the other the discussions on African conditions which had preceded the final drafting of the Anti-Slavery Convention had indicated that evil practices were prevalent in Liberia. This growing agitation and the reports sent home by the United States Minister in Monrovia led Stimson, in June 1929, to address a severe rebuke to Liberia; and when that country, protesting its innocence, offered to allow the question to be investigated on the spot by an impartial Commission, the Secretary of State quickly seized upon the suggestion. Under his firm pressure, the Liberian government asked the Council and the United States each to appoint one member of the Inquiry Commission, the third being appointed by itself. For the next years, thanks to the reluctance of Washington to accept direct responsibility for any African territory, the attempts to reform Liberian conditions were centred in Geneva.

The report of the Inquiry Commission—of which the League nominee, Dr Christy, was the outstanding member—was far indeed from being what the government had professed to expect. It revealed the existence of domestic slavery, of pawning, and of compulsory labour under conditions contrary to the Anti-Slavery Convention; and that men were recruited and shipped to work in the Spanish colony of Fernando Po by

methods hardly distinguishable from those of the slave trade. High officials, including the Vice-President, had shared in the profits from these abuses and had used the official Frontier Force to coerce unwilling tribes. Further, the whole administration and organization of the country was shown to be in a lamentable state. A few thousand educated men, dwelling on the coast, kept all power in their hands, while the original tribes of the interior were left in primitive ignorance and poverty, knowing nothing of their government except that it forced them to pay taxes and supply labourers and gave nothing in return. The report did not find fault with the managers of the Firestone concessions, who had already cleared 85 square miles of land: but implied that they had made little effort to understand or improve the general state of affairs.

The result of this devastating indictment was first, a strongly worded warning from Washington to Monrovia; secondly, the resignation of the President, the Vice-President, and several other high officials; thirdly, the adoption of laws and decrees prohibiting all the various abuses described in the report; and, fourthly, a request from Liberia to the Council for the assistance of the League in carrying out the necessary reforms. The Council, vigorously inspired by Arthur Henderson, set up a special Liberian Committee in which the United States at once agreed to participate. Three experts—one on African administrative problems, one on colonial finance, and one on public health—were dispatched to Liberia; they returned, in August 1931, bringing a report which confirmed the judgement of Dr Christy's Commission, and a scheme for the reorganization of the country with the help of foreign advisers and a foreign loan. The experts' scheme was discussed at great length between the Council Committee and the Liberian Secretary of State, Louis Grimes, an amiable but obstructive negotiator. Finally, the Committee drew up a complete Plan of Assistance, based on that of the experts, but simpler and more economical.

Now the difficulties began to be serious. Reforms could not be carried out without money: but who would lend money to so dilapidated and unreliable an Administration? In any case, the loan contract between the government and the American Finance Corporation—a cover name for the Firestone interests—forbade the former to borrow elsewhere without the lenders' permission. The only chance was to try to reach a new agreement with the Corporation; more than half of their loan was still unissued, and the residual sum would easily meet the need. The Council Committee, therefore, decided to enter into negotiations for this purpose, hoping for the effective support of the State Department. But this hope was not fulfilled: the Department had no direct authority

over the Corporation, nor was it much enamoured of the Plan of Assistance. It wanted to see a single commissioner of American nationality sent to Monrovia with power to make his will prevail. The Committee's plan did provide for the appointment of a Chief Adviser but, on the principle that the League could not act without the consent of Liberia, it gave him no overruling executive authority. Further, the Committee agreed with Liberia in refusing to nominate to this post any person of British, French, or American nationality, on the ground that these three powers had important territorial or financial interests in the country itself or on its borders.

These differences were smoothed out in due course; the Committee reinforced the powers to be exercised by the Chief Adviser, while the United States withdrew its demand that he should be an American. The Plan of Assistance, thus amended, was accepted by Liberia on the understanding that the Finance Corporation consented to the sacrifices it was asked to make. But meanwhile negotiations with the Finance Corporation had hung fire: neither the Corporation, nor the government, really wished to see the plan put into effect; and, though they were at odds between themselves, each was inclined to delay the moment when decisions must be made. Not until the summer of 1933 did the Corporation give its agreement to the modifications in its contract which the League experts had proposed nearly two years earlier.

In the course of time the question with which the Council was wrestling had gradually been extended. Almost against its will, it was no longer merely offering its assistance in order to help Liberia to stamp out slavery and the abuse of compulsory labour, but was seeking to bring about the complete reorganization of the country. Its reforming zeal was hampered by the need to respect the sovereign rights of Liberia, but was spurred by the genuine desire of the United States and British governments to put an end to existing abuses, and in particular by reports that some Kru tribes in the south had been attacked and driven from their homes by the Liberian Frontier Force. The usual official denials convinced nobody, and the Council decided to send a representative to the spot. For this task it found a courageous volunteer in Dr Mackenzie, a young Scottish member of the Secretariat, who had been one of the three experts previously sent out. Mackenzie's report, submitted in September 1932, fully confirmed the stories of the distress among the Krus, though he concluded that their sufferings were due as much to fighting between their own tribes as to the conduct of the Frontier Force. Their towns along the coast were ravaged or deserted: many thousands had fled to the bush and, cut off from their farming and fishing, were close to starvation. For a time, at least, his visit produced



beneficent results. He restored peace amongst the Krus themselves and between the Krus and the government; brought half of those who had taken to the bush back to their own homes, and arranged for the other half to have access to their farms; and organized, at their own request, an extensive disarmament of the warring tribes. But he warned the Council that the improvement would not last unless the general plan of reforms were quickly put into effect.

In October 1933, the needful modifications in its contract having at last been agreed to by the Finance Corporation, the Council determined that the time had come to force a final decision. For nearly three years it had worked on the problem: it had listened with its usual patience to the protests and arguments of Liberia, and had no further concessions to offer. It therefore invited Liberia to accept the plan as it stood, and declared that if this were not done, it would make no further attempt to give her the assistance for which she had appealed. The United States representative in Monrovia was instructed to press for the adoption of the plan, and to promise American co-operation in carrying it out. All this was in vain. The ruling oligarchy was not prepared to let foreign advisers rob it of its profitable privileges. While making some show of acceptance in principle, the government asked for reconsideration of certain essential points, well knowing that this was bound to be refused.

At its next session, in May 1934, the Council formally resolved that Liberia had rejected the Plan of Assistance and that its offer was therefore withdrawn. Eden improved the occasion by telling in public session the whole story of the affair—the desperate condition of things which had led to the first request for help, the long and laborious work of the Council and its experts, the reasons which made him believe that misgovernment and oppression still continued as before. He ended by saying that Liberia had grossly failed to honour the obligation laid on all Members of the League by Article 23 (*b*) of the Covenant, to secure the just treatment of the native inhabitants of territories under their control: and that the League would be quite entitled to expel her from membership.

This threat, though not repeated by any other Member or followed up by the British government, was not without effect. Liberia assured the Council of her intention to execute a part, at least of the plan. In the next years she did, in fact, call in a number of foreign advisers and conclude with the Finance Corporation a temporary agreement on the lines proposed by the Council. These efforts were not sustained for long, but no further appeal appeared upon the agenda of the League.

When the Persian authorities, on November 27th, 1932, unexpectedly

notified the Anglo-Persian Oil Company that its concession was cancelled, it did not take the British government long to decide, in its own words, to take up the case of one of its nationals whose interests had been injured by acts contrary to international law committed by another State. Within five days the British Minister at Teheran had presented a note in the classical style of pre-League diplomacy, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the notification and warning Persia that his government would take all legitimate measures to protect its just interests. However, on receiving a mild but firm reply from the Persian Foreign Minister, Simon's next note was much less severe in tone; he announced his intention to submit the question to the decision of the Hague Court. To this Mirza Furugi (who had sat as Persian representative on the Council from September 1928 to January 1930) answered that the Court was not competent to judge a case between a government and a private person; that the threats and pressure exercised by the British were making an amicable solution of the question more and more difficult, and that he proposed to lay a complaint before the Council of the League. Simon, however, had no wish to appear as a defendant. The Persian note reached him on December 12th in Geneva, where he had been taking part in drafting the agreement under which Germany returned to the Disarmament Conference. He hurried in person to the Secretary-General—Geneva gossip had it that he actually ran in order to be sure of getting there first—with a formal demand that the question should be placed on the agenda of the Council and that a special meeting should at once be called to discuss it. He further underlined the gravity of the dispute by submitting it under Article 15, that is to say as a dispute likely to lead to a rupture between the two countries concerned. The Persians protested against the threat which this implied. They affirmed that no damage or destruction had been caused to the Company and that they asked nothing better than to renew its concession, but on terms more fair to their country. They were perfectly willing to submit the dispute to the League; indeed, they had already announced their intention of doing so; but they needed time to prepare the documents and to send a special envoy to present their case.

In the end, therefore, it was not till the next regular session, in January 1933, that the question came before the Council. The debate was opened by a speech from the Foreign Secretary, enjoyed both by himself and his audience, in which the Company's complaint was set forth with the persuasive clarity which had won so many verdicts from other tribunals. The reply of the Persian delegate was far less masterly whether in law or in logic. But his hearers were none the less left with the sentiment that the original concession had turned out to be too favourable

to one side, that revision was called for, and that the action of the Persian government, high-handed as it was, might have been their only way of reopening the matter on an equitable basis. In any case, Simon no longer adopted the uncompromising attitude of the previous month; and the directors of the Company were now ready to negotiate a new concession without insisting, as the British government had insisted hitherto, that the old one must first be restored and acknowledged. With the help of Beneš as rapporteur, conversations were promptly started and resulted in an agreement satisfactory to both sides (April 29th, 1933). The new contract gave Persia a much larger share than before of the profits and advantages derived from the exploitation of the riches of Persian soil. In return, the duration of the concession, which was due to end in 1961, was extended until 1993; and a guarantee was given that it should not again be cancelled by the arbitrary decision of the government.

This conclusion was justly hailed as a success for the Council. Once the rights and wrongs of the dispute had been dispassionately set forth in Geneva, its solution had been easy enough. But the past history of such incidents, and the first reaction of the British government in this case, showed the dangers that might have arisen but for the existence of a higher authority which both countries were bound to respect. The use of diplomatic pressure—which in truth is only a preliminary form of military pressure—by powerful States, in order to secure or maintain commercial advantages for their nationals on the territory of weak States, has been a fruitful cause of injustice and a menace to international peace. The dispute over the Anglo-Persian oil concession, after rash actions on each side in its early stages, was carried to a settlement in conditions that were creditable to both. The protection accorded to Persia in this case by her membership of the League was a lesson which was by no means lost upon her neighbours in the Middle East.

The Kingdom of Iraq might truly be described as the child of the League. The termination of the British mandate, under which it had been guided hitherto, its admission to League membership, and its establishment as a juridically equal member of the community of independent States, were closely connected parts of a single event, the consummation of which depended upon the vote of the Assembly. When deciding, in December 1925, to award the great province of Mosul to Iraq rather than to Turkey, the Council had wished to be assured that the mandate would continue for another twenty-five years. The assurance which it actually accepted was that the mandate should continue for

twenty-five years or until Iraq should be qualified for admission to the League.

Less than four years later, in September 1929, the mandatory power announced its intention of recommending that the mandate should be terminated in 1932 and that Iraq should then be admitted to membership of the League as an independent sovereign State. This announcement was received with misgiving by the minority communities in Iraq, both Moslem and Christian. Various warnings and appeals were addressed to the Permanent Mandates Commission on the subject, and the Commission in its turn hesitated long before advising the Council that Iraq was now capable of taking charge of her own destinies. Its scruples were satisfied, or at least silenced, by the emphatic affirmations of the British administrators, made with a full sense of the moral responsibility thereby involved, that the Iraqi government could be trusted to protect the racial and religious minorities who would henceforth be under its authority. Though some doubts remained in the minds both of the Mandates Commission and of the Council, no further opposition was raised. The Iraqi representatives themselves were asked to sign, on the occasion of their entry into the League, a declaration guaranteeing equality of treatment, freedom of conscience, and general protection to the minorities within their borders. There is no reason to doubt that the British assurances and the Iraqi guarantee were given in good faith, or that their acceptance by the Council and Assembly was right and reasonable. It could not then be foreseen to what a formidable test they would be put, as a result of an unfortunate series of events, and of the rash conduct of one of the minorities concerned.

When Iraq became independent, nearly the whole surviving remnant of the Assyrian nation was gathered within its frontiers. Some had been settled there for centuries, but the majority were refugees from the Hakkiari mountains in Turkey or from northern Persia. This small group of tribes, quarrelsome, ignorant, and poor, was united by a strange and romantic heritage. Though their claim to descent from the ancient Assyrians rested only on a tradition and a name, there was no doubt that they were the true successors of the once famous and widespread Assyrian Church. They acknowledged the spiritual headship of a hereditary Patriarch, the Mar Shimun, who also exercised a vague but considerable authority of a more general kind. It was a misfortune that at this crisis in their history the Mar Shimun was a young and inexperienced man, not lacking in courage, but narrow, obstinate, and unable to distinguish between the interests of his office and that of the people as a whole. His fixed idea was to see all the Assyrian tribes settled side by side under his spiritual and temporal authority, and

enjoying a condition of autonomy save for the allegiance which they would owe, through him, to the King of Iraq. In answer to questions on the subject from the Council of the League, the Iraqi government replied (December 1932) that no such privileges could be given to one group without destroying the unity of the State: the Assyrians must be content with the same status as other citizens. There was no room to settle them in a single community, but it would do its best to find homes for those still living in camps and temporary quarters, and would bring in an experienced foreign officer to help it. And it would put no obstacles in the way of those Assyrians who might wish to leave the country.

The Council was satisfied with this programme: so were a considerable proportion of the Assyrians, and for the next months plans for their settlement in Iraq made steady progress. But on both the Iraqi side and on that of the Mar Shimun there was ill humour and discontent; rumours of impending revolt or impending massacre were spread; while the authorities still acted with restraint, the Arab press inflamed popular sentiment against the Assyrians, and the followers of the Mar Shimun began to talk of emigrating. By the unhappiest of chances King Faisal, whom the Assyrians trusted, was absent from his kingdom, suffering from the illness which shortly ended his adventurous and noble life. In July 1933 about 800 armed Assyrians suddenly, without warning to either the Iraqi or the French authorities, crossed the Tigris into Syria. Finding that the French would not allow them to remain on Syrian territory, they recrossed the river, and thereupon an engagement ensued between them and an Iraqi force which had been sent to intercept and disarm them. After some hours of fighting most of them returned to Syria, where they were promptly interned.

No further fighting occurred: but during the next fortnight the Iraqi army took a terrible revenge upon the Assyrian tribes. Prisoners were shot out of hand and on August 10th abominable massacres took place at the villages of Dohuk and Simel. Six hundred innocent men thus perished, and hundreds of families were reduced to ruin by the burning and looting of their villages.

The news of these tragic events, which the authorities in Baghdad tried in vain to hush up, reached Geneva on August 31st, on the eve of the seventy-sixth session of the Council: and the representatives of Mexico, Ireland, and Norway at once placed the question on the agenda. The death of Faisal, however, led to its consideration being put off to October. By then, the Iraqi government was ready to acknowledge the truth and, while throwing all the blame on the Assyrians, to express its regrets and to promise that there would be no further outrages—a

promise which was faithfully honoured. But it also stated that settlement in Iraq was no longer the best or even a possible solution for the Assyrian problem. For their own happiness and for the peace and order of the State, it was necessary that all who wished to leave the country should be allowed to do so; and only the League could find a place for them to go to. The Council could not but agree: and since the conditions of Iraq's admission had made the League in some sort the guardian of its minorities, the Council was also in duty bound to face the task of making a home, somewhere in the wide world, for a community of from ten to twenty thousand people who had no resources, no national affinities, and no claim on any country except those which had wronged or neglected them.

It would be too long to describe in detail the really devoted and incessant efforts made by the representatives of the Council to overcome the triple difficulties of this task—the difficulty of finding a place of settlement, of securing the necessary funds, and of meeting the exigencies of the Assyrians themselves. The work was done, as usual, by a Committee of the Council, with a Spanish delegate, López Oliván, as chairman. The first proposal was to establish them on the wide estates of the Paran  Plantations Company in Brazil. The Company, and the Brazilian government, looked favourably on the plan: a small mission, led by Brigadier Browne, who had commanded the Assyrian levies in Iraq for many years and knew their ways and needs, was sent by the Committee to inspect the ground, and reported that it was in every way suitable. The cost of settling twenty thousand souls there would be some £600,000. And here, in January 1934, Oliv n and his Committee met an unpleasant surprise. They had expected, in view of the past history of the affair, that the British government would have been ready to bear the brunt of the expense: but they were told that this must be borne by the League as a whole, and that Britain would contribute only its share as one among the rest. So long as this attitude was maintained, the Committee's task was in fact impossible, since the other Members of the League could not be willing to admit an equal responsibility with Britain for the fate of the Assyrians. In June, a still worse disappointment followed, when the Brazilian Congress adopted a new and severe law against immigration and thus compelled the executive to withdraw the consent it had previously given.

The Committee now made a formal appeal to those Members of the League which might, it hoped, find room for the Assyrians within their territories. This led to an offer from London to make available an area in the uplands of British Guiana; but Browne, who was promptly dispatched to the spot, reported that settlement could only take place by

slow degrees and on an experimental basis, and that there would in any case not be room for the whole community.

Meanwhile the Assyrians in Iraq were waiting to emigrate; some were in refugee camps, while those living in their villages were ceasing to cultivate their lands, in spite of warnings that they could not, at best, be moved for another year. The only redeeming features in the situation were first, that no further ill treatment had occurred; and secondly, that several hundred families had been permitted to join the men interned after the border fight of August 1933, and to construct temporary homes along the bank of the Upper Khabur. A League representative and a French officer took charge of the Khabur settlement; gradually new groups were allowed to come, so that by the late summer of 1935 some 6,000 Assyrians were living there under tolerable conditions.

The Khabur settlement provided in the end the solution of the problem, so far as it was in fact solved; but not until one further scheme, more ambitious and more hopeful than all the rest, had been first tried. The French authorities in Syria had long had plans for reclaiming the marshes of the Ghab, an area of nearly 200 square miles on the Orontes river, near the Mediterranean coast of Syria. They proposed that, instead of spending large sums on transporting the Assyrians overseas, the money should be used for drainage and irrigation in the Ghab, and the Assyrians be settled on part of the land thus made available. The suggestion was attractive: the British and Iraqi governments agreed to bear the main cost, the Assembly voted a further fraction, and the mandatory power would put up most of the rest. This would have been a great work, beneficent not only to the Assyrians but to Syria and Latakia also. Unhappily, in June 1936, when operations had already started, the French government informed the Council that it was contemplating an immediate surrender of its mandate, and that Syria as an independent State could not be counted on to continue the policy of reclamation and settlement.

For another year the Council's Committee sought a new place of transfer: the British government in particular made a fresh inquiry in every territory under British administration. All this having failed, the Committee on September 29th, 1937, reported to the Council that it could do no more: the only solution was to establish the Khabur settlement as a permanent home for those already there, and to leave the rest in Iraq. The Khabur villages had made good progress, thanks chiefly to the zeal of Captain Vuilloud, a French officer seconded to the service of the League. Further groups had been brought in from Iraq, and their total population was now nearly 9,000. Meanwhile, in Iraq itself, feelings had grown calmer on both sides. Most of the Assyrians

were willing to stay; and the government was willing to keep them, and to provide them with homes in the northern districts where some of their tribes had dwelt in peace throughout the period of trouble.

So it was decided: and thenceforward only the Khabur settlement remained under the management of the representatives of the League. It continued under relatively tranquil and prosperous conditions until, at the beginning of 1942, it was finally handed over to the charge of the Syrian government. Each family had then become the owner of its home and of land enough to live on, and all the refugees had acquired Syrian citizenship.



## THE ENTRY OF RUSSIA

*Russia turns towards the League—Her advances welcomed—Difficulties of Assembly procedure—An exciting debate—Russia as a League Member*

(DECEMBER 1933—SEPTEMBER 1934)

THE entry of Russia into the League was a direct consequence of the establishment of the Nazi power in Germany. The change in the Russian attitude could at first be felt rather than seen: references to the international institutions were still unfriendly and critical, but they no longer seemed intended to wound. The turning-point came with the resignation of Germany. On December 25th, 1933, less than three months after the announcement of her withdrawal, Stalin informed the Moscow correspondent of the *New York Times* that if the League could do anything to avert war, Russia was ready to support it. Molotov and Litvinov followed immediately with speeches to the same effect. It seems clear that, at that moment, the Soviet government had already decided to become a Member of the League, if this could be done without risking its national dignity. But the prospect did not begin to take definite form until the following summer.

It was natural enough that events in Germany should turn the Russian mind towards Geneva. Hitler and his inspirer, Rosenberg, were openly teaching the Germans that their future depended on the conquest and annexation of the Ukraine and the Caucasus. Russia took the threat seriously. She had few friends and no allies. She had built up a network of treaties of non-aggression with all her neighbours from the Caspian to the Gulf of Finland: but they contained no obligation on either side to help in resisting aggression by others. By joining the League, she would be able to call on all its Members for support if attacked by Germany. Membership of the League would also, she believed, reinforce her security in another way. Between her and Germany there lay a number of weak States. None of them could do much to hold up a German advance. But all were Members of the League, and Germany could not violate the frontier of any one of them without laying herself open to the sanctions of the Covenant. If Russia were also a Member, the chances that her fellow Members would in such a case carry out their full obligations were much enhanced. Economic sanctions would then create a

close and complete blockade, and military sanctions would at least be within the realm of possibility. The importance of these considerations has been largely overlooked. It may be that for the western powers they were not altogether a pleasant subject of contemplation. But there can be no doubt that for Russia they weighed heavily in the balance. Her small neighbours also felt that their security was greatly reinforced by Russia's entrance into the League, not merely because it helped to protect them against Germany, but still more because their own continued existence as independent Members was now a vital part of Russia's conception of her own security.

Japan too, like Germany, was at the same time dangerous to Russia and hostile to the League. The Tanaka Memorial might be compared to the territorial dreams of Hitler; though the authenticity of that document is highly doubtful, it was certain that Japan had territorial ambitions in Eastern Siberia and that it was her way to act first and explain afterwards. Her occupation of Manchuria had created a threatening strategical position. Russia had not lifted a finger to help China, or the League, in opposing the aggression of Japan. Without formally recognizing the new State of Manchukuo, she had negotiated with its agents when she found it convenient to do so, and was probably not sorry to see the Nanking government kept at arm's length from the Northern Provinces. But she had done nothing directly counter to the policy established by the Assembly. She was free to draw what advantage she could from League membership in the Far East as well as in Europe.

If it was natural that Russia should turn towards the League when Germany and Japan left it, it was natural also that her change of attitude should be specially welcomed by France. Although there was as yet no question of an alliance, there was growing up between them, under the common sense of danger, something not unlike the Franco-British entente of pre-war days. France was becoming more and more alarmed about Germany, and less and less inclined to count on effective help from Poland. Nothing could be more welcome to her than the adherence of Russia to the Covenant. From the moment that Moscow had, to the general surprise, begun to hint that an invitation to join the League would be accepted, France took the question up with zeal. Barthou, in particular, having made sure that the hints really meant what they seemed to mean, gave all his remarkable energy to translating into reality what still seemed an improbable speculation. For Russia had so long treated the League with hostility and scorn, and so many Members of the League were still without any diplomatic relations with Moscow, that the first inclination in most capitals was to refuse to consider the question seriously. Barthou, however, secured the agreement of London

and Rome, and during the summer of 1934 the three permanent Members of the Council joined in consulting their fellow-Members through the diplomatic channel, and did their best to persuade them to share in the invitation which they proposed to address to the Soviet government.

By the time the Assembly met in September, it was known that a great majority of Members were ready to vote for the admission of Russia to the League, but that a small minority intended to oppose it. Even among the majority, not all, it seemed, were ready to join in actually inviting her to come in. Yet it was evident that she had the right to wait for an invitation. Mexico had been invited in 1931, and Turkey in 1932. Once such precedents had been established, no great power could be expected to submit an application in the old way. Least of all could this be expected of Russia, for Russia was never sure that she would not be the object of bitter attack from one quarter or another. It was necessary, therefore, that she should be invited. It was necessary, further, that she should be assured of her election not only to membership of the League, but also to a permanent seat on the Council. And all this must be so completely arranged beforehand that any possibility of unpleasant surprise was ruled out. It seemed improbable that the Russian delegates would display the patience and magnanimity of Stresemann in 1926. Any serious hitch in the proceedings would be regarded as an insult, and reconciliation between Russia and the League would be rendered impossible for ever.

No difficulty was raised as regards her seat on the Council. One of its Members, Portugal, was among those who intended to vote against her admission to the League. Two others, Argentine and Panama, were prepared at best to abstain from voting. But all three agreed that, once admitted, she ought to be a permanent Member of the Council, and they promised to allow the unanimous decision in that sense which the Covenant required. The business of the invitation was more troubled. Previous invitations had been given by means of Assembly resolutions. But an Assembly resolution could be prevented by a single adverse vote; and it was certain that several such votes would be cast. Nothing that the great powers could say affected the determination in this matter of the Netherlands, Portugal, and Switzerland. Once the definite question of admission was put to the Assembly, a majority of two-thirds was all that was needed. At that point their adverse vote could do no harm. But no conscientious lawyer would agree that this special provision of the Covenant could be extended to cover a proposal to invite a non-Member State to enter the League.

A formal invitation being thus unattainable, it was planned to secure

as many signatures as possible to an invitation which would then be addressed to Moscow in the name, not of the Assembly, but of those powers which were prepared to sign it. Litvinov who, from his hotel in Geneva, was following these manœuvres with, we may suppose, a mixture of irritation and amusement, agreed that if the list of signatures was adequate, the Soviet government would reply in terms which could be treated as a demand for admission. And now one further problem arose. It was the regular rule of the Assembly not to take decisions of substance until after they had been discussed in one of the main Committees. Exceptions to this rule could, of course, be made by the Assembly itself. But hitherto such exceptions had been few and unimportant. Every demand for admission had always been considered in committee before the decisive vote was taken; and many of the smaller powers were unwilling that an exception should now be made. De Valera constituted himself their spokesman, and took advantage of the general debate to bring the question forward in public Assembly. He was prepared, he said, to vote for Russia's entry. Russia, like other States, great or small, had the right to be assured that her dignity would not be wounded, and in particular to be certain of success before applying for membership. But the Assembly had its dignity also, and its members ought not to be deprived of their right to discuss, criticize, and vote upon any proposal. Assembly decisions ought not to be settled beforehand at meetings in hotel rooms or by collecting the signatures of delegations. Barthou was vexed and anxious, but once again the great powers, including Russia, found it necessary to give way, and it was agreed that the question should be referred, as usual, to the Sixth Committee.

The annoyance of Barthou was understandable. The entry of Russia was a matter of the highest political importance; and it was without doubt being actually endangered by this insistence on questions of precedent and procedure. But does not history show that such considerations may often have a far deeper significance than appears at first sight? From the first the Assembly had treated them as matters of serious moment: and in doing so it was following the example of many ancient and famous institutions. The British Parliaments, the American Congress, have always paid great attention to tradition and precedent, and have found therein a safeguard for democratic rights. Insistence upon rules of procedure has more often helped to preserve freedom than to strangle legitimate initiative. The rules and customs of the Assembly, in which the small countries were far more numerous than the great ones, were designed above all to protect the right of all Members to be heard, to ask for public debate, to be given time for reflection, and in general to know that their interests and desires would be taken into consideration.

These principles constitute the main part of what may be called democracy in international affairs. And these principles, not some individual regulation, were at stake when the Assembly was asked, and refused, to cut short its normal practice.

Once the problems of procedure had been solved, the business went forward with no further hitch. The invitation was signed by thirty-four Members: and the Russian reply was clear and cordial. The Soviet government considered an invitation from so great a majority of its Members as 'representing the real will to peace of the League of Nations'. It willingly responded to it, and gave a formal 'undertaking to observe all the international obligations and decisions binding upon Members of the League, in conformity with Article 1 of the Covenant'. Its only reservation, the legitimacy of which no one could deny, was that it should not be bound to submit to arbitration or judicial settlement any disputes arising from events which had taken place before its entry. On September 17th this exchange of messages was placed in the hands of the President of the Assembly. The question was at once referred to the Sixth Committee, and considered at a public meeting of that body on the same day.

The Committee room was crowded with delegates and journalists, filled with the partisan excitement which Russian affairs never failed to evoke. It was known that Motta would be the chief speaker against admission, and Barthou the leader on the other side. Both were debaters of high repute, and a contest between them on so burning an issue promised to be a lively occasion. But the form of the Russian answer had cut away much of the ground from under Motta's feet. She promised to observe all the obligations of League membership. Whatever might be thought of her internal conditions, her conduct in regard to the organization of peace had been worthy of respect. Motta could not, and did not, suggest that her intentions were incompatible with the Covenant. He explained the hostility of Swiss public opinion; but though none could dissent from his tribute to the quality of Swiss democracy, none could deny that in the long quarrel between Switzerland and Soviet Russia the faults had not all been on the side of the latter. He denounced Communism and atheism, the danger of world revolution and the persecution of religion. He could not believe that such a State could ever evolve towards democracy and tolerance. Was it wise to present it with the added prestige of League membership? and would Switzerland's fellow Members help to preserve her from the contagious propaganda which the new Member would bring to Geneva? The delegates of Portugal, Belgium, Argentina, Holland, spoke on the same side. They referred to the losses which had been inflicted on their nationals, or to

the indignities suffered by their diplomatists, but they added little to the general case against Russia's entry.

Barthou's reply naturally dwelt on exactly that aspect of the question which his opponents had left on one side. His countrymen, he said, had suffered more financial loss from their Russian investments than any others. No one could be more hostile to religious intolerance than he. But was it not by closer association with other States that the Russian regime was likely to become more tolerant? Above all, he took his stand on the Covenant, which Russia now promised to accept and fulfil. The primary concern of the League was not internal doctrine, but international action. The Assembly was there to promote and organize peace; could it drive Russia back into that isolation which was the surest source of war? Barthou's advocacy was at once supported by Britain. Our foreign policy, said Eden, has been based upon the League ever since it was created, and we welcome this addition to its power and resources. His welcome was echoed by Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Canada, and, with special warmth, by Turkey.

The vote in the Committee was 38 for, 3 against, 7 abstentions. In the Assembly the next day 39 voted for admission, 3 against, and 7 abstained; while the vote on a permanent seat in the Council was 40 in favour, 10 abstentions: the Assembly, like the Council, was thus formally unanimous on this point. Before the vote was taken, de Valera had still a word to say. He called upon the Russian government to permit freedom of worship to all its subjects: and claiming to speak on behalf not only of 300 million Catholics but of all the followers of Christ, he suggested that if this were not done all Christians would lose faith in the League.

When the voting was over, the Soviet delegates took their places and Litvinov addressed the Assembly for the first time. He briefly traced the past history of the Soviet attitude towards the League—the early days of suspicion, when the Soviet Union, feeling itself an object of hostility to all, had even feared that the League might be the means through which the rest of the world might plan collective action against her; the gradual increase in contacts through the Economic Conference, the Disarmament Conference, and other meetings; and the final conviction that the League and the Soviet Union possessed a common aim, the organization of peace. The more the aggressive elements in the world showed that they found the restrictions of the League embarrassing, and tried to shake them off, the more did Russia feel impelled to assume them. She was convinced that no war of serious dimensions could be localized, and that, wherever it occurred, it would prove to be the first of a series. She had no exaggerated idea of the League's power to keep the peace. But she believed that it could do much to diminish the danger of war,

and in this effort she was determined to share to the best of her ability.

From September 18th, 1934, until a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War, Russia continued to be a convinced supporter of the League. Her record in the Council and the Assembly, and her conduct towards the aggressive powers, were more consistent with the Covenant than those of any other great power. She played no leading part in the work except so far as it concerned security. Russian officials, however, were appointed as members of the main technical agencies of the League; one such expert was a surprisingly popular and respected figure in the Financial Committee, others co-operated in the meetings of the Economic and Transit organizations. In the Health Committee, above all, the Soviet experts joined with zeal, as indeed they had done since its earliest days. A Russian Under Secretary-General was added to the Secretariat, but the Soviet administration, weakened by repeated purges, could spare no younger men to serve in lower positions. Nor would Moscow consent to the nomination of a Russian member of the Mandates Commission or of the social agencies, such as the Child Welfare Committee.

The hope, therefore, that her entry into the League would multiply the contacts between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world was only fulfilled in part. The reason for this was not to be sought entirely on the Russian side. It was never seriously alleged, even by the Swiss, that the Russians were using their position in the League to spread the doctrines of Communism. Nor was there any report, during the period of Russia's membership, of any outbreak of religious persecution within her boundaries. But the fears, prejudices, and suspicions to which Motta and de Valera gave expression in the Assembly debates were persistent and powerful. The Irish leader foretold that they would henceforth be directed not only against the Soviet Union but also, to some extent, against the League of which she was now an important part. Such a transfer of emotional judgement could have no moral or political justification; but de Valera's prophecy was amply fulfilled. The next few years were to show how sentiments, respectable and sincere in themselves, could be twisted to form the basis of a campaign of propaganda which was false, malignant, and incredibly successful.

## THE SAAR PLEBISCITE

*Conditions in the Saar—Hitler's attitude to the plebiscite and the Governing Commission—Plans for the vote—The maintenance of order and the International Force—The campaign and the vote—Final settlement—The Governing Commission's last report*

(JANUARY 1934—MARCH 1935)

UNDER the government of a League Commission the Saar Basin had been one of the most prosperous and quiet places in Europe. The old quarrel about the presence of French troops had been settled, as the result of the famous debate in the Council between Stresemann and Briand. Thereafter the annals of the Territory had been pleasant reading. They took the form of a three-monthly report to the Council, in which the Governing Commission dealt fully with difficulties and grievances, as well as with the more successful aspects of administration. The Members of the Council were certain to hear of any trouble, if not through the official reports, then through the petitions which any inhabitant had the right to submit, or through the minority opinion of the Saar member of the Governing Commission. In these circumstances the fact that Germany, from 1927 until the time she left the League, had never laid any complaint before her fellow Members, was an indisputable proof that the system was working as well as the Treaty provisions allowed. The population enjoyed a relatively high standard of economic prosperity and of industrial peace. Its discontents, such as they were, arose from the basic facts of the Treaty which neither the Governing Commission nor the Council itself could alter without the consent of the signatory powers.

The Saar Basin was not less German than any other part of the Reich; and the Saarlanders resented having to obey a government of foreigners. Further, the rule of the Governing Commission was in the nature of things undemocratic. It had organized a local Landesrat (June 1922) and frequently consulted it. But it did not depend upon the approval of the elected representatives of the Territory, nor was it bound to accept their advice; such a situation would indeed have been a breach of the Treaty, since the real governing power would have been transferred from the Commission to the Landesrat. The Saar Basin, with its preponderantly working-class population, wished to possess representative institutions. It was understandable that France should have the benefit of the Saar mines to offset the losses she had suffered under the



German invasion. But was it just that three-quarters of a million educated men and women should therefore be deprived of those political rights which both Frenchmen and Germans enjoyed? These grievances were sedulously kept alive by a powerful and expensive propaganda system. They might have led to serious trouble but for the fact that the Saarlanders knew that in 1935 they would be able to decide their own future. They would then be asked to choose between union with Germany, union with France, or the maintenance of the *status quo*, that is to say, of the League regime. The prospect of the plebiscite enabled them to enjoy their present tranquillity, while remaining united in their determination to return as soon as they could to the open arms of Republican Germany.

Two years before the date to which all were looking forward, the placidity of the Saar was roughly broken by the advent of a Nazi government in Berlin. To return to the Germany of Hitler was a very different thing from returning to the Germany of Weimar, or even of Potsdam. It meant abandoning for ever all aspirations towards democracy. Beatings, murders, concentration camps, Jew-baiting, were abhorrent to the peaceful and industrious Saarlanders. Three-quarters of the population were devout Catholics. And now a vote for Germany meant a vote for a regime which was openly hostile to the Churches and especially to the Church of Rome. Many voters began to experience one of those inner conflicts which so easily break out in the German soul—a conflict, in this case, between conscience and patriotism. The result of the plebiscite was no longer certain.

This situation was profoundly disturbing to Hitler. That a majority, or even a considerable minority, of loyal Germans should prefer government by the League to government by the Nazi party, would be for him a very serious blow. He met the danger in characteristic fashion. He organized a campaign of fervent nationalism, combined with terror. At the same time he tried to induce the French to hand over the Saar without a plebiscite.

The terror perforce was mainly prospective. Threats as to what awaited them in 1935 were poured out by the German press and radio on Jews, Communists, and anti-Nazis. There was talk of a twenty-four-hours orgy of murder when the plebiscite was over. Already Jewish children were bullied, until the Governing Commission, at the request of their parents, provided them with a school of their own. A branch of the party was, of course, organized in the territory: its newspapers echoed the tone of those in the Reich and it tried by menace, blackmail, and actual violence to make itself the unofficial master of the Saar. But in the attempt Hitler found himself, perhaps to his surprise, effectively

resisted by the Governing Commission under its British Chairman, Geoffrey Knox. The task of the Commission, against the unscrupulous methods of Nazism, was hard indeed. Its members were spied upon; of its officials and police, many were secretly Nazi, and many others were too frightened to be loyal. Some magistrates were fanatics, others were terrorized; and though many bravely followed their conscience, justice in the Saar was beginning to go the way of justice in the Reich. Police and officials, however, had to live, and their livelihood still depended on the Governing Commission. The margin of safety was small, but the Commission still managed, by resolute efforts, to maintain order. The opponents of Nazism were protected from violence, at least for the time being. They began to steady their ranks and to organize a campaign in favour of the *status quo*. The attitude of the Catholics was uncertain; the Nazis began to grow anxious; and the terrorist tactics of 1933 were gradually abandoned or thrust into the background. Hitler did not forgive those who stood up to him. The Governing Commission, and especially Knox, were from that time onward the objects of an endless stream of abuse by the radio and press of Nazi Germany. No effort was spared to make it impossible for them to carry out their functions.

At the same time, while professing complete confidence as to the result of the plebiscite, Hitler tried to recover the Saar by direct agreement. On October 14th, 1933, the day Germany left the League, he broadcast a speech on foreign policy in which he declared that Germany and France should once for all banish force from their common life, adding that when the Saar had been returned to Germany, there would be no further grounds for territorial conflict between them. He followed this up by making proposals for a direct settlement between the two governments, not only of the territorial attribution of the Saar, but also of all the economic problems involved in the change of ownership of the coal mines. The French, however, were in no mood to give him a cheap victory. They insisted that the Saarlanders must be allowed to exercise the choice to which they were entitled by the terms of the Peace Treaty.

Such was the situation in January 1934, when the Council first took up the question of the organization of the plebiscite. The League had been entrusted with the government of the Saar for fifteen years from the entry into force of the Peace Treaty, i.e. until January 10th, 1935. The Council rightly judged that a year would be none too long for the preparatory work. The technical problems were highly complex. It was necessary to ensure that every person who had the right to vote should also have the opportunity; that no unauthorized votes should be cast; that secrecy should be guaranteed at the time of voting, at the time of

counting, and for ever after. There must be an electoral organization to take charge of all these problems. There must be a judicial organization to hear appeals and to settle disputes. The experience of the past must be studied: the Saar plebiscite was the first to be held under the authority of the League, and both the Council and Secretariat believed that much depended upon its success. All this would involve much work and planning. But no organization, however perfect, could cope with the two chief difficulties which the Council had to face. It knew that the coming year would be filled with an electoral campaign of passionate intensity. In that Europe which was struggling on the dividing line between democracy and dictatorship, even ordinary elections were dangerous occasions. The Saar plebiscite aroused far stronger emotions than an ordinary election, and far greater interests were at stake. How then could public order be guaranteed? And how could the voter be assured that he was free to speak, write, and vote as his conscience bade him, without fear of the consequences?

In the winter of 1933-4, when Germany had just left the League and Nazi threats and invective were in full blast, the achievement of these two conditions looked impossible. Nevertheless, the Council admitted that it was its duty to bring them about, and, not without secret uneasiness, affirmed its intention to fulfil all the duties incumbent upon it.<sup>1</sup> Everything depended upon Germany. Not on her good will: it was only too evident that good will was entirely absent. The task of the Council was to persuade the government of the Reich that its own interests required it to collaborate in ensuring a free and fair expression of the popular will. For this purpose it possessed two weapons of considerable weight. In the first place, the date of the plebiscite could be fixed by the Council alone; and Germany was anxious that it should take place at the earliest possible moment. In the second place, it was in the power of the Council, if it chose to do so, to exercise a certain influence on the result of the vote. There could be no question of undertaking propaganda in favour of the *status quo*. But the Council was being urged from many sides to declare that, if the Saar voted to remain under the authority of the League, it would be granted a democratic constitution, and would later on be free to reverse its decision and to return to Germany. It is not possible to say what effect these declarations might have had upon the vote. It is certain that the Nazis were much afraid of what that effect might be.

The double task of planning the electoral organization, and of negotiating with Germany and France, was entrusted by the Council to its regular rapporteur on Saar affairs, the Italian representative, Baron Aloisi. The Argentine and Spanish delegates, Cantilo and López Oliván,

<sup>1</sup> See Council Minutes, June 20th, 1934.

were invited to assist him. A number of experts and of members of the Secretariat set to work on the innumerable administrative questions that had to be regulated, while Aloisi took charge of the diplomatic exchanges. By the end of May he and his colleagues were able to submit a complete scheme for the approval of the Council. They had defined precisely who had the right to vote, how the voting lists should be established, what the electoral districts should be, and what methods should be used to determine the final result. They had drawn up plans for a Plebiscite Commission, with inspectors in each district; and for a Supreme Plebiscite Tribunal, with subordinate tribunals in each district. All these and many lesser matters had been discussed with the French and German governments and only awaited the Council's endorsement. Finally, they had induced both France and Germany to give assurances which went far to settle the question of a free and fair vote. The two governments promised, in identical letters, to abstain from all pressure, direct or indirect, upon the voters; to abstain from any reprisals or discrimination against any voter on account of his part in the campaign or the vote; and to prevent their nationals from committing any action contrary to these formal engagements. They further agreed that the Supreme Plebiscite Tribunal should continue to function for one year after the setting up of the new regime, whatever it might be, with full authority to hear and judge all complaints of pressure or reprisals. In view of these promises on the part of Germany, the Committee of Three proposed to the Council to appoint Sunday, January 13th, 1935—the earliest day possible—as the date on which the plebiscite should take place.

The Council members were much relieved to learn of the progress made in dealing with so thorny a problem. They gratefully endorsed (June 4th, 1934) all the proposals of Aloisi's Committee, and left it a practically free hand in the execution of its plans for establishing the various organs of the plebiscite.

It was no light task to find, at such short notice, a large number of competent persons, knowing German well, neither French, German, nor Saarlander, and acceptable to both the governments chiefly concerned. However, the group of ex-neutrals—Holland, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries—has always proved a rich nursery of good workers in the international field, most of whom are familiar with the German language. Drawing largely on this source, Aloisi's Committee was able to build up by July 1st a Plebiscite Commission of three members and one expert adviser,<sup>1</sup> with some fifty inspectors and sub-inspectors

<sup>1</sup> The adviser was Miss Sarah Wambaugh, who had made a profound study of previous plebiscites. She helped first to plan, and then to execute, the regulations for the Saar plebiscite; and subsequently wrote an excellent book on the subject.

under its orders. Two months later the Supreme Plebiscite Tribunal, with eight district tribunals, was also ready to function: its judges, deputy-judges, and officials brought some twenty-five more neutral officials into the Territory. The two organs were always working against time. The lists as first drawn up contained over 530,000 names; over 100,000 claims or protests had to be examined; the final list reached almost 540,000; and all but about 11,000 of these actually voted. These figures give some idea of the magnitude of the task. Again and again it looked as though it could not possibly be carried through in time. But each stage was, by the narrowest margin, punctually completed. For the final vote about 950 experienced officials were brought in from Switzerland, Holland, and Luxemburg, so that a neutral chairman was in charge of every voting centre. From first to last the technical arrangements were carried through without any serious hitch.

As regards the question of ensuring a free and fair vote, the Council's action and the letter from the German government provided the population, at least on paper, with the guarantees which they were entitled to expect. On the connected, but distinct, question of the maintenance of public order during the electoral campaign, Germany had not been asked to make any promise. This was the business of the Governing Commission, not of any outside authority. Yet it was evident that the Nazi government could provoke disorder in the Saar to whatever extent it chose. That it never actually did so was due neither to fear of, nor respect for, the Governing Commission. There was, in truth, a good deal of bluff on both sides. The Nazis kept up a state of nervousness and uncertainty. They attacked Knox continually on the radio. They spread rumours that trouble was about to break out in this town or that. They gathered a force of young Saarlanders, variously estimated at from ten to sixteen thousand strong, gave them some sort of military training, and encamped them at various points within striking distance of the Saar Basin. At the same time they protested against all Knox's efforts to increase the Saar police, which they described as an insult to the peaceful and law-abiding disposition of the German race. Knox's retorts to Hitler, if more decorous, were hardly less disagreeable. He poured contempt on the childish vanity of the Nazis in the Saar. He showed his complete disbelief in the value of the Nazi promises. Officials who had been forced to flee from Germany were appointed to posts in the Saar police. In short, the Governing Commission defied Hitler, knowing that it could not rely upon its subordinates and that, if any serious trouble

arose, its only resources would be either to appeal to the Council or to use the prerogative granted to it long ago, in very different circumstances, of calling in French troops to restore order.

That French forces should enter the Saar within a few weeks of the plebiscite would have created a situation of the utmost danger to peace. But Knox had the right to call on them, and the French government made it plain that it would not refuse the call. At the end of October, it was even reported that the necessary orders had already been given so that the troops could march without delay. The German reaction to this news was such as to show how deeply they felt about any such possibility. There can be no doubt that it was equally abhorrent to the British government. But Knox was not then their servant, and enjoyed to the full the Englishman's traditional pleasure of defying his own government for conscience' sake.

Both Knox and the French had from the first desired that order should be ensured during the whole plebiscite period by an international force stationed in the area. The British, however, whose participation was obviously essential, had not been willing to consider the suggestion. The Germans protested with their usual violence. To send an international force to the Saar was, they declared, illegal and provocative. Germany and the Saarlanders could be relied on to maintain perfect discipline. As late as November 15th, Eden informed the House of Commons that there was not, and never had been, any question of sending British troops to the Saar. But thanks, it would seem, to the skilful manœuvring of Laval, who had succeeded Barthou at the Quai d'Orsay, the British government abruptly changed its attitude. On December 5th the Council assembled in special session to make the final arrangements for the plebiscite. To the general surprise, Eden informed his colleagues at a secret meeting that he was authorized to offer British participation in an international force, on condition that others would do the same and that Germany agreed. That afternoon he made the same announcement in public. Aloisi followed with the news that Italy was ready to provide a contingent. The German government gave its consent, unwillingly, but with commendable promptitude. The Council then decided that invitations to participate on a modest scale should be sent to Sweden and the Netherlands, each the very embodiment of neutrality and respectability. With their acceptance, the way was clear for the constitution of the first and last International Force in the service of the League.<sup>1</sup> To the surprise of Simon, the British initiative in this

<sup>1</sup> The Commission at Leticia had under its orders a small detachment which was considered as international and wore armlets with the letters S.D.N. But it was composed only of Colombian soldiers and was not, therefore, an international force in the full sense.

matter proved to be perhaps the most popular action of his tenure of the Foreign Office.

The Force, 3,300 strong—the largest contingent, and the Commander, being British—reached the Saar before Christmas. From that moment all fear of disorder was at an end. The mere presence of the troops was all that was needed, and they were never called upon to use their arms. The relations between the different contingents were excellent throughout. Relations with the Saarlanders were also good: the local Nazi leaders tried at first to organize a boycott, describing the Force as a new army of occupation and ordering their followers to avoid all fraternization. But their efforts were a total failure. The troops enjoyed a popularity which they well deserved.<sup>1</sup>

The German pledge to abstain from pressure on the voters was, outwardly at least, much better observed than anyone had expected. Hitler himself, at a monster meeting held on August 26th close to the frontier of the Saar, promised that the political attitudes of the inhabitants should not be remembered against them—and this though he knew that the adherents of the *status quo* were holding at the same time a meeting designed to rival his own.

He had realized that he must now rely, for a favourable issue of the plebiscite, on the power of patriotic sentiment, and that he must therefore stress the note of German unity. Later on, under Aloisi's patient pressure, he extended to non-voters the guarantee of immunity which had been already given to all voters; and agreed that all inhabitants who wished to leave the Saar should be allowed to do so, and to take their movable property with them, provided that they declared their intention within six months from the time when the Territory should have been reunited with Germany.

In spite of these assurances, both general and particular, it required great courage in any Saarlander to declare himself openly in favour of the *status quo*. It was no part of the Nazi philosophy either to keep promises or to show mercy. Nevertheless, the *status quo* movement was developing with surprising vitality. The victims of Hitler's murderous purge of June 30th, 1934, had included some respected leaders of German Catholicism, and the Catholics of the Saar had been severely shaken. If once the issue should begin to seem doubtful, there might well be a rapid increase in the votes of those who would prefer to postpone reunion with the Fatherland until it had returned to political sanity. If the Church

<sup>1</sup> An admirable report on the history of the International Force was drawn up in October 1935 by its Commander, Major-General Brind. It contains interesting suggestions for future use, and it is a pity that it has never been published.

authorities chose to encourage such a view, or if the League Council were ready to promise democratic institutions and a second plebiscite, the Nazi regime might find itself in danger of a resounding reverse.

But neither the Church nor the League were in a fighting mood. While the Vatican remained conspicuously neutral, the Bishops of Speyer and Trèves, the spiritual overlords of the Saar Basin, gave a decided lead in favour of reunion with Germany. From a great Catholic meeting at Saarbrücken they sent a joint telegram to Hindenburg, vowing unwavering fidelity to the Head of the German Reich. Those of the clergy who adhered to the anti-Nazi front were discouraged and disavowed. On December 26th, in the final stage of the campaign, the Bishops issued a further pronouncement of so tendentious a character that the Plebiscite Commission felt it necessary to protest.

The Council for its part declined to make any statement as to the situation which would follow a vote for the *status quo*. It did not receive any clear lead even from France. The Quai d'Orsay did indeed (August 31st, 1934) submit a memorandum, but its proposals as to the two essential questions were wrapped in such diplomatic drafting as could only puzzle the ignorant and warn the experienced. Only Litvinov (Russia having become a Member of the Council in September), and, at the last moment, Laval, spoke plainly. But they could not speak for the Council as a whole. The rest, including Britain and Italy, took refuge either in silence or in ambiguity. They certainly had no wish to see the Saar transferred, even temporarily, to the sovereignty of the League. Such a responsibility, in face of a violently hostile Germany, would have been the source of unending difficulty and danger. They preferred to leave the embarrassing questions without an answer.

Thus the adherents of the *status quo* received none of the assistance for which they hoped. They tried to claim the support of the Church. They tried to show that a vote against union with Germany could be reversed later, and that meantime the Saarlanders could at last be their own masters. But on neither point could they speak with real conviction. Their only solid argument was the condition of things in Germany, and the belief that 'Hitler-Germany' meant ruin at present and war in no distant future. But such assertions had little effect upon men and women who, in Litvinov's grave and penetrating words, 'wished to remain German and to share in every respect the fate of their fellow-countrymen'. It became more and more certain that the great majority would vote for union with Germany; and, as always happens in elections, many were unwilling to vote for a cause which had no hope of success. It was said that fifty thousand persons attended the last great meeting in favour of the *status quo*. But when the day came, only forty-six thousand



in the whole Territory voted for remaining under the League. Two thousand voted for France. Four hundred and seventy-seven thousand, 90 per cent of the electorate, were for immediate reunion with Germany. Many cast their vote with reluctance and apprehension. But it counted just the same.

The Council had put forward the date of its regular January session, in order to be ready to cope with any sudden emergency or to give any last-minute decision that might be required. Early on January 14th it heard from the Plebiscite Commission that the voting had taken place with perfect discipline and dignity. That day the ballot-boxes, guarded by detachments of the International Force, were carried to Saarbrücken. Three hundred neutral tellers were waiting to count them. They worked all through the night. At six o'clock the next morning the result was telephoned to the Council; at eight o'clock it was broadcast to the world. Its reception in Germany can be easily imagined. In Geneva the result was received with mixed feelings. It was not in any direct sense a setback for the League. The Council had never sought to encourage a vote for the *status quo*: when it was in its power to influence the electorate, it had deliberately refrained from doing so. But it was, without question, one further success for Hitler, the enemy of the League and of all it stood for; the Nazi regime had received a fresh draft of power and confidence, and in the long run this could only increase the danger of war.

Nevertheless, the prevailing sentiment of the Council Members was one of relief. A long period of anxious tension had been safely passed. The result was indisputably clear; and no doubtful or embarrassing decisions had to be taken. There had been some fear lest an attempt might be made by the Nazis to take over the Territory without awaiting the formal verdict of the League. But no external, and no serious internal, disorder followed on the announcement of the vote. Two days later, the Council, in the presence of the Governing Commission and the Plebiscite Commission, resolved that on March 1st, 1935, the whole Territory should be united with Germany.

The general satisfaction was heightened by the attitude of the two governments chiefly concerned. Laval stated at once that France accepted the consequence of the vote and agreed that the Council must pronounce the reunion of the Saar with Germany. Indeed, though the French in general were deeply disappointed with the figures of the plebiscite, it is probable that Laval, who was pursuing a policy of détente with Germany, fully shared the relief of his colleagues. As for Hitler, he repeated his previous declaration that there was now no territorial question between Germany and France. He ordered his Ambassador in Paris to assure Laval that Germany recognized that the Saar was part

of the demilitarized zone provided by the Peace Treaty, and would act on that recognition. He did nothing to render more difficult the task of the Governing Commission, which had still to administer the Territory until March 1st. He made no unreasonable conditions in the settlement of the many questions involved in the transfer. Although it would have been unlike the Germans, and particularly unlike the Nazis, to say so, there is no doubt that official and private opinion in the Reich was impressed by the fairness and efficiency with which the plebiscite had been organized.

Those who knew the Council had never doubted that it would act with fairness. An international body, whose corporate proceedings are subject to the scrutiny of all its Members, whether they be directly concerned or not with the question at issue, may have many faults: but that of deliberately favouring one side or the other is the fault of which it is least likely to be guilty. The real danger was not that it should be partial but that it should be inefficient. Not, indeed, in dealing with administrative complexities; these the Council machine of those days could take in its stride, whatever they might be; but in dealing with the political difficulties, and above all in persuading Germany to adopt an attitude which would enable the plebiscite to be properly carried out. When all was over, one member after another offered thanks and congratulations to Aloisi; and never were thanks and congratulations better earned. For fourteen months he had devoted to the organization of the plebiscite all his exceptional qualities—industry, resourcefulness, firmness when required, good temper, courage, and optimism under testing conditions. He never shirked a difficulty, nor gave way under disappointment. Many times in the course of its existence the Council had cause to be grateful for the exertions of its rapporteurs, but never more so than to Aloisi for his handling of the Saar plebiscite.

Even after the fundamental decisions had been taken, there was still a mass of financial and administrative matters to be settled. The transfer of the Territory to Germany involved a change of currency, and the abolition of a customs line. The mines had to be bought by Germany from France. Arrangements had to be made for the payment of foreign debts, for the transfer of public funds, for the future of officials, for the safeguarding of the workers' insurance rights. Much preparatory work had been done; but Aloisi's Committee had still weary weeks of negotiation before them. However, they hit on the idea of concentrating their business, not in the harsh winter climate of Geneva, Saarbrück, or Berlin, but first in Rome and then, still better, in Naples. This move was much appreciated by the Secretariat. It seemed welcome, too, to the

members of the Financial Committee, who came to guide the proceedings in regard to debts, currency, and exchange: to the experts from the International Labour Office, who solved the problem of insurance; to the delegates of France, Germany, and the Governing Commission, all of whom had to be parties to one or other of the various instruments. All was finished with ten days to spare and by February 20th all the agreements had been signed. On the 26th the last detachments of the International Force left for home. On February 28th the Governing Commission handed over the Territory to the Council, represented by Aloisi, Cantilo, and Oliván. The next day the Council representatives carried out the formal transfer to the German government.

Thereafter all that was left of League organization in the Saar was the Supreme Plebiscite Tribunal, which continued to function for one year in order to guarantee the inhabitants against reprisals or injustices on account of their attitude during the electoral campaign. It did not have many appeals to judge; but its presence was doubtless not without effect. In any case, so far as is known, the Germans kept their promises to the League in this respect. Those, however, who believed themselves specially marked out for revenge were justifiably unwilling to wait and test Nazi good faith with their lives. After the vote, some 8,000 persons left the Saar, of whom one-third were already refugees from the terror in the Reich. These unhappy people were added to the many whose sufferings the League was attempting to alleviate. Saarlanders among them were regarded as having a special claim. But the assistance of the League was in proportion to the insignificant funds at its disposal, and it was from France that they, like so many others, received the most effective help. For the rest, the population of the Saar shared henceforth in every respect the fate of their countrymen.

In their sixty-first, and last, periodical report to the Council, the Governing Commission of the Saar recalled how, fifteen years earlier, the original members of the Commission had entered on their task with no resources except a sum of £4,000 advanced by a private bank through the good offices of the Secretariat. Now their successors handed over to Germany a Territory which had been morally and materially preserved from the worst afflictions of the rest of Europe. In spite of large expenditure on unemployment relief—80 million francs, or over £1 million in 1934 alone—the Treasury balances amounted to 65 million francs and \$270,000. Great sums had been spent on public works. Internal communications had been improved and extended. Yet the Territory was entirely free from public debt.

In bidding farewell to Knox and his colleagues, the Council expressed

a gratitude which was heartfelt and sincere. It had in mind especially the memory of the last two years, during which the Commission, and above all the Chairman, had, for the sake of the League, faced conditions of political difficulty and physical danger, and had done so with firmness and courage. But its thanks might well have been considered also as a last salute to an institution of unique historical importance. The fifteen-year record of the Saar Governing Commission is a standing proof of the practical possibilities of international administration. After some bad mistakes in its early years, it had shown that even under the most unfavourable circumstances a group of men from different countries can work together loyally and efficiently. Although two of its five members, the Saarlander and the Frenchman, were appointed to watch over the special interests of their respective countries, the Commission as a whole had grown more and more conscious of itself as a unit responsible only to the League of Nations. The Council's own dealings with the Commission had combined the minimum of intervention with the maximum of support. And the period of international government had been closed by the best-managed of all plebiscites, and the unprecedented and successful experiment of the International Force. Truly the history of the Saar Territory deserves more attention than it has received from those who have the power and the duty to shape the outlines of the post-war world.

## THE HUNGARO-YUGOSLAV CRISIS

*The Crime of Marseilles—Previous tension on the Hungaro-Yugoslav frontier—Yugoslavia appeals to the Council—War danger averted*

(OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1934)

ON October 8th, 1934, the world learnt with horror and apprehension that King Alexander of Yugoslavia and Louis Barthou, Foreign Minister of France, had been assassinated in Marseilles. It was evident from the first that the ambush had been planned against the King and not the Minister, and that this was a political crime, the purpose of which was to damage and destroy the fabric of his kingdom.

For the last five years Alexander had kept the whole power of government in his own hands. He was passionately devoted to the idea of Yugoslav unity and had made himself a dictator mainly because he believed that his personal rule was the best way to achieve that aim. The result of his life's work was a profound failure internally: but it was beginning to look very successful from the point of view of foreign policy. A people of strong democratic instincts was unreconciled to the loss of its constitutional rights; nor had the King found any way of making Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes dwell together in amity. On the other hand, the position of Yugoslavia in relation to her neighbours had been consolidated by a foreign policy which enjoyed the support of the whole country. Ever since Serbia had emerged from the war as the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, Italy and Hungary had been hoping for its dissolution. Italian intrigue had done its best to keep alive the hatred between Serbs and Bulgars, and at the same time to encourage any separatist movement among the Croats. Now Alexander of Yugoslavia (one of his first acts as dictator had been to change the name of the State) and Boris of Bulgaria had begun to put an end to the feud between their peoples, and both countries had gladly responded to their lead. The Croats, too, though they bitterly resented the predominance of the Serbs, were in their vast majority quite determined not to risk finding themselves once more under Hungarian rule. Meanwhile there had been a notable stabilization in the political structure of South East Europe. Yugoslavia, as a member of the reinforced Little Entente, and of the newly created Balkan Entente, was feeling greater confidence in her international position than for many years past.

The long aspiration of the Balkan nations to be left in peace by the

great powers seemed at last in a fair way to be realized. No greater contribution to the tranquillity of Europe could have been imagined. But it was entirely contrary to the hopes and plans of Italy and Hungary. Each of these countries was anxious to maintain a sense of insecurity among the States of the Little Entente. Hungary found in her unceasing revisionist campaign a solace for her wounded pride and a unifying force between her privileged class and her poverty-stricken peasantry. Italy was trying to build up a group of satellites to counterbalance the combined strength of France and the Little Entente. She had special reasons for hostility towards Yugoslavia, her rival along the Adriatic coast and in Albania. Both Italy and Hungary hoped that their purposes might be served if the discontent of the Croats were to result in the separation of Croatia from the rest of Yugoslavia. It may be that the Italian plans had not yet reached the height of criminal folly which they attained in Ciano's day and which culminated, in May 1941, in the absurdity of putting an Italian duke on the imaginary throne of a non-existent Kingdom of Croatia. But it is certain that both countries were doing their best to make capital out of Croatian aspirations towards autonomy and to convert them into a movement for independence. In this intrigue they found ready to their hands tools which the most unscrupulous of governments might have hesitated to use.

The despotic rule of Alexander and the cruelty of the Serbian police had driven into exile a considerable number both of Croats and Slovenes. Most of them were law-abiding citizens who lived in the usual sad hopefulness of refugees. They did not desire to break up the Yugoslav State nor to be guilty of violence. But there was a group of *émigrés* to whom crime and outrage appeared as the only way to achieve their ends—to some of whom indeed crime was an end in itself. The leaders of these men found asylum, some in Italy, and some in Hungary; and not only asylum, but financial support. They were able to recruit agents, acquire arms and explosives, and move from one place to another in the preparation of their plots. They had brought off one or two assassinations and had caused a succession of railway accidents by concealed bombs. But they had made no progress towards their main object, the disintegration of Yugoslavia. In the summer of 1934 there were indications that they intended to concentrate their efforts on the assassination of the King.

The outrage of Marseilles was therefore not only a political crime, but also a crime of deep international significance. It was a crime against the State, in which foreign enemies of the State were implicated. It was this fact which made it immediately an acute danger to peace and recalled to men's minds the murder at Sarajevo twenty years before. Yugoslavs,

without distinction of race, supporters or opponents of the King's policy, were united in indignation against both Italy and Hungary. And what made the story doubly bitter was the fact that, only a few months earlier, the Yugoslav representative had set forth at length, in the Council of the League, the complaints of his government against Hungarian complaisance towards terrorists. The names of some of those who took part in the plot against Alexander, including that of the actual assassin, had been mentioned to the Council as persons whom Hungarian officials had been helping and protecting.

It was not, on that occasion, the Yugoslav government which took the initiative of bringing its grievances before the League. Hungary herself made the first move. On May 12th, 1934, she addressed a note to the Council, complaining of the intolerable conditions which prevailed along the whole length of the frontier between the two countries. Besides many less grave accusations, it was said that Yugoslav frontier guards had killed outright no fewer than fifteen Hungarian subjects, not one of whom had been guilty of any offence; and that the Yugoslav authorities would listen to no complaint, nor allow any joint investigation of the circumstances. Hungary begged the Council to insist on the restoration of normal conditions on the frontier, and on the setting up of a joint commission to inquire into the incidents complained of and prevent their repetition. When the Council met in June, the Yugoslav delegate produced the counter-attack already described. If the frontier control, said he, was abnormally severe, this was because the Croat terrorists were allowed by the Hungarian authorities to settle within a few miles of it. Thus it was easy for them to make their illegal entries into Yugoslavia, commit their crimes, and escape as they had come. Prominent in this accusation was the name of Janka-Puszta, a farm close to the border, which the terrorist leaders were said to use as a centre for recruitment and training. The Hungarians had for years refused to take these reports seriously; but they informed the Council that, while they had no reason to think that the Croats who lived at Janka-Puszta were other than peaceful citizens, they were taking measures to evacuate them from the farm.

Though the feeling on both sides was bitter, no one at the time attached special importance to this debate. The other Council members listened in silence to the exchange of grievances. Some thought, in view of the Hungarian denials, that the Yugoslav accusations were highly exaggerated. Indeed, as in many other cases, it seemed as though each country had worked off most of its ill humour by the mere process of setting forth to the Council, and to the world, the misdeeds of the other. The discussion closed on a promise given by both that they would enter

into immediate negotiations and that each would do its best to meet the other's complaints. And in due course the Secretary-General was notified that an agreement on the subject had been signed at Belgrade (July 21st, 1934).

When the news of the Marseilles crime reached Belgrade, the Yugoslav Government did not at once decide to ask the Council to take charge of the situation. Indeed the country, sore and bewildered, knew not which way to turn. The heir to the throne was a boy of eleven. It was not known until the next day what arrangements Alexander had made for the government of the Kingdom in case of his death; and when his sealed letter on the subject was opened, it was found that he had appointed a Council of Regency whose three members possessed little experience of foreign affairs. In the meantime, the immediate danger, acute as it was, was somewhat lessened by the fact that the anger of the Yugoslav nation was directed not against a single country but against three—Hungary for the encouragement she was believed to have given to the terrorists, Italy as the chief mover in every attempt to weaken and dislocate Yugoslavia, and France whose incredible carelessness had given the criminals such an easy opportunity.

Mussolini hastened to declare his horror at the crime. Italian war-ships were sent to salute the ship which was carrying the dead King back to his country. The press was warned to change its tone. Pavelić, the leader of the Croat terrorists in Italy, was arrested, though his extradition was refused. The Hungarians followed suit. They were shocked to hear that several of the band of assassins had been among the inmates of Janka-Puszta, and that these men had been able, under false names, to procure genuine Hungarian passports. They issued fresh orders for the control of political refugees. They did not, however, succeed in arresting any of the terrorists who remained on Hungarian soil. Meanwhile the friends of Yugoslavia did their best to restore her self-confidence by an ostentatious display of sympathy and support. The Foreign Ministers of Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Greece, and Turkey gathered in Belgrade. But while closing their diplomatic ranks, they were anxious above all to avert the danger of war; and in this they were whole-heartedly seconded by France and Britain. The new Regents were persuaded that it was the true interest of their country to seek redress by peaceful means, and that honour would be satisfied by an appeal to the League. They called on the nation to sacrifice its revenge on the altar of international peace. And they announced to the Council later that, 'if the Yugoslav people have been able to maintain their dignity and calm in this cruel trial, it is because they believe in the efficacy of the League of Nations, the



guardian of peace and of the international morality on which peace depends.<sup>1</sup>

It is still something of a mystery that the dispatch by which the Yugoslav government laid the matter before the Council was not sent until November 22nd, over six weeks after the murder of the King. The decision to take this measure must have been made much earlier: for the only alternative was to demand redress directly from Hungary or Italy or both, and this could only have been done within a few days of the crime. The interval was occupied by the feverish efforts of the French and Yugoslav police to lay hands on the whole gang of assassins, to explore their past, and to discover the source of their plans, their money, and their arms. The result of these inquiries was either singularly meagre, or singularly compromising. They were evidently obstructed so far as possible by the Italian authorities: yet it seems likely that they exposed a degree of complicity on the part of those authorities which, if revealed, could not have been left unpunished. In any case, it is evident that some part of the interval preceding the Yugoslav appeal to the League must have been spent in ensuring that only Hungary, and not Italy, should be brought thereby before the bar of public opinion.

The Council met on December 5th, 1934, in a special session with only two items on its agenda—the final arrangements for the Saar plebiscite and the Yugoslav appeal. It was long since a Council meeting had caused so much excitement or attracted such crowds of journalists to Geneva. They were provided with a first-class sensation by the decision to send an international force to the Saar. And although the first threat of war as a result of the Marseilles crime had passed, feelings on both the Yugoslav and the Hungarian side were bitter and angry; no one knew how it might be possible to find some ground of appeasement; and if the meeting were to end in deadlock, the danger would return, all the more menacing because of the Council's failure. For once, therefore, agreement between two parties in conflict was quite as great a sensation, from the point of view of the press, as failure: and the agreement, when it came, lost nothing by being adopted at a meeting of the Council held in public, at midnight, with a touch of drama which was rare indeed in the proceedings of the League.

The Yugoslav spokesman was Yevtić, the Foreign Minister. He looked like a villain of the screen, but proved himself both skilful in debate and moderate in policy. Hungary was represented by Tibor Eckhardt, a young politician: he had a frank and truthful air, but in his case also, reality differed from appearance. The public discussions were long and passionate. Both those who spoke and those who listened must often

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Council, dated November 22nd, 1934.

have thought of Louis Barthou, who in his seventy-fifth year had brought new life and energy into the proceedings of the League, who ten weeks earlier had triumphantly carried through the entrance of Russia, and who on that disastrous 8th of October had been left to die unattended on the pavement of Marseilles. As for the crime itself, there was nothing new to be said. It had never been suggested that responsible Hungarians had deliberately plotted the murder of Alexander. The accusations of Yevtić were in the main those already enounced in June, now tragically confirmed: the Hungarian answered with the same indignation but hardly the same confidence as before.

The debate, however, was enlarged on both sides to include the great subject of revisionism. Hungary was a small country: but by her skilful and tireless propaganda against the terms of the Treaty of Neuilly she had earned much of the credit or the blame for the fact that revision of the Peace Treaties in general was now the basic problem of Europe. She had always declared that she did not seek to change her frontiers by force: but would this still be true if ever she possessed force enough to try? Was there not an evident connexion between the unrest which she so sedulously kept alive, and the campaign of separatism and terrorism which had culminated at Marseilles? This at least was the view of the five Foreign Ministers who spoke on the Yugoslav side—Yevtić, Beneš, Titulescu, Rüstü Aras, and Laval. Against them Eckhardt and Aloisi defended the revisionist standpoint. Had not every State the right to ask for what it believed to be justice, so long as it did not threaten recourse to war? Were not those who obstinately refused to consider the slightest alteration in the conditions of the Peace Treaties, who were trying to maintain unchanged for ever the situation of Europe, instead of adjusting it to the changes which are inevitable in human affairs—were not these the people really responsible for the growing danger of war? Such was the argument, and behind it on both sides there lurked unspoken the thought of Hitler's revolt against the Treaty of Versailles and of the murder of Dollfuss. These things came near the surface in a speech by Litvinov, who declared that the worst form of terrorism was that plotted and organized, as an instrument of policy, by the foreign enemies of the State on whose territory the crime was to be committed; and that in this form it was becoming the characteristic weapon of the most reactionary parties.

Meanwhile the members of the Council were working hard behind the scenes in the effort to find a formula which both sides could accept. In this difficult task the system of rapporteurs once more proved its value. The British government was impartial in the conflict: and Eden, who was now a Cabinet Minister and regularly took Simon's place in the

Council, was trusted by all his colleagues. He understood the feelings on both sides and could speak to them with sympathy as well as authority. He acceded to the general demand that he should act as rapporteur; and with the help of Laval and Aloisi he succeeded in his task. At midnight on December 10th he presented his proposals in a public meeting. They affirmed that it was the duty of every State to prevent and repress all acts of political terrorism; and that certain Hungarian authorities had, at least by negligence, failed to carry out this duty, with the result that the task of the assassins had been facilitated. Hungary was asked to make further investigations and to report the result. At the same time the Council was invited to declare that international law on the whole question of the repression of terrorism was inadequate, and to set up a Committee to draft a general convention on the subject. These proposals were accepted unanimously, as soon as it was known that the two disputing States were ready to vote for them. The relief with which they were greeted next day in most European capitals proved the reality of the danger which had thus been averted. The Hungarians made their report in due course and it was never necessary to renew the debate.

## REARMAMENT: THE STRESA FRONT

*A new armaments race—British rearmament—The German Army Law of March 1935—The Stresa Conference—Sir John Simon's last Council session—The Anglo-German Naval Agreement*

(MARCH—JUNE 1935)

IN the spring of 1935 the principal governments of Europe openly announced to their own countries and to the world that a new armaments race had begun. In truth, their expenditure on defence, as it was everywhere called, had been rising for over a year. Until the breakdown of the Disarmament Conference, it had remained remarkably steady: indeed, during the years 1931–3, in spite of a great increase in the war budget of Japan, the armaments truce had been kept, and there had actually been a slight reduction in the world figures taken as a whole. But Japan's successful aggression, the Nazi dictatorship in Germany, Hitler's decision to withdraw from the League and abandon the Disarmament Conference, had each in turn provided the General Staffs with arguments to prove that more armaments were required. By the end of 1934 the process was in full swing. The last to join in it, and the first to make its existence undeniably clear, was the British government. On March 1st, 1935, Ramsay MacDonald issued to Parliament and to the nation a White Paper under the title *Statement Relating to Defence*. 'It has been found', he wrote, 'that once action has been taken, the international machinery of peace cannot be relied on as a protection against an aggressor.' He went on to refer to the general rearmament in which every great power except Britain was engaged. In particular, the growth of the German armed forces might soon create a situation where peace would be in peril, not only for material reasons but through the cultivation of a warlike spirit among the German youth. Accordingly the British government had been compelled to relinquish its hopes of a general reduction of armaments and turn its attention to the accumulated deficiencies of its own defences. A new and costly programme must now be undertaken in order to strengthen all the fighting services, particularly at sea and in the air. In the debate which followed on March 11th, Baldwin assured his countrymen that these measures were in no wise inimical to peace: they would, on the contrary, help Britain to make peace more secure.

The British announcement met with an angry reception from the

Germans, whose picture of themselves as the innocent victims of slander and injustice was in no way altered by the militarism of their government or by its open rearmament. It had been arranged that Simon and Eden should visit Berlin in order to discuss the main European problems, including that of how to avert an armaments race, and that of bringing Germany back to the League. Hitler promptly asked that the visit should be postponed; and a few days later, on March 16th, the German government published a law by which conscription was re-established and the peace-time strength of the German army was fixed at thirty-six divisions. At the same time Hitler issued a statement to the German nation. Germany, he declared, could not be accused of violating the obligations of the Peace Treaty: she had been released from those obligations by the victorious powers themselves, which had refused to carry out their pledge that German disarmament would be followed by their own. Like Baldwin in England, he vowed that his government had no aggressive intentions and that the purpose of German rearmament was to enable her to be a co-guarantor of the general peace, and to make her contribution to the pacification of the world in free collaboration with other nations.

The German Army Law of March 1935 was the open, official, irrevocable culmination of a process which had been carried on for many months at increasing speed. Whatever they might pretend, it was no surprise to the other signatories of the Treaty of Versailles. German spokesmen, Socialist, Liberal, Nationalist, and Nazi alike, had for years foretold this moment. A year before, on April 17th, 1934, the French had broken off negotiations with Germany on the ground that she was already arming far beyond the limits of the Treaty. On the same ground, the British government had decided, four months earlier, to speed up its rearmament in the air; on the same ground, it now justified the further increases laid down in the White Paper on defence. The anger, agitation, and doubt which swept through London and Paris were not due to surprise. They were due in part to the magnitude of the German plan: thirty-six divisions meant nearly 600,000 men; and no other country could maintain, on a peace footing, an army of comparable strength. They were due, secondly, to a justified fear and mistrust of the Nazi government. They were due, thirdly, to discomfiture at having to face a fact which it had hitherto been found convenient to disregard—not the fact of German rearmament, but the fact that the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty had become a completely dead letter. Both governments, but especially the French, had hitherto acted as though the question for negotiation was to what extent and on what conditions they would agree to release Germany from the limitations laid down in

the Treaty: and had allowed it to be understood that, if no agreement were possible, those limitations would retain their force. This had indeed been true in Stresemann's time: it had lost part, but not all, of its truth, in the time of Brüning; it possessed still a faint remnant of reality when Hitler left the Disarmament Conference and the League. From that day, Germany's treaty obligations in regard to disarmament had exercised no effective influence over the action of the German government.

The Allied powers had now, it seemed, a choice of two possible lines of conduct. They could attempt to reimpose the limitations of the Treaty, by force or the threat of force. They could accept the new situation openly, and discuss the control and limitation of armaments with Germany on equal terms. Each of these courses, however, involved difficulties which they were unwilling to face. They preferred to let things drift. At the same time it was necessary, for the sake of public opinion, to appear to be taking action. They were already increasing their own armaments, and this policy now received a fresh impetus. They addressed strongly-worded protests to Berlin. This done, they laid the matter in the hands of the League.

It was Laval who telegraphed to the Secretary-General asking for a special meeting of the Council in order to consider the situation created by the German Army Law—a situation which France considered as a threat to peace and to good understanding between nations. Such a request was never refused by the Council, and it was decided to meet in the first days of April. Meanwhile there was much activity among the great powers. On March 25th, Simon and Eden paid their postponed visit to Berlin. Eden went first to Paris; and after two days in Berlin, he went on to Moscow, Warsaw, and Prague, before returning to London. Mussolini suggested that the Council meeting should be preceded and prepared by a conference between Italy, France, and Britain, and the suggestion was cordially welcomed in Paris and London. It was decided to hold the conference at Stresa. The Prime Ministers of France and Britain came out, accompanied by their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs; and since Mussolini attended in person, Italy was also represented by the holder of both of these offices, not to mention most of the other chief posts in the Italian Administration. It might have been expected that the Stresa Conference would be so arranged as to fit in with whatever date was fixed for the special session of the Council. Instead of this, the three powers informed their colleagues that the Conference would take place on April 11th and requested them to be ready to meet as soon as it was over. It might also have been expected that the British delegates at least would have insisted on trying to clear up the question of Italy's intentions in Ethiopia. The danger in Africa was

already acute;<sup>1</sup> and it was not hard to foresee that war in Africa must bring with it a crisis which would profoundly affect the future of the League, as well as the relations between Italy and her fellow Members. But Ethiopia was a disagreeable and dangerous subject; and not only Mussolini, Laval, and Flandin but also MacDonald and Simon preferred to ignore it.

The Stresa Conference was a meeting of powers which did not propose to do anything, and its results were in exact proportion to this fact. Mussolini, the initiator and the President of the meeting, informed his countrymen on the opening day that it was only meant for consultation, and that consultation was a synonym for indecision. Italy had no general plan to propose: but she had her own plan, which was to keep 600,000 men under arms and to increase and modernize her armaments in every field. This, he added, echoing the words of Baldwin and Hitler, was an indispensable contribution towards guaranteeing the peace of Europe. Mussolini's prediction of the outcome of the meeting was justified by the event. After three days of conversations, a communiqué was issued. The three powers declared themselves to be in complete agreement on every question which had been discussed. The only clear statement in the communiqué was the assertion of a common purpose to defend the independence and integrity of Austria. On other questions its terms were voluminous but unsubstantial. Simon, Laval, and Aloisi then repaired to Geneva. Their first care was to arrange that the Ethiopian question should be postponed for a month. They then laid before their colleagues a resolution on the subject of the German Army Law. The Council was invited to declare that scrupulous respect of all treaty obligations was the first principle of international life and a necessary condition of peace; that Germany had violated this principle and thereby threatened the security of Europe; that this action by Germany deserved condemnation; that the British, French, and Italian governments ought to continue their efforts to ensure European security, the limitation of armaments, and the return of Germany to the League; and that economic and financial sanctions should, in the future, be applied to any country which endangered the peace of Europe by repudiating its treaty obligations.

These proposals filled the rank and file of Members of the Council with doubt and misgiving. They were anxious about the threat of war in Africa; and it was disappointing that a meeting of the responsible leaders of the countries chiefly concerned should not only have done nothing to lessen the danger, but even have appeared not to know that the danger existed. They were asked to affirm in solemn words the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 53.

sanctity of all treaties: yet they strongly suspected that Italy was planning to violate a whole series of treaties including the Covenant itself, and that neither France nor Britain was holding her back. Though they were shocked and alarmed at the German Army Law, they were aware that the Treaty provisions on the subject had been violated for years. They did not know, indeed, that one of the powers which asked them to pronounce a condemnation of Germany was about to negotiate a naval agreement with that country in terms which were no less a violation of the Treaty of Versailles than was the Army Law itself. But they knew that the roots of the conflict over German armaments were deep and complex. On the other hand, most of them knew very little about the various plans for European security which were being discussed in the capitals of the great powers, including Berlin—an Eastern Security Pact, a Western Air Pact, or proposals aimed at averting the race in armaments. No organ of the League had been consulted or even informed concerning these matters. Yet they were expected to pronounce a summary verdict condemning the action of Germany and approving the diplomatic activities of Britain, France, and Italy. Could such action by the Council really promote the return of Germany to the League? Still more surprising was it to be asked to approve, without time for reflection, an extension of the system of economic sanctions to cover not only actual aggression but also such cases of treaty violation as might be held to be a danger to European peace. Was not this a development which went far beyond the Covenant? Why should it apply only to Europe? Could it be seriously meant, when the British government had steadfastly refused hitherto any increase in its commitments? when it had rejected all proposals to apply sanctions to breaches of the Kellogg Pact, if these were not also breaches of the Covenant? when Britain and France were not yet prepared to say that, if Italy went to war against Ethiopia, they would fulfil the pledges of the Covenant itself?

The discomfort of their colleagues was much increased by the summary methods adopted by the Stresa group. The draft resolution, long and complicated in its terms, and dealing with subjects of vital importance, was seen by them for the first time on April 15th. The next day discussion was opened by short statements from Laval, Simon, and Aloisi. They gave little information or explanation of its various paragraphs; their chief purpose was clearly to press the Council to accept it on behalf of the League as a whole. 'If you have hesitations, I am sure you will be able to surmount them', said Laval. Simon observed that he and his two colleagues were putting forward their resolution as representatives, not of individual countries, but of Members of the League and of its Council. 'If it is adopted, it will be a League resolution



decided upon by the Members of the Council in free, equal and open consultation among themselves.' In spite of these fair words, the three powers declined to answer any of the many questions, reservations, and misgivings expressed by the other Members, and rejected with a firmness which bordered on discourtesy any proposals to alter its contents or even its wording. Nothing, indeed, could have less resembled a free, equal, and open consultation than the Council's debate on this occasion. Only Beneš, for Czechoslovakia, and Bruce, for Australia, gave unqualified support to the Stresa powers. Litvinov reminded the Council that his government had not signed the Treaty which Germany had broken, and indeed disapproved of it: but it accepted the resolution because it wished to emphasize that the Nazi programme was a programme of revenge and conquest, which could only be met by the creation of a strong international order. Poland, Portugal, and Spain set forth their doubts and disagreements on various points. Cantilo, for Argentina, made a general reservation regarding any parts of the resolution which his government had not had time to consider. Mexico and Chile criticized the limiting reference to Europe. Denmark, represented by her Foreign Minister, Peter Munch, was not prepared to join in the judgement of German action: Germany herself admitted that it was contrary to the Peace Treaty, but claimed that it was justified by other facts: the Council should act, not as a court of justice, but as an instrument of political understanding. He appealed, therefore, to the authors of the resolution to accept an alteration of this part of the text. Finally, Rüştü Aras announced that he had nothing to say about the resolution, but that Turkey intended to alter the regime of the Straits as laid down by the Treaty of Lausanne. This speech at last drew a response from the Stresa powers. Simon, Laval, and Aloisi in turn felt obliged to make all reservations with regard to what the Turkish Foreign Minister had said. Litvinov, on the other hand, hastened to assure Rüştü Aras that Russia would put no difficulties in Turkey's way.

When all the other members of the Council had spoken, it might well have been expected that the three authors of the resolution would reply. To those who remembered the free, equal, and open consultation of other days, it seemed impossible that the successors of Balfour, Chamberlain, and Henderson, of Bourgeois and Briand, would say no word to satisfy the doubts, or answer the objections, of their fellow members. But so it was. 'I must interpret the silence of the three authors of the proposal on the question I raised', said the Danish Foreign Minister, 'as signifying that they are unable to accept any amendments.' When Litvinov showed signs of actually rejecting the resolution unless the limitation to European affairs were removed, he met a sharp retort from

Simon, Laval, and Aloisi, and withdrew his opposition. Apart from this, the Stresa group waited in silence for the Council to vote; and the Council reluctantly voted (April 17th, 1934). To accept the resolution meant accepting a series of declarations which they were not convinced were either honest or wise, and a proposal concerning sanctions in which they had little confidence. But to reject it meant to bring aid and comfort to Hitler, to give deep offence to the British, French, and Italian governments, to risk a grave conflict between these powers and a large section of their fellow Members of the League. To acquiesce was the lesser evil, even for those who most disliked both the terms of the resolution and the way it had been forced on them. Denmark abstained. All the rest gave an affirmative vote.

The Stresa powers had had their will; but it was at a heavy cost. There was a general impression that they had treated the League in a way that was neither dignified nor sincere, and, indeed, that could justly be described as contemptuous. They professed to believe that the best answer to the German threat was to strengthen the system of collective security based on the Covenant. But if this had been their real purpose, their action would have been very different. It was felt, and subsequent events confirmed the view, that they themselves had no belief in the proposals for which they chose to make the League responsible. The result of the meeting, so far from strengthening the League, had been to undermine the confidence of the Council in itself and in its natural leaders.

This unhappy session of the Council was the last at which Britain was represented by Sir John Simon. He did not come out to the next regular meeting, and soon afterwards he moved from the Foreign Office to another department. His tenure of that office had been a period of difficulty for his country and for the League; and looking back over those three and a half eventful years, it seemed that in the Council and Assembly the British Foreign Secretary had ceased to be a guide or a leader, and had even become a source of discouragement and weakness. His predecessors had, generally speaking, identified the interests of their country with those of the League; to uphold the principles of the Covenant and to support the institutions of the League was for them to follow the central line of British policy. Simon's view was, as it seemed, exactly opposed to this. To his mind it was dangerous to strengthen the League, since this meant that his country would be tied all the more closely to the general commitments of membership. He preferred to consider each question in isolation, and to determine what the particular British interest in regard to it might be. The League aspect of the question might be a factor that could be used, or a difficulty that had to be

surmounted: in either case it was something outside and apart from British policy. Thus it was possible for him, even in regard to questions of vital importance, such as those of Manchuria and Ethiopia, to separate the action of Britain as a Member of the League from her action as an individual State. She might be compelled to take certain measures in virtue of the Covenant; if those measures failed, the failure would be that not of Britain but of the League, and its consequences would fall upon the League and not on Britain.

Though personally affable and kind, Simon neither felt nor inspired, as a member of the Council, that *esprit de corps* which Chamberlain and Henderson had done so much to maintain. He did not seek to be a leader: such a role would involve following a policy based on the Covenant, and in that policy Simon had no belief. By his debating skill and by a certain coldness and impatience, he tended to overawe the less self-confident of his colleagues. As time went on he broke more and more with the tradition that the British Foreign Secretary should attend every Council session. He had, indeed, a particularly competent substitute, and Eden rendered invaluable service to the Council. Nevertheless, this very fact seemed to reinforce the tendency to duality between British policy as carried on in the League and British policy as carried on outside it.

As had been certain from the first, the Council's condemnation had not the slightest effect upon German rearmament. The value attached to it by Simon and the British government was shown a few weeks later when they negotiated an Anglo-German Naval Agreement which authorized Germany to reconstruct her fleet up to 35 per cent of the strength of the British navy.<sup>1</sup> For this unexpected move there were strong practical arguments. Germany had actually volunteered to accept, and might therefore be expected to honour, the obligations of the Agreement. She had already ceased to respect the naval limitations imposed at Versailles; and no power was prepared to use force in order to compel her to do so. Was it not wise, therefore, to act on an opportunity which, as experience showed, might never again be offered in such an acceptable form? On the other hand, the French complained that by thus condoning German rearmament at sea, the British had completely reversed the attitude adopted in regard to the Army Law. They held that such condonation, not having been endorsed by the other signatories, was in itself a breach of the Treaty. Furthermore, its practical effect might be reassuring for the British Admiralty; but for France it meant that she would have to start a new programme of naval building, or else to

<sup>1</sup> This Agreement was actually concluded by Sir Samuel Hoare, but the substance of it had already been settled before Simon left the Foreign Office.

acquiesce in naval inferiority to Germany in the North Sea, and to Italy in the Mediterranean. The ill humour of the French was increased by the obvious satisfaction of the German press, which declared that the Naval Agreement proved the rightness of Hitler's policy of rearmament and the injustice of the Council's resolution. Indeed, whatever practical arguments could be brought forward in favour of the Agreement, its contradiction with the resolution which the British had taken a leading part in pressing upon the Council was flagrant and undeniable.

One practical result, quite unforeseen by its sponsors, did indeed flow from the inglorious resolution of April 17th. The proposal to extend the scope of financial and economic sanctions led to the formation of a committee to study the most practical ways in which such sanctions could be applied: and the work of this committee, in which Italy took part, proved useful when sanctions were actually enforced against Italy. Apart from this, its effects were wholly disadvantageous. It brought the Council into disrepute for making declarations which could lead to nothing. It sharpened German hostility to the League: this, however, was a matter of no great importance, since Nazi Germany and the League were natural enemies. Far more serious were the misgivings aroused, or renewed, among those many Members of the League which had no wish to be guardians of the Versailles Treaty. The European ex-neutrals had for years blamed the chief Allied powers for the failure to hold the Disarmament Conference at a time when, in their belief, it could have succeeded. Whatever their dislike of Nazi methods might be, they considered that Britain, France, Italy, the little Entente, and others had been no more justified in declining to carry out the organized reduction of armaments as provided in Article 8 of the Covenant, than Germany in violating the limitations of the Peace Treaty. They had more to lose and more to fear than most of their fellow Members from any application of economic sanctions to Germany. German rearmament was not, legally, a direct breach of the Covenant. It was morally contrary to the purpose and spirit of the Covenant: but so had been, they considered, the attitude of the chief Allied powers in regard to the whole problem of disarmament. The same sentiments prevailed, in less acute form, among the Latin American Members. Trade with Germany was important to all of them: they would still at this time have been ready to play their part in fulfilling the Covenant if Germany went to war, but short of actual aggression on her part they earnestly desired to retain her good will. They began to be alarmed lest the mere fact of being Members of the League might force them into a situation where they must choose between the friendship of Germany and that of the Stresa powers.

## POLAND AND THE LEAGUE: DANZIG

*The policy of Pilsudski—Polish-German Agreement of January 1934—  
Poland and the Minorities Treaty—Nazi tyranny in Danzig—The  
Council and the Danzig Constitution*

(1934-1936)

OF all the Council Members which voted reluctantly for the resolution drawn up at Stresa, none did so more reluctantly than Poland. Poland had strenuously opposed the scheme for a Four-Power Pact. She had always criticized the tendency of the Disarmament Commission and the Disarmament Conference to hold up their work while the great powers tried to reach agreement by secret negotiations among themselves. She was therefore completely consistent in objecting to the method of Stresa. Such matters, the Polish delegates had urged, ought to be dealt with openly in the appropriate League organ—Council, Assembly, or Conference. Only thus would each State be enabled to explain its own special interests: and only when all such points of view were known would it be possible to produce just and effective conclusions. What State could be more closely and deeply concerned than Poland with the effects of the German Army Law, which had been the chief subject of the Stresa consultations? The method followed by the great powers was unfair to their fellow Members and disastrous for the League. The justice of these arguments was again and again vindicated by events. Poland performed a useful service in repeatedly bringing them forward, even though one may conjecture that her ill humour would have promptly disappeared if she had been included in the circle of the great.

From the time when, in May 1926, Pilsudski overthrew the constitutional regime in Poland, the desire to be among the great powers had been a principal motive of her foreign policy and had influenced her attitude towards the League. No country anywhere was quite so vitally and directly interested in collective security as Poland. Her long frontiers with Russia and Germany were devoid of natural defences. Each was immensely her superior in military power: each believed itself to have legitimate territorial claims against her. She had sat on the Council without a break since 1926 and could count on continuous reelection; and in the discussions and actions of the League she had thus an equal voice with the greatest of its Members. Her clear interest,

perhaps even her hopes of survival, lay in promoting the power and influence of the League. But with Pilsudski and the military clique which served him, and which governed the country after his death in May 1935, national pride counted for more even than national interest. Meetings in Geneva had sometimes been painful to Polish dignity. She was forced to discuss her disputes with Lithuania before a none too sympathetic audience, instead of being able to settle them by direct methods. She was prevented from having her way in the affairs of Danzig. She was held up before the world as hard and unjust by the German minority in her western territories, and the Ukrainian minority in the east: she had to answer the complaints of her subjects and often to admit that they were justified. Britain, France, Italy, Russia, had none of these troubles: why should not Poland share their immunity?

It was a misfortune that at this anxious time the wise and moderate Zaleski should have been replaced (November 1932) by Colonel Josef Beck, a man endowed with ability, charm, and persuasiveness, but ambitious and unreliable. With Beck's assistance, Pilsudski did to a great extent succeed in cutting free from the tutelary interventions of the League; but he did so by dangerous means. In January 1934 he made an agreement with Germany providing that problems affecting the mutual relations of the two signatories should be settled by direct understanding. There followed an appeasement, superficial indeed, but remarkably complete, both in the relations between Poland and Danzig, and in those between Poland and her German citizens. The satisfaction of Warsaw in this temporary relief was shared by the Council, whose members were only too glad to be spared the long and difficult hours of negotiation over these questions which had been their lot in the past. But it was both a shock and a surprise when, on September 13th, 1934, Beck announced to the Assembly that Poland had decided to cease all co-operation with the Council in regard to the protection of minorities. She was ready, he declared, to accept whatever obligations in this respect were accepted by all League Members alike; but she would no longer consent to be one of a group of countries placed in a position of inferiority. Her treatment of minorities was, and would continue to be, in full conformity with what she had promised; but the world must take her word for it. Beck must have been conscious that he was taking a risk. He was deliberately re-creating the danger which it was the special purpose of the Minorities Treaties to abolish—the danger that the interests and grievances of minorities might become a weapon of disruption in the hands of aggressive neighbours. If the German minority were not allowed to appeal to the Council, it would inevitably appeal to Berlin. To Beck, however, the intervention of the League appeared not

as a screen against false accusations, but as a humiliation for his country. And so long as Hitler's policy was to keep on good terms with Poland, the German minority ceased to be a cause of trouble. When he showed his real purpose, it was too late to invoke the Minorities Treaty.

The events of March and April 1935 were to repeat themselves, still more dangerously, a year later, when Hitler tore up the Treaty of Locarno and re-militarized the Rhineland. Between those two major episodes, the chief preoccupation of the League, so far as Germany was concerned, was connected with Danzig. The role of the Council, and of the High Commissioner who represented it on the spot, was not only to settle whatever disputes might arise between Danzig and Poland, but also to guarantee the Constitution of the Free City. The question of the Constitution had hitherto presented no serious problems. It was not a particularly advanced Constitution. But it was a model of democratic freedom compared with the principles of Nazism; and in May 1933, only a few months after Hitler came into power in Berlin, the Nazi party was successful in securing a majority in the Danzig Volkstag, and a Nazi government took over the direction of affairs. For a time all went well. The new President was Hermann Rauschning, an elderly man of the old-fashioned Nationalist type. He had joined the party out of personal and national ambition; but he was neither a bully nor a blusterer. He hated having to be polite and accommodating to the Poles: but he did not enjoy ill treating German liberals and Jews. Furthermore, the Constitution guaranteed the elementary liberties of individual citizens. It could be changed only by the vote of two-thirds of the Volkstag: the Nazis had only a little over half, and none of the other parties were willing to help them. Even if he wished, therefore, to follow the example of the Reich, to suppress freedom of speech and of the press, to send opponents to death or the concentration camps, Rauschning could not do so without breaking the Constitution and defying the Council. He shrank from this course, chiefly because he still believed that League help was needed to preserve the independence of Danzig from Polish encroachment.

But though he was the titular head of the government, Rauschning was in reality subjected to the authority of a young Nazi tough, Albert Forster, who was Gauleiter of Danzig and a personal favourite of the Leader himself. Forster was no *éminence grise*. He made speeches, published a paper, issued messages to the population, and gave his orders to the various departments of government. Being quite ignorant and very extravagant, he had soon involved the finances of the Free City in a

disastrous crash. Rauschning resented Forster's interferences; Forster thought Rauschning slow and timid, and decided to throw him out. It was not difficult. Forster's paper began to describe the President of the Senate as a traitor, in the pay of Jews and foreigners, only fit for the concentration camp; and though Rauschning at first refused to resign, his resistance could not last long. In November 1934 he was replaced by one Arthur Greiser, who had neither the honesty of Rauschning nor the cheerful effrontery of Forster. Greiser looked, and was, an unmitigated villain. To Forster or anyone else who could help or harm him, he was slavishly obsequious: to the many Danzigers, and later the millions of Poles, whom fate put in his power, he was a monster of cruelty.

The result of the Saar plebiscite, and a couple of local by-elections, convinced Forster and Greiser that the Nazi party could secure a two-thirds majority and thus get rid of the shackles of the Constitution. They accordingly (February 21st, 1935) dissolved the Volkstag, and the whole power of the Nazi movement was concentrated on making the new elections a triumph for the regime. Danzig must confirm the vote of confidence in Hitler given by the Saar. Nothing was left undone to ensure a sweeping majority for the Nazi candidates. No others were allowed to broadcast. The only daily paper which supported an opposition party was repeatedly confiscated. Threats and violence were used against the traitors and separatists who dared to thwart the will of the German people. Many of their meetings were broken up; several of their candidates were arrested. Göring, Goebbels, Hess, Streicher, and other national leaders addressed election meetings in Danzig. But the outcome of all this effort was highly disappointing to the Leader. The Nazis gained two seats, the German Nationals gained one, the Communists lost three. The Centre party and the Social Democrats neither lost nor gained. The Nazis ended with about 57 per cent of the votes, and 43 seats out of 72. They had fallen far short of the two-thirds majority which had been the least of their expectations. The German people had once more, as in the Saar, shown a surprising degree of courage and steadfastness, so long as they still had that minimum of defence which the League could afford them.

The Nazis both in Danzig and Berlin were infuriated by their defeat. The opposition parties were correspondingly encouraged: they even asked the Danzig courts to have the election results annulled, confident that if a new vote were taken they would win an actual majority of the seats. There was no chance, however, that the court would grant such a request. Greiser continued to be the head of the government, and since he could not change the Constitution, he proceeded to disregard it so far as he dared. The next years accordingly produced an endless



stream of petitions from Danzig citizens to Seán Lester, the former Irish delegate in Geneva, who in 1933 had accepted the post of High Commissioner. The Catholics, the Jews, the old parties, submitted memoranda drawn up with true German thoroughness and verbosity. Lester did what he could: but Greiser would promise little and perform still less, and there was no alternative but to ask for the intervention of the Council. Once more, therefore, that body found itself compelled to devote a disproportionate amount of its energies to the affairs of the Free City—not, as in past years, in order to settle the disputes between Danzig and Poland, but for the still more difficult purpose of forcing a Nazi government to act constitutionally. When the League had accepted the function of guarantor, the German people, both in Danzig and in the Reich, had appeared to be able and willing to embrace the democratic way of life. No special difficulties were anticipated; and it had not seemed necessary to give the Council any specific powers of action to ensure respect for the Constitution of Danzig. It was obvious that it could not and would not attempt to use force for such a purpose. Nor could it, in this case, make effective use of publicity; for the Nazis of Danzig cared no more for the moral reprobation of democratic opinion than did the Nazis of Berlin. Nevertheless, during the first three years of the Nazi regime, the Council and the High Commissioner succeeded in extending to the non-Nazi elements in Danzig a degree of protection which their fellow sufferers in the Reich would have given much to possess.

The Council's share in this painful and difficult task fell almost entirely on the shoulders of Eden. His only real weapon was the threat, unspoken but ever present, that if the Danzig government defied the Council to an intolerable degree, the League would be forced to abandon not only its guarantee of the Constitution but its whole connexion with the Statute of the Free City. The threat could still have an effect on Danzig and on Berlin; it had an effect on Poland also, and thus induced the Warsaw government to bring its influence to bear on Danzig. For although the Polish and Danzig governments now prided themselves on being able to settle all their differences by direct agreement, they knew well that this state of things could not be certain to endure; and neither felt strong enough to face the other without the possibility of an appeal to the League. Beck cared little for the constitutional rights of the Danzigers, or even, as he showed in due course, for the dignity of the Council: but he did not dare allow the link between Danzig and the League to be abolished, lest the very existence of the Free City, and the special rights of Poland in regard to it, might disappear at the same time. Nor was Danzig, or rather Germany speaking through the voice of

Danzig, yet ready to bring matters to a head, realizing that if the League severed its ties with Danzig, the Free City would have to be absorbed either by Germany or by Poland, and that the decision could hardly be reached without war.

On the basis of this precarious diplomatic combination Eden, Lester, and the Council were able, for a time, to moderate the Nazi tyranny. At one session after another Greiser had to promise to withdraw particular decrees which the Council held to be unconstitutional, and even to compensate individual victims of injustice. But by the summer of 1936 the shaky edifice of Council control began to break down. Hitler was quick to read the lesson of Mussolini's victory over the League and his own successful defiance of the Locarno powers. He concluded that it was now time to take the first step towards the recovery of Danzig, by severing the constitutional connexion between the League and the Free City. He was not yet ready for an open break with Poland. But he no longer felt the need of treating the Polish government with exaggerated respect, and believed he could secure its acquiescence by flattering references to the glorious memory of Pilsudski, and to Poland's position as a great power which could settle its own affairs without consulting any international organization. As regards the League, he gave orders to Forster and Greiser to open a campaign on the usual Nazi lines, and Goebbels's propaganda gave them full support. Speeches and articles repeated that, until Hitler took matters in hand, the Statute of Danzig had been a perpetual danger to the peace of eastern Europe. The League and its successive High Commissioners had done nothing for Danzig: they had brought its finances to ruin, and had not even been able to establish a state of harmony and collaboration between the Free City and Poland. What the League could not do in fifteen years, Hitler had done in a few months, because he really aimed at peace. Danzig-Polish relations had ceased to be a danger; and the League had no longer, even in theory, any useful function to perform. This was why it had suddenly begun to concern itself with Danzig's internal affairs, making the task of the government more difficult and encouraging Jews and traitors to resist.

The technique of Nazi campaigns required that some particular individual should be picked out for special attack. This honour had been paid to Knox in the Saar two years before: it was now paid to Lester. Like Knox, he was exposed to every sort of petty malice, including espionage in his household. At the beginning of June 1936, the Council having just reappointed him for a further year, Greiser had written to him expressing the deep satisfaction of the Danzig government and its gratitude for his past devotion to the welfare of the Free City. Three

weeks later, at a word from Hitler, insult and criticism had taken the place of satisfaction and gratitude.

The German government soon had an opportunity of throwing down its gauntlet openly at the Council table. On July 4th the Council had on its agenda a Danzig question of no special importance, and it summoned Greiser to attend the meeting. On his way to Geneva, Greiser received full instructions from Berlin; and in the scene which followed, he boasted with truth that he was the spokesman not of the small city but of the great German Reich. With a truculent air he repeated the attacks on the connexion between Danzig and the League, and on Lester personally, which had recently filled the columns of the obedient German press. It was a time of deep discouragement at Geneva. The Assembly on that very day had decided to raise the sanctions imposed on Italy and to give up any semblance of an attempt to save Ethiopia from total annexation. All knew that the German threat in Europe had been a decisive element in the humiliation of the League. To Greiser and his masters it was an occasion not to be missed. He openly attacked the League's position in Danzig, and did so in deliberately offensive language; and quitted the table with a Hitlerian salute.

The prestige and power of the Council were at a very low ebb. Its members were angry: but they were without the means of forcing the government of Danzig to honour its engagements. It was not until three months later (October 5th, 1936) that they referred in public to the general question of the position of the High Commissioner, which Greiser had forced on their consideration. It had been discussed meantime by the British representative with his French and Swedish colleagues, who were now his co-rapporteurs, sharing his responsibility if not his labour. But they could see no other issue than to ask the Polish government to take up the matter on the Council's behalf. This decision was equivalent to abandoning any formal attempt to uphold the Constitution. Poland had her own interests and her own difficulties: she did not consider that her interests included protecting the non-Nazi minority in Danzig, and did not wish to add to her difficulties by endeavouring to do so. The Germans were still officially professing respect for Polish rights in the Free City: the slogan in the Danzig press was still *Los vom Völkerbund* rather than *Zurück zum Reich*. So long as this position could be maintained, the Poles would do nothing to disturb it.

From this time onwards, the Nazi government in Danzig proceeded by stages to destroy the rights of the citizens. The opposition press was liquidated, the opposition leaders were arrested or compelled to emigrate, the opposition parties were abolished. Lester was forced to witness the first stages of the process: but it chanced that the post of

Deputy Secretary-General in the Secretariat fell vacant that autumn, and it was offered to and accepted by him. His record and his qualities made him an admirable candidate. But his withdrawal from Danzig was taken as a further retreat on the part of the League before the Nazi menace, the more so since no new High Commissioner was appointed until the following February.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 65.

## THE ITALO-ETHIOPIAN WAR

*Italian attack planned from 1933 onward—The Wal-Wal affair—The Council and the Ethiopian appeal—Public opinion is alarmed—Negotiations between Britain, France, and Italy—Italy's memorandum to the League—The Assembly debate—The Council's last efforts—The war begins—The Council's verdict—The Assembly's endorsement—The organization of sanctions—Italian difficulties—Fear of embargo on oil—The Hoare-Laval plan—Eden becomes Foreign Secretary—Italian victories—Flandin succeeds Laval—Collapse of League action—Annexation of Ethiopia—Britain renounces sanctions—Special meeting of the Assembly—Proposals for 'Reform'—The regular Assembly accepts an Ethiopian Delegation*

(DECEMBER 1934—SEPTEMBER 1936)

WE are now arrived at the most important and the most decisive chapter in the history of the League.

It is not necessary here to retrace the record of Italian aspirations in Africa and in particular her efforts to secure a foothold in Ethiopia. Her colonies of Eritrea and Somalia formed the northern and south-eastern boundaries of Ethiopia. Poor and barren territories, they possessed no communications leading from one to the other or from either into any of the neighbouring areas under British, French, or Ethiopian sovereignty, provided no resources of interest to Italy, and had a white population of only a few thousands. But between them lay the vast Ethiopian Empire, containing many fertile districts and an unknown mineral wealth—an ideal field, it might seem, for colonial exploitation of the traditional kind. Ethiopia, barbaric and ignorant, had for many centuries held to its primitive Christianity and preserved its independent status. In 1896 it had defeated an Italian invasion. Since 1928 it had been under the effective rule of Ras Tafari, who in 1930 had become Emperor under the style of Haile Selassie I. All who knew the country bore witness that Haile Selassie was a sincere and enlightened ruler. He was trying, with the help of foreign advisers, to modernize and centralize his ill-organized Empire. To bring even the rudiments of civilization to Ethiopia would be a task of years. But both the Emperor and his people were fully capable of perceiving, and fully resolved to oppose, the territorial and political ambitions of the three great powers on their borders.

To outward showing, Italy herself had accepted this situation. Since her defeat at Adowa her efforts had been directed to the search for

concessions and for commercial penetration. She had played a leading part in bringing Ethiopia into the League. This was in itself a full and formal promise to respect the integrity and independence of the Empire; and the Fascist government had also made a number of specific declarations and commitments in the same sense, culminating in the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation, and Arbitration signed at Addis Ababa on August 2nd, 1928.

No doubt it was in the minds of the authorities, whether in Rome or in Eritrea, that success in the economic field might well be the first step towards territorial expansion. But this possibility was still more clearly present in the mind of the Emperor. Throughout their history, he told the Members of the League,<sup>1</sup> the Ethiopian people had rarely met with foreigners who did not desire to annex their territory and destroy their independence. Accordingly, Italy had made no real progress even in the economic field, in spite of British support; just as Britain had made no progress in spite of the support of Italy.

This failure was one more disappointment to Mussolini's colonial ambitions. When Italy was hesitating whether or not to enter the First World War, France and Britain had promised to grant her equitable compensation for any extension of their own colonial possessions at the expense of Germany.<sup>2</sup> They had not claimed that the institution of the mandates system had nullified that obligation. But they had been slow and niggardly in the extreme in fulfilling their pledges. The Italians saw Britain and France, already so rich, drawing further resources from their great African possessions. Italy, poor in raw materials, rich in man-power, possessed only the dry and desert areas of Libya, Cyrenaica, Eritrea, and Somalia. These lands could neither receive her surplus population nor supply the least part of her needs. All she had spent to win and hold them had served only for purposes of prestige or of strategical position. But what were these unless they could be used for a further advance? Since, therefore, France and Britain would not help, and could not be coerced, Italy must either accept failure or satisfy her ambitions at the expense of Ethiopia.

It was in the course of the year 1933 that Mussolini began to plan his attack. Whether or not he already hoped to annex the whole country, it is certain that he began, at that time, to prepare for war. On this we have not merely circumstantial evidence, but the clear testimony of General de Bono,<sup>3</sup> who was then his Minister of the Colonies. It is important to remember this fact, in view of the pretext subsequently put

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 34 above.

<sup>2</sup> By the Treaty of London, April 26th, 1915.

<sup>3</sup> Emilio de Bono, *Anno XVIII: the Conquest of an Empire* (London, Cresset Press, 1937) pp. 13-17.

forward by the Italian government that it was acting in self-defence. The action of the League, based on its judgement that the war arose through Italian aggression, was not only resented as unjust by Italian opinion but criticized as being hasty and ill founded by many people in other countries. But only a year later, de Bono's book proved beyond dispute that that judgement was completely justified. All the protestations of Rome, all claims that Italy was forced into action by Ethiopian hostility or by the impulse to spread civilization, were untrue from first to last. The conquest of Ethiopia was conceived, planned, and carried out by the Fascist government for the sole purpose of expanding the colonial territories of Italy.

From the autumn of 1933 to December 1934 the first preparations were already being vigorously pushed forward by Mussolini and de Bono. Political and intelligence bureaux were established to create disaffection and disorder in Ethiopia. Military plans were worked out with the co-operation of the Chief of the General Staff, General Badoglio, and the chiefs of the army, navy, and air force. Money was provided for bribery in Ethiopia and for road-making in Eritrea. The Duce's speeches tended more and more to stimulate the warlike spirit of the Italian people. At the same time he did his best to avoid arousing new suspicions in Addis Ababa. As late as September 29th, 1934, he formally assured the Ethiopian chargé d'affaires in Rome that Italy had no intentions that were not friendly towards the Ethiopian government.

By the last months of 1934 the actual date on which operations were to begin had been decided. The time was drawing near when it would be impossible to conceal what was being planned either from foreign governments or from the Italians themselves. It would not have been difficult to bring about incidents which could have been used to justify the further steps in the enterprise. The frontiers of Ethiopia were enormous in extent; they were ill guarded; and where they marched with the Italian colonies, they were for the most part undelimited and even disputed. All the neighbouring Administrations had frequently to complain of frontier violations, varying from mere poaching expeditions to raids in which their subjects were murdered or carried off into slavery. Nor were such complaints lacking from the Ethiopian side. It was certain, therefore, that Mussolini would not have to wait long for an occasion to pick a more serious quarrel with the country which he intended to invade. But chance supplied him with an incident on a greater scale than usual. On December 5th, 1934, there occurred at Wal-Wal, in the disputed area between Italian Somaliland and the Ogaden province of Ethiopia, a direct clash between the armed forces of the two States. Over 100 Ethiopians and some 30 Italian native troops were

killed. It was a serious incident on any reckoning, though not one which could reasonably be taken as a *casus belli*, more especially since there was great uncertainty as to the circumstances in which the fighting had begun. But it provided a perfect starting-point for the second stage of military preparations, and a diplomatic cover behind which their real purpose might be skilfully concealed.

Wal-Wal, an area containing a number of wells to which the local tribes repaired, had been occupied since 1928 by an Italian military post. The Ethiopian government considered, and had good arguments for its view, that this area was Ethiopian territory. The frontier had never been delimited, but treaty provisions seemed to place it many miles east of Wal-Wal, and it was so marked on a number of official Italian maps. No protest, however, had been made against the existence either of the Italian post at Wal-Wal or of a more considerable garrison at Wardair a few miles to the south. Peace had reigned until the arrival on this remote spot of an Anglo-Ethiopian Commission which had been delimiting the frontier between the Ogaden province and British Somaliland. The Commission was accompanied by an escort of Ethiopian troops, and trouble at once arose between these and the Italian native levies. Reinforcements arrived from both sides. The Commission withdrew, after protesting against the provocative attitude of the Italians; and the two forces faced one another at a few yards' distance for a fortnight on end, exchanging challenges and insults. The Italian officers could clearly not retire, under threat, from a post they had occupied for years. The Ethiopians would not retire, under threat, from territory which they considered as their own. On December 5th the inevitable happened and the fight began. It was settled by the arrival of a few tanks and aeroplanes to support the Italian force. The Ethiopians retreated with heavy loss: the losses among the Italian levies had also been serious.

Some days elapsed before news of the fight reached the two governments. Their actions then proceeded along what may be called classical lines. Each declared that the responsibility for the clash lay entirely upon the shoulders of the other side. Each protested strongly against the unprovoked attack of which its troops had been the victims. Ethiopia, as by far the weaker power, demanded that the whole matter should be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the Treaty of 1928.<sup>1</sup> Italy declared that the circumstances were clear and that there was no question for arbitration. She peremptorily demanded that the Governor

<sup>1</sup> 'Both Governments undertake to submit to a procedure of conciliation and arbitration disputes which may arise between them and which it may not have been possible to settle by ordinary diplomatic methods, without having recourse to armed force. Notes shall be exchanged by common agreement between the two Governments regarding the manner of appointing arbitrators.' (Article 5.)



of the Harrar should proceed to Wal-Wal, and there in the presence of Italian and Ethiopian troops make formal apology and salute the Italian flag; that heavy reparation in cash should be paid as indemnity for the Italian losses, and that suitable punishment should be inflicted upon those responsible. No threats were made in writing, but Italian aeroplanes flew over the Ethiopian posts in the neighbourhood of Wal-Wal and completed the demonstration by dropping a number of bombs. Haile Selassie had recently complied with a similar demand after an attack had been made on the Italian consulate at Gondar. This time, however, he was not prepared to yield so easily. He believed that Wal-Wal was in his own territory. The Italians now formally claimed that it belonged to Italian Somaliland, and the Emperor naturally feared that compliance with their demands would be equivalent to recognizing that claim. He therefore repeated his proposal for arbitration, and at the same time telegraphed to the Secretary-General, asking that the attention of the Council might be drawn to the gravity of the situation. This message, which was sent on December 15th, 1934, was followed on January 3rd by a further telegram affirming that the Italians were massing troops before the Ethiopian post of Gerlogubi, that Ethiopian soldiers had been killed, and that Italian aeroplanes were continually flying over Gerlogubi; and requesting that the Council should take measures to safeguard the peace.

Such, briefly narrated, was the sequence of events which brought the Italo-Ethiopian conflict into the international arena. Though nothing of the real purposes of the Fascist government was known or guessed at Geneva at that time, it was realized that the League might once more be faced by a major test. Already it was clear that the Italian attitude was likely to be based on pride and prestige even more than that of other great powers. Mussolini considered it beneath his dignity to submit the dispute to arbitration in accordance with the Treaty which he himself had made only six years before; was it likely that he would now submit it to the procedures of the Covenant, to which he had shown himself increasingly hostile during the last two years? Yet Ethiopia was clearly within her right as a Member of the League in demanding action by the Council: and, by declaring herself ready to carry out loyally the award of the arbitrators, whatever it might be, she had placed herself in a strong moral position. Would the Council be able and willing to uphold the rights of the weaker State against the overbearing intransigence of the stronger?

The Council had already much business on its hands. When the first Ethiopian note arrived, it had just finished a special session of great

importance. The Yugoslav-Hungarian crisis had been settled: the International Force for the Saar was being organized after difficult negotiations with Germany. These problems had been tackled with energy and success; and the Council had adjourned for a month with a justified sentiment of work well done. But there was still much to do, and the January session was expected to be a hard one. The success so far achieved had been the result not of the authority of a world-wide Council but of hard work and diplomacy, in which the Italian delegate had played an important part. It was no proof that the Council could bring Italy to reason against her will.

Uncertain and apprehensive, the other Council Members and the Secretariat looked to London and Paris for a lead. And here began a sort of dual procedure which in the end proved fatal to the League. The British and French governments were not only concerned with Ethiopia as a fellow Member of the League. They were also her neighbours in Africa. They too, like Italy, had for many years cherished hopes of economic expansion in Ethiopia. By the Three-Power Treaty of December 1906, they had joined her in delineating zones of influence within the frontiers of the Empire; and if they had been less resentful than she when the vigilance of the Ethiopian government had brought their plans to nothing, it was only because they had, unlike her, far greater colonial interests elsewhere. Like Italy, they had suffered from frontier raids. With her, they had intervened in the administration of justice, and organized a control over the importation of arms. If now Italy was unwilling to allow the Council to discuss her relations with Ethiopia, if she felt it as an affront to have to deal in public, on equal terms, with the representative of Haile Selassie, this attitude was only too well understood in the Foreign and Colonial Offices of London and Paris. In common with Italy, Britain and France had for fifty years formed an effective zone of separation between Ethiopia and the rest of the world. It seemed to them only natural that the new trouble should also be dealt with among themselves, and that Ethiopia herself and the rest of the League should be expected to approve the result of their discussions. Accordingly, the proceedings of the Council were made to alternate with conversations between Britain, France, and Italy, in which the Covenant was often forgotten and the interests of the League were treated as of small account.

This procedure suited admirably both the pride and the purposes of Mussolini. Whatever may have been the attitude of Britain and France towards his ambitions, they were resolved to show every consideration for his feelings. They still counted on Italian help in holding back the rising tide of Nazi aggressiveness. Had not Mussolini, only a few months

before, in July 1934, when Dollfuss was murdered and Austrian independence was threatened, marched four divisions to the frontier and forced Hitler to hold his hand? This action was to prove an inexhaustible source of credit on which Italian diplomacy could draw during the years that followed. Even after the tragedies of Ethiopia and Spain had bound the fate of the two dictators indissolubly together, London and Paris were still cherishing the hope that the man who had defied Hitler once might yet be persuaded to do so again. During the development of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, this hope exercised a decisive influence on French and British policy. It was doubtless also the reason why the Soviet representatives, while their acts and words were more consistent with the Covenant than those of other great powers, were nevertheless content to play a minor part and made no determined effort to change the course of events.

From the moment, therefore, that Ethiopia first laid her case before the League, the British and French delegates did their best to find a procedure which should be acceptable to Italy. The various complaints and statements which had been received from Addis Ababa by the Secretary-General had been promptly communicated to all the Members of the League; and Italy on her side had sent replies in which she denied all accusations of aggression and declared that the Ethiopian government had violated the Covenant. But though she was thus willing to defend herself in writing, she was unwilling to allow the question to be discussed at the Council. As usual, the stronger power preferred direct negotiations. Both the rules and the practice of the Council gave the Ethiopian delegation a clear right to place the question on the agenda and to state their case at a public meeting. Accordingly the efforts of Laval and Eden were directed on the one hand to persuading Teclé Hawariate, the Ethiopian delegate, to consent to forgo this right, and on the other to secure from Italy such concessions as would justify him in so doing. So long as Italy maintained her demand for apologies and indemnities, refusing any form of negotiation or arbitration until her demand had been satisfied, it was evident that the Ethiopian delegate would insist on bringing the question before the Council. He played his part with some—perhaps too much—diplomatic skill. At the opening meeting on January 11th, 1935, it was announced that he had not yet asked that it should be placed on the agenda, but reserved the right to do so. Four days later, no concession having yet been extracted from Rome, he formally requested that the dispute should be added to the agenda. Mussolini was not yet prepared to show his hand. Reluctantly, therefore, he was compelled to retreat from the uncompromising position he had adopted hitherto. The demand for apologies and

indemnities was tacitly dropped. Aloisi was authorized to inform the Council in writing that Italy was prepared to settle the question in accordance with Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928, and that instructions would be given to avoid all fresh incidents. Further, the Italian government affirmed that it did not regard the question as likely to affect the peaceful relations between the two countries—a statement which the Council was fully entitled to regard as a promise. In these circumstances Italy asked the Council to postpone its discussion on the Ethiopian request.

If this communication were made in good faith, it represented a substantial success for Ethiopia. Settlement through Article 5 of the 1928 Treaty was precisely what she had demanded from the first: while the provision regarding the avoidance of further incidents would naturally put an end to the troop concentrations and aeroplane flights of which she had complained. Teclé Hawariate, therefore, was instructed to accept the postponement and to promise that his government also would take all measures to prevent fresh trouble. This he did by a letter, which, together with that of Aloisi, was read by the Secretary-General on January 19th to a private meeting<sup>1</sup> of the Council. Italian prestige was doubly safeguarded, since the Council entered into no discussion on the question, while the Ethiopian delegate was induced, most improperly, to forgo his right of taking part in the meeting.

Nevertheless the agreement conveyed by these two letters appeared on the face of it to guarantee that the conflict would be peaceably and honourably settled. It was so understood by Ethiopia and by the members of the Council other than France and Britain. On France, however, there rests a painful doubt. Laval had visited Rome just before the Council met, and there had signed agreements intended to settle all Franco-Italian differences in regard to African affairs. It was then rumoured that, in addition to these agreements, a secret accord had been made by which Laval consented to leave Italy a free hand for military action in Ethiopia. This was immediately denied, and, since the suspicion persisted, the denial was more than once repeated. Such denials, however, are generally drafted in words which seem to leave a possible loophole for doubt, and this was the case in regard to the rumours about Laval's promises. The doubt has never been cleared up, and Laval's record during the whole affair was of a nature to keep it alive. In London, the view taken of possible developments was grave enough to lead to the setting up, in strict confidence, of a departmental committee to consider what effect an Italian conquest of Ethiopia would

<sup>1</sup> i.e. a regular official meeting, the proceedings at which were duly recorded in the published minutes, but to which the press was not admitted.

have upon the interests of the British Empire. It is certain, therefore, that the French and British governments well understood that the situation was far more dangerous than might appear after the Italian declarations to the League. Nevertheless, whatever their suspicions and anxieties may have been, Eden and Laval were still entitled to hope that the undertakings which they had extracted from Rome were at least a step on the road towards a peaceful solution.

Such hopes were soon undeceived. The Italian reading of Article 5 of the 1928 Treaty was that arbitration should take place only after direct negotiation had been fully tried: and Mussolini's idea of negotiation with Ethiopia was simply to insist on the demands already put forward. Thus a new deadlock arose which the Italians saw no reason to break. They were now deliberately playing for time in which to complete their preparations. General de Bono had been appointed High Commissioner for East Africa. He reached Massawa in January and immediately put all his remarkable energies into carrying out plans which had been drawn up in Rome. Italian labourers were brought out by the thousand to work on the roads, aerodromes, docks, and other necessary installations. The natives of Eritrea were mobilized for military training. At home, a beginning was made with the calling-up of reserves. From February onwards Italian troops began to sail for Eritrea and Somaliland. In the latter colony General Graziani, Italy's best-known fighting general, was making such preparation for military action as the nature of the country permitted. Meanwhile the tone of the Italian press became increasingly menacing.

It was no longer possible to doubt, and no serious person did doubt, that Mussolini intended to impose his will on Ethiopia by force. It was equally certain that the Ethiopians would resist. They probably underestimated the advantage which the ruthless use of modern weapons, including poison gas, would give to the Italian forces. But in any case their long tradition as a free and warlike people would have fired them to put up the best fight they could. All this, however, had evidently been taken into account by the Duce. If he were to be prevented from starting the war, this could only be done by the firm action of the League. And to the League Haile Selassie now turned once more. In telegrams sent on March 16th and 17th he set forth at length how the hopes inspired by the agreement of January 19th had been proved vain and how the military threat was growing. To appeal to the League was, he declared, the last resort of his country for the protection of her independence and integrity. He begged the Council to take up the case under Article 15 of the Covenant; to see to it that the dispute should now be effectively

submitted to arbitration; and to put an end to the military preparations in Eritrea and Somaliland.

The Italians replied on March 22nd that there was no ground for any such appeal. Their military preparations were no more than a necessary precaution for the defence of their colonies against the threat of attack from Ethiopia. They had never intended, and did not now intend, to evade the procedure of Article 5 of the Treaty of Friendship, and were prepared to take steps to refer the Wal-Wal dispute to arbitration. The appeal to Article 15 must therefore be rejected by the Council, since that Article was concerned with 'disputes which are not submitted to arbitration'.

Everybody knew that the Ethiopian appeal was justified and that the Italian answer was a falsehood. Italy's colonies were not threatened; her warlike measures were intended for attack, not for defence; her promise to submit the Wal-Wal incident to arbitration was a diplomatic screen to cover her real purpose. The issue before the League was not who was responsible for the fight at Wal-Wal, but whether there was to be war or peace between two Members of the League. Italy's attempt to remove the question from the Council's consideration could not have stood for a moment against a serious challenge from any of her fellow Members. But such a challenge would mean incurring the anger and hostility of the Italian dictator; and Britain, France, and even Russia, had special reason to wish for his friendship and support. On the very day of Ethiopia's new appeal to the League, Hitler had announced the creation of a great conscript army in Germany. All Europe was shaken and alarmed. No one felt inclined to take the risk of pushing Mussolini once more into that attitude of sympathy with Germany which he had long displayed but, as it seemed, had lately abandoned. France, in particular, after years of bad relations, had just reached a friendly and almost cordial understanding with Italy; and Laval was determined at any cost to reap the benefit of the Rome agreements. Mussolini knew well how to encourage these sentiments. He duly protested against the decision of his fellow dictator. He invited the French and British to a conference at Stresa, agreed with all their ideas about peace plans for Europe, reaffirmed his loyalty to the Locarno Pact, and accepted a common resolution to be submitted to the Council of the League. In return Laval and Simon refrained, at Stresa, from any discussion of Italy's African designs and let it be seen that they would make no difficulties at Geneva over the Ethiopian request. And since they, and Russia, shrank from challenging Italy's reply, the lesser members of the Council did not venture to do so.

Accordingly, when the Council met on April 15th, Aloisi repeated the

substance of that reply and added that he did not think that any Member of the Council would ask that the question should be dealt with at that session. He declined to make any promise regarding the military measures which his government was compelled to take; but said that Italy would now proceed to appoint two members of the Arbitration Commission provided for in Article 5 of the Treaty of Friendship, and would do her utmost to see that the further procedure was started as rapidly as possible. All his fellow members, with Simon and Laval in the lead, declared that, this being so, there was nothing for the Council to discuss, but that the question should be placed on the agenda of the next regular session, which was due to open some five weeks later. With these poor crumbs of comfort Ethiopia had to be content. The provisions of the Covenant were thrust into the background, and the Council of the League bowed before the will of the three powers, whose brief show of co-operation was known as the Stresa front.

The events of the next weeks only widened the gulf between the professions of the great powers in regard to the European crisis, and their actions in regard to the crisis in Africa. Having in mind the open and uncompromising violation by Germany of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, they were planning not merely to reinforce, but actually to extend, the protective system of the Covenant. At the same time they were making every effort to avoid the application of the Covenant to the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. In Italy more divisions were being mobilized; troops, labourers, and supplies were being poured into Italian East Africa; and the Under-Secretary of the Colonies announced in the Chamber that Italy must now settle her relations with Ethiopia once for all. In spite of the protests of supporters of the League, Laval and Simon continued to act as though the Covenant could be violated in Africa and still preserved for use in Europe. No serious warning was given to Mussolini. His conviction grew that the fulfilment of his colonial ambitions would meet with no real resistance from Italy's fellow Members of the League.

Meeting again in regular session on May 20th, the Council had before it new and painful appeals from Addis Ababa. The Emperor protested against accusations in the Italian press to the effect that he was mobilizing troops and planning to attack the Italian colonies. He begged the Council once more to hasten the arbitral proceedings and to put an end to Italy's military preparations. Of these two objects, the second was by far the more important. But, faced with a completely intransigent attitude in Rome, the Council confined its action to the first. The Italians had hitherto refused to agree to the constitution of the Commission of conciliation or arbitration on the ground that Ethiopia had

nominated a Frenchman and an American; they themselves nominated two Italians, and they insisted that the Ethiopian nominees ought to be Ethiopian subjects. After four days of hard negotiation, Eden and Laval succeeded in overcoming this obstacle. They also secured the agreement of Italy to a time-table which they hoped might prevent further obstruction of the arbitral procedure. If, by July 25th, the four had not reached agreement, either on the substance of the dispute or on the appointment of a fifth arbitrator, the Council was to hold a fresh meeting to consider the question. It was likewise to hold a fresh meeting if the whole procedure of arbitration and conciliation were not completed by August 25th.

Thus, for the third time, Italy agreed at the Council table to follow the method of settlement laid down in her Treaty of Friendship with Ethiopia. On each occasion she had, before the Council met, either refused or obstructed the fulfilment of her engagement; and thus, on each occasion, she appeared to be turning to a more conciliatory attitude, and offering the Council some ground for hoping that its action might avert the threat of war. Yet the members knew that Ethiopia's demand that no further preparation for war should be allowed on her borders was fully justified, and Aloisi did not, this time, repeat his promise of a peaceful settlement. He declared that the steps taken by Italy to ensure the defence of her territory could not be subject to comment by anyone whomsoever. So the Duce had said, and his words were 'categorical and final'. This was Italy's first defiance of the Council in open session. No member thought it prudent to take up the gauntlet.

There was, indeed, but little discussion at this depressing meeting. Litvinov, as President, submitted the resolutions worked out by Laval and Eden. Both parties having given their assent, Litvinov asked his colleagues to avoid speech-making. His advice was followed, and the only statements of substance were those of the Italian and Ethiopian delegates. The latter on this occasion was Gaston Jèze, a Frenchman and a Professor of International Law at the Sorbonne. Jèze was a brave and honest man, but he was no match for Aloisi, with his familiar knowledge of a Council to which he had rendered great service in the past. The one argued as a lawyer, the other spoke with the confident authority of an experienced delegate. Jèze was forced not only to accept in silence Aloisi's refusal to discuss the military measures which his government was taking, but also to leave unanswered an important question concerning the powers of the Arbitral Commission: should it have the right to consider whether Wal-Wal was in Italian or Ethiopian territory? This uncertainty was later used by the Italians to hold up the work of the arbitrators for another two months. However, if they had been



deprived of that particular pretext, they would doubtless have found another. The fundamental question was whether Ethiopia would agree to the proposal that the Council should wait another three months before entering into the issue of peace or war; and that question was evidently decided not in Geneva but in Addis Ababa. Wisdom after the event makes it clear that the Emperor would have been better advised to insist on a full discussion there and then. A little later, on June 19th, he submitted a formal request that the Council should send observers to see for themselves whether any preparation for aggression was being made in Ethiopia: they would be given every facility and his government would bear all the expense. It was an eminently reasonable proposal: but by the time it was made the Council had separated, other plans for settlement were being tried, and the question of League observers was not taken up again until the eve of invasion. Meanwhile the Emperor was persuaded into accepting what in effect was very little more than yet another postponement. And at the end of the brief proceedings of the Council, the former delegate, Teclé Hawariate, once more took his seat at the Council to express his gratitude to Laval and Eden for their efforts, and to the Council for the resolutions it had adopted. Aloisi had perhaps more reason to be grateful; but he felt no inclination to say so. 'I note', he said stiffly, 'the efforts made by M. Laval and by Mr Eden.' Whereupon Litvinov observed that the Council would join in the thanks expressed by the representatives of Ethiopia and Italy.

It now began to be seen how considerable a section of the public opinion of the world still placed its hopes of peace upon the action of the League of Nations. More perspicacious than the Foreign Offices, this body of opinion realized that if the Covenant were to be torn up in Africa, it would equally cease to provide security in Europe. The smaller countries both in Europe and America were already uneasy and resentful at what seemed to them the capitulation of the Council before the will of a single great power. The coloured peoples were indignant that aggression against one of the two independent African States should be called a colonial war and treated as though it were on a different moral footing from aggression against a white nation. Defence of peaceful States against war, defence of small States against injustice, defence of the coloured races against foreign oppression, were seen as depending upon a single issue. The maintenance of the Covenant would ensure each of these great purposes. Its failure would mean their abandonment so far as international action was concerned.

These convictions, solidly based and widely held as they were, had

so far failed to make themselves effectively felt either in the Foreign Offices or at the Council table. But now, as the summer of 1935 wore on, they began to influence the attitude of the British government and to find a spokesman in Anthony Eden. In June Ramsay MacDonald resigned the Premiership to Baldwin. At the same time Simon gave up the office of Foreign Secretary. He was succeeded by Sir Samuel Hoare, while Eden took up the newly created post of Minister of League Affairs. A few days later (June 27th, 1935) the final results of the Peace Ballot were published.<sup>1</sup> Henceforth no one could doubt the position of the League in British public opinion and Eden's hands were strengthened accordingly. The lead which the British government now began to give was neither clear nor resolute. But it was enough, when the time came, to rally the Members of the League and to produce some effort at least to carry out the obligations of the Covenant.

From June onwards, therefore, the real nature of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis became increasingly evident. It was a struggle between Fascist Italy and the League; and everywhere the forces of isolationism and reaction set themselves to encourage Mussolini. Nevertheless the dispute was not yet fully and frankly placed in this, its true setting. The British government was no longer closing its eyes to the danger, and was exerting itself to hold back the Italian adventure; but it still shrank from basing its new policy openly on the League. Mussolini was warned that British public opinion was hostile to his ambitions; he was not told that the British government was determined to apply sanctions if he went to war in violation of the Covenant. It was argued that, if this were done, all hope of a settlement by compromise would disappear. The weakness of the argument is evident, and the real reason why no warning of sanctions was given was probably that, whatever Eden might advise, his colleagues in the Cabinet were still hesitating.

In any case, the attempt at compromise was now made. On June 23rd Eden was sent to Rome bearing a proposal for a peaceful solution and an offer from the British government to make a not ungenerous contribution thereto. It was suggested that a part of the Ogaden province should be ceded to Italy by Ethiopia, and that satisfaction should also be given to Italy's desire for railway communication between her two East African Colonies, while Ethiopia would receive in compensation an area in British Somaliland consisting of the port of Zeila and a corridor con-

<sup>1</sup> Voters throughout the country were invited to answer five questions concerning their views on British membership of the League, on economic and military sanctions, &c. Though carried on almost without funds, and misrepresented or boycotted by important sections of the press, the enterprise was amazingly successful. Half a million voluntary workers distributed, discussed, and collected the ballot-papers. Nearly twelve million persons voted, the overwhelming majority being in favour of League membership and of fulfilment of the Covenant.

necting it with her existing territory, on which she might construct a railway of her own. The suggestion was attractive to Ethiopia because she had long complained of being cut off by the Italian, French, and British colonies, from any direct access to the sea. As for Italy, the area proposed for annexation by her was doubtless recognized to be much less than she hoped to acquire, though in truth no one then knew exactly what her pretensions might be; but she would get it without the cost or danger of war, and without being asked for any concession in return. Mussolini, however, dismissed the offer with contempt and treated its bearer with a minimum of courtesy. He was already contrasting the British attitude with that of France. The Italian diplomatic and propaganda services henceforth sedulously spread the belief that British opposition was inspired solely by a jealous desire to obstruct the colonial development of Italy. And the French, so long the first to insist on those provisions of the Covenant which were intended to create a common front against aggression, now lent themselves to the Italian method. They were deeply wounded by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. They resented the suggestion that Ethiopia might have her own railway connexion with the sea, instead of being compelled to use the French line to Jibuti. A large part of the French press, for one motive or another, gave its support to Mussolini; a section of it was at the same time strongly anti-British. Laval, not for the last time, showed himself convinced that Italian good will was more important to his country than friendship with Britain. This period of division was brief, but it came at a decisive moment.

Thus all the circumstances conspired to postpone yet further the moment when the League should face its responsibilities. The Emperor's request for the dispatch of neutral observers was not taken up by any Member of the Council. Italian reinforcements and supplies were arriving in Africa on an enormous scale. The Committee of Conciliation or Arbitration met after some delay; it speedily broke down because the Ethiopian representatives insisted that it should consider whether Wal-Wal was in Ethiopian or Italian territory, while the Italian members declared that this question was entirely outside its competence. By July 25th it was evident that the special Council meeting foreseen in May must be held, and it duly opened on July 31st with Litvinov again in the chair. The result was, once more, to give substantial satisfaction to the Italian delegation. No mention was made, save by the Ethiopian delegate, of the growing danger of war or of the real purposes by which Italy's actions were inspired. Discussion was kept strictly to points connected with the Wal-Wal arbitration: the Arbitration Committee was restarted with instructions not to express any judgement on the

territorial question. On the other hand, the Council decided to meet in any event on September 4th, in order to discuss the whole question of Italo-Ethiopian relations. The resolution to this effect was hailed with joy and gratitude by Ethiopia. Aloisi abstained from voting, but it may be supposed that, having gained one more month of freedom of action for his master, he was not greatly disturbed at the prospect. He must have known that the climax would in any case be bound to come in September.

The Council was further informed that negotiations were about to be opened between Italy, France, and Britain with a view to settling the differences between Italy and Ethiopia. This procedure, from which Ethiopia herself was excluded, was based on the existence of the Treaty of 1906, by which the three powers had attempted to delimit their zones of influence in the Empire of Menelik. It represented a return to methods which had long been out of date, and were, in any case, totally inapplicable now that Ethiopia was a Member of the League. To transfer the question from the Council to a small group in which the prospective aggressor, but not the prospective victim, was included, was clearly contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Covenant. It was very plain that Eden disliked the proposal, and would have preferred to force the true issue in the Council without further delay. But he yielded, whether to the persuasiveness of Laval, or to the instructions received from London. He did his best to reassure his colleagues, promising to report the result to the Council, and adding that the British government would try to secure a settlement in harmony with the Covenant.

Save for a few colourless observations from the representatives of Denmark and Argentina, no member of the Council attempted to discuss the resolution worked out by Eden and Laval and submitted to the Council by Litvinov as Chairman. Australia, Czechoslovakia, Mexico, Turkey, and the rest remained silent throughout the proceedings. They knew well enough the gravity and danger of the situation: most of them knew that the safeguards of their own security were threatened. But they had been brought to believe that open recognition of the true facts, and open discussion of what their consequences might be, would exasperate the Italian dictator and destroy the chance that France and Britain might yet find means to turn him from his purpose. Italian diplomacy had doubtless been active in its own way in the various capitals concerned. It will be a matter of great interest, when the archives of the Foreign Ministries are opened, to see how action through the diplomatic channel affected the proceedings of the League both before and after the war began. Such action was purely one-sided. Ethiopia possessed nothing that could be called a diplomatic service. The League as such was

barred out, almost as completely as the general public, from all access to the diplomatic scene and from all influence upon whatever discussions might be going on behind the traditional curtain of secrecy. Nor does it appear that individual Members of the League, even during the period of sanctions, ever used their diplomatic services in support of their joint policy. Only the Italians were working in this secret and influential field: and to this fact must be attributed no small part of their extraordinary diplomatic success throughout the months of crisis.

There was yet another reason for the silence of the smaller powers. Not only were they anxious not to offend Italy; but they were also in complete uncertainty as to what the other great powers would do when the crisis came. The word Sanctions was on no one's lips; but it was in everyone's mind. In a few weeks, unless some miracle intervened, every Member of the League would be compelled to decide whether or not it was prepared to carry out its obligation to sever all trade and financial relations with Italy. This time there would be none of the uncertainties of law or of fact which had existed in the Sino-Japanese conflict or in the war between Bolivia and Paraguay. The question would have to be faced squarely. The majority had, no doubt, a preference in favour of applying sanctions if the expected aggression took place. But they kept silence, since they dared not yet commit themselves to a policy which could not be followed unless the great powers were ready to play their part.

No help, in this period of doubt, came from across the Atlantic. On July 3rd Haile Selassie had appealed to the American government to take steps to avert the threatened violation of the Kellogg Pact. The answer was that that government would be loath to believe that either Italy or Ethiopia would resort to other than pacific means of settling their differences. Cordell Hull showed resentment when this answer was interpreted in a press article as meaning that the Kellogg Pact was dead. But no more was heard of Stimson's view that the Pact had put an end to American neutrality. On August 1st, when the Council was meeting, the President issued a statement voicing 'the hope of the people and the Government of the United States that an amicable solution will be found and that peace will be maintained'. The American nation could not, by its nature and its temperament, fail to be emotionally in favour of the weak victim of a dictatorial power. But in Washington, as in Paris and London, action was governed rather by consideration of the danger of war in Europe. The isolationists in Congress were on the top of the wave. They were able to force through the first Neutrality Act (August 31st, 1935), whereby the President was bound, during any war in which the United States was neutral, to order an embargo on the export of arms,

ammunition, or implements of war to any belligerent country. This Act made it impossible for the Executive to differentiate between the aggressor and the victim; at the same time it excluded, by implication, any embargo on exports which did not come under the category of arms, ammunition, and implements of war. It thus placed, and was intended to place, the narrowest possible limits upon the President's freedom to support the action of the League; and though it was no part of its authors' purpose to encourage the aggressiveness of the Fascist and Nazi dictators, there can be no doubt that it did in fact have that effect.

The Three-Power negotiations began in Paris on August 16th. They closed in complete failure three days later. The French and British delegates had prepared the ground by ascertaining what measures the Emperor was ready to accept in order to avert the Italian threat. When their talks with Aloisi began, they asked to be told what his government's demands on Ethiopia were. They met with a refusal: and it was at once evident that no negotiations would be possible. Patiently Laval and Eden produced their own proposal for settlement. Ethiopia was to be asked to accept a plan for the reorganization of every aspect of her national life, to be carried out with the help of a large number of foreign advisers; these would be appointed by the League, or by Italy, France, and Britain under a treaty previously approved by the Council. Italy herself was to receive extensive economic privileges and the right to build the railway from Eritrea to Somalia which she had so often demanded. And Ethiopia was also to cede parts of her territory, with possibly some compensation from British and French Somaliland.

It must be supposed that all this represented the maximum concessions which the Emperor was ready to make for the sake of peace. They were indeed, from his point of view, both extensive and dangerous. He was, it seems, ready to go as far as he believed possible without forfeiting the independence of his ancient kingdom. He would not accept such measures of annexation, disarmament, or control as would either destroy that independence outright, or deprive him of the power of resistance to further demands. Yet these were precisely the purposes of the Fascist government. Though Aloisi was forbidden to define its demands, he was allowed to talk to journalists about Italy receiving a mandate over Ethiopia, and about the need to disarm the Ethiopian troops and entrust Italy with the duty of keeping order in the country. In these circumstances it surprised nobody when Mussolini roughly rejected the suggestions of Laval and Eden, refusing even to take into consideration a plan which fell so far short of what he intended to gain. Having sent his reply to Paris, he telegraphed (August 21st) to de Bono in Asmara: 'Conference came to no conclusion; Geneva will do the same. Make an

end.' 'I have never believed in conferences', the General replied.<sup>1</sup> The Duce had laid down that by September 10th all must be ready to start operations. Three hundred thousand men, with 250 aeroplanes, were then to be massed in Eritrea and Somalia.

Among the various forms of preparation undertaken by the Italian government was that of preventing Ethiopia from arming. The three neighbours had signed a treaty with the Emperor in 1930, providing that no obstacle was to be placed on the transit of arms which were properly certified to be for government account, but that none might be imported without such certificate. The Ethiopian troops were not trained to the use of any arms more complicated than the rifle and the machine-gun. Even of these there were only enough to supply a small fraction of the levies which would take the field. As the Italian menace grew, Haile Selassie made desperate efforts to purchase arms and munitions. The results were small. Italian diplomatists were instructed to inform any government which was believed to be ready to allow its manufacturers to deal with Ethiopia, that any such sale would be regarded by Italy as an unfriendly act. During the summer several governments, including France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Denmark, prohibited the export of arms to Ethiopia. In July the British government announced an embargo on such export both to Ethiopia and to Italy. Worst of all, the French authorities at Jibuti made difficulties about transit, thus crippling the only convenient route for the delivery of such arms as the Emperor had been able to buy. In August the Ethiopian delegate protested to the League that, while Italy was manufacturing arms in quantity, Ethiopia had no manufacture whatever and found herself unable to import what she needed for her defence. Wherever his government attempted to obtain the arms it required, it met with prohibitions and export embargoes. 'Is that real neutrality?' he asked. 'Is it just?'

As it had promised to do, the Council met again on September 4th to deal at last with the whole question of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. Mussolini, though he was defying the League in his speeches and ridiculing it in his messages to de Bono, sent Aloisi to Geneva with instructions not, as before, to refuse all discussion of the Italian action, but to proclaim and justify it. Hitherto it had been claimed on the Italian side that the Wal-Wal incident was the main cause of the dispute, and that, since that matter was being settled through the procedure laid down by the Treaty of Friendship, there was nothing for the Council to discuss. The Arbitration Committee had, as a matter of fact, finished its work the very day before the Council met. It had appointed

<sup>1</sup> De Bono, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

Politis as its neutral Chairman and under his guidance had quickly reached an agreed conclusion. Neither Italy nor Ethiopia, it now unanimously reported, was to be held responsible for starting the fight. The Italians had clearly not done so: and there was no proof that the Ethiopians had done so either. This decision produced a brief return of hope even among the Ethiopian delegation. If all that Aloisi had affirmed to the Council at its earlier meetings had been true, the way would now be clear for a peaceful settlement of the whole dispute.

But, as soon as the Council opened, the Italian spokesman indicated that the closure of the Wal-Wal affair was a matter of no importance. He laid before the Council an immense printed memorandum, complete with annexes, maps, and photographs, setting forth Italy's case against Ethiopia. At the same time he declared that Italy was reluctantly forced to consider Ethiopia as beyond all question her enemy; as a barbarous State whose signature could not be trusted; and as no longer entitled to claim the rights of League membership or the benefits of the Treaty of Friendship. It had been a mistake ever to admit her to the League. The Assembly, including his own country, had hoped that by so doing they would encourage her to abolish slavery, correct her internal disorder, and live at peace with her neighbours. These hopes had been illusory; things had become worse rather than better. Now, in view of her backward condition and her aggressive behaviour, Italy as a civilized State must decline to continue any discussion before the League on a footing of equality with Ethiopia. His government reserved full liberty to adopt whatever measures might be necessary to protect its interests and to ensure the safety of its colonies.

The memorandum set forth the Italian grievances in great detail. Ethiopia, it was said, had in the first place failed to carry out her treaty obligations towards Italy. She had prevented the delimitation of her frontiers with Eritrea and Somalia. She had broken her engagement to construct a road connecting Assab with Dessye. Even after signing the Treaty of Friendship, she had blocked all Italian attempts to acquire land, to carry on mining or other commercial activities, to collaborate in the administrative or technical development of the country, even to establish hospitals and dispensaries. She had disregarded her agreements with the three powers concerning customs duties, monopolies, police and justice, the traffic in arms.

Secondly, the memorandum enumerated a long series of outrages against Italian diplomatists and consuls, injustices to Italian subjects, raids across the frontiers of the Italian colonies. These incidents covered the period from 1916 to 1935. They varied from trivial thefts or discourtesies to serious cases of murder and robbery.



Thirdly, it was argued that Ethiopia was, for several reasons, incapable of being a Member of the League. She was not an organized State at all. There had been an ancient Abyssinian State, Christian in religion, Amharic or Tigrean in language, feudal in its institutions, and possessing well-defined geographical, ethnical, and historical boundaries. But under Menelik this State had subdued and annexed vast countries outside its borders, inhabited by peoples of other races, languages, and religions. Modern Ethiopia consisted of a ruling minority, holding down by cruel repression the colonies which it had conquered within the last forty years. Flourishing lands had been laid waste, peaceful tribes had been enslaved and almost exterminated. To liberate these oppressed colonies was a duty of civilization.

Further, the memorandum went on, Ethiopia had been admitted to the League only after promising to abolish slavery and put down the slave trade. That promise, also, had been broken. Ras Tafari, before he became Emperor, had indeed proclaimed that the sale of slaves was henceforth forbidden, and that all children henceforth to be born, whatever their parentage, should be free. But these edicts left the existing slaves still the property of their masters. Slavery, therefore, continued to be legal. Besides, the edicts were almost completely ineffective. Recent reports from official British, French, and Italian sources, and investigation by well-known British authorities, proved that the institution of slavery was still the principal basis of the national existence. Some estimates placed the number of slaves at over two million. The government itself, and the Emperor personally, owned great numbers of slaves, and even accepted them as payment of taxes or of tribute. The slave-trade continued as before. Finally, the memorandum quoted a number of terrible stories told by foreign eyewitnesses describing the barbarous cruelties inflicted upon slaves and criminals.

A further section dealt with the traffic in arms. Ethiopia's admission to the League had been conditional on her promising to conform to the principles of the Convention of St Germain, in other words, to prevent arms being sold to any unauthorized persons. In August 1930, she had repeated this pledge in her treaty on the subject with Italy, France, and Britain. Both promises had been repeatedly violated. The Emperor had sold large quantities of arms and ammunition to his personal followers; and, to add insult to injury, had successfully insisted that the rule applied to all persons in the Empire, so that even foreigners were forbidden to carry arms without the official permission of the Ethiopian government.

Membership of the League, the memorandum concluded, involved duties as well as rights. Ethiopia, having shown herself incapable of

fulfilling the former, had forfeited her claim to the latter. In putting an end to an intolerable situation, Italy was not violating the Covenant: on the contrary, she was defending the prestige and the good name of the League of Nations.

The issue of the Italian memorandum, accompanied by a concerted effort of publicity, was a clever and effective move. No one could read or hear unmoved the long catalogue of slavery, cruelty, and injustice. Ethiopia had come to the Council as an accuser: she suddenly found herself unexpectedly in the dock, and her delegates were unable to produce a prompt reply to so many different charges. It was subsequently shown that the Italian affirmations were inaccurate in a number of important respects. Apart from this, the general effect of the memorandum was unjust, inasmuch as it emphasized all the shortcomings of the Ethiopian State and made no mention of anything which might excuse or redeem them. No credit was given to the Emperor's plans for reform. Yet all who knew the country agreed that his efforts were sincere and were already producing good results. It was known, also, that the disorder of which the Italians complained was in part created by their own deliberate policy of secretly encouraging local chieftains to defy the central government. It was significant that the authors of the document could not refrain from emphasizing that Italy was 'in most urgent and recognized need of colonial expansion'. But these and similar considerations were never put forward by any delegation except that of Ethiopia herself. In any case, there was much in the Italian accusations that was well authenticated by impartial observers. It provided excellent material to those who urged that the quarrel between Italy and Ethiopia was nobody's business but their own, and that if membership of the League meant being forced to intervene on behalf of Ethiopia, the only thing to do was to follow the example of the United States and break away from such dangerous obligations.

From the point of view of the League the Italian declaration called for a reply, not as to the truth of its accusations against Ethiopia, but as to the conclusions which it claimed the right to draw therefrom. Every delegation, including that of Italy, knew very well that, even if all that was said in the memorandum were true, it could not justify the assertion that Italy could now make war on Ethiopia without violating the Covenant. She had indeed violated it already by her persistent refusal to allow the Council to deal with the substance of the dispute. If Ethiopia deserved to be expelled from the League, the conditions and methods of expulsion were laid down in the Covenant. Italy could not have a shadow of legal or moral right to decide for herself that another Member of the League should be deprived of the rights of membership. Even if

this claim, preposterous as it was, were conceded, it would have made no difference; for in case of dispute between a Member and a non-Member, it was the duty of the Council to invite the latter to accept the obligations of membership for the purpose of settling the dispute in question; and it was certain that Ethiopia would have hastened to accept the invitation.

It was important that public opinion should, from the first, be made to realize these essential facts, if it were to understand the grounds on which Italy's aggression was to be opposed by her fellow Members. Only Litvinov, however, ventured to speak what all were feeling. The Italian representative, he said at the Council meeting of September 5th, based his case on the violation by Ethiopia of her international obligations. But in asking the Council to declare itself disinterested in the conflict, Italy was inviting the Members of the League to repudiate, in their turn, their international obligations and to disregard the Covenant. No one could feel sympathy with the internal regime of Ethiopia as described in the Italian memorandum. But nothing in the Covenant allowed the Council to discriminate between Members as to their internal regime, the colour of their skin, their racial distinctions, or the stage of their civilization. 'I venture to say that, for the development of backward peoples, . . . for raising them to higher civilization, other means than military may be found . . . the League of Nations should stand firm on the principle that there cannot be justification for military operations except in self-defence. . . .' Twenty-four hours later the Mexican delegate followed his example, rejecting, though with diplomatic obscurity, the Italian thesis. The Council then closed its discussion, after setting up a Committee of Five—Britain, France, Poland, Spain, and Turkey—to study the question and seek for a peaceful settlement.

Litvinov's words were unquestionably wise, moderate, and opportune. But, coming from the representative of a State which inspired such wide and deep dislike, they had far less effect than they deserved and than the situation required. Why did they not receive support, at least from those delegates, such as Eden, Beneš, and Rüstü Aras, whose governments had already decided that if Italy carried out her threats they would apply sanctions against her? The answer is to be found in the fact that the Members of the League were much concerned to avoid any appearance of hostility towards Italy. Throughout the Italo-Ethiopian conflict there was a certain lack of realism in their attitude. It was true that, with a few exceptions, they had no malevolent feelings towards the Italian government; but it was also true that they were opposing its cherished ambition and that either they as League Members or Italy as the Covenant-breaking State were bound sooner or later to admit a

disastrous defeat. This fact they preferred not to face. They hoped to stop Mussolini from getting what he wanted; but they did not wish to annoy him, to hurt him, to humiliate him, and above all they did not wish to bring about his fall. Thus it was that in the case, for instance, of the British government, its acts, though some might think them inadequate, were actually stronger than its words. It was always seeking to damp down any growth of critical or hostile sentiment towards Italy. Litvinov's words on Eden's lips would have aroused great enthusiasm at home, as well as resentment in Italy. Both results would have been unwelcome to the British Cabinet.

When, in September 1935, the Council at last decided to take up the dispute in all its menacing reality, its hopes of maintaining the peace were slight indeed. Six months earlier there were still influential elements in Italy which shrank from provoking a war, believing that it would be not only disapproved abroad but also unpopular at home. More than one Italian holding high government office had discreetly expressed in Geneva the hope that the League would succeed in forcing the Duce to change his purpose. In any case, by September he had gone too far to withdraw without disaster to the Fascist regime. And the Council still, as when Japan invaded Manchuria, lacked means to carry out the preventive function which it had been intended to exercise. The application of Article 11 was paralysed by the doctrine that the Council could take no resolution under that Article save by a unanimous vote, so that each Member of the League was free to veto any proposal made for the purpose of preventing it from preparing aggression.

Two expedients remained. The first was the threat of sanctions, which could be applied only after the war had been started. The second was to go still farther along the road of concessions to Italy in the hope of buying her off before the war began. The government in London decided to try both. Hoare came out to proclaim to the Assembly its resolve to execute the Covenant, while Eden worked with his colleagues of the Council Committee on a new plan of conciliation.

The main interest now shifted from the Council to the Assembly. Excitement had spread throughout the world as the realization grew that the League of Nations was after all going to put up a fight for its existence. Even before the Assembly met, a number of governments had shown that they recognized that the test was at hand, and that the peace system set up by the Covenant was about to be either decisively reinforced or fatally discredited. On August 29th the Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden issued a joint declaration of loyalty to the League. The next day a still more emphatic

statement was made by Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Roumania. These pronouncements, and those yet to be made in the Assembly by many other governments, were preceded by a remarkable upsurge of public opinion. Labour organizations, both national and international, voted resolutions in favour of strong action by the League. On July 25th the Archbishops of Canterbury and Upsala addressed a joint appeal to the Council. On August 24th the Universal Christian Council proclaimed that the League could count on the whole-hearted support of the Christian Churches. Only the Vatican remained aloof.<sup>1</sup>

These are but a few examples of the declarations of loyalty to the League which were made at this time by countless groups and organizations. There can be no doubt that they represented an even greater mass of ungrouped and unorganized men and women. Eden was saying no more than the plain truth when, on September 5th, he told his colleagues in the Council that world opinion was watching them, conscious that the authority of the League was at stake, and that the collapse of the League and of the new conception of international order for which it stood would be a world calamity. He might have added that world opinion understood that the questions before the League were immediate, practical, and concrete. Italy's warlike intentions were open and unmistakable. Would the Council and Assembly warn her clearly that recourse to war would be met with the sanctions laid down in the Covenant? And if this threat were not sufficient, would the sanctions be faithfully carried out? These were the questions that all were asking; and right up to the first day of the Assembly debate it was still impossible to be sure what answers would be given. World-wide anxiety changed to world-wide relief and satisfaction, as one Member of the League after another declared its resolve to stand by the Covenant.

The Assembly met on September 9th. It elected Beneš as its President. No wiser choice could have been made. Many of his colleagues would have shrunk from so difficult and invidious a task. But Beneš was not only a cheerful, clear-headed, and courageous individual; he was also a convinced upholder of the League. He quickly disposed of the routine business and on the morning of September 11th called upon the delegates to open the general debate. The first speech, and the one which all were most eagerly awaiting, was that of the British Foreign Secretary. He spoke first of the deep and sincere attachment of the British people

<sup>1</sup> The Pope expressed his hope that Italian difficulties could be solved by other means than war, saying that a war which was only one of conquest would evidently be an unjust war (August 28th, 1935). Such words could not embarrass the Fascist government, nor did they prevent many Italian prelates from giving their enthusiastic support to the war policy of Mussolini.

to the League of Nations. He showed the difficulties due to the absence of three great powers, and the need for peaceful methods of change. He announced that the British government would be ready to join in investigating the problem of how to make raw materials from colonial areas accessible to all States. (This proposal, though he did not say so, was intended to give some degree of satisfaction to the Italians, who for years had vainly demanded that the League should deal with the question of equality of distribution in the matter of raw materials.) But such plans could only be worked out in an atmosphere of peace. And this brought him to his conclusion. In measured, emphatic terms, he announced 'the unswerving fidelity' of His Majesty's Government 'to the League and all it stands for. . . . The nation supports the Government in the full acceptance of the obligations of League membership . . . the League stands, and my country stands with it, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression.'

It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of this speech. Once more, it seemed, after four years of uncertainty, timidity, opportunism, the true voice of Britain was heard. Now that the test was at hand, she was ready to take her natural place as leader of the League and all it stood for—the respect for treaty obligations, the rights of small nations, the prevention, or, if need be, the defeat, of aggression, through collective action. Though one or two isolationist papers were still critical, the nation as a whole was united as never since the Armistice of 1918; and, to the surprise of the cynics, this unity was formed behind a policy not of national self-aggrandizement or even defence, but of an international leadership which would almost certainly require material sacrifices and might even involve the risk of war. In non-European countries the speech led to an immediate increase in willingness to carry out the Covenant. In Europe its effect was far greater still. For throughout Europe it was upon the Covenant that the essential problems of foreign policy were centred. Those governments, few in number but formidable through the power and energy of Germany, which wished to disrupt the existing order, aimed first at the downfall of the League. The many whose first interest was peace were more than ever convinced that an efficient League was their most reliable safeguard. But an efficient League meant, in their eyes, a League which could count on the full support of the British Commonwealth. Their trust in that support had been steadily fading. Many of them, more and more alarmed for their own security, were becoming more and more inclined to make terms with the prospective aggressors. To these, Hoare's speech, apparently so calm and resolute, brought fresh courage. If Britain were resolved to stand by the

Covenant, then they could do the same, and the danger of war would once more recede into the background.

In the Assembly itself the excitement was great. The Foreign Secretary was surrounded with thanks and acclamations. A new confidence took the place of the doubt and discouragement engendered by the weakness of the Council. But one powerful element of doubt still existed—the attitude of France. It was common knowledge that the French government was deeply reluctant to risk Italian enmity. It was believed that Laval had given pledges to Mussolini which were inconsistent with the duties of League membership. The Duce himself took pains to show that he counted on France to save him from sanctions. The tone of the Paris press was pro-Italian and anti-League. Doubt in Geneva was increased by the fact that Laval waited forty-eight hours before addressing the Assembly. When he rose on September 13th, few of his hearers knew whether he would confirm or destroy the high hopes which the British statement had aroused. When, therefore, he declared that if the Council failed to find a peaceful issue to the dispute, France would fulfil the obligations of the Covenant, the relief was great. His promise, it was clear, was given reluctantly, and grudgingly. His references to Italy were notably warmer than to Britain. But the essential thing was that the promise should be made.

For five days the Assembly listened to a series of speakers, of whom the great majority were mainly concerned to express their country's hope that Italy would hold her hand, and its resolve, if she still declined to do so, to carry out its duty as a Member of the League. Litvinov declared that the only question for his government was to defend the Covenant as an instrument of peace; if this were the general purpose, that Assembly might become a landmark in the history of the League. The Yugoslav delegate, speaking for Roumania and Czechoslovakia as well as for his own country, vowed that all three would remain true to the Covenant. The Greek representative gave the same pledge on behalf of the Balkan Entente. From the Scandinavian States, the Baltic States, Holland, Belgium, Portugal, the same note was sounded. De Valera told the Assembly that the Irish nation, restored again, to its intense joy, as a separate recognized member of the European family, would fulfil the obligations of the Covenant in the letter and in the spirit. Among the few European voices which were silent in this debate were Switzerland and Spain, both reluctant to admit the possibility of having to oppose the Italy they admired; Austria and Hungary, Italy's clients in the political field; Poland, increasingly cold towards the League.

Among the overseas Members, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand gave their full support to the policy of the United Kingdom. South

Africa's spokesman was Charles de Water, an orator of remarkable quality. He too pledged support of British policy, and added a moving appeal to Italy, on behalf of the one permanent white civilization in Africa, not to stir up a fresh antagonism between white and black. 'The long memory of Black Africa never forgets and never forgives an injury or an injustice.' Only India among the Commonwealth Members had nothing serious to say. In truth, feeling in India was strong against the Italians. Politically minded Indians were bound to sympathize with the struggle of an independent, if backward, nation against conquest by a European power; Indian Moslems, in particular, shared both the traditional sympathy of Islam for Ethiopia and its recent grudge against Italy. Nothing of all this, however, was felt in the India Office, or appeared in the Aga Khan's address to the Assembly. China, indeed, was the only Asiatic Member who spoke out clearly in support of League action. Iraq, Persia, Siam were silent. Afghanistan had only generalities to put forward. The Latin American States also were reluctant to declare themselves. Their feelings for Italy were cordial; they still hoped not to have to face the choice between Italy and the Covenant. Yet three of the small States of Central America, Honduras, Panama, and Haiti, could not refrain from proclaiming their sympathy and support for a weak country in its fight for life against a great Power. The Haitian delegate in particular spoke with extraordinary force 'as a man of colour, representing the only black republic in the immense continent of America'.

In spite of the silence of a number of delegations, the general effect of the Assembly debate was highly encouraging to the supporters of the League. Most of the abstentions were clearly due, not to any decision to break faith with the League, but to the reluctance of the governments concerned to commit themselves until the last possible moment. Considering the delays accepted and even encouraged by the chief European powers, it was not surprising that more distant States needed further time for reflection. Later events were to show that, with hardly an exception, they were willing, when the time came, to join in the common action. Meanwhile, the British lead had been accepted, gladly or reluctantly, by so many important countries that it was now certain that an Italian attack on Ethiopia would be treated as a violation of the Covenant and followed by sanctions. Mussolini himself had altered his tone as he recognized this unpleasant fact. It did not change his determination; and for this, as will later appear, he had special reasons of which the world was totally ignorant. But he no longer laughed at the idea of sanctions, nor threatened to go to war against any State which should apply them. On the contrary, he began to prepare the Italian



people to meet them—politically, by a campaign of propaganda against the hypocrisy of Britain, which was accused of using the League as a cover for her private interests; economically, by tightening up the controls, already severe, on exchange, investment, and foreign trade.

Strictly speaking, the dispute was still before the Council, and the speakers in the Assembly were stating, not their opinion on its merits, but the position which their country would adopt in case of violation of the Covenant. Meanwhile, the Committee of Five, appointed by the Council on September 7th, was working out a new proposal for an agreed settlement. Teclé Hawariate had informed the Assembly that the Emperor would welcome help from the League in planning and executing the reforms which his country needed and desired, but could not carry out unaided. On this basis the Committee put forward, on September 18th, a scheme under which the Emperor would accept a number of advisers appointed by the League and acting under the direction of the Council. The scheme would have left Ethiopian sovereignty nominally intact, but would have transferred the principal administrative authority to the representatives of the League. Nevertheless Haile Selassie agreed to take it as the basis of further negotiations. But, before his answer could reach Geneva, Mussolini had already rejected the Committee's proposals. They would have met, in full measure, the grievances exposed in the Italian memorandum. But they would have put an end to hopes of military glory and territorial expansion. Mussolini did not treat them with the same contempt as he had shown for the suggestions drawn up in Paris by Eden and Laval. He took four days to send his answer: and even expressed his appreciation of the efforts put forth by the Committee. But it may be considered certain that he never seriously contemplated accepting the plan, though he judged it politic to refrain from discourtesy towards the Council and Assembly.

Events now began to move with speed towards the climax which had been foreseen in Geneva ever since the fight at Wal-Wal nearly ten months earlier. On September 25th the Emperor notified the Council that his troops had been withdrawn thirty kilometres from the frontier in order to avoid incidents which might serve as a pretext for invasion, and requested it to send out observers to investigate and report on any incident which might arise. The next day the Council met. It was acting under Article 15 of the Covenant, which provided that in serious disputes it should first try to bring the parties to agreement, and if that attempt failed, should then pronounce its own judgement in the form of recommendations for a just settlement. In view of the Italian reply to the Committee of Five, it now had no alternative but to declare that its

work of conciliation had failed and its work of judgement must begin. This, as all knew, was the first constitutional step towards the application of sanctions; for the Article further provided that if one party complied with the Council's recommendations, no other Member might go to war with it. Consequently, if Ethiopia accepted the Council's judgement, and Italy then attacked her, the violation of the Covenant would be self-evident and the application of sanctions would be the plain duty of every Member. It was therefore with a full sense of the gravity of its proceedings that the Council took up its task. It formed itself into a Committee, excluding the two parties; and this Committee of Thirteen set to work, with the help of the Secretariat, to draft its formal statement of the facts of the dispute, and its final recommendations for a settlement.

The rains had ended. It was now possible for a mechanized army to advance over the Tigrean plateau. General de Bono's preparations were complete; and he had fixed October 5th as the day on which he would attack. On September 28th the Emperor announced that he could no longer delay the order for general mobilization. Thereupon, Mussolini ordered de Bono to begin operations on October 3rd instead of two days later. There was to be no declaration of war.<sup>1</sup> In the early hours of October 3rd a telegram from Rome informed the Council that the threatening attitude of the Emperor, in particular his order for general mobilization and the thirty-kilometre withdrawal, which was a purely strategic move, had obliged the Italian government to take the necessary measures for defence. A few hours later Addis Ababa reported that the Italian army had crossed the frontier and that Italian planes had bombed Adowa and Adigrat.

The Council's report was issued on October 5th. It recounted the story of Wal-Wal and all the various grounds of Italian complaints against Ethiopia. It described and defined the treaty obligations on both sides. It examined Ethiopia's conduct as a Member of the League since her admission in 1923, and especially during the last ten months. In language of studied moderation, it rejected the Italian case in all essential respects. It declared that the Covenant, the Kellogg Pact, the 1928 Treaty of Friendship, and the Optional Clause of the Statute of the Permanent Court were, for both countries, solemn undertakings which excluded resort to arms between them; and that if Ethiopia were accused of violating her engagements, the Council alone was competent to pronounce upon the accusation. Brief and belated as it was, this report was a document of the highest historical importance. It represented the judgement of thirteen States, all of whom had for weeks past been

<sup>1</sup> De Bono, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-21.

giving anxious study to the question involved, and most of whom were only too anxious to view Italian policy in the most favourable possible light. Yet they reached conclusions completely unfavourable to the Italian case. No great international dispute has ever been the subject of a clearer verdict.

Aloisi did his best to produce an answer to the Council's report: but the only points of substance he could find were that the Council ought to have sent a Commission of Inquiry to Ethiopia and that it had paid insufficient attention to the Italian memorandum of September 4th. Neither comment could come well from Italian lips, since in so far as the criticisms were true, they related to sins of omission which the Council had committed for Italy's sake. It was solely in order not to offend the Fascist government that the Council had never taken up Ethiopia's requests to send a League Commission to report on the truth or falsehood of Italy's complaints. (Only the last appeal of September 28th had been seriously considered; a plan had been worked out for an air patrol over the frontier districts; but once the Italian army was on the march the sending of observers was clearly useless.) As for the memorandum, it had been studied with care; and if only a partial answer to it was to be found in the Council's report, this was because further comment could only have meant further refutation, either of the Italian assertions or of the conclusions drawn therefrom. To refrain from all avoidable controversy with Italy was a principle from which no League organ departed throughout the conflict. It was a source of weakness, since it meant that Italian arguments, however false, were always allowed to pass without reply. During the whole proceedings of the Council and Assembly in September and October 1935 only two delegates, excluding of course those of Ethiopia, offered serious criticisms of the Italian claims—Litvinov in the Council on September 5th, and Alfred Nemours, the Haitian delegate, in the Assembly on September 16th and again on October 10th. No more remarkable oration is to be found in the annals of the Assembly than the second of these speeches. But what European power thought it had anything to learn from the spokesman of a small and poor negro republic, or gave attention to his closing prophecy: 'Great or small, strong or weak, near or far, white or coloured, let us never forget that one day we may be somebody's Ethiopia'.

What has here been called the Council's report did not, strictly speaking, possess that character until it had been formally approved. Though issued on October 5th, it was not put to the vote until October 7th, in order to allow Aloisi and Teclé Hawariate to consult their respective governments before voting. They were the only speakers at

the meeting: and their speeches were directed more to the outer world than to the Council. Thereafter, the report was approved by all the Council Members other than the parties. Italy voted against it; Ethiopia voted for it. Their votes, under the Covenant, were not to be reckoned; so that the report was unanimously adopted.

The Council had yet one further task to perform. Since October 3rd it had been receiving telegrams showing that hostilities had begun; and it now had to pronounce on the two vital questions: Does a state of war exist? If so, has the war been begun in disregard of the Covenant? For this purpose it had set up yet another Committee. The Chairman of this new body was Monteiro, the young, able, and energetic Foreign Minister of Portugal, who, during his brief tenure of that office, showed signs of becoming a European figure. But its driving force, as had already been the case in the previous Council Committees, was Eden; and its chief Secretary was Henri Vigier, a French member of the Secretariat whose outstanding ability as a draftsman has left its mark on all the important political documents drawn up by the Council or Assembly from 1930 onwards. The report which it submitted to the Council was clear, concise, and simple. The first question had been anticipated by Roosevelt, who on October 5th had formally imposed an arms embargo on both belligerents. The Committee's answer was given by a series of quotations from the highly coloured communiqués which General de Bono was issuing from his headquarters in Eritrea. The second question was considered in the light of the statements from both sides and of the essential rules of the Covenant. 'The Members of the League', it declared amongst other principles, 'are not entitled, without having first complied with the provisions of Articles 12, 13, and 15, to seek a remedy by war for grievances they consider they have against other Members of the League. The adoption by a State of measures of security on its own territory and within the limits of its international agreements does not authorize another State to consider itself free from its obligations under the Covenant.' And the report ended: 'After an examination of the facts stated above, the Committee has come to the conclusion that the Italian Government has resorted to war in disregard of its covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.'

Nothing, it might seem, could be less dramatic than the clumsy, commonplace, official phrases which have just been quoted. But to those who knew the Covenant they were charged with deep and historic significance. For they deliberately reproduced the opening words of Article 16: 'Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13, or 15, it shall *ipso*

*facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League. . . .’—The ‘conclusion’ reached by the Committee was therefore not simply a verdict on Italy’s claim to be justified in going to war. It was at the same time an acceptance of the consequences of that verdict, that is to say of the legal duty to apply sanctions—acceptance, in the first place, by the six States which composed the Committee, subsequently by their fellow Members of the Council, and lastly by the vast majority of the Assembly, as each in turn declared its approval of the report.

The Italians were surprised and disconcerted by the fact that the Committee had been able to produce so prompt and uncompromising a verdict. Aloisi protested that he had had no time to consult his government and asked for postponement. But with Italian bulletins of victory appearing in every edition of the press (Adowa had been taken the previous day) the Council was in no mood to comply with his request. Each member in turn, except the Italian representative, declared his acceptance of the report. Thereupon the President, Ruiz Guinazu of Argentina, announced, in terms already agreed on with his colleagues, that the minutes of the meeting would be sent to all the Members of the League, because, as the Assembly had long ago declared (October 4th, 1921), ‘the fulfilment of their duties under Article 16 is required of the Members of the League . . . and they cannot neglect them without a breach of their treaty obligations.’ Further, since the Assembly had been re-convened by Beneš and was to meet again in two days, the minutes were also ordered to be officially communicated to that body.

After the closure of its general debate, nothing more had been heard in the Assembly concerning the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. The regular business of the session had been carried through in the usual way. By September 28th the budget for the ensuing year had been voted—traditionally the last act of each Assembly. But though the forty questions on their agenda had been completed, the delegations were not ready to allow their session to be closed. It was clear that decisive events were impending; and there was a strong feeling that the Assembly must be in a position to meet again without delay. Numerous delegations, singly or in groups, urged that the session should only be adjourned, that the President should continue to follow closely the development of the conflict and, if war came, should at once re-convene the Assembly. So it was decided; and on October 5th, seeing that hostilities had begun and that the proceedings of the Council were nearing their climax, Beneš called on the Assembly to meet four days later.

The desire of the loyal Members of the League that the Assembly

should meet again was based on two considerations, the one moral, the other material. The Covenant had left to each individual Member the duty of judging for itself, according to its own conscience, whether or not a situation had arisen in which it was required to act under Article 16. But public opinion in each country would certainly demand that such individual decisions should be based upon the widest possible international agreement. A declaration by the Assembly that Italy had resorted to war in violation of the Covenant might, strictly speaking, produce no legal effect: but it furnished the moral basis without which individual action would be impossible. From the practical point of view also, each Member of the League required to have some assurance that the repressive measures enjoined by the Covenant would be taken by all, or at least by an overwhelming majority, of its fellow Members. Further, economic sanctions could not be effective if each country were left to decide when, how, and to what extent it would apply them. Some method of consultation and co-ordination was clearly necessary.

All these things the Assembly provided in a three-day session. Of the fifty-four Members represented, fifty put on record their agreement with the conclusions already reached in the Council. Italy voted against, once more, after yet another speech by Aloisi, the last and the best. Albania, Austria, and Hungary announced that they could not endorse a judgement which would force them to apply sanctions against a State to which they had so many reasons to be grateful. These exceptions, based on self-interest and fear, could not detract from the moral effect of the general verdict. They might, however, have raised some constitutional difficulty as regards the next step in the programme, namely, the establishment of a Committee for the purpose of organizing the action of the fifty loyal Members under Article 16 of the Covenant. Had this proposal been put forward as a formal resolution of the Assembly, it might have been defeated, under the unanimity rule, by a single adverse vote. But Beneš, with the aid of the principal delegates, had discovered a way of avoiding the pitfalls of procedure. The application of sanctions, he pointed out, was not a matter for the Assembly as such, but for the individual Members of the League. All the Assembly could do was to express the wish that the Members would set up a Committee of co-ordination. One adverse vote, and three abstentions, could not destroy the influence of a wish in which fifty nations joined; and the Committee was in fact set up by the same fifty with the knowledge that they had behind them the real, if not the formal, approval of the supreme organ of the League.

The Assembly had thus performed its essential tasks with surprising speed, clarity, and completeness. The verdict was pronounced: the

first necessary steps had been taken towards the application of sanctions. By October 11th, only forty-eight hours after the reopening of the session, the new Committee had met and taken its first substantive decision, to the effect that all export of arms to Italy should be immediately prohibited. It was already clear that the League Members as a body were prepared to carry out, at least up to a certain point, the hard and heavy obligations of resistance to aggression. Openly or tacitly, almost all the States which had remained silent during the general debate a month before had now come into line. Only two had at this stage shown signs of breaking away—Switzerland and Venezuela. With many protests of devotion to the League, each claimed that it would have special difficulty in cutting off economic relations with Italy. This hint at defection was serious. Venezuela was important as an exporter of oil. Switzerland was important to Italy both as importer and exporter: and still more valuable to Mussolini was the moral encouragement he could draw from the attitude of a State which had enjoyed so high a reputation for international loyalty. Nevertheless, the general result of the Assembly meeting was to show that the League was a more united body, and the prospects of effective action against Italy were more favourable, than either its friends or its enemies had expected.

But in spite of the promptitude of their action, the declarations at the Assembly of the chief sanctionist powers were in one respect deeply ominous. To simple minds it seemed evident that a struggle had now begun between the League of Nations and the Fascist regime which could only end by the victory of one and the defeat of the other. All over the world, in Britain, France, America, Russia, India, among the small countries and among the coloured peoples, there were wide sections of opinion which openly rejoiced in the unexpected stand taken by the League against a great power, and unreservedly hoped that the result would be the complete discomfiture of the ambitions of Mussolini. Their joy and hopes were shared, though not openly, by the governments of many States in Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe. But, with the single exception of Nemours's astonishing speech, nothing of all this was heard on the Assembly platform. There it was assumed that the policy of sanctions could be carried out in a friendly spirit, without interrupting normal relations with the Italian government in other respects, or destroying the prospects of a settlement by compromise. The mission of the League, said Motta, was to settle the conflict, with the consent of the parties, in a spirit of equity. Such language—and that of Laval, Eden, and others was not very different—was a deliberate refusal to face the facts. They knew that the Duce had three times

rejected proposals which, from the Ethiopian point of view, went a long way beyond the bounds of justice and equity. They were not prepared to admit the truth, since it would then have been plain to all that a choice must be made between the friendship of Mussolini on the one hand and the maintenance of the Covenant on the other. They were not ready to make that choice. Hence they continued to pursue two policies which were not merely inconsistent but mutually destructive.

It was not until two months later that the real meaning of this double policy was to become clear. In the days following the verdict of the Council and Assembly, the attention of public opinion everywhere, and of nearly all governments, was concentrated on the organization of sanctions against Italy. It is difficult now, in the light of later events, to realize that in October 1935 there was little or no fear of failure. Yet so it was. There was anxiety not to suffer, or inflict, more loss and disturbance than were strictly necessary. There was apprehension over the difficulties and complications which were bound to arise in an operation of such magnitude, undertaken for the first time in history. Each country was jealously watching lest its burden should be heavier than those of its neighbours: the refusal of Austria and Hungary to take any share, and of Switzerland to take a fair share, in the common action, led to suspicion and irritation. But all were confident that under the leadership of Britain the League would achieve its purpose. With her tradition of prudence and success, with her vast sources of information, with her special knowledge of Africa and of that little known region which stretched from Port Said to Aden, it was unthinkable that she should be setting out on a road which could lead to failure. Kind words to Italy were understood as a pledge that everything would be done to make it easier for her to accept defeat and give up her destructive enterprise. In this sense all the sanctionist powers were ready to echo them. All felt that the sooner the trouble was over, and normal conditions restored, the better it would be. But with the British government as their leader, none supposed that the end could be other than the victory of the League.

The whole business of sanctions was carried on, not by the Assembly or the Council, but by the new organism set up on the proposal of the Assembly for the purpose of co-ordinating the measures taken by each Member. This body was called the Co-ordination Committee. In order to avoid the loss of time involved in debating every question in a meeting of fifty delegates, the Co-ordination Committee delegated much of its work to a smaller body known as the Committee of Eighteen. All



decisions, however, were necessarily taken by, or in the name of, the Co-ordination Committee. The name of this organ was clumsy and even misleading. It was not a Committee in the English sense. It was responsible to no other body. Its conclusions were drafted in the form of proposals to be accepted or rejected by each State. This form was necessary on the one hand in order to avoid delay, since it enabled a delegate to accept *ad referendum* a proposal on which he had not yet received the instructions of his government; and on the other, to avoid all problems of voting by unanimity or majority. It was therefore a standing conference of the sanctionist States, and if it was not allowed to be called the Sanctions Conference, this was due to the reluctance felt by governments to use plain words which might hurt Italian feelings. Besides the managing committee of eighteen of its principal members, the Co-ordination Committee also set up a large number of committees and sub-committees dealing with economic questions, financial questions, the organization of mutual support, and various other problems. But it is unnecessary, and would only be confusing, to go into these details of procedure, since the final authority in every case rested in the main Committee. We shall therefore follow the method already used in dealing with the Disarmament Conference, and in describing the acts of the Co-ordination Committee and its Committee of Eighteen, shall use the terms, at once more simple and more accurate, of Sanctions Conference and Sanctions Committee.

On October 11th, eight days after the Italian army had crossed the frontier of Ethiopia, the Sanctions Conference held its first meeting. It elected as President Augusto de Vasconcellos, a former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Portugal, a devoted adherent of the League and long familiar with the men and methods of Geneva. It was a difficult task, but, Vasconcellos did it well, and, unlike many other delegates, he was not intimidated by the personal attacks of the Italian radio or the ceaseless complaints of the Italian Minister in Lisbon. The Conference next decided to meet in private—a decision which was immediately, and wisely, reversed. How could the proceedings of a body of fifty separate delegates, each with his advisers and experts, be kept confidential? On Eden's proposal, the Conference then agreed that all export of arms to Italy should be stopped forthwith. All but Switzerland and Luxembourg agreed at the same time to permit their export to Ethiopia.

It was already evident that no government intended to carry out in their literal form the obligations of Article 16. Under that Article, each Member of the League was required, first, to cut off all financial, commercial, and personal intercourse with the Covenant-breaking

State, and, secondly, to prevent such intercourse between it and any other State, whether a Member of the League or not. The second duty had become clearly impossible so long as the United States remained outside the League. There was nothing impossible about the first: but its execution in the literal sense would cause great suffering to the sanctionist States themselves, and the Members of the League had long ago agreed, at the Second Assembly, that this obligation should be carried out by stages, so as to reach the desired effect with the minimum of disturbance and loss. The sanctionist leaders, Eden, Titulescu, Litvinov, and others, declined to admit that this agreement was valid, inasmuch as the necessary amendment to the Covenant, though adopted by the Assembly, had never received the ratifications required to bring it into force. But even those who denied the theoretical validity of the Assembly resolutions of 1921 had no intention of going beyond them in practice. Two reasons for this were plain enough. Whereas in 1921 the United States was the only country outside the League capable of giving much economic help to a Covenant-breaking State, in 1935 Germany, Japan, and Brazil had also to be taken into account. Secondly, most people believed that the war would be long and that limited sanctions would therefore have time to be decisive. But there was also a third reason, known to very few people at that time. Hoare and Laval had agreed that there must be no danger of war with Italy: they accordingly planned their proposals on a scale which they felt sure would not provoke Mussolini into desperate acts of retaliation.<sup>1</sup>

Eden quickly followed up the arms embargo with two further suggestions. The first was to prohibit all loans and credits to the Italian government and to Italian firms. The second was to put a stop to all imports whatever from Italy. Seventy per cent of all her exports went to League Members. If these were stopped, and no credits were granted, her purchasing power abroad, and hence her capacity for carrying on a war, would be greatly reduced. She would have to use her gold reserves, which were already at a low level. Further, this measure could be applied without any technical difficulties. Import quotas and prohibitions were an only too familiar feature of international life; customs officials would only have to do, on a larger scale, what they were already doing every day.

The first proposal presented no great difficulty. Italy was already heavily in debt to foreign countries. Her resources had never been great. But her needs also were modest compared with those of other great powers; her finances had been managed with much skill; and she had always been able to pay her way. Now, however, with the Fascist

<sup>1</sup> See p. 670, below.

government squandering enormous sums on armaments, her financial position was deeply undermined, and few countries would in any case have been willing to increase the debit balance which she owed them. On October 14th, the financial sanction was adopted by the Conference, and governments were requested to put it into effect forthwith.

The prohibition of imports from Italy was adopted also, but not without doubt, hesitation, and delay. It was evident that she would retaliate by refusing, in her turn, so far as possible, to buy from the sanctionist States. To some, such as Yugoslavia, Roumania, and Switzerland, her custom represented a considerable proportion of their export trade. To nearly all it meant some loss of trade and therefore some increase in unemployment, that scourge of the inter-war years. Switzerland made it plain that she was not prepared to carry out the proposal: it would throw several thousand men out of work and create resentment and disturbance in her Italian-speaking cantons. This defection, following that of Austria and Hungary, made acceptance more difficult for States such as Yugoslavia and Roumania. Their case was brilliantly argued by Titulescu. They were convinced, he said, that their own security and that of their fellow Members depended on maintaining the Covenant and proving that aggression could and would be repressed. They were willing to take their full share in the general loss. They were even resigned to the probability of losing proportionately more than the rest. But now there was a group whose security was being defended at heavy cost by the loyal Members of the League, while they themselves not only refused to honour their plain obligations but would certainly profit by the trade which the loyal Members renounced.<sup>1</sup> This was a situation which the Little Entente States could not accept.

Their plea was warmly supported by Eden and Litvinov. Its justice was undeniable. Indeed, the Covenant had foreseen that such hardship might arise, by providing that the Members of the League should mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures taken under Article 16, in order to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting therefrom. The Conference therefore agreed, first, that sanctionist States should do their best to replace their imports from Italy by imports from one another, and, secondly, that they should reduce their purchases from those Members which were not participating in the common action.

There remained the question of prohibiting the export to Italy of

<sup>1</sup> Switzerland, Austria, and Hungary replied that they neither wished nor expected to increase their trade with Italy. Swiss trade did not, in fact, increase: that of the other two increased considerably.

manufactures or raw materials needed to carry on the war. This indeed had quickly and rightly been judged by public opinion to be the crux of the whole operation. The sanctions proposed by Eden, apart from the arms embargo, were indirect in their effect. They would gradually exhaust Italian purchasing power. But while it lasted, Italy could buy steel, coal, oil, and all the other materials she required. The Conference could not avoid or postpone considering this essential question of direct sanctions. The difficulty was that, for many products which Italy had hitherto imported from the sanctionist States, there existed an alternative source of supply. Was it reasonable to stop exports to Italy if this merely resulted in her getting them from the United States or Germany? Would not this mean that League Members would suffer loss without impairing Italy's power to continue the war? The argument was not wholly convincing; but Britain, France, and Russia accepted it without question, and the rest were glad to follow their lead. It was agreed, therefore, to draw up two lists of materials needed for the war in Africa. The first consisted of those articles the supply of which was, for practical purposes, completely controlled by the sanctionist powers. On these an embargo could, and should, be placed as soon as possible. The second list was to cover all those commodities of which the stoppage was desirable but was not likely to be effective unless sources outside the sanctionist States were also blocked.

On October 19th the Conference closed its first session. It formally approved the third sanction (stoppage of imports from Italy), and the fourth sanction (embargo on commodities in the first list, which included rubber, tin, aluminium, manganese, nickel, and several rarer metals; and also transport animals). But it did not decide the date on which these two important sanctions were to start. For this another meeting was to be held a fortnight later, by which time the governments would have been able to reflect on the work done at Geneva and to report how long it would take them to make the arrangements necessary to put it into effect. Meanwhile, all the decisions of the Conference were to be sent to the United States, Germany, and other non-Member States, with a discreet but unmistakable invitation to support the action of the League.

Two forms of sanction which had been much discussed in the press were tacitly rejected by the Sanctions Conference. The rupture of diplomatic relations with Italy was suggested by the delegate of South Africa. But he made no formal proposal: his suggestion met with no official support; and nothing more was heard of it. The closing of the Suez Canal was never proposed by any government. It had been urged by important outside bodies and persons, ranging from the Second

International to Sir Austen Chamberlain. Its effect would have been crushing: the bigger the Italian force in Africa, the sooner Mussolini would have had to come to terms with the League. For just this reason it was never seriously considered by the British government, which had dispatched a part of the fleet to Alexandria, but was resolved to run no risk of an Italian attack on British bases or ships in the Mediterranean. And no other power could propose a measure which only the British could execute.

But though the Sanctions Conference had taken no such dramatic or decisive step, its achievements were by no means inconsiderable. Setting out upon an enterprise never before attempted, it had moved both farther and faster than its warmest supporters had dared to hope. The conception of world-wide resistance to an unlawful act of aggression had been proved to be no mere theory. And it was clearly understood that the four sanctions so far voted were only a beginning, and that further action would be taken as soon as the first measures had been effectively set in motion.

By October 31st, when the Conference met again, nearly fifty Members of the League had declared themselves ready to carry out its resolutions. Egypt, though not a Member, had decided to participate in full. As for the two non-Members whose attitude was of special importance, they presented a curious contrast. In the United States public sentiment was overwhelmingly favourable to League action and anxious to see it succeed; this was true even of the large section of opinion which preferred that the country should officially remain completely neutral. The Secretary of State replied to the message of the Sanctions Conference with evident good will, though with no hint at possible co-operation. The Administration asked men of business to refrain from increasing their sales to either belligerent. But in spite of all this, Italy found no difficulty in securing whatever additional supplies she could pay for. In Germany, on the other hand, public opinion, though sympathizing with Ethiopia, was of course hostile to the League. The Nazi government returned no official answer to the message of the Conference. But, for its own reasons, the government had no wish to part with the materials which Italy wanted to buy. It took steps to prevent any increase in the export of these materials, and with diplomatic circumlocution it allowed this fact to be announced by Vasconcellos.

A large proportion of the governments, in agreeing to enforce the third and fourth sanctions, had reported that they would need another two or three weeks to make the necessary arrangements. It was decided, therefore, that both should come into effect in all the countries concerned on November 18th. The delay was disappointing to Eden and

other sanctionist leaders. They had hoped that the general action could begin in the first days of November. The extra fortnight of freedom was undoubtedly of great help to Italy.

It was observed with satisfaction in Geneva that Laval and Hoare came in person to the meeting of November 2nd, which fixed the date at which the new sanctions should begin, and which called on all Members of the League to see that these were effectively applied throughout their respective territories. Did not their presence for the first time in the Sanctions Conference mark their recognition of the historic importance of the occasion, and their determination to persevere in loyal observance of the Covenant? As soon as the resolution had been voted, they rose in turn to inform the Conference that France and Britain would each carry out its terms in full. But they added that they were, at the same time, holding conversations with Italy in the hope of finding a new basis of agreement. Each protested that nothing would be done behind the back of the League or contrary to the Covenant. The Council would be told at once if a basis of settlement could be found.

As soon as Hoare sat down, van Zeeland, the Belgian Prime Minister—he too present at the Conference for the first time—rose to move that the French and British representatives should be formally entrusted with the task of finding a solution to the conflict. The atmosphere of the meeting had by now changed from one of confidence to one of discomfort. The proposal itself was unwelcome to many delegations, who recalled how the action of the Council had been obstructed throughout the early stages of the dispute. Their doubts were strengthened by the obvious fact that the whole scene had been prepared beforehand. Subsequent speakers could not refuse their blessing to the efforts of Laval and Hoare; but they emphasized the promise that those efforts would lead to no result that was inconsistent with the Covenant. As for van Zeeland's proposal, it was pointed out that the Sanctions Conference had no competence to entrust any of its members with any such mission. The President did not therefore put the proposal to a vote. The meeting, he said, took note of the hope expressed by the delegate of Belgium, adding, with more courtesy than truth, that they gave it their full approval.

Before the session closed, the Conference approved a motion proposed by Dr Riddell, the Canadian delegate, to the effect that the embargo now decided on for rubber, tin, and other materials controlled by the Members of the League, ought to be extended to other essential materials as soon as it could be effectively applied. The materials in question were oil; iron and steel; coal and coke. It was decided to consult the governments and to await their replies before reaching

definite conclusions. The United States could supply all three groups; Germany could supply the second and third. The question therefore was, first, whether one or both of these powers would co-operate with the League by stopping or limiting exports to Italy of oil, steel, and coal. If they did so, the path of the League powers was clear. If they declined, then the League powers must decide whether to give up the idea of an embargo on these materials, or to impose it, knowing that at least it would cause inconvenience, expense, and delay, and thus reduce Italy's capacity to make war. The new proposal was for Mussolini a threat, not immediate, but infinitely more dangerous than anything that the League had done hitherto.

At the end of the first two months of Mussolini's war, the situation from the point of view of the League was by no means unsatisfactory. For a few weeks more the balance continued to incline in favour of the League. The signs of Italy's financial difficulties were not slow in appearing. From October 20th the Bank of Italy ceased to publish the figures of its gold reserves. On November 27th the gold value of the lira was cut by nearly 25 per cent. The direct effect of sanctions was still hardly felt: but the prospective loss of two-thirds of the export trade, and of certain necessary imports, was already adding to the loss and confusion due to war conditions. Italian opinion had at first reacted with courage and indignation to the imposition of sanctions, which, every Italian was told, were the result not of world-wide disapproval, but only of British jealousy. Britain and the League were accused in every Fascist journal—that is to say in every Italian journal—of trying to starve the Italians to death. In truth it had been agreed from the first that no embargo should be placed on her importation of food: and as her food exports were cut off, the nutritional standard of the people, far from being reduced, was actually higher than before. But the national fervour excited by the Duce's speeches and the first highly coloured war bulletins was now subsiding. By December, criticism and discontent were widespread, and, what was significant in a country which had long lost the habit of free discussion, they were beginning to be openly expressed.

The chief cause of this fall in morale was popular disappointment with the news from the front. Three days after crossing the frontier, de Bono had reached Adowa, meeting with no resistance; but it was not till nearly a month later, on November 3rd, that he felt strong enough to make a further move, and even then he had to be spurred forward by a series of impatient telegrams in which Mussolini reminded him that time was working against Italy and that the political situation

in Europe was far from reassuring.<sup>1</sup> Having advanced forty miles in five days, he again stopped to organize his communications and secure his flanks. Yet there had so far been no serious fighting at all. It was not surprising that the excessive prudence of the Fascist general should excite the criticism and even the ridicule of the regular army and of the salons of Rome. On November 17th the Duce recalled de Bono and put Badoglio in command of operations. This move was expected to lead to swift developments. In the end, Italian hopes were not disappointed; when Badoglio did move, he moved with speed. But January still found his forces in the positions in which de Bono had left them.

In this situation, any serious intensification of sanctions opened up, for the Fascist government, a terrifying prospect. Such an intensification had already been approved, in principle, by the Sanctions Conference. And there was fresh reason to think that Britain, the acknowledged leader of the sanctionist States, would press for it to be put into practice. Baldwin's government had been agreeably surprised to find how popular it had become since people thought that it was really backing the League. A general election had to take place before September 1936; and Baldwin decided to take advantage of the unmistakable direction of opinion by fighting his election forthwith on the basis of Britain's leadership in support of the Covenant. The Liberal and Labour parties also placed the League in the forefront of their programmes. They urged that their support of collective security was due to no sudden conversion but to long-held conviction; the government, on the other hand, had hoisted the League flag for opportunist reasons and would betray it as soon as they had secured a fresh lease of power. Baldwin, Hoare, Neville Chamberlain, and others protested against such unworthy suspicions and pledged, in the strongest language, their loyalty to the Covenant. Their promises, and the record of Eden's acts, were enough to win the day. The electorate was resolved to ensure a League victory over Italy. It gave its vote for the party that had begun the good work and promised to complete it. On November 14th, 1935, the National government was sent back to Westminster with a large majority; and all agreed that this result was due to its championship of the League.

In many other directions the signs seemed favourable to the League rather than to the Fascist government. The Labour movement all over the world was hostile to Italy, and with few exceptions was anxious to see the policy of sanctions pursued with energy. In Alexandria and Marseilles, in South Africa and California, crews had refused to sail in ships carrying supplies for Italy, and dockers had refused to load them.

<sup>1</sup> De Bono, *op. cit.*, pp. 276 sqq.



The British Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives had refused to work on orders for the Italian army. On September 25th, before the war began, the Third International had invited the Second to join in organizing united working-class action; it repeated the invitation as soon as the expected attack took place. If these proposals came to nothing, and if the local movements were discouraged by the Unions, this was chiefly because their leaders believed that their governments would see to it that League action was effective. The movement could have been re-started at any moment. All the Protestant Churches, all the women's organizations, all liberty-loving and generous men wished well to the efforts of the League. There seemed little to set against this strong movement of popular feeling. A few groups campaigned openly in Italy's favour. The leaders of reaction in France, with Maurras at their head, proclaimed that the League and its sanctions were the invention of Marxists, Jews, and Freemasons. Some associations of traders in America, France, and Switzerland protested against the loss of business. In London, and no doubt elsewhere, there were discreet representations from commercial interests, and a steady weight of discouragement from the professionals of diplomacy. But all this looked very small compared with the surging tide of support for the League. If then the proposal to stop coal, steel and, above all, oil, were to be pressed forward at Geneva, the outlook for Mussolini's war was black indeed.

In this crisis Mussolini turned to Laval; and he did not turn in vain. He threatened to leave the League; he moved troops to the French frontier; he hinted that the French Riviera might be bombed. Laval was doubtless already resolved to help the Fascist government to the best of his power; but these threats might strengthen his hands in dealing with his colleagues in Paris and, still more, in dealing with his ally in London; and it would be quite in keeping with his character that he should have suggested them himself. However that may be, he set to work with skill and determination. The Sanctions Committee was to meet before the end of November in order to consider the possibility of applying the new prohibitions. By that time the sanctionist governments, with Britain and France at their head, were expected to announce their individual willingness to stop all their own exports of coal, steel, and oil to Italy, and thereafter to take a joint decision on behalf of the Members of the League as a whole. Public opinion was waiting with impatience to know what the Committee would do. In particular the oil sanction had caught the imagination of the world. In Ethiopia the Italians were fighting with planes, tanks, and mechanical transport against levies that moved on foot and were armed only with rifles and machine-guns. Deprived of their oil supply, the Italians would

have no choice but to retreat.<sup>1</sup> That supply had hitherto come almost entirely from sanctionist countries, and nearly all of those chiefly concerned had made up their minds to accept an embargo if others did so. It was true that the United States could fill the gap, and that Italian purchases of oil from that source had already risen steeply. But it was also true that the American government was already using moral pressure to stop the increase, and that the possibility of more direct measures was by no means excluded.

In the face of this urgent and specific danger, Laval began by asking for a postponement, on personal grounds, of the meeting of the Sanctions Committee. Such a request from the Prime Minister of France could not be refused without discourtesy; and Vasconcellos put off the meeting from November 29th to December 12th.

To have gained a fortnight's respite was a valuable service to Mussolini, since the Italians were largely increasing their imports of oil from Roumania and Russia as well as from America. But it was only a beginning. On December 7th Hoare left London for a holiday in Switzerland. He had, it seems, no intention of discussing business on his way through Paris: but Laval persuaded him that the situation was more grave than he had realized. If the oil sanction were imposed, Mussolini would be unable to continue the war in East Africa: and if he could not carry on war in East Africa, he would make war on the British Empire. A stranger argument it would be hard to imagine: but Laval reinforced it with hints that in such a case Britain might be left to fight alone, and succeeded in creating such an atmosphere of tension and anxiety that the Foreign Secretary agreed to stay another day in Paris in order to complete a new plan of conciliation. Officials of the Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office had been working for weeks on such a plan. Hoare now gave his formal agreement to proposals which might be expected to satisfy the ambitions of the Italian invader. He agreed also that these proposals should be submitted at once to the two belligerents, and that the British Minister in Addis Ababa should be instructed to use his utmost influence to secure their acceptance by the Emperor. It was understood between the French and British that their terms would be kept secret. But they were, in fact, divulged in Paris even before they had become known to the British Cabinet or been submitted to the Italian and Ethiopian governments. Their publication was a stunning shock, not only to the British electorate, but also to all the countries which were taking part in sanctions.

<sup>1</sup> It is believed that the Italians already controlled big supplies of oil at sea or in port-storage. But they certainly had only about two months' supply in Africa (de Bono, *op. cit.*, p. 275). They could not have remained in enemy territory till these were exhausted.

The substance of the Hoare-Laval plan consisted of two proposals. The first was diplomatically called an exchange of territories. The exchange consisted of the cession by Ethiopia to Italy of three areas, two in the north contiguous to Eritrea, one in the south-east contiguous to Somalia. The three together totalled about 60,000 square miles. In return, Ethiopia was to receive an outlet to the sea through the cession by Italy of some 3,000 square miles in the south-east corner of Eritrea; or, if this were refused by the Duce, by an equivalent area taken from the territories of French or British Somaliland. The second proposal was that the whole southern half of the country, to a total of about 160,000 square miles, should be marked off as 'a zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy'. In this enormous area Italy would enjoy exclusive rights of economic exploitation, the right of ownership of unoccupied territories, and unlimited rights of immigration and settlement. The zone would remain nominally under Ethiopian sovereignty and Ethiopian administration: but the administration was to be controlled by Italians acting in the name of the League, and one of their essential duties would be to ensure the safety of Italian subjects and the free development of Italian enterprises.

The reaction against this plan not only in Addis Ababa, but in Britain, in America, and in the small countries generally, was violent and immediate. It was bad enough to ask Ethiopia to give up twenty times what she could hope to receive, and to call it an exchange. But if it was hypocrisy to speak of an exchange, what was to be said of the zone of Italian settlement? Was not this simply equivalent to the annexation of half the country? The zone, and the new Italian territory in the south-east, would have a common frontier 400 miles long. Could anyone doubt that Italy would find that the safety of her settlers and the free development of her enterprises necessitated the military occupation of the zone? And how long could the central area, surrounded on all sides by Italian territory, retain any semblance of independence? Was the plan anything less than the consecration and reward of aggression, proffered to Mussolini in the name of the League? How could it be reconciled with the repeated promises of its authors to take no action that should be inconsistent with the Covenant? They had promised, also, not to go behind the back of the League, or to present it with a *fait accompli*. They still pretended that the plan meant nothing until it had been submitted to, and approved by, the Council. But the two chief Members of that Council, without consulting or even informing their fellow Members, had already committed themselves to approve and support it. More, they had exerted their utmost influence on the Emperor to persuade him to accept it.

That the Hoare-Laval proposals constituted a breach of faith towards Ethiopia, and towards all the Members of the League, was unanswerably clear from the first moment of their publication. What was not so well understood at the time was that they were the natural outcome of the double policy which the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay had followed ever since the Italo-Ethiopian dispute had been taken up by the Council and Assembly of the League. By his speech of September 11th Hoare had placed his country at the head of the League powers, inspiring them with a confidence and resolution which, in the absence of the United States, only British leadership could give. From then, until the new plan was produced three months later, the British delegate had been the first to put forward proposals for the application of sanctions, and to urge that they should be brought into force without delay. But on the very day before he spoke in the Assembly, Hoare had agreed with Laval that the sanctions applied should only be such as would not lead to war. It was not, it seems, a pledge, but it was a statement of policy, and of a policy which was not capable of being reconciled with the speech in the Assembly. It meant, in effect, and was so construed to mean by the governments of Baldwin and Laval alike, not only that they would themselves take no military measures, such as the closing of the Suez Canal, but also that they would refrain from any action to which Mussolini was likely to retaliate by military measures on his side. And since it may be regarded as certain that Laval promptly informed the Duce of this situation, it followed that the latter knew that if sanctions began to look too dangerous he had a way of arresting them. Thus the British and French entered into the Sanctions Conference under limitations which were quite unknown to their fellow Members. In this false situation, the need of a settlement by conciliation must have looked more and more urgent; and such a settlement they sought for desperately, even while they knew that Italy would reject any terms which were consistent with the Covenant. Accordingly, while Eden in Geneva was pressing for united League action for the vindication of the Covenant, the British and French diplomatic services were working out new formulas for compromise, and trying to persuade the Emperor to start negotiations for peace. And thus the British government was caught unawares in the sudden squeeze exercised on Mussolini by the threat of the oil sanction, by Mussolini on Laval, and by Laval in turn upon the Foreign Secretary.

The Hoare-Laval plan was received by Ethiopia with amazement and indignation. The Emperor's reply was sent, not to Paris and London, but to Geneva. He asked that the Assembly might be reconvened and the new proposals dealt with, not in secret negotiations,

but in open debate. It was perfectly clear that they would be rejected by Ethiopia; and their reception in Italy was little better. They were severely criticized by the Fascist press. Mussolini himself declared in a public speech that they were the product of conservatism and hypocrisy, and that Italy would not allow herself to be tricked. No answer was ever sent to Paris and London. There was no truth in the assertion, made by the Italians at a later stage, that if Ethiopia had not refused to consider the plan, Italy might have accepted it.

Though rejected by the belligerents, resented by most Members of the League, execrated by the great mass of public opinion, and speedily dropped by the British and French governments themselves, the Hoare-Laval proposals nevertheless achieved their purpose. Their authors had agreed that, so long as a new plan for peace was under consideration, it would be unreasonable to discuss any extension of sanctions. Nothing, indeed, but the desire to forestall the forthcoming meeting of the Sanctions Committee could explain why a step of such momentous and far-reaching character should have been taken with so little time for reflection. The Sanctions Committee could not be further postponed. But when it met on December 12th, it was informed by Laval and Eden that a new basis of negotiation had just been submitted to the belligerents, and would shortly be communicated to the Council; and that the Council would be asked to meet as soon as possible in order to consider it. No authentic text of the plan had yet been published: whatever its inward convictions might be, the Committee had little choice but to accept the assumption that a new hope of early peace had dawned, and that it should refrain from any decision which could prejudice the action of the Council. With obvious reluctance, its members decided to postpone once more the discussion of additional sanctions, and to await the result of the forthcoming Council meeting. At the same time Beneš, replying as President of the Assembly to the Ethiopian request for a public debate on the Hoare-Laval plan, said that he would wait and see what happened in the Council before deciding.

There followed a week of doubt and demoralization—a week of misery, as some members of the British Parliament described it in the famous debate with which it closed. From all over the world came tidings of the disastrous effects of the Paris plan. Confidence in the British government had been raised by Hoare's speech in the Assembly, by Eden's lead in the Sanctions Conference, by the pledges given at the general election, to heights unknown since the Armistice. Confidence in the League had risen to heights unknown since the days when the United States was still expected to be its leading Member. Not a small State but was rejoicing in a renewed sense of security. If the Covenant

could baffle Mussolini today, would Hitler or any other aggressor venture to violate it tomorrow? Germany, from the day she left the League, had been treating it as impotent and a sham: she had greatly changed her tone since its Members had shown themselves capable of united action. The American government was in strong sympathy, and was looking for ways to give practical support.

With the publication of the Franco-British plan, all the ground thus gained, and much more, was lost in a few hours. The relief in Germany, the dismay in America, were unmistakable. The effect on the Members of the League and on their capacity for collective resistance to aggression was still more crushing.

On December 18th, when Eden opened the discussion at the Council, it was already plain that the proposals were dead: and his speech did not disguise the fact. Laval was still defiant: he claimed, contrary to all evidence, that the Council did not yet know how the plan would be welcomed by the two belligerents, and that in the meantime it should avoid expressing an opinion. Italy was not represented at the Council table. Ethiopia had a new delegate, Wolde Mariam, who had taken Teclé Hawariate's place in Paris and Geneva. In a short speech and a long memorandum, Wolde Mariam set forth the deep injustice of the proposals and the grief, alarm, and surprise with which they had been received in his country. Ethiopia, however, had not lost faith in the League. She did not ask for military help. Italy was fighting her with troops levied from those who were brothers in race and colour of the Ethiopian people: but she would defend herself with her own blood. Her soldiers did not fear death. But they were desperately short of arms and munitions. She appealed to the League for financial help in order to procure the weapons which she needed to defend herself against the vast armaments of the invader. Wolde Mariam's plea was moving in its directness and simplicity. It was received with embarrassed silence. The authors of the Paris plan made no answer to the Ethiopian criticisms. No other Council member spoke. The Council decided that it was not called upon to express an opinion on the Hoare-Laval proposals—a polite but unmistakable verdict. But it had no more to say. Nothing was heard of a meeting of the Assembly: Ethiopia had asked for this, in order to have a public debate on the proposals, and these having been dropped, did not renew her request. The Sanctions Committee held a short and formal meeting, and separated without further discussion on the oil sanction or other extension of those already being applied. It might well seem that the organs of the League were frozen in a paralysis of doubt. And this indeed was true. But some Members kept silence, partly because the Hoare-Laval plan had broken their confidence, but

partly also in the expectation that a new impulse to action would shortly be given from London.

The week of misery had witnessed a startling upheaval of British public opinion. All parties, and not least its Conservative supporters, accused the government of having broken faith not only with the League but with the electorate which had just returned it to power. After trying for a few days to ride the storm, Baldwin decided to withdraw his approval of the plan, and to save his government by accepting the resignation of the Foreign Secretary. Hoare's tenure of the Foreign Office had been brief, but dramatic. It had lasted only six months. From the first his frank and cordial attitude in Parliament had done much to win him the trust of all parties. He had abandoned the controversial methods of his predecessor, and treated foreign policy as a common national interest. His speech at the Assembly had consolidated British unity and restored confidence both at home and abroad. His achievement had brought victory at the polls to a government for which the people had no enthusiasm and little respect. But he was a tired man. Some of his chief officials disliked the League and distrusted the idealism of the electors. They had no desire to see Mussolini overthrown, and British policy bound, perhaps for ever, by the fetters of the Covenant. The Quai d'Orsay had its own reasons for wishing to save the Fascist government; and the two powerful institutions followed, with their usual persistence, a course which could only frustrate the enterprise undertaken at Geneva. Hoare began to see the situation through their eyes; he grew alarmed at the prospect of success, exaggerated the danger of war, lost sight of the disasters which must follow at such a critical time from a sudden reversal in the British attitude. And thus his period of office ended with British prestige and reputation lower than they had been for years, and with the nation more deeply divided over foreign policy than before his appointment.

One hope remained, both at home and abroad. Would the British government now return to the policy of September 11th and of the general election—the policy of steady resistance to the aggressor and of faithful execution of the Covenant? Eden's appointment as Foreign Secretary (December 22nd, 1935) seemed to be an affirmative answer to the questions that all were asking. In Britain, and Geneva, it was learned with joy; in Rome with anger and fear. Though he had loyally declared that there had never been a shadow of difference of opinion between himself and Simon or Hoare, he was everywhere looked upon as a champion of the League. The British nation had chosen its own Foreign Secretary: and it had chosen a man of whom it knew little save that he had stood firm for the Covenant. He could, it

seemed, dictate his own policy, sure of being upheld by the progressive members of his own party and by all sections of the opposition. There was every reason, therefore, to hope that the British government would now continue with energy and resolution along the road of sanctions. This hope faded as the weeks went by, bringing no new decision.

The next regular session of the Council was due to open on January 20th, 1936. No further discussion on sanctions took place in the meantime. The Council agenda was no less charged than usual; but so far as the war in Ethiopia was concerned, it had only two decisions to take. In the first place, it declined to make, at least for the time being, any further attempt at a settlement by conciliation. This decision was a relief to the Ethiopian delegation, which feared lest it might once more be pressed to make concessions to Italy, under pain of losing the help of the League if it refused to do so. Secondly, the Council rejected Ethiopia's request for financial assistance. The situation in which that country now stood had indeed been fully foreseen in previous years. The Assembly of 1930 had unanimously approved a Treaty of Financial Assistance for the Victim of Aggression. If this agreement, carefully and elaborately worked out by high financial authorities, had been allowed to come into force, the Council would have been able, and indeed would have been obliged, to make large sums available for Ethiopia to use in her own defence. But though all had praised it, few had ratified it. Like the Treaty to Improve the Means of Preventing War, it had been planned to close a gap: and the gap had been left open. No government was willing, in the absence of any treaty obligation, to advance money to Ethiopia or to propose a joint action for that purpose.

It was not, however, upon the Council, but upon the simultaneous session of the Sanctions Committee, that public attention was now concentrated. In the duel between the League and Italy, it was still uncertain to which side fortune would incline. The Sanctions Conference had been profoundly shaken by the Hoare-Laval plan. The sense of unity, the confidence in ultimate success, had largely disappeared. In every League country, and in the United States, the enemies of collective action were proclaiming that all the loss and inconvenience were being sustained, not for any noble international purpose, but to serve the ends of British policy. On the other hand, no important development had taken place in the field. Until well past the New Year, the Italian armies had attempted no further advance. In mid-January, a success won by Graziani on the south-eastern front had been balanced by an indecisive battle in the north. Any engagement which was not an Italian victory was a success for Ethiopia. Her strategic problem was



how to hold out until the rains of early summer. It would then be difficult for the mechanized forces of the invader to do more than hold their ground: and the respite of three or four months thus gained would allow the action of the League to take effect, more especially if existing pressure were now to be intensified. The sanctions already imposed were indeed beginning to constitute a serious danger for Italy. Her export trade had diminished to a crippling degree; her monthly exports to Britain had fallen from a normal rate of over \$3 million to less than \$100,000, her monthly exports to France from over \$2 million to less than one-tenth of that amount. Forty-nine other States were pledged to enforce the same measures. In spite of retaliatory decrees cutting down her imports from all these States—and these were in themselves a kind of self-imposed sanction—her gold reserves were melting at a rate which would exhaust them completely in another nine months. What then would happen if the League were led to give a further turn of the screw?

It had been expected by many, after the dramatic manifestation of public opinion a month before, that Britain would now propose some new steps in that direction. Even apart from an embargo on oil, coal, and steel, which had already been approved in principle, there were many ways in which Mussolini's difficulties could have been increased. Supplies of food and water were being delivered direct in large quantities to Italian East Africa from Aden, Kenya, South Africa, and elsewhere. Italy was even allowed to maintain, between Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, an air service which involved landing and refuelling in British Somaliland. Tourists' visits to Italy, an important form of invisible export, were still freely permitted. No proposal, however, was made in the Sanctions Committee to stop these or other forms of assistance to the aggressor. The proposals for an embargo on coal, iron, and steel were dropped on the ground that the statistics collected by the Secretariat did not prove that such an embargo would be effective. As for the oil sanction, it was decided that a group of experts should be asked to study the question. It was significant that this suggestion was made by the President. The Italian press kept a close watch on proceedings at Geneva and poured out invectives against countries and individuals who showed any initiative in the matter of sanctions. These attacks were far from fruitless. The first proposal for an embargo on oil, coal, and steel had been made by the Canadian representative just as a change of government was taking place in Ottawa; and, partly at least as a result of Italian representations, his action was soon afterwards disavowed by the new Prime Minister. Now even the delegations which wanted to impose the oil embargo thought it more prudent to act

through the impersonal medium of Vasconcellos who, though a sensitive man, continued to show himself proof against the insults of the Roman propaganda machine.

It is possible, and even probable, that the sanctionist powers believed that they had time to spare. The military experts of the press were convinced that Italy could not complete her conquest before the rainy season; and it seems likely that the official advice of the General Staffs was substantially to the same effect. In any case, the Sanctions Committee proceeded without haste. The experts on oil could not be assembled before February 3rd. Their work, once started, was speedy and harmonious. By February 12th they had produced a unanimous report covering the whole question of Italy's requirements, stocks, sources of supply, and means of transport. Their conclusion was that her resources would be exhausted in from three to three and a half months from the imposition of an embargo; that the effectiveness of the embargo would hardly be diminished by imports from the United States so long as these were kept to their normal figure; and that there was no other available source outside the territories of the Members of the League. They further showed that, even if no action were taken by the United States, it would be possible, by denying to Italy the use of tankers belonging to sanctionist powers, to make any addition to her supplies from that country a slow, difficult, and costly affair. This report, by experts of the highest competence, was clear, conclusive, and encouraging. If the spirit which had animated the Sanctions Conference in October had still survived in February, the oil embargo could have been applied without more delay. But the governments asked for time to study and reflect on the report. No further meeting of the sanctionist States was called until March 2nd.

While Geneva marked time, a disastrous change was coming over the situation in Ethiopia. Mussolini and Badoglio, doubting the possibility of victory by fair means alone, had decided to use foul means as well. They did not cease to proclaim, both in Europe and in the occupied regions of Ethiopia, that they were bringing civilization and freedom to an Empire of barbarians and slave-owners. The new means of teaching Africa what European civilization could do was the scientific and liberal distribution of mustard gas.

As in every war, each side had from the first accused the other of violating the laws of war. The Italians accused the Ethiopians of using dum-dum bullets; of mutilating the dead; of committing atrocities on the wounded and on prisoners; and of misusing the Red Cross. The Ethiopians accused the Italians of using dum-dum bullets; of bombing

open towns; and of deliberately attacking field hospitals from the air. Each side produced the evidence of foreigners as well as of its own people; and, indeed, both the British and Swedish governments protested indignantly to Rome against the attacks on hospitals sent out by the charity of their nationals. It was very natural that for the Fascist press all the atrocities should be on the Ethiopian side. But on January 2nd there appeared a phenomenon which was clearly not natural, but inspired. On that day a number of different papers published articles denouncing the villainies of the enemy and calling on the government to change its over-chivalrous attitude and to adopt henceforth the most ruthless methods of warfare. It was easy to see what was coming, the more so since reports of the use of gas bombs and shells were already reaching Geneva. These methods, however, did not prove very successful. The Italian staff then found a better plan. Mustard gas was sprayed by relays of planes along broad bands of territory, not only at the front but in selected areas far from the fighting. The effect both on the armies and on the women and children, all of whom went habitually barefoot, is easy to imagine. It will probably never be known with certainty how far the Italians owed their victories to the skilful use of poison gas. The Ethiopians affirmed that, but for this, they could have held out indefinitely. It is at least certain that the moral effect of each defeat was enormously increased by the ruthless bombing and spraying of the retreating levies.

During the month of February the Italians won two important battles on the northern front. It was now realized that the military prospects of the invader were much better than they had seemed to be a month earlier, and that the crisis, not only of the war in Ethiopia, but of the League's collective effort, could not long be delayed. At the beginning of March the Foreign Ministers of France and Britain came out for the meeting of the Sanctions Committee. Laval had fallen; but his successor, Etienne Flandin, was a politician no less reactionary than Laval himself, the spokesman in French politics of high finance and heavy industry. Flandin was determined to maintain the policy hitherto followed by Laval. As soon as the report of the oil experts came up for discussion, he asked that its consideration should be postponed and that the Council Committee<sup>1</sup> should be asked to make a fresh attempt to put an end to the war. Eden agreed, believing that the delay would not be a long one. He then announced that the British government was in favour of an oil embargo, and would join in applying it if the other Members of the League which produced or transported oil would do the same. At last, therefore, Britain had abandoned the position that no

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the Council without Italy or Ethiopia.

embargo should be imposed on any commodity not wholly controlled by sanctionist powers. On this showing, Italy could have been cut off months earlier from her chief sources, not only of oil but also of coal and steel. The chances of American co-operation would at that time have been greater; even without it Italy's war would have been subjected to a severe handicap. Now it might well be doubted whether Eden's statement was more than an empty gesture. He had enabled his government to reply, at last, to the critics at home. But he made no proposal, and no date was fixed for a further meeting of the sanctionist States. Flandin was left in possession of the field.

On March 3rd the Council Committee met and dispatched to Rome and Addis Ababa an appeal to declare themselves ready to open negotiations at once, 'in the framework of the League and in the spirit of the Covenant', for the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of peace. Haile Selassie accepted the next day. Mussolini's answer, five days later, was that he would accept in principle to open negotiations for the settlement of the conflict. It can scarcely be supposed that these moves had any other purpose than to assist Flandin's delaying operation in Geneva. In any case, the whole situation was changed when, on March 7th, Hitler denounced the Treaty of Locarno and marched into the Rhineland. The Duce did not withdraw his answer to the Council Committee; but he thenceforth treated the Committee, the Council, and the sanctionist powers with a contempt which showed that he no longer believed that they would offer any obstacle to his purposes.

He was not wrong. The belief that Italy could be induced to join in opposing the warlike ambitions of Germany was still dominant in the minds of French and British diplomatists. Hitler had torn up the Treaty of Locarno: it could not be restored without the co-operation of Italy. And if Italy were to be a guarantor of the Franco-German frontier, was it not the height of folly not merely to alienate her good will, but to undermine her resources? Why continue to widen the gulf, sacrificing Italy's old friendship with Britain and new friendship with France, and forcing Mussolini to maintain in Africa the armies and aeroplanes which might be deployed in defence of the Rhine? All this to satisfy an ignorant and sentimental public opinion, to preserve the independence of a barbarous Empire, to uphold a Covenant whose true purpose was to restrain aggression in Europe. The French government at least had made up its mind: if it had to choose between Mussolini and the League, the League must give way. Many Frenchmen and the majority of Britons rejected this reasoning. They declined to place their trust in the signature of the Fascist leader. He had violated the Covenant, the

Kellogg Pact, the Treaty of Friendship with Ethiopia, the anti-gas protocol: how could it be supposed that he would keep a promise to defend the democratic countries against his fellow dictator? To abandon the Covenant was to destroy the whole system of security which both governments had repeatedly declared to be the corner-stone of their policy. They would lose the confidence of the smaller States in every continent, and the sympathy of progressive opinion in every country. If they in turn were to be the victims of aggression, they would have forfeited the right to ask for the support of their fellow Members of the League. And this heavy price would be paid in vain: whatever engagements Mussolini might undertake, he would follow nothing but his own interests when the crisis came.

The conclusion of the debate was not long in doubt. On March 29th Eden communicated to the Council in London<sup>1</sup> a statement drawn up the previous day by himself, Flandin, van Zeeland, and Grandi, in which the four powers began by solemnly declaring that 'scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations is a fundamental principle of international life and an essential condition of the maintenance of peace'. When Britain, France, and Belgium could allow Mussolini's Ambassador to join them in such an affirmation, it was evident that they had made up their minds to condone the violation of the Covenant.

The rest of the story is soon told. The Council Committee still talked of a settlement by conciliation: and its Chairman, Madariaga, courageously accepted the task of trying to negotiate an agreement between Italy and Ethiopia. No one knew better than he that what he was asked to do was impossible. He met, indeed, with nothing but courtesy from the side of Rome. Mussolini had a diplomatic game to play from which he must have extracted pleasure as well as profit. His sentiment towards the League was a mixture of resentment and contempt: but he did not wish to break with it, because withdrawal from the League would mean that Italy was openly aligned with Germany and would thus deprive him of his best bargaining position. For the same reason, he saw no advantage in reconstructing the edifice of Locarno, but every advantage in making France and Britain believe that they could bribe him into doing so. He had no intention of making a negotiated peace with Ethiopia. But, by simple methods of ambiguity and delay, he kept discussion on the subject open until the triumph of the Italian armies was complete. It was not until April 17th that Madariaga could report to the Council Committee, and the Committee in turn to the Council itself, that the hope of bringing about a

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 54.

cessation of hostilities by agreement between the two parties must be finally abandoned.

The Council met on April 20th. Aloisi came, and was allowed by his master to sit at the same table with the Ethiopian delegate. He was now the spokesman of a country victorious both in war and in diplomacy. In Ethiopia, though the capital had not yet fallen, the issue was no longer in doubt. In Europe there were few countries which did not court the friendship, and fear the resentment, of the Italian Dictator. The Council had to listen while Aloisi proclaimed that, in spite of the injustices which Italy had suffered at the hands of the League, she had acted, was still acting, and desired to act in future, in the spirit of the Covenant. She had brought freedom and civilization to the part of Ethiopia already occupied. She was ready to negotiate, and did not wish to exclude the Council from the negotiations. But these must take place outside Geneva, and could not begin until the enemy had accepted an armistice, one of the terms of which must be the complete occupation of the country. There was nothing in that stipulation which was contrary to international practice or to the Covenant. Wolde Mariam briefly answered that it was evident that Italy had never intended to negotiate within the framework of the Covenant; it was for the Members of the League to do their duty and in particular to apply the oil sanction. To this Aloisi replied that he had been as moderate as possible hitherto, but that the Council ought to realize that Italy's co-operation in Europe was dependent on the settlement of her conflict with Ethiopia.

Each of the other members of the Council then spoke in turn. No voice was heard to urge that the sanctionist States should intensify their effort to uphold the Covenant.<sup>1</sup> Each in his own way accepted the fact that the League was about to suffer a disastrous defeat. Eden with a realistic anxiety for the future; Paul-Boncour, spokesman for Flandin, with the hope that Italy would now resume her place at the side of France and Britain; Potemkin, Litvinov's lieutenant, with criticism for the half-hearted action of other Members of the League; Ruiz Guinazu with a long speech which recalled past declarations against recognition of territorial modifications brought about by force. There emerged also certain indications that some Members of the League, in view of what they described as the failure of sanctions to achieve their object, might wish to recast the Covenant, changing it from a system of common defence against war to a system of discussion and consultation only. This sentiment was emphasized by Bruce of Australia, while the opposite

<sup>1</sup> It is true that Eden said that his government was ready and willing to consider further sanctions. Denmark, Roumania, and Turkey spoke in the same sense. But no proposal was made.

view—that the lesson of the present crisis was that the obligations of League membership should be better defined and more strictly carried out—was voiced by Potemkin. Three years before, the other Members had refused to listen to Fascist demands for radical changes in the purposes and methods of the League.<sup>1</sup> That they should now begin to consider the question, as a result of his success in defying the Covenant, was a further moral victory for the dictator.

All the same, the Council meeting was far from giving him full satisfaction. Though no new sanctions were proposed, the Council, with Ecuador as a solitary exception, voted for the maintenance of those which were already being applied. Nor did the use of poison gas pass without a protest. The Council Committee had already formally notified the Italian government that it had no right to invoke Ethiopia's breaches of the laws of war as a pretext for dishonouring its signature of the gas protocol of 1925. Now Eden and Vasconcellos uttered a strong protest against the violation of that protocol, a 'charter against extermination', as Eden called it, for the inhabitants of every great city in the world. Aloisi riposted with a violence which showed that their protest had struck home. But all he could do was to ask why nothing was said about the atrocities committed by Ethiopia. He could not deny Italy's use of gas—one of the blackest pages in the bad record of the Fascist regime.

While the farce of conciliation was being played in London and Geneva, the Italian armies were everywhere successful. They defeated the last organized army on the northern front at the battle of Lake Ashangi (March 31st–April 3rd, 1936). Under the personal command of the Emperor, Ethiopian warriors fought bravely: their losses were enormous. This battle opened to Badoglio a clear road to the capital. In the south, resistance continued longer: but here too Graziani was master of the situation by the end of April. Haile Selassie had been expected to move westward and to carry on a guerilla fight in the wide and inaccessible territories between Addis Ababa and the Sudan frontier. But, on May 2nd, he suddenly decided to leave the country. Four days later Badoglio entered the capital. On that evening Mussolini announced to his subjects that the war was over, that civilization had triumphed over barbarism, and that Ethiopia was henceforth definitely and irrevocably Italian. On May 9th he acclaimed the founding of the Fascist Empire in that boastful rhetoric of which he was so great a master, and read from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia a decree whereby the King of Italy assumed for himself and his successors the title of Emperor of Ethiopia. This decree, shouted the Duce, was for

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 56.

Italy a pass opening on to the vast possibilities of the future. In truth, it opened upon an abyss of calamity, first for Ethiopia and later for Italy herself.

The regular spring session of the Council was fixed for May 11th; its Members were thus given no time to reflect or consult upon the consequences of the uncompromising action of Rome. They had, it seems, hardly expected that outright annexation would follow so rapidly on the victory. On the day of the meeting they found themselves confronted with three documents. The first was an appeal from the Emperor, telegraphed from Jerusalem. Haile Selassie explained that, as a result of the rain of gas, further resistance could only mean the extermination of the Ethiopian people. It was to avoid this, and to put an end to the war, that he had left his country. The second was a letter from Wolde Mariam, affirming that the Ethiopian people was still defending itself in the western territories of the Empire, which remained independent and unoccupied. The third document was the decree of annexation, officially communicated to the League by the Italian government. And this was promptly followed up by Aloisi, who declared at the opening meeting that there was no longer any State called Ethiopia; that in consequence the so-called Ethiopian representative ought not to be admitted to the Council table, nor should there be any discussion of the question which stood on the Council's agenda under the heading (unchanged since it had first appeared in January 1935) 'Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy'. The Council, as Aloisi, if not Mussolini, must have clearly foreseen, was not prepared to yield to so humiliating a challenge. Learning that it was resolved both to maintain the question on its agenda, and to continue to treat Wolde Mariam as the representative of a Member of the League, the Duce ordered the Italian delegation to return to Rome. In these circumstances, the Council decided, on May 12th, to give itself another month in which to consider the effects of the annexation. Meanwhile it informed the Members of the League that sanctions ought to continue.

For a few weeks more, therefore, the League maintained its resistance to the aggressor. Sanctions continued to be applied as before, and it was still an open question what course the sanctionist powers would choose to follow—to admit defeat, or to keep up the economic pressure on Italy. The period of uncertainty was extended for a further fortnight by a request from Argentina that the Assembly should be summoned to consider the situation. The rightness of the proposal was evident. A meeting was convoked for June 30th; and the Council quickly agreed to leave the whole matter to be dealt with by the Assembly.

These weeks were a time of intense anxiety for the supporters of the



League. All who had opposed, and many who had favoured, its action were demanding that sanctions should now be lifted. The Emperor had fled from his country; organized resistance to the Italian armies had come to an end; the war was over. The Members of the League should accept defeat, realize that the Covenant system had proved a failure, and take care not to be led any farther along the dangerous and impracticable road of collective security. On the other side it was urged that the strain of holding Ethiopia was likely to prove almost as heavy as the strain of war itself. There was no doubt that pressure on the Italian economy was already severe: though much secrecy was observed, some experts believed that the breaking-point was approaching. In any case, the existing sanctions were certain, if continued long enough, to force the aggressor to give up his conquest. The purpose of sanctions was to prevent an aggressor from imposing his will by war, and the fact that the victim was no longer able to keep up the fight did not affect the legal or moral obligations of the Members of the League.

This view, which was clearly the only one consistent with the Covenant, seemed to grow in force after the first shock of the Emperor's flight and the Italian decree of annexation. The Scandinavian States and other European neutrals announced that they were opposed to the lifting of sanctions. There had been an election in France; on June 4th, Léon Blum came into power with the support of the Socialist, Communist, and Radical-Socialist parties, all of which had pressed for effective sanctions and protested against the opportunist policy of Laval and Flandin. Even on the right there was much anger over the annexation of the vanquished Empire. If British resolution still held, France would now surely stand by her side. The British government seemed to be hesitating. It was pressed by Cecil and his followers, and by both opposition parties, to declare for the maintenance of sanctions; but Eden's statements in Parliament implied that it would wait until the meeting in Geneva before deciding on its attitude. Meanwhile, the sanctionist front remained outwardly steady. Ecuador, a State of small economic importance, had already broken away in April. But though Italian diplomacy was working overtime in every capital, and though many States were doubtless anxious to restart their trade with Italy if a lead were given, no other Members of the League actually did so until that lead came suddenly and unexpectedly from London.

On June 10th, three weeks before the Assembly met, Neville Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a speech to a group of Conservative members of Parliament, expressed the view that to continue sanctions would be 'the very midsummer of madness'; that

the functions of the League should be reconsidered and limited so as to accord with its real powers; and that peace should be secured in future by regional arrangements between the countries directly interested in each of the regions concerned. The Chancellor had deliberately refrained from consulting the Foreign Secretary before his speech, because he knew that Eden would object to such a pronouncement.<sup>1</sup> He was, it appears, surprised to find that his action produced immediate and far-reaching effects on the whole international situation. Yet it was inevitable that foreign governments should attach decisive importance to a declaration by the leading figure in the British Cabinet, on the most acute and burning question of the time. In every capital it was now taken for granted that British resistance to the Italian victory was about to be abandoned. They were not mistaken. A week later Eden stated officially that, when the Assembly met, the British delegation would recommend that sanctions should be brought to an end. In reaching this momentous decision the government had not only changed its declared intention of first discussing the situation with its fellow Members in Geneva, but had not even, it seemed, followed its time-honoured practice of consulting the French.

Eden continued to speak in Parliament as though the question were still open for the decision of the Assembly, but the whole world realized that Britain had already pronounced the end of League resistance to Mussolini. While the Italian press proclaimed its joy, the French government declared that it would agree with whatever decision was taken at Geneva. The sanctions front began to dissolve. Business men in France and Britain, and no doubt in other countries also, were openly making arrangements to resume commercial exchanges with Italy as soon as the administrative restrictions were relaxed. Two States, Poland and Haiti, actually repealed all such restrictions without waiting for the Assembly—a step which caused some ill feeling among their fellow Members, who suspected that their purpose was to gain an unfair advantage in the Italian market. Others let it be known that, when the Assembly met, they would support the British view.

No Assembly had ever come together in such a mood of ill humour, discouragement, and anxiety as that which gathered at Geneva on June 30th, 1936. The smaller States were almost unanimous in feeling that they had been completely let down by the great powers. They suddenly found that they could no longer look upon the League as a protection against aggression; and this catastrophic reversal, which profoundly affected their security and must change their whole outlook

<sup>1</sup> K. Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London, Macmillan, 1946) p. 296.

on foreign policy, had come about by a series of moves of which they had perforce been mere spectators. The Hoare-Laval plan, the postponement of the oil sanction, the courting of Italy after Hitler had smashed the Locarno Treaties, the decision to abandon sanctions, were a series of blows which in effect dislocated completely the security system of the League. And they had come, one after another, from France which had always claimed to stand for the sanctity of the Covenant, and from Britain, which had held in the past the moral leadership of the League, and had seemed in the critical days of September and October to stand forward as its champion.

The situation of the British and French delegations was equally unenviable. Eden's position was heavily diminished at home and abroad. Blum and Delbos, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Popular Front government in France, were indeed men of outstanding character among the weak or disreputable politicians who governed France in the nineteen-thirties. But they were new to office; conditions at home were dangerously strained; France was disunited and discontented; they were unable to cut loose from the policy of their predecessors and their professional advisers. The result was that both the British and French leaders found themselves involved in a series of negotiations behind the scenes which could only intensify the mistrust of their fellow delegates.

In all preliminary discussion on the work of the Assembly, three questions had come to the front: the question of sanctions, the question of recognizing Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia, and, finally, the question of reforming the League. There was no doubt as to what the verdict would be on the first question: but before recommending that sanctions should be brought to an end, the Assembly was bound to hear the views of its Members and in particular of Ethiopia. The first incident of the session was the delivery of a note from Count Ciano, who had recently become Foreign Minister in Rome. Italy was not present at the Assembly, but she desired to facilitate a favourable decision both on sanctions and on recognition. Ciano set forth once more the story of Italy's peacefulness and Ethiopia's pugnacity. He described the welcome given by the population to the Italian army and the blessings which the army bestowed in return. Italy, he concluded, would think it an honour to keep the League informed of her progress in civilizing her new Empire. If the League now took a fair view of her action, she was willing to continue active membership and to join in the reform of the Covenant. The President of the Assembly, van Zeeland, opened the proceedings by reading this letter, which appeared to give some satisfaction to the Locarno powers, if to few others. But whatever effect it might have

was soon wiped out. After a brief statement by the Argentine delegate as to his government's reasons for asking the Assembly to meet, van Zeeland called upon Haile Selassie. No sooner did the Emperor appear on the speaker's platform than the Italian consul ostentatiously rose to leave his place in the diplomatic gallery, and at the same time a chorus of whistles and yells was set up by a dozen Italian journalists. They were soon hustled out by the police, not before Titulescu, a man of generous impulse, had risen in his place and called on the President to silence this *canaille*. Haile Selassie, a small dark-robed figure of infinite dignity, listened impassively to the Italian howls and to the applause with which delegations and journalists alike tried to cover them. The Assembly then heard in courteous silence his long speech in the Amharic tongue and the French and English translations which followed.

The Emperor's statement was an overwhelming and unanswerable indictment of Italy's conduct in planning an unjustifiable war and in using unjustifiable means to win it. He described the gas attacks, from the first ineffective bombs to the fine and deadly rain which poisoned food and water as well as killing or maiming all on whom it fell. He recalled the verdict given by practically all the Members of the League, his own confidence in the help which was sure to come, and his despair when he found how inadequate and half-hearted that help proved to be. The only unexpected element in his speech was a protest against the conduct of the French who, he declared, had made a secret agreement with Italy and had thereafter done everything to obstruct the action of the League. He affirmed that resistance still continued and begged that sanctions should be strengthened and that Ethiopia should receive financial help to rearm her soldiers. To all this the Assembly had no answer to give. Only two delegations, South Africa and New Zealand, urged the maintenance of sanctions. All the rest acquiesced in the view that they were now useless and hopeless, and should be abandoned.

The second question was whether Members of the League were to be free to recognize Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia. The doctrine of non-recognition of territorial change imposed by force had made great strides since Stimson had first enunciated it in relation to the Japanese in Manchuria. In both parts of the American hemisphere it had acquired immense authority. Though not explicitly laid down in the Covenant, it was a natural consequence of the pledge to maintain the territorial integrity of Member States against external aggression. It had been fully accepted in the case of Manchuria by both the Council and the Assembly: and the great majority of delegations hoped that the Assembly would now resolve that League Members could not recognize the annexation of Ethiopia. But Eden and Blum were not prepared to

tie their hands for the future nor, in the present, to offend Mussolini more than they need. They were still pursuing the mirage of the reconstruction of the Locarno front. They were working on a vague and non-committal resolution to be presented to the Assembly by the pliant van Zeeland; they were even, it was believed, allowing the agents in Geneva of the Italian government to see and comment on its terms. Having decided, however reluctantly, that the League must eat humble pie, they saw no reason to do things by halves. Accordingly they rejected any words which could bind League Members to non-recognition of the annexation of Ethiopia as they had bound themselves to non-recognition of Manchukuo; and rejected also the insertion, which many delegates desired, of a paragraph to the effect that the raising of sanctions did not imply any reversal of the judgement pronounced nine months before. The other Members, dispirited and anxious not to make things still worse, allowed themselves to be persuaded. Only Mexico declined to take any further part in the preparation of this painful text, and resigned her seat on the Bureau of the Assembly, in which it was being discussed.

There remained the question of 'reform'. This was not, indeed, the first occasion on which the League had been unable to fulfil its primary purpose. But it was the first time that its Members as a whole had plainly affirmed the violation of the Covenant and acknowledged their duty to take positive and collective measures against the aggressor. Sanctions, inadequate indeed, but almost world-wide, had been applied, loss and inconvenience had been incurred, but the result had been a failure, resounding and complete. The war had not been prevented: the victim had not been rescued. It was impossible simply to pass the sponge over what had happened and to carry on as though the obligations and advantages of League membership were still the same as before. Most Members were convinced that the only reason for failure was that the leading powers had, for their own reasons, deliberately saved Mussolini from defeat. But whether that were true or not, it was still evident that things could not be left as they were. Either there must be an assurance that the same causes of failure would not be allowed to operate a second time, or else the duties of membership must be revised. Either all Members must be effectively protected against aggression, or else each Member must be released from the obligation to come to the aid of the rest. Either the safeguards of the Covenant must be made a reality, or else its commitments must be relaxed.

This fundamental choice between two conflicting policies continued to be actively debated throughout the brief period of life that yet remained to the League; and the Members were henceforth divided

into two main parties, the one seeking to reinforce, the other to suppress, the coercive provisions of the Covenant. In the Assembly of July 1936, however, the controversy, though its essential character was already clear enough, could still be postponed. Meanwhile, each side could be described as aiming at reform. It was even possible to describe each as aiming at strengthening the League, since the party which insisted on reducing the obligations of membership claimed that the League's real influence would thereby be increased. Accordingly all agreed, after long discussion, on a resolution whereby each Member was asked to send in in writing the conclusions which it drew from the lessons of experience, with a view to improving the application of the principles of the Covenant.

This miserable formula was completed by a recommendation that the Sanctions Conference should meet and put an end to the measures taken against Italy. On July 4th, the Assembly voted in silence and gloom: Ethiopia voted against the proposal, South Africa and a few others abstained. Van Zeeland refused to put to the vote an Ethiopian motion calling on the Assembly to declare that it would recognize no annexation obtained by force. A second motion asked the Assembly to help Ethiopia to secure a loan of £10 million to be spent on defensive arms. This was put to the vote: only Ethiopia voted for it, and twenty-three others against; the fact that twenty-five delegations abstained was a clear indication of their discontent.

The same men met once more, as delegates to the Sanctions Conference, and decided that all measures taken under Article 16 of the Covenant should be brought to an end on July 15th. Thereafter they dispersed, resentful and unhappy; and it may be supposed that Eden and Blum were not less unhappy than the representatives of the small powers. Each was by temperament and conviction a supporter of the League: each detested the Fascist ideology and recognized Mussolini for a dangerous and untrustworthy adventurer. Yet the fact remained that the governments for which they spoke had sacrificed the League to Mussolini, and were already beginning to find that the sacrifice was in vain. The Duce repaid it with insult and injury. His press, and his speeches, were full of hatred and contempt for the Western democracies. And a few days after the Assembly closed, his aeroplanes were helping to start the Falangist rebellion in Spain.

Italy was now on increasingly cordial terms with Germany and holding herself more and more aloof from the rest of Europe—always excepting her satellites, Austria and Hungary. Mussolini refused to take part in the Montreux Conference of June 1936 on the regime of the

Straits. He refused to proceed further with the discussions on the replacement of the Locarno Treaty;<sup>1</sup> he withheld his approval from the formulas worked out in London with Grandi's collaboration, and repeatedly declined to take part in any meeting of the Locarno Powers. Strangely enough, however, he still made no move to withdraw from the League. The Italian press was instructed to cover the League with ridicule: but the official attitude was that Italy desired nothing better than to resume full and loyal co-operation in the labours of the Council and Assembly. One condition alone was made: the Italian delegation must not be exposed to finding itself sitting in the same hall with a delegation representing Ethiopia. Britain and France continued to think it important and desirable that Italy should remain in the League. As the date for the next Assembly session drew near, it was seen that they were doing their best to ensure that her condition should be fulfilled. That well-marked section of the French press which took its cue from the Quai d'Orsay began to point out that no Ethiopian government now subsisted in Ethiopian territory; if, therefore, the Assembly admitted an Ethiopian delegation, it would be opening its debates to persons who could not lift a finger to carry out its resolutions. Could it, for the sake of such an absurdity, shut out the representatives of a great power whose collaboration was essential to the peace of Europe? Avenol, the Secretary-General, who fully shared this view, found himself pressed by the Italian government to visit Rome, ostensibly to discuss questions concerning the Italian members of the Secretariat. Whether intentionally or not, he gave Mussolini and Ciano some encouragement: and when the Assembly met on September 21st, it was known that the Italian delegation, with Ciano at its head, was waiting with its bags packed ready to start for Geneva at a moment's notice.

The Assembly invariably began its proceedings by setting up a committee to examine and report on the credentials of the delegates. Eden and Delbos counted on persuading this committee to report that the credentials of the Ethiopian delegation, being issued by a chief of State who no longer possessed any actual authority, were insufficient, and that the delegation should not therefore be admitted to participate in the work of the Assembly. Indeed, the argument was not unreasonable in itself, if it had been possible to leave out of account the circumstances by which the Emperor's authority had been destroyed. But while it was already possible in Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay to thrust those circumstances into the background, in Geneva they were still vividly present in the minds of the delegations. In the past, the appointment of the Credentials Committee, and its proceedings, once

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 54.

appointed, had been a matter of quick-moving routine—necessary to the Assembly as to every other international conference, but totally devoid of political interest. Membership had been neither coveted nor avoided: the Secretariat drew up a list, the Assembly accepted it. But on this occasion it proved difficult to find nine delegates willing to undertake so invidious a task. If the committee accepted the credentials of the Ethiopian delegation, Italy would stay away in anger: if it refused them, the great majority of the Assembly would be indignant and would probably reject its report. Finally, Eden and Delbos had to serve in person, and Litvinov joined them, together with other leading delegates—an unexpected event, since hitherto the committee had always been composed of delegates of the second or third rank. They quickly discovered that the exclusion of the Ethiopians was a political impossibility. Too many members of the Assembly were resolved not to be dragged any further along a path which they considered dishonourable. Eden wisely abandoned the attempt: the French tried hard for a day or two longer, but they too had to give way. The committee reported that there were serious doubts as to the status of the Ethiopian delegation, but that it ought to have the benefit of the doubt and be allowed to sit. Ciano unpacked his suit-cases: the Fascist press, and those papers in France and elsewhere which were influenced thereby, vied with one another in their attacks on the Secretariat and on Litvinov.

In the light of after events, the rank and file of the Assembly was proved to be more clear-sighted than the ingenious diplomatists. If there had ever been a possibility of bringing a Fascist Italy back to the side of the peace-loving nations after her Ethiopian victory—and few could now believe that this was really the case—all such possibility must have finally disappeared after she had been, for two months, intervening in the Spanish civil war with Nazi Germany as her partner. The Stresa front had been a hollow sham, because it took no account of Mussolini's forthcoming aggression in Africa: a new version of the Stresa front, which did not include an honourable settlement of the Spanish crisis, would have been even more unreal. Mussolini's attempt to return in triumph to Geneva was simply aimed at forcing the chief Members of the League to acquiesce in the annexation of Ethiopia. He saw that if the Assembly threw out the Ethiopian, and welcomed the Italian, delegation, this would be equivalent to admitting itself in the wrong from the beginning and would pave the way for the formal recognition of the new Italian Empire. How could it be supposed that a renewal of co-operation in the League, which he hated and despised, would have led him to a renewal of the front against Hitler? That France and Britain could even temporarily have based their policy on



such an idea, and have pursued it in spite of the indignation of most of their fellow-Members, showed how little their diplomatic services had understood the nature of the League, the character and purposes of Mussolini, and the profound significance of the tragedy in Spain. That they could still continue to follow the same will-o'-the-wisp outside the League for three more years is surely as strange a phenomenon as any in diplomatic history.

## THE END OF LOCARNO

*Hitler denounces Locarno and re-militarizes the Rhineland—The Council in London—Ribbentrop at the Council—The end of Locarno*

(MARCH 1936)

WHILE official quarters in Paris and London had deliberately shut their eyes to the realities of the situation created by Mussolini's defiance of the League, Hitler had understood them clearly enough. Whether the Italians wished it or not, their ruler had started on an adventure in the traditional style of imperialist ambition. Fascism was now the natural ally of Nazism, not only because both were based on personal authority and not on democratic institutions, but also because both were resolved to acquire by forcible methods a larger share of power and wealth than they at present possessed. Germany, however, did not act without reflection. The first consequence of the invasion of Ethiopia had been an unexpected rally on the part of the Members of the League. It was their declared purpose to bring such pressure on Italy as would force her to make peace with Ethiopia on terms consistent with the Covenant. If they succeeded in that aim, it was most probable that the Fascist regime would collapse; that a democratic or socialist Italy would return to the ranks of the League; and that the Covenant would have become for an indefinite time the effective guarantee of world peace. Pro-League sentiment had grown rapidly in the United States since the decision to impose sanctions on Italy: if these proved effective, the question of American membership would again become practical politics. In Germany, as elsewhere, it was still believed that once Britain had given a lead, she would carry her undertaking through to success. For some weeks, therefore, German policy remained, to Mussolini's chagrin, non-committal. Nothing was done to help Italy; attempts by Italian agents to buy arms and raw materials in Germany were discouraged; press opinion, however critical of the League, was, if anything, favourable to Ethiopia rather than to Italy.

But the Hoare-Laval plan, which broke the unity and confidence of League action, was for the Nazis a signal that the line was clear for further advance. It marked the weakness and division of France and Britain; it was a promise of survival to the Fascist regime, which Hitler rightly considered as his natural partner and support.

During January and February 1936 there were many indications of growing sympathy between Germany and Italy. Meanwhile, the German press was filled with attacks on the Franco-Russian Treaty, which had just been laid before the Chamber for ratification; and the rumour grew that Hitler's next objective was to get rid of the demilitarized zone. It was hoped, indeed, that he would approach this objective by negotiation, since the obligation to maintain the demilitarized zone was contained not only in the Treaty of Versailles but also in that of Locarno; and as recently as May 1935 Hitler had promised to uphold the obligations of Locarno. As usual, however, he went farther than was expected by those who depended for their information on the diplomatic channel. In the early hours of March 7th, 1936, the German army reoccupied the demilitarized zone. At the same time Hitler made in the Reichstag one of the series of speeches in which he announced his devotion to disarmament and peace. The Treaty of Locarno, he declared, had been nullified by the ratification of the Franco-Russian Treaty, and Germany considered it as no longer in existence. But she was ready to enter into new Pacts of Guarantee in the West and of non-aggression in the East; to conclude an Air Pact with her Western neighbours, by which sudden air attack should be prevented; and to return forthwith to the League of Nations. In connexion with this offer she would expect that, in due course, friendly negotiations should take place on the question of equality of rights in the matter of colonies, and on that of separating the Covenant from the rest of the Treaty of Versailles. But this was an expectation, not a condition: having now recovered equality of rights in regard to armaments, and full sovereignty over her own territory, she was ready to resume membership of the League without delay.

Under the Treaty of Locarno violation of the demilitarized zone was treated as equivalent to direct attack on French and Belgian territory. If they considered that a flagrant breach of the Treaty had been committed in either respect, France and Belgium were entitled to take military action at once; to call on Britain and Italy, as guarantors, to come to their help, and only then to ask the Council of the League to approve or disapprove their action. For a few hours it looked as if the French would mobilize and clear the Rhineland by force. But, by the evening, the government had decided to hold its hand, and to follow the more leisurely procedure laid down in the Locarno Treaty for breaches of a less flagrant character. This involved, in the first place, a verdict from the Council to the effect that a breach had been committed: thereafter it was left to the injured powers and the guarantor powers together to take steps to put an end to the illegal situation.

Accordingly, on March 8th, Flandin telegraphed to the Secretary-General, setting forth the facts and requesting an urgent meeting of the Council. The same day van Zeeland telegraphed making the same request on behalf of Belgium.

The Council was summoned to meet in Geneva on March 13th, the earliest day on which Litvinov could arrive from Moscow and Rüstü Aras from Ankara. But the French and British had now discovered that they were by no means fully agreed as to the action to be taken. They were conferring in London: and Eden suggested that the Council should be held in London on the fourteenth instead of in Geneva on the thirteenth. Meanwhile that same French press which had helped and encouraged Japan and Italy to defy the League was proclaiming that the value of the Covenant was now at last to be put to the decisive test. Either the Council would force Hitler to withdraw, or the uselessness of the League would be demonstrated once and for all. The British press, on the other hand, had clearly accepted the reoccupation of the Rhineland as an accomplished fact: its attention was concentrated chiefly on considering how far Hitler's new offers of co-operation could be used for the purpose of rebuilding the decrepit structure of European peace.

It was a divided and suspicious Council which gathered in London. Many Members were anxious above all not to be dragged into the quarrel between Germany and the Western powers. The entry of German troops into the Rhineland might be an unpleasant and dangerous event; but it was not, to their minds, either legally or morally equivalent to an act of war. If Germany, though no longer a Member of the League, had been guilty of actual aggression, the Covenant undoubtedly obliged them to consider her as having committed an act of war against them all. But although the Locarno powers were entitled to treat a violation of the demilitarized zone as equivalent to the invasion of France or Belgium, the other Members of the League were in no way bound to do the same. In view of the many breaches of treaties which they had witnessed of late, above all in view of the Italian aggression and the way it had been helped or acquiesced in by France and Britain, they were not particularly shocked at Germany's decision to claim a free hand in her own territory. They were by no means inclined to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for France, Britain, and Belgium, which were the powers most directly concerned, and also the only ones possessing a clear right to maintain by force the demilitarization of the Rhineland zone. They hoped, therefore, that the Council might limit itself strictly to its role under the Locarno Treaty—that is to say, that it might formally declare that a breach of the Treaty had been committed by Germany, and might then leave it to the

signatories of the Pact to take such further action as they desired, or dared.

When the session opened, the four Locarno powers had already been through a week of intensive discussion. Flandin was still making a show of pressing his British and Belgian fellow signatories to join in financial and economic sanctions against Germany. Italy was taking part in all the meetings and was not openly repudiating her pledges under the Locarno Treaty: but it was obvious that a State which was already suffering under sanctions applied by fifty Members of the League would not, and could not, add to its difficulties by breaking off economic relations with Germany. It was hardly less plain that Britain and Belgium were resolved not to take any such steps: and Flandin must have known that his attempt to induce them to join in applying sanctions to Germany had no chance of success. It can scarcely be supposed that he expected the Council to do what the Locarno powers refused. But the French government was still anxious that French public opinion should give it credit for offering a firm resistance to Hitler's challenge: and if in fact there were to be no resistance at all, it was desirable to spread the blame as widely as possible. And since Flandin, like Laval before him, was being fiercely attacked by his political opponents on the ground that he was sabotaging the League's action against Mussolini, it was convenient to be able to show that the League was anyhow useless as a support against Germany.

The Council sat in St James's Palace, under the presidency of Stanley Bruce—the best, perhaps, of the many first-rate chairmen who presided over the Council, Assembly, Conferences, or Committees of the League. Its composition reflected the anxieties of that critical time, for it included, besides the former Prime Minister of Australia, the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, Russia, Denmark, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Spain, Turkey, and Belgium. The Latin American representatives, Ruiz Guinazu of Argentina, Agustín Edwards of Chile, Gonzalo Zaldumbide of Ecuador, were all either past or future Foreign Ministers; so also was Grandi of Italy. The united influence of such a gathering might have been powerful indeed. But it lacked a common purpose, the more so since it had been convened to act, not on the Covenant, but on the Locarno Treaty. Its first meeting was devoted to statements from the convening powers. Flandin asked his colleagues to declare that there had been a breach of the Treaty, and to recommend what steps should be taken. The German pretext that the Treaty had already been broken by the Franco-Russian agreement was absolutely unjustified: he was perfectly ready to submit the question to the Hague Court and accept its ruling. France had the right to act alone: but she

believed that the question was of vital importance to the future of collective security, and that it was her duty not to create fresh disturbance, but to ask the League to see to it that the sanctity of treaties could not be violated with impunity. If it failed to do so, it would be risking its very existence. Van Zeeland movingly described the shock which Belgium had suffered, but asked for no more than a formal declaration that the Treaty had been broken. Eden reserved his statement of the British view for a later meeting, but added that it was for the Council to find a solution and that the British government would co-operate in its efforts.

The next step was to invite Germany to attend the Council. The Germans answered that they would come on two conditions: they must be treated on an equal footing with the members, and they must be assured that the proposals announced by Hitler on March 7th would be considered. The answer to the first condition was simple: Germany's position under the Treaty of Locarno was the same as that of France and Belgium, and her position in the Council would therefore be the same as theirs—full right of discussion, but no power to veto. On the second condition the Council could give no promise: Hitler's proposals had been made to the Western powers individually, not to the League. This answer satisfied the Germans, who replied that von Ribbentrop would leave for London next day.

While waiting for his arrival, the Council devoted two public meetings to declarations by its members. Litvinov denounced the whole trend of Nazi policy, and urged the Locarno powers to take strong measures. His country would give them all the support which might be agreed on by the Members of the League. How could they trust German offers to sign new pacts, or to return to the League, seeing that Hitler considered himself free to tear up any treaty which he found it inconvenient to observe? Eden uttered a plea for the rebuilding of confidence, to which all, including Germany, must contribute. Grandi affirmed Italy's devotion to European peace: but how could she be expected to help, so long as she was embittered by the unjust and ungrateful action of the League which had attached such disproportionate importance to a mere colonial dispute? Beck was prepared to agree that the Locarno Treaty had been broken by Germany: but he added that Poland had never approved of that Treaty, and spoke with ardent dislike of the new Franco-Russian Treaty also. Ecuador and Chile showed their anxiety not to give offence to Germany, the former by failing to attend the Council at all, the latter by stating that since Chile was in no way bound by the Treaty of Locarno, she was unwilling to pronounce on its violation unless the question had first been submitted to the Permanent

Court at The Hague. It is interesting to speculate on what a Branting or a Nansen might have said. But the spokesman of the European neutrals was Munch of Denmark, a cautious man representing a frightened country. He could join in declaring that the Locarno Treaty had been broken, since Germany herself did not contest the fact. But he had no blame for anybody and no policy to propose—only a cry of alarm at the rapid widening of the gulf between the two blocks into which Europe was now divided, at the swift growth of armaments, and the steadily increasing danger of war.

Next day Ribbentrop appeared at the Council meeting. There was no actual discourtesy in his words, but his attitude was far from conciliatory. He sat bolt upright, his arms folded on his chest, with an expression of unrelaxing loftiness. Only when invited to speak himself, did he appear to show the slightest interest in, or even comprehension of, the proceedings. His speech, though very long, was no more than a re-statement of the declarations made by the Führer on March 7th. He ended by repeating that now, at last, Germany was freed from all the humiliations and injuries of the peace settlement, and asked for nothing but to live in friendship with France. The proposals of the Führer would, if accepted, ensure the peace of Europe for twenty-five years.

It was, of course, impossible for the Council to open a discussion on the German proposals, unless invited to do so by those of its Members which were also signatories of the Locarno Treaty. For the moment, therefore, its sole concern was to make a formal pronouncement on the violation of that Treaty by Germany. It did so by the votes of all its Members except Chile, which abstained, and Ecuador, which was not represented. Germany voted against the resolution, but, as had been laid down before Ribbentrop left Berlin, her vote could not prevent its adoption.

Meanwhile the delegates of the Locarno Powers were painfully working out, not a policy in relation to Germany, but a formula which might cover their own lack of agreement. This they presented in due course to the Council, which, while uncertain on almost every point, was resolved on one thing at least—that it would not once more accept a ready-made resolution as it had done a year ago at the behest of the Stresa powers. However, Eden explained that the new texts were submitted only for the Council's information: one of their authors, Grandi, had not yet received his government's approval of their terms; and no action was at present expected of the Council. After waiting a few days, during which Grandi received no further word from Rome, the session was adjourned. During these last inconclusive meetings Ribbentrop had

sat silent and aloof. The temporary return of Germany to the Council table had been an empty and meaningless gesture on both sides. Hitler indeed had put forward a scheme of new agreements, culminating in the return of Germany to League membership. He claimed that the acceptance of this offer would ensure the peace of Europe. But the circumstances in which it was made, the tone adopted by himself on March 7th and by Ribbentrop at the Council, the marked difference between his proposals for Western as compared with those for Eastern Europe, his openly threatening attitude towards Russia, all suggested that his talk of negotiation was no more than a trap, and that his real intention was to keep a free hand for the next move in his programme of expansion.

And if Hitler was masking aggressive intentions under a pretence of peace-making, the Council and in particular the Locarno powers were playing a scarcely more honourable role. Italy had torn up the Covenant quite as flagrantly as Germany had torn up the Locarno Treaty: yet she was still a member of the Council and of that inner circle which invited the rest to join in solemn affirmations concerning the sanctity of treaties. So long as an unrepentant and victorious Italy was allowed, and even pressed, by Britain and France to stand with them as guardian of the Locarno Treaty and of the Covenant itself, the whole basis of League action was fatally undermined. As a natural consequence, the meeting in London seemed to be, for the first time in the history of the Council, a gathering of individual States possessing no common legal or moral basis of action, but each concerned with its own particular interests in relation to the resurgent German power.

As for the signatories of Locarno, they were never able to resolve the deadlock which they had reached in London. Mussolini encouraged them for a little longer to believe that Italy was still their friend, and that once the African imbroglio was cleared up she would again be standing at their side in defence of the existing order in Europe. But as soon as victory had been won, Ethiopia annexed, and sanctions raised, he threw off the mask. The opening of the war in Spain, and the first announcement of the general entente between Italy and Germany known as the Rome-Berlin Axis, were the formal, unmistakable, and irreversible moves which showed that the groupings of Locarno and Stresa had ceased to exist.

In October the Belgian government in turn contracted out of the Locarno Treaty, desiring to return to a status of neutrality so far as it was possible to do so while remaining a Member of the League. The work of Briand, Stresemann, and Chamberlain was now no more than a memory.



PART V

THE YEARS OF DEFEAT

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55

THE LEAGUE DEFEATED

*The Palais des Nations—The possibilities of recovery—They are not realized—The ideological campaign—Formation of the Axis: its successful anti-League propaganda—The International Peace Campaign*

(AUTUMN 1936)

IN the spring of 1936 the Secretariat moved into the great building known as the Palais des Nations. In September of that year the Council began to meet in its new Chamber; and in 1937 the Assembly Hall came into use, first for the twenty-third International Labour Conference and then for the Eighteenth Assembly. For the Secretariat as for all the Committees and lesser agencies of the League the change was an immense improvement. They could not but appreciate the comfort and convenience of their new home. The Committee rooms, the Library, the offices of the Secretary-General and of the whole staff were both dignified and practical. In every material sense their work was made more easy and agreeable than it had ever been. Unhappily, no such skill or taste had been shown in planning the accommodation of the Council and the Assembly. Nothing could be better than the rooms provided for the Council's private or secret meetings. But the Council Chamber itself was over-large, pretentious, almost theatrical. The members, instead of facing one another round a narrow horse-shoe table, were seated in a shallow crescent, on a sort of stage, facing outwards, across a pit reserved for secretaries and officials, towards the galleries occupied by the press. Nothing less suitable to quick and spontaneous discussion could possibly be imagined. Without doubt the Council had already lost much of its old habit of free debate, especially since the Manchurian dispute, in which uncertainty as to their own policy and fear of offending either China or Japan had led other Members to confine themselves to carefully prepared statements. But the new arrangements influenced it still more in the direction of formality and caution. If ever, in that Chamber, strength of feeling or resolution were displayed, it was always by some delegate who sought

thus to bring his country's cause to the attention of the world, not by one who was hoping to persuade or win over his fellow members.

The new Assembly Hall, also, was over-large and over-ornate, designed for set speeches rather than for direct discussion. This, however, was a less serious disadvantage than in the case of the Council, since plenary meetings of the Assembly had from a very early date tended to become formal occasions. The general debate, with which each session still opened, had always been used by delegates for pronouncing the speeches they had brought from home; and the closing meetings usually endorsed, without further argument, the conclusions reached in committee. The main work of the Assembly was done in public sessions of its Committees, for which the new Palace was admirably organized.

In any event, the satisfaction which would naturally have accompanied this long-hoped-for move was destroyed by the double crisis of Ethiopia and the Rhineland; and it was with anxious hearts, and with a sense of the irony of things, that the Secretariat exchanged the plain and shabby quarters which had witnessed the League's time of greatness for the spacious palace in which its last inglorious days were to be passed.

In other years the League had undergone unpleasant shocks and grave reverses. Its final demise had more than once been not only foretold but pronounced, whether by avowed opponents or by disappointed friends. But hitherto it had always shown an unexpected vitality and resilience. Its slow and unimpressive beginnings, the heavy blow it received from the Senate of the United States, had led up to the great revival of the First Assembly. Its partial setbacks over Vilna and Corfu, its exclusion from the critical problems of reparations and the Ruhr occupation, had been followed by the entry of Germany and the establishment of Geneva as the main centre of international action. Even the shattering events of 1932 and 1933—the war in the Far East, the failure of the Disarmament Conference, the withdrawal of Germany and Japan, the Chaco war—had been the prelude to important political successes in Europe and in America, to the entry of Russia, to the spectacle, unique in history, of fifty nations accepting the risks and losses of economic sanctions in order to help a weak State to resist the attack of a great one. Now that effort had led only to defeat. The power and the prestige of the League were at their lowest ebb. Could it once again recover from the blow? Could it renew the endeavour to carry out the purposes for which it had been founded?

The picture was not one of unrelieved gloom. The outer life of the institutions of the League continued at the same rhythm as before. The

regular attendance of Foreign Ministers was not interrupted. The meetings of the Council and Assembly still brought together at Geneva the leading statesmen of Europe and many distinguished representatives of the distant Members. Disputes, both great and small, were still laid before them. The Republican government of Spain came to the League for the hearing it could get nowhere else. The Chinese appealed once more to the League to help them in their resistance against the intensified attacks of Japan. A threatening situation on the Turco-Syrian frontier was relieved by agreement to submit the question to the Council. Difficult problems in the negotiations over the regime of the Straits or over the future relations between Britain and Egypt were settled by reference to the Covenant or to the Council. Egypt herself still considered membership of the League as the consecration of her new statehood. The Moslem countries in general, whose diplomatic and strategic importance was enhanced by the disunity of the West, were increasingly inclined to look to the Covenant as their guide and to Geneva as their meeting-place.<sup>1</sup>

Even in the political field, therefore, the League was still in harness, rendering useful services to its Members. On the social and economic side, its work was continuing with undiminished authority. The German and Italian members were absent from the great standing committees; but this was not a matter of decisive moment, seeing that both countries were deliberately sacrificing all idea of social and economic progress to the needs of internal despotism and external aggression. Their defection was more than compensated by the fact that American co-operation in all these activities was more cordial and complete in the last years of the League than ever before. The work itself had changed somewhat in character, by no means to its disadvantage. Less attention was paid to the problems of international trade, of currency, of tariffs, quotas, clearing agreements, and the rest; and more to the great modern developments by which the common man everywhere was being affected in the day-to-day existence of himself and his family. Nutrition, food-supply, housing, rural hygiene, urban planning—these now began to be the object of international study on a scale which only the League could provide.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, in spite of discouragement and loss of confidence, the Members of the League were practically unanimous in proclaiming that it must be kept in being. More than this, the great majority were opposed to any important modification of the Covenant. Only a minority, it is true, still accepted for themselves, and demanded from others, the full performance of its obligations. But the rest, with few exceptions,

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 59.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 60.

continued to declare that it constituted the best possible system for the maintenance of peace; and admitted that its recent failure was due, not to its own shortcomings, but to the fact that its principles had not been carried out. They concluded that, even if certain of its provisions must be left dormant for the time being, it ought, none the less, to be preserved unchanged, in the hope that one day it would become again the effective law of nations.

These facts are enough to suggest that the events connected with the Italo-Ethiopian war need not necessarily have been the death-blow of the League. But they must not be taken to suggest that those events were not its death-blow in fact. They show that it might have recovered from the wounds inflicted by its resolute enemies and its untrustworthy friends. But they do not show that it did in fact so recover. It could still function for a time in many fields with energy and success; it still possessed something of the resilience which it had shown in the earlier crises of its fate. But on those occasions its vitality had been drawn from the loyal support of the great majority of its Member States, and from the enthusiastic hopes of public opinion. Now those powerful currents were reduced to no more than a trickle. Some few governments, some few crusaders of unconquerable faith, maintained that the whole Covenant was still the best hope of world peace. But the governments in general were looking for safety to their armed forces, or to their alliances, or to their hopes of neutrality, or to all at once; and the mass of opinion was shaken, resentful, and confused. The political institutions of the League were still an administrative convenience: they were no longer a repository of moral power. Such vitality as they displayed was for the most part a survival from the loyalties and achievements of the past.

If then the possibility of rebuilding subsisted, the effort required would have been hard and long. In the field of public opinion it was undertaken, with remarkable results, by the International Peace Campaign, which Cecil, Herriot, and others now began to organize. But no corresponding attempt was ever made by those responsible for official policy. Those great democratic governments, which alone could have made it with success, looked for other expedients to help them through the dangers and disasters of the times. For it was not simply a question of reviving the League: it was a question, at the same time, of actually performing or omitting the obligations of membership. Aggression was no longer a mere possibility; it was no longer even a threat; it was actually going on. The war in Spain, in which one Member of the League was actively assisting the Spanish government, while two of the

three anti-League powers were fighting on the side of the rebel forces, began almost on the very day that sanctions against Italy were finally lifted. The struggle between right and left added to the general hesitation and confusion. In every country, except those already completely dominated by one or the other ideology in its extreme form, internal dissensions prevented the formation of a clear policy on external events, while the development of external events made internal dissensions more deep and bitter than before. The Spanish war acted like a corroding acid: in internal and external affairs alike, it intensified existing quarrels and started new ones. Partly by chance and partly by design, the totalitarian powers had discovered the modern application of the old device, Divide and Rule; and they exploited it with stupefying success. Within a few months the will-power of the democracies was gravely weakened. Disunited at home, conscious of the disunion of their neighbours, they could neither feel nor inspire the confidence on which alone international action can rest.

The strange story and the profound effects of this ideological division—its ‘fell approach and secret might’—would make an historical study of outstanding interest. Its impact on the League must be briefly recorded. Its first international manifestations in its post-war form were seen during the early years of Bolshevism in Russia, when the new regime combined its fight for survival with endeavours to extend the Communist doctrine, and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in other countries. But from about 1924 onwards ideological disputes ceased for the time being to play any important part in international affairs. The Bolshevik chiefs, concerned above all to consolidate their authority in Russia, were proceeding on the theory that Communist and capitalist States could co-operate with one another in spite of the profound differences in their political and economic systems.<sup>1</sup> The capitalist powers, realizing that the new regime had come to stay, were ready to try to live on normal terms with its government. For some years the doctrines of Communism and Fascism did not directly affect the relations between States. But when Hitler became ruler of Germany, the situation changed. Of all his plans there was none that he was more resolved to carry out than the plan to conquer and annex the vast and rich Russian provinces which lie between the Baltic and the Black Sea. And Nazi propaganda began to prepare the way by stirring up a fresh wave of hatred for Communism and the Communist State.

This campaign had made little progress when Russia joined the League. Objection to her entry on ideological grounds was voiced only

<sup>1</sup> Speech of Soviet Delegate to Economic Conference, Geneva, May 7th, 1927.

by the Swiss representative, though some others doubtless felt it. But in the next few months Mussolini discovered the principal use which could be made of talk about the dangers of Communism. The fear lest the defeat of his regime should lead to Communism in Italy powerfully affected the views of many influential persons, and played a considerable part in fostering opposition to sanctions and in keeping them down to the lowest possible level. From that time on, the Italian press was bidden to describe the League as being under Communist influence, exercised not only by the Russian delegation and the Comintern but also by a semi-Communist Secretariat. At the same time Italy and Germany drew closer to one another. The real ground of their entente was a common purpose to upset the existing order of things: but this was conveniently covered by the pretence that they were combining to defend Europe against the danger of Communism and of Russian hegemony.

In the autumn of 1936 the great campaign took recognizable shape. In October, Hitler and Mussolini arrived at a series of agreements; their text was not published, but they constituted, according to the Duce, an axis round which other European States could rally in support of peace. Thus was born the Axis of sad and sinister memory, the true nature of which was a recognition that the Nazi and Fascist regimes were natural allies, that each could serve its own ambitions in promoting those of the other, and that the forces which must be overcome in the process were the same for both. A month later, Japan was brought into the group by the signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact, of November 25th, 1936, whereby Germany and Japan bound themselves to tell one another all they knew about the Comintern and to co-operate in defence against Communist subversive activities. Such a document was clearly meaningless in itself; its alleged purposes could be carried out by the mere exchange of information between police chiefs, and required no formal obligation. The Pact, however, was a much more important political act than its terms suggested. It brought Japan into the camp of those who intended to make of their hostility to the Communist ideology a pretext and a cover for ambitions of a very different character.

The three powers had a further bond of union in their common enmity for the League. Each could claim to have defeated it; each professed to despise it. Yet they found that it had not altogether lost the capacity to be, if not a barrier, at least a hindrance and an inconvenience in the path of their advance. It had effectively prevented the recognition of Japan's puppet State of Manchukuo. It was still giving moral support and some technical assistance to the Chinese government. The Council and the Assembly were still great centres of publicity. China, the Republican government of Spain, and even the exiled

government of Ethiopia, could still bring their complaints and their justifications before the international press and before the responsible statesmen of fifty countries. Naturally, therefore, the League was denounced as an agency of Communism. Japan extended her military occupation of Northern China in the name of self-defence and anti-Communism. To save Spain, and Europe, from Communism, Italy and Germany sent troops and arms to help Franco. Hitler discovered the same reasons for threatening Czechoslovakia and Russia, and for denouncing their French ally. If then these countries came to plead their cause in Geneva, or tried to prepare their defence by urging their fellow Members of the League to renew their allegiance to the Covenant, was it not evident that the League was protecting the Communist aggressors?

All this might have had little result had it not been for the Spanish war. But with the destructive intensification of domestic strife which that war introduced into all countries where differences of opinion could still be manifested, the effects of extremist propaganda on either side were increased beyond all reason. Whoever wished well to Franco was denounced as reactionary and Fascist: whoever wished well to the government, as atheist and Communist. The great majority of those who had hoped for the success of the League were naturally inclined to favour the Republicans, for the reason that the two dictators who were helping Franco were not merely the avowed enemies of internationalism in every form, but were also openly preaching to their subjects the virtues of militarism and war. Thus the ambience of the League itself was preponderantly, though not wholly, on the Republican side. This was not in the least due to any leaning towards Communism. It was the natural reaction of those who had seen their life's work broken and insulted by the Fascist and Nazi leaders and their servile press; and who believed that the operations of the Axis in Spain were the prelude to a new war. But in the unreal atmosphere of the last feverish years before the Second World War, prejudice and passion had falsified the normal judgement of many who had never before held strong partisan views. The violence of the Nazi campaign, designed to create and intensify political differences on the national and on the international plane alike, forced individuals and governments into partisan attitudes against their will, even without their knowledge. Extremism on the one side naturally played into the hands of the extremists on the other: and the Communist or pro-Communist parties gained in numbers and conviction. The moderate elements were everywhere the losers. Neither the democratic States, nor the League, were able to steer clear of the treacherous reefs of ideological zeal. The moral and material strength of individual States was deeply undermined. The prospects of any

effective revival of the League were fatally compromised. No small success, truly, for a propaganda campaign which possessed no serious basis of fact, but knew how to address a brilliant, resonant, unremitting appeal to the sentiments of its victims.

The campaign of propaganda against the League on which the Axis poured out its skill and resources provoked no reply from the democratic governments. Nor could any adequate counter-effort be carried on by the League of Nations Associations, which shared in the loss of prestige and popularity inflicted on the League itself by the failure of sanctions. But at this point of deepest depression, in the summer of 1936, there was born the first great international movement in support of the Covenant—a movement which did not in the end succeed in exercising a decisive influence on government policy, but which did at least win the adhesion of large numbers of people in many different countries. This was the International Peace Campaign. It was started by an Anglo-French group of which the leaders were Cecil, Philip Noel-Baker, and Norman Angell on the British side, and on the French side Herriot, Jouhaux, the spokesman of French trade unionism, and Pierre Cot, who at hardly thirty years old was already a power in the Socialist party. The new movement was the result, in the first place, of the profound anxiety inspired by the successes of Mussolini and Hitler and the abandonment of the Covenant by the democratic governments. Its chief aims were, therefore, to restore and strengthen the powers of the League; to insist that all dangerous international problems should be dealt with through the League; to stop the armaments race, achieve a general reduction, and eliminate private manufacture. It was the result, secondly, of the realization that movements organized simply to popularize the League or proclaim the virtues of peace, were insufficient. The Peace Ballot had indeed influenced strongly the policy of the British government in the early stages of the Ethiopian conflict; its last wave had swept Hoare from office; but its effect thereafter had faded out. Some closer connexion must be constructed between the mass of democratic opinion and the cause of the League and of peace.

This connexion, Cecil believed, could be found by contact with those great groups or movements whose primary purpose was not the direct pursuit of peace, yet for whose successful working, peace was a necessary condition. The trade unions, the professional associations of doctors or traders or teachers or farmers, the powerful organizations of ex-service men, the co-operatives, the women's movement—these and others numbered their adherents by the million. They were deeply rooted in



their own countries; they were for the most part free from the more violent forms of nationalism; they were accustomed to meet and discuss with corresponding groups in other countries. All were anxious for peace: but few amongst them had ever sought to translate that anxiety into terms of practical policy. Besides these special organizations there were also the Churches: with one great exception, their good will could be counted on, but here also it was necessary to create new links without which their aspirations, sincere and passionate as they were, could have little effect upon the decisions of governments.

The first moves made by the founders of the Peace Campaign met with a response which exceeded all their hopes. With few exceptions, the heads of the organizations which they approached, national and international alike, gave an enthusiastic welcome to a movement which promised to meet the profound desire of their constituents to do something, if they only knew what, to make war less probable. In France the trade unions, the ex-service men, the co-operative movement, the Confederation of Peasants and other agricultural groups, and numerous other professional organizations, as well as the chief left-wing parties, all gave their adhesion. When it was seen that something of the same kind was happening elsewhere, Cecil, de Brouckère, Cot, and the other leaders decided to hold an international congress without delay. The meeting took place in Brussels in September 1936. In spite of the short time that had elapsed since the plan was first launched, more than five hundred persons attended from thirty-five different countries, every one of whom was present not in his or her individual capacity, but as delegate for some organization, great or small. Subsequent conferences were not less extensive or enthusiastic. By 1939 there were national campaign committees in forty-three States, many of them very closely linked with the chief religious, professional, trade union, ex-service, feminist, and youth organizations in the country concerned. Strongest perhaps in France—the French national committee claimed to speak for sixteen million adherents—the organization was active and successful in nearly all the democratic countries, including the United States.

But though the International Peace Campaign was a genuine, enthusiastic, and intelligent movement, it came too late to produce any of the results at which it aimed. It was born at a moment when the ideological propaganda of Germany and Italy was already proving highly effective. It was inevitable that such a movement should detest and be detested by the Fascists and the Nazis: and they instantly set themselves to create the belief that it was an agency of Communism, revolution, disorder—a thing, in short, to be regarded with the same

hatred as the Soviet regime, the Popular Front government in France, the Republican government in Spain, or the League itself in so far as it attempted to carry out the Covenant. Two facts will show how successfully they worked. The congress of Brussels was first planned to be held at the headquarters of the League, and was transferred to Brussels because of the unfriendly attitude of the conservative citizens of Geneva, who, staunch democrats at home, considered Mussolini as an infallible guide in international affairs. And in Brussels itself the congress was boycotted by the Belgian Catholics, on the instructions of the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines.

From the snare thus skilfully spread the International Peace Campaign was never able to shake itself free. 'The ideals of liberty and democracy were again becoming revolutionary cries in Europe'<sup>1</sup>; the same might almost be said of the ideals of collective security and all-round disarmament. The movement was forced, on pain of being totally unrealistic, to proclaim its views on such burning questions as those of Spain, China, and Czechoslovakia: and in each case its attitude was necessarily displeasing to the Axis powers and to all those who believed that it was a political necessity to yield to their demands. Its origin, membership, and policy thus combined to make it mistrusted by all extreme, and by many moderate, right-wing elements; it was disliked by the official world, and was therefore treated as of little account by the League Secretariat. Given a few more years of time, its sincerity might have been better understood and its voting strength might have made itself felt. As it was, it has to be written down as a great and gallant effort, born too late to exercise any decisive influence upon the main course of events.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from article by Miss S. Grant Duff in *Contemporary Review*, December 1938.

## THE 'REFORM' OF THE LEAGUE

*'Reform' in previous years—Effect of Italian victory—The principal suggestions—Separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties—'Universality'—Preventive action—Peaceful change—Regional agreements for defence—The Latin American Members and the Conference of Buenos Aires*

(DECEMBER 1936—SEPTEMBER 1938)

IT has been mentioned in a previous chapter that when the Special Assembly of July 1936 decided to abandon all further effort to resist, by economic sanctions, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, it initiated at the same time a process of inquiry and consultation with the object of reconsidering the constituent elements of the Covenant. This was the official beginning of a long and elaborately organized discussion on what was usually called the reform of the League. In actual fact the defeat of the League had taken place not through any shortcoming in the Covenant, but, on the contrary, precisely for the reason that the provisions of the Covenant had not been applied. The theoretical obligations of membership had been violated. The practical possibilities of League action, the positive will and purpose of its Members as a whole, had been deliberately thwarted. It may well be that the governments concerned realized their responsibilities, and even that they bitterly regretted their miscalculations. If so, they saw nothing to be gained by acknowledging past faults. In any case, the whole political situation had been violently altered, and every government was forced to consider anew its policies and its prospects.

For a time, at least, the system of collective security had ceased to exist. No State could now afford to rely on its membership of the League to protect it from aggression, or even to give it any useful help in time of danger. This was a fact: whether the blame was to be put on the Covenant, or on the Members as a whole, or on particular States, the fact was still the same. The practical question was not to decide whether the Covenant had collapsed in the hands of those who tried to apply it or had been deliberately broken for fear its application might be only too effective. The practical question was concerned with the consequences, not the causes, of its failure. What was to be the attitude of the Members of the League, collectively or individually, in view of the radical transformation which had now come over the international scene?

This then was the real character of the long debate which followed the special Assembly of July 1936. The usual description of its object was the reform of the League; the official description was the study of how to improve the application of the principles of the Covenant. In fact, the chief purpose of each Member was to consider its own situation, and to decide its own policy, in the light of the breakdown of collective security; and, having made its decisions, to announce them and to justify them, both to its own public opinion and to its fellow members of the international community. Some, like Russia and France, might aim at giving fresh life to the basic principle of joint automatic action against any State which broke the peace. Others, like the Scandinavian States and Canada, might accept with relief the disappearance of such obligations, and oppose any endeavour to revive them. Others, like Britain, might be still hesitating between the two extremes. But none of these were in any real sense aiming at the reform of the Covenant. The first group did not ask for any reinforcement of its Articles: they only wished that those Articles should be strictly applied if Germany should start a new war. The second group did not ask for any change: they merely wished it to be acknowledged that the Covenant could not be relied on to save them from attack and that therefore they in turn were no longer bound to risk their existence in support of France or Russia or any other victim of German aggression.

In earlier years, though little had been heard of any such phrase as reform of the League, there had, in fact, been a good many plans and proposals which might have properly been thus described. The Treaty of Mutual Assistance, the Geneva Protocol of 1924, the Kellogg Pact, and the attempts to incorporate it into the Covenant—all these were aimed at actually improving the Covenant both in its theory and in its practice. Other schemes had been devised to reinforce its working without changing its character. The Treaty for Improving the Means of Preventing War was intended to put clear and definite powers into the hands of the Council before war actually broke out. The Treaty for Financial Assistance to the Victim of Aggression was intended to supplement the negative effects of economic and financial sanctions—to help the victim as well as to hinder the attacker. Both of these had been adopted by the Assembly. The first might have proved its value in the Manchurian conflict: the second would have been of incalculable importance to Ethiopia. They were put forward, not to meet a particular situation, but simply in order to make the system more efficient. These schemes, therefore, whether or not they were wisely conceived for the purpose, might rightly have been counted as proposals for reform.

When the Disarmament Conference failed, and Germany broke finally with the League, the question entered upon a new phase. Hitherto there had been little talk of 'reform', but a long series of efforts to strengthen the action of the Council and Assembly. In 1933 the phrase 'reform of the League' was brought by Mussolini into sudden prominence: but it was generally believed that his object was to weaken rather than to reinforce it. The Fascist Grand Council announced (December 12th, 1933) that Italy would withdraw unless there were a radical reform. There was nothing to show what changes were demanded; press comments suggested that the Duce's purpose was the same as that which had inspired the Four-Power Pact, that is to say, to concentrate the effective direction of the League in the hands of the great powers, and to give them authority to carry out a revision of the Peace Treaties. Except in Germany, the Italian initiative was coldly received. In January 1934, the Netherlands government addressed to its fellow Members a strong defence of the existing system, and utterly rejected any proposal to reduce the status of the smaller powers. This, it was clear, was the prevailing view; and Mussolini soon dropped his campaign and forgot his threats. But the movement had been started: and it was kept alive in a number of different ways. In Germany, for example, the official attitude, amidst a parade of hostility to the League, was that Germany would be ready to resume membership on certain conditions. These related chiefly to matters of substance, such as equality in armaments: but it was also suggested that the Covenant must be cleansed of all connexion with the Treaty of Versailles and must provide more effective means for treaty revision and for territorial change. In the United States too, men's thoughts turned to the question whether changes in the Covenant might create a new possibility of American membership. No official support was given to such hopes: but once the idea of revision had become a matter of current speculation, it was natural that on both sides of the Atlantic men should recall that the only indisputable reform of the League would be the admission of the United States.

The flow of discussion dried up when the Council and Assembly decisions of 1935 set the League in array against the Fascist aggressor. However far the measures taken might fall short of those actually prescribed by the Covenant, the struggle was recognized as a test for the League system, decisive in practice if not in logic. Defenders and critics alike waited the outcome; and the call for reform was a natural and immediate sequel to the Italian triumph. The Assembly was not unwilling to listen; it was easier to acknowledge failure if it could be suggested at the same time that the lesson would lead to success on some

future occasion. But though the question of reform had thus for the first time been officially brought before the organs of the League, it had simultaneously ceased to be a real question at all. What was now at issue was not whether the Covenant should be reformed, or left as it had been hitherto. The issue now was this: the Covenant having in fact ceased to function as a guarantee of security, should it be re-created? or should its demise be accepted?

Such a description of the actual facts of the situation was vehemently rejected by Litvinov. The Russian delegate consistently took the line that the Ethiopian conflict was on no different footing from other major disputes dealt with by the League: that the failure of sanctions did not create any fundamentally new situation, and that all that was needed was for the Members of the League to make up their minds to do better next time. No future historian will lightly disagree with any views expressed by Litvinov on international questions. Whatever may be thought of the policy and purposes of his government, the long series of his statements and speeches in the Assembly, the Council, the Conferences, and Committees of which he was a member between 1927 and 1939, can hardly be read today without an astonished admiration. Nothing in the annals of the League can compare with them in frankness, in debating power, in the acute diagnosis of each situation. No contemporary statesman could point to such a record of criticisms justified and prophecies fulfilled. It is impossible to believe that a man so clear-sighted can have failed to perceive the shattering reversal which had taken place in the situation of the League between the autumn of 1935 and the summer of 1936. It seems, therefore, that he was forced, for the sake of Soviet policy, to accept without apparent reluctance the abandonment of sanctions: to join in preparing the false and embarrassed formula voted by the Assembly; and to display an optimism which he did not feel. The Russian government, threatened in East and West, profoundly shaken internally by the horrors of the purge and by the discontents of which those horrors were both the effect and the cause, could not renounce the hope that the League might still make some contribution to its security. Naturally, therefore, Litvinov set himself to re-inject as much life as possible into the institutions of Geneva. An exact parallel may be found in the attitude of another no less realistic statesman. 'I believe', said Winston Churchill (December 3rd, 1936), 'that the great days of the League are still to come, and that it would be madness . . . to discard this immense potential for salvation.'

In response to the invitation of the Assembly the Members of the League diligently sent in their observations and suggestions. By the

time the regular Assembly met in September 1936, more than half had answered: the rest did so through the speeches of their delegates in the general debate. The first impression was, perhaps rather unexpectedly, an almost unanimous rally to the system of the Covenant. 'This League . . . can yet achieve, if the nations of the world so intend . . . the permanent establishment of peace. The policy of the British government will still be based upon its membership of the League', said Eden: and the same attitude was expressed, often in stronger terms, by almost every government. Was this an empty demonstration, a meaningless lip-service? Perhaps in some cases: certainly it did not mean, except for a very few States, that they were still ready to carry out that steady and collective resistance to aggression which Hoare had promised amid such enthusiasm a year before. But for most governments it had a real significance: and indeed that popular sentiment which had so often forced ministers to pay lip-service to Geneva had now largely disappeared. The real sense of their words was this, that in the gathering dangers of the time, they found their fears and anxieties increased because they could no longer look to the League to save or help them. Whatever its protective powers had been, they were now gone. Though there was little hope that those powers could be restored in the near future, few statesmen were willing to destroy the possibility.

The varied and often conflicting views of League Members on the question of reform were referred for further study to a Committee set up by the Assembly of 1936. The debates of the Committee were long, its documents and reports were numerous and elaborate. Its work led to no results of any practical importance. But the further developments of the subject must be recorded, not for their academic interest, but because they were a reflection of the attitude towards the League of its chief Members and groups of Members. And though the proposals put forward could not, in the conditions of that time, be translated into action, they were destined to exert a considerable influence upon the proceedings of the Conferences which drew up the Charter of the United Nations.

Among the proposals advanced by different Member States for changes in the theory or practice of the League the principal were these:

Separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties.

Universality of the League.

More emphasis on prevention of war, less on sanctions once war had begun.

More emphasis on peaceful change, less on the preservation of existing treaty situations.

Establishment of regional agreements, and thereby relief from the

necessity of sanctions except for States directly affected by the conflict.

The separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties had always been demanded by Germany. The decision to make it an integral part of those treaties had, in the circumstances of the Paris Conference, been a political master-stroke on the part of Woodrow Wilson. But it had left on the Covenant itself traces which constituted, for Germany and her allies, a painful reminder of defeat. Members which had been neutral in the war, and were therefore not parties to the Peace Treaties, would from the first have preferred the Covenant to be a separate and independent instrument. Not a few of the victorious powers, and in particular the members of the British Commonwealth, had long since begun to regret those parts of the Treaty of Versailles which the Germans considered as unjust; and they gladly accepted the occasion to satisfy a German demand with which their own sentiments were in full accord. Nor did those signatory powers which still desired to maintain the Paris settlements see any reason to object to the proposal that the Covenant should be transformed into a separate instrument. This suggestion, therefore, met with general approval: and the Covenant was duly subjected to the minor surgical operations required to execute it. The process was long; the new text was not finally approved until the Assembly of 1938; and the formal procedure of ratification was interrupted by the Second World War, and was never carried through. If the change could have had any effect on the attitude of Germany, it would doubtless have been pressed with greater vigour. But from that point of view it was undertaken far too late. Its value for Stresemann or Brüning might have been considerable. For Hitler it had no value at all.

While this one question was superficial and non-controversial, all the rest of those which have been enumerated went, directly or indirectly, to the very heart of the problem. Each of them raised, from a different angle, the fundamental issue, whether the Members of the League should rebuild a system of sanctions, that is to say, of collective obligations against war, or should henceforth treat the Covenant only as a constitutional method of seeking for pacific settlements by consultation, conciliation, or persuasion, on the understanding that if these methods failed they would be under no engagement to take economic or military action. Sanctions or no sanctions, a coercive League or a consultative League—this was the question that reappeared at every turn of the debate. It was a debate which could not be settled by voting, and which



never looked likely to be settled by compromise. Each party held firmly to its convictions; and each occupied an impregnable defensive position. Those who favoured a coercive League could, and did, refuse to accept any changes in the Covenant, whether by amendment or by an agreement to suspend the operation of the system of sanctions. Those who desired a consultative League could, and did, declare that they no longer recognized the obligation to apply coercive measures. The coercive position was doubtless the stronger in law; but the consultative policy was, for obvious reasons, overwhelmingly effective in practice, since coercion could never be used by the League so long as powerful Members, and especially Britain, declined to participate.

When Britain, Canada, Australia, Belgium, the European neutrals, and the Latin American States stressed the view that the League was intended to be universal, they were thinking in the first place of the United States, and of the fact that the Sanctions Conference had been handicapped in all its planning by the absence of that country. Of the seven great powers, only three were still in the League camp;<sup>1</sup> and it was on the great powers that the whole responsibility for military sanctions, and the major responsibility for economic sanctions, must always fall. Thus, on the one hand, the effectiveness of League action was reduced as compared with the situation foreseen when the Covenant was planned; while on the other, the dangers were multiplied, alike for the faithful three and for all the lesser Members which might follow their lead. The conclusion, expressed by some Members and implied by others, was that new efforts must be made to induce the chief non-Member States to enter, or re-enter, the League: and that in the meantime they considered themselves to be released from any engagement to take part in coercive action based on the Covenant. To this Litvinov replied that if Italy, Germany, and Japan were to re-enter the League with the firm intention of renouncing aggression and fulfilling the Covenant, his government would welcome them back. But they were outside the League precisely because they were planning, and indeed practising, a policy of conquest. To abandon the obligation of sanctions on account of their absence, and to accept it again if and when they came back, was exactly like dissolving the fire-brigade because there was great danger of a fire and promising to reconstitute it if and when such danger had ceased to exist. In spite of losses, the peace-loving States were still immensely stronger in all essential respects than the group of would-be aggressors. To give up the Covenant would not mean any new safety for Members of the League: it would merely

<sup>1</sup> Italy was counted as an anti-League power, though she did not give formal notice of withdrawal until December 1937.

expose them to being overrun one by one. His view was backed by China, Spain, the Baltic States, the Little Entente, Turkey, Persia, and Iraq: by the French, blandly overlooking the fact that they had deliberately acquiesced in the destruction of the system they now attempted to defend; and, with a more disinterested courage, by Mexico, Colombia, New Zealand.

An unexpected note was introduced into the debate in September 1937 by the Chilean delegation, which proposed that the non-Member States should at once be invited to take part, or at least to communicate their view by correspondence. The ideal of a universal League could not be realized unless those outside were induced to come in: how could this happen if they were not invited to explain the conditions in which they would be ready to do so? Suppose the Members of the League were able, after long discussion, to reach agreement among themselves: it was not likely that the agreement so reached would be accepted without change by the great powers now outside, and all the work would have to be done over again. The argument might seem reasonable enough as a matter of theory: but when examined in the light of actual facts it assumed a very different aspect. Everybody knew why a militarist Japan, a Nazi Germany, a Fascist Italy, were hostile to the League. That the Assembly should invite them to explain what changes they would wish to see in the Covenant, would have been both humiliating and useless: more, it would have been practically a confession that the whole system of collective security was, as these countries declared, an aberration to be abandoned at once and forgotten as soon as possible. The Chilean proposal received no real support from other delegations; and though it was left to Litvinov to oppose it, the rest combined to shelve it. But the Chileans continued to press it with a persistence and a passion which showed that there was more in their attitude than appeared on the surface: and in truth their chief delegate, Agustín Edwards, believed that by offering the Covenant as a sacrifice to Hitler and Mussolini he could strengthen the forces which were protecting the world from Communism. He threatened that Chile would leave the League if her proposal were rejected or postponed: and, on June 2nd, 1938, his threat was carried out by the Chilean government.

In this controversy, the British government occupied an uncertain position. Its real concern was with the question of sanctions. It had, in fact, made up its mind not to consider itself bound any longer by those Articles of the Covenant which obliged the Members to oppose aggression by economic and military means. But it had not yet made up its mind to say so. Its delegate to the Reform Committee was Lord

Cranborne, a man of high intellectual quality, a friend and follower of Eden, and neither inclined nor permitted to express uncompromising views. Cranborne contributed, under date of September 8th, 1937, a masterly study of the theoretical advantages of a 'coercive League', a 'consultative League', and an 'intermediate League', that is to say, a League whose Members would have the right to use sanctions against an aggressor but would not be bound to do so. He declined to say which form was preferred by his government. But his hearers had little doubt that, if forced to answer, he would have chosen the intermediate form, which indeed represented that free hand which the British Foreign Office had long desired to recover. We shall see that the process was duly consummated at the Assembly of 1938.

The contention that the League ought to be better organized for preventive action, so as to be able to settle disputes before they reached the dangerous stages in which national pride had been worked up in support of some extreme demand, had often been urged in earlier years. Such a reform would involve not so much a change in the Covenant as a return to methods which its makers had intended to provide; their purpose, however, had been frustrated by the preference of the great powers for the older procedures of diplomacy, and by the unreasonable extension given to the unanimity rule. Numerous Members now suggested that the Council should be enabled to insist that its pacific intervention should not be paralysed by acts of violence on the part of one of the disputing States. For this object they found all that was needed in the proposals worked out in 1927 for the effective application of Article 11 of the Covenant.

Much the same was true of the suggestions that the League should establish an efficient procedure for the revision of treaties and in general for what was described as 'peaceful change'. Some of those who laid stress on this were, like Hungary, thinking of their own particular interests; others were chiefly concerned to appease the ill humour of Germany; but it was none the less true that many loyal and disinterested supporters of the League had long believed that herein lay the chief defect of the Covenant, or at least of its application in actual practice. For here again the founders of the League had constructed at any rate an embryo of the required machinery; they had given the Assembly power to recommend modifications in treaties which no longer corresponded to the needs of the situation. Indeed, this provision had been originally put forward by Cecil as part of the famous Article 10, which pledged the League to prevent territorial changes imposed by force: he, therefore, had fully grasped and accepted the contention that when

forcible change was forbidden, peaceful change must not be unreasonably blocked. But the passionate anxiety of the French to maintain the sacred and unchangeable character of the Versailles settlement had been too strong; and the Assembly's right to recommend changes in existing treaties was separately embodied in Article 19, thus cutting across its practical and logical connexion with Article 10. Thereafter, whenever an attempt had been made to make use of, or even to define, the competence of the Assembly under Article 19, the French had successfully opposed it. The endeavours of Bolivia and Peru, at the First Assembly, to secure reconsideration of the treaties imposed by Chile after her victory in the Pacific War of 1879-84, and of China to bring the problems of her 'unequal treaties' before the Assembly of 1929, had been resisted by France, not on their own merits but in the fear lest a dangerous precedent might be created. By 1936 the position had altered. France had learnt by bitter experience that change could not be held up by the simple process of refusing to consider it, and that open discussion in conference or Assembly must offer the best chance of keeping it under international control.

These general proposals then, to reinforce the working of the League in the two fields of preventive action and of peaceful change, were in full accord with the principles of the Covenant and unquestionably deserved to be described as proposals for reform. But they could be realized only on the assumption that the Council and the Assembly regained a large share of their lost authority, and there was little sign of such a restoration. It would have needed full co-operation between the British Commonwealth, France, and Russia; and these powers would have had to find means of convincing their fellow Members that their future action would be firmly based on the Covenant, and that they would not again refuse to carry through the responsibilities which they had accepted. Thus revived, the resources of the League would be far greater than those of Germany, Italy, and Japan. As for the United States, its good will was certain to be on the side of the League; and the chance of active assistance from that quarter would be all the greater if the action of the League powers was clear and firm. In any case the hostility of the three aggressive outsiders was not likely to be satisfied by the mere abandonment of the coercive provisions of the Covenant: on the contrary, the liquidation of the League was to them only a necessary first stage on the way to the fulfilment of their territorial ambitions. The argument was convincing to many; but not to those in power, and it was never put to the test. Of the three governments which would have to lead the way, only Russia believed that her interests and her safety required the execution of such a plan; Britain and France

preferred to try to limit their commitments. What greater step could be taken in this direction than to discard the general obligations of League membership and at the same time build up that joint defence of Western Europe which had long been desired by the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay? With this in mind, both countries put forward, as an element in the reform of the League, the proposal that its Members should form regional groups for mutual defence. The same suggestion came also from Moscow; but its meaning in that case was different. Russian policy was to build an additional defence network in Eastern Europe, while continuing to count on, and to share in, the collective resistance of the whole League. The British government wished to establish a defence system in the West, retaining a free hand to give or to refuse help to fellow Members elsewhere, and admitting that the latter in turn were free to help her or not as they thought best. France hoped still to be able to claim the benefits of the Covenant without any effective obligation on her part to give the same benefits where her own safety was not at stake.

In view of these basic contradictions, the proposals for regional defence agreements, though they could in theory be harmonized with the principles of the Covenant, were not in reality proposals for League reform, but rather indications of the actual purposes or hopes of the governments concerned. In point of fact they led to no result in either aspect. They were never seriously taken up either by the Reform Committee or by the Assembly. Nor did they ever lead to effective regional arrangements either in Western or in Eastern Europe. The French and British governments were indeed closely united in their attitude on foreign policy: and each gave moral pledges for the defence of other Western European countries; but no new formal agreements were made until, in the spring of 1939, the British government reversed its policy and undertook engagements to join in the defence, not of the Western countries, but of Poland, Roumania, and Greece.

The Latin American Members of the League were impelled to a fresh review of their position, not only by the negative influence of the failure to save Ethiopia, but by the positive influence of a new and important initiative from Washington. In January 1936, while sanctions against Italy were in full operation, President Roosevelt had proposed the holding of a special Conference of all the American Republics to strengthen their common action for the peace of their own hemisphere. There was nothing unfriendly to the League in the terms of his proposal. On the contrary, he spoke of the need to supplement the efforts of the League. Nevertheless, as months went by in the exchange of views and

suggestions between the twenty-one Republics on the general question of the organization of peace, the idea of creating a security system for the American continent alone began to exercise a considerable attraction. For Roosevelt and Hull, the organization of peace on a continental scale would represent a step in what they considered the right direction, that is to say, a step away from the narrow isolationism with which they were waging an unending contest. For the Latin Americans, on the other hand, it would mean not an expansion but a limitation of their international commitments, and in particular a loosening of their connexion with the League.

The Conference was therefore watched with some anxiety from Geneva when it met in Buenos Aires in December 1936. This was the more natural inasmuch as four Latin American Members had recently notified their withdrawal. Paraguay resigned in indignation at the Assembly's decision to raise the arms embargo for Bolivia but not for her. Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua had resigned for no other reason than that they were unwilling to pay their contributions to the League budget. Here again, however, in spite of the powerful pull of the United States and Brazil, the result was a decided rally in favour of the League. Its Members showed themselves generally unwilling to accept new obligations which might prove inconsistent with those of the Covenant. In the draft Conventions which were finally adopted, this principle was carefully preserved: and the Conference actually passed a resolution (the United States abstaining) recommending those American States which were not Members of the League to co-operate with it in its efforts to prevent war.

## WAR IN SPAIN

*'Non-Intervention'—The Spanish government appeals to the Council—  
Failure of non-intervention—The Nyon Conference—The Assembly  
resolution*

(JULY 1936—DECEMBER 1937)

IN the ideological conflicts of the last years before the Second World War, the war in Spain played a decisive part. No continent, no country, escaped its bitter contagion. Indirectly, therefore, it proved to be an important element in the history of the League's declining years. It constituted a continuous threat to, and in many respects an actual breach of, international peace. It was the dominant issue of international affairs, by virtue alike of its own dramatic and terrible qualities, and of its character as a trial of strength between the Axis and the countries which they hoped to destroy. But it was only at intervals, and incompletely, that it was brought within the field of action of the League. In their anxiety to avoid any open break with the Axis powers, Britain and France persistently discouraged any suggestion that the war in Spain should be dealt with by the Council or the Assembly. They would have preferred that it should not be raised or considered there at all, if that had been possible. But the Republican government, in spite of the changes which it went through in the course of the war, continued to be recognized as the legitimate government of Spain by the great majority of League Members and, consequently, by the organs of the League itself; and it was thus able to claim the rights of membership and to insist on bringing the international aspects of the war into discussion by the League. It was indeed at Geneva, and at Nyon (that is to say Geneva camouflaged to spare the feelings of the Duce) that the attitude of other powers to the Spanish tragedy most nearly approached a normal level of sane and manly conduct. This fact was due, not to any attempt to apply the Covenant, but to the virtues of open debate under constitutional conditions.

It was on July 18th, 1936, that the civil war was started by a widespread military revolt. Within the first weeks it was clear that the rebels were receiving moral and material help from Italy, Germany, and Portugal, while the government was receiving similar help from Russia. Alarmed by this situation and by the dangerously conflicting reactions of French public opinion, the Blum government forbade the sending of

war material to either side in Spain, and, with British support, proposed that other countries should make a joint agreement to follow their example. By the end of August all European States had adhered to the proposed Non-Intervention Agreement, which, in conception and in execution alike, was entirely unconnected with the League. Early in September the Non-Intervention Committee was set up in London. Its original function was to exchange information concerning the action taken by the signatory States to fulfil their pledges. It soon found itself forced to deal with well-founded accusations to the effect that those pledges were being cynically and deliberately violated.

When the Assembly met, however, it was still hoped that the Agreement would prove effective. The British and French governments successfully advised the Spanish delegation not to bring the question formally before the League; and no other Member was inclined to open so explosive a subject. Though delegates and journalists alike thought and spoke of little else except the war in Spain, it was actually suggested that the President should stop any reference to the subject in the general debate. This, however, would have been contrary to the established tradition of the Assembly, whereby the general debate was made the occasion for each country to speak freely of its own interests and purposes, and was in no way confined to questions actually on the agenda. The chief Spanish delegate was Alvarez del Vayo, who had been chairman of the Chaco Committee three years before—a man of strong convictions, not violent in speech, but filled with an unyielding fighting spirit. His government felt a double grievance. They objected to non-intervention in principle, on the ground that a legitimate government ought not to be subjected to the same treatment as those in rebellion against it: it was wrong to sell arms to the latter, and equally wrong to refuse to sell them to the former. They objected to it still more strongly in practice, on the ground that the countries from which they had hoped to procure the arms they needed were honouring their signature, while the rebellious forces were being copiously supplied from Italy, Germany, and Portugal. For the time being, del Vayo contented himself with a speech to this effect. In actual fact, the first shock having passed, the Republican side had begun to think that, if intervention could now be stopped, they would be able to crush the rebellion.

The next few weeks showed that the Non-Intervention Agreement was ineffective. War material continued to be delivered to the rebels in large quantities, to the government in such quantities as the Russians could manage. The Agreement did not yet forbid the sending of men to reinforce the respective armies. Thousands of volunteers were pouring



into Republican Spain in order to fight against General Franco, who was now organizing a government of Fascist complexion at Burgos. Franco, on his side, was receiving extensive reinforcements from the armed forces of Italy and Germany. These also were called volunteers, but it was known to all that they were in reality sent to Spain by order of their governments, and could not possibly have got there under any other conditions. A considerable number of Russian officers and specialists were also assisting, and in places actually commanding, the Republican troops. All this led to much wrangling in the Non-Intervention Committee, but to no action. Indeed, the whole conception of non-intervention was fatally undermined when, on November 18th, 1936, Hitler and Mussolini officially recognized the Burgos government as the legitimate government of Spain. By taking this step they staked their prestige on Franco's victory, and proclaimed their intention not to cease to help him until that victory was secured.

In these circumstances the Spanish government requested the Secretary-General to arrange for an urgent meeting of the Council, claiming that there was a clear case of aggression by Germany and Italy against Spain. The right of a Member of the League to ask for an immediate meeting of the Council, if it considered itself in danger of attack, had never yet been questioned. On this occasion some obstruction was caused by the acting President, Edwards of Chile. Edwards was profoundly affected by the ideological campaign; he regarded the Republican government with detestation, although it was still recognized by his own. London and Paris also hesitated. But the constitutional right could not be denied: on December 12th the Council met, though none of the principal Foreign Ministers attended. Del Vayo can hardly have expected any concrete results: but he found and used the opportunity to set forth his government's case against the non-intervention system, and to describe how foreign planes were bombing the workers' homes in Madrid and foreign submarines were sinking Spanish merchant ships. Such an opportunity was important to the Republicans, because they could take no part in the Non-Intervention Committee. In any case, the work of that Committee was done in secret, which meant in practice that the press of most countries published reports giving only the points of view with which they were in sympathy.

More than half the Council belonged to the Non-Intervention Committee, so that there was no chance that the former would attempt to change or criticize the action of the latter. The Spanish government itself still believed that the strict enforcement of the Non-Intervention Agreement would improve its prospects of victory. The mere fact that the Council was to meet and discuss the subject had put some fresh life

into the Committee: during the twelve days which elapsed between the Spanish appeal and the Council meeting, it had decided to attempt, first, to stop the sending of volunteers to Spain, and, secondly, to set up a system of control on the ports and frontiers of the whole country. The Council, therefore, including the Spanish member, gave its blessing to the work and urged that it should be strictly carried out.

From then, until the government side collapsed in the spring of 1939, there was no session of the Council or Assembly at which the Spanish war was not discussed in some form or another. But only once, at the 1937 Assembly, was the subject fully and honestly faced. On other occasions the meetings of the League were used, on the initiative of the Spanish government, either to deal with questions of a humanitarian character, or as a public sounding-board whereby it could make the world listen to its attempts to justify its cause and protest against its wrongs. In the Non-Intervention Committee the principle was followed of treating the two contesting sides on an equal footing: and whatever might be done in Berlin, Rome, or Moscow, the democratic governments did their best to act on this basis. They were, therefore, embarrassed and uncomfortable whenever the question was discussed at Geneva, since the League continued to treat the Republican side as being the legitimate representative of the Spanish people. The Spanish diplomatic service, with very few exceptions, had thrown in its lot with the nationalist side: and in Switzerland, as elsewhere, Franco was effectively, if not officially, represented. The agents of Burgos had no less easy access to delegations and to journalists than those of Valencia.<sup>1</sup> They were equally able to keep in touch with the Secretariat, which was by no means free from the contagion of ideological rivalry. But the communications from the Republican government were the only ones which the Secretariat could receive and circulate: only the delegates of the Republican government could speak in the Council, the Assembly, or the Committees of the League.

In regard to humanitarian questions, this was of no importance. A group of experts was sent, under the authority of the League, to report on health conditions, and, later on, a group to report on the food situation: but so far as the Council, and indeed so far as the Valencia government was concerned, their services would have been equally available for both sides. On the essential question of foreign intervention, however, only one side was heard: and it was the side which had by far the most to say. Del Vayo could bring to Geneva and display

<sup>1</sup> The government had moved from Madrid to Valencia in November 1936.

to the Council innumerable proofs of the presence in Spain of Italian divisions, complete with their commanders, armaments, and auxiliary services. He could describe the destruction of Guernica by German bombers, the ruthless sinking of Spanish merchant ships by Italian submarines and destroyers. But in the end the Council would do no more than reiterate that no outside power had the right to intervene in Spain, and urge the Non-Intervention Committee to tighten up its controls. And that Committee, helpless against the truculence of Ribbentrop and Grandi, continued as before to treat both sides as equally guilty, shutting its eyes to the fact that German and Italian intervention were absolutely different in scale from that of Russia, and that their military formations in Spain were absolutely different in character from the genuine volunteers who went to fight of their own free will.

For a few weeks in the autumn of 1937, it seemed as though the democratic powers had decided to make a stand. German intervention was by then somewhat reduced: but Italian forces were operating on a greater scale than ever. Italian bombers were daily attacking Cartagena, Valencia, Barcelona, and other towns; it was an operation hardly more risky than those they had performed in Ethiopia, since the Republicans had to keep their few guns and fighters to protect their forces in the line. Italian warships were patrolling the Mediterranean from the Dardanelles to Gibraltar: their submarines, bearing no recognizable marks, were sinking not only Spanish ships but British, Russian, and others bound for the Republican ports. Italian troops and generals were taking so prominent a part in the war on land that their Spanish allies themselves were beginning to murmur. The Fascist press was filled with reports of their feats of arms: Mussolini himself was exchanging fervid telegrams with their commanders. It was not surprising that the French, for whom the Duce hardly concealed his hostility and contempt, were becoming uneasy. They could see a formidable political and strategic barrier being built up across their line of sea and air communications with North Africa—the life-line of French national defence. Even the British government, which had hitherto seemed quite unmoved by the steady undermining of its position in the Mediterranean, lost patience when, on August 31st, 1937, a British destroyer reported that an unidentified submarine had tried to torpedo her.

The two countries then decided to hold a conference of the European powers affected by the conditions of piracy which prevailed from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. The Assembly was about to meet, and the natural place for the conference would have been Geneva; but it was convened in the neighbouring town of Nyon, so as to avoid

inviting Italy and Germany to come to the seat of the League. In spite of this precaution, they still refused to attend. To their surprise and chagrin the other powers went ahead without them, and, being freed for once from their persistent obstruction, were able in a very few days to draw up agreements which provided, in substance, that the British and French navies should patrol the Mediterranean and should counter-attack any submarine, surface warship, or aeroplane which was guilty of piratical attack on merchant vessels other than those of Spain. Mussolini at once climbed down and offered to join in the patrol work: and the other signatories, well aware that the pirates belonged to the Italian navy, accepted the offer.

The Spanish government was naturally indignant that the Nyon agreements should leave its enemies free, at least in theory, to bomb or torpedo its ships, as before, without warning or challenge. It had already renewed its appeal to the Council to take measures against such acts as the bombardment of the open town of Almeria by a German warship as a reprisal for the bombing of the *Deutschland*, and the lawless sinking of merchant vessels. It had given as an example the story of the tanker *Campeador*, shadowed all day long (August 11th, 1937) by two Italian destroyers which made no answer to her signals: desperately trying to reach the shelter of French North African waters before dark: torpedoed and shelled without warning by the two warships which had moved silently up as soon as night fell, and had then left the crew struggling in the water and in the flames of her burning cargo. The Spanish delegation begged the Council to agree that the measures devised at Nyon should be extended to cover Spanish ships. It did not, however, press the matter very far, partly because the new measures did in fact force the Italians to keep their submarines in port, but chiefly because it was concentrating its efforts in Geneva on an undertaking of far greater importance.

The Republicans had always held that the policy of non-intervention was unfair and illegal; nevertheless, being convinced that if neither side were in receipt of foreign help they could quickly suppress the rebellion, they had not hitherto sought to put an end to it. They asked, not that it should be abandoned, but that it should be enforced. Four months earlier, on May 29th, the Council had once more insisted, by a unanimous and strongly worded resolution, on the immediate and complete withdrawal of all foreigners fighting in Spain, and had urged those Members of the League who were also members of the Non-Intervention Committee to do their utmost to that end. But the British and French governments had made light in London of the resolutions for which they had voted at Geneva. Their tactics seemed to be to

display at the Council just enough energy to satisfy the complaints and demands of the Spaniards, and to get back as soon as possible to the Non-Intervention Committee, where they could play the more congenial role of moderators between the two extremes represented by the Axis on the one side and Russia on the other. No serious effort had been made to withdraw the foreign combatants. The general sentiment that non-intervention was little more than a farce had been deepened by Mussolini's formal declaration that he would not permit the existence of a Communist or near-Communist government on the shores of the Mediterranean. It was indeed no less obvious to the democratic governments than to the general public that he intended to maintain his intervention until Franco's victory was complete. But it annoyed and disconcerted them to have it stated so plainly; the French in particular were embarrassed, because the bitterest criticism of their policy came from their own supporters, not as in London from the opposition parties.

In the circumstances the Republican leaders, convinced that their chances of victory depended on securing the abolition of the non-intervention system, since they had lost all hope of seeing it become effective, judged that the right moment to make the attempt had now arrived. The democratic powers had acted at Nyon with unaccustomed self-confidence; might they not be persuaded to take the further step of notifying the Axis once for all that non-intervention must either be enforced or abandoned? Only at Geneva, where it could insist on being heard and answered, could the Spanish government make a last effort to bring the issue to a decision; and for this purpose it rightly considered that the Assembly was a far better medium than the Council.

For a brief moment it seemed as though the undertaking was successful. The speeches of Negrín, the Prime Minister, and of del Vayo, made a deep impression. Both were notable orators, but the effect of their words was due to their substance and not to their form, and still more to the general sense of crisis which pervaded the Assembly. For the last time in the League's history almost every European Foreign Minister was present. They no longer came out of respect to the prestige of the League nor on account of the importance of its work. But the fear of war hung heavily over the whole Continent. They felt themselves divided and uncertain, drifting helplessly towards disaster. They came with no plan, with little confidence in themselves or in one another; but with the hope that some new unity of purpose might emerge from the meeting of so many responsible statesmen. Such an audience could not listen unmoved to the description of what was happening in Spain and over the whole length of the Mediterranean—the bombing of open

towns, the sinking of defenceless ships, above all the clear purpose of the Axis powers to impose their will by war. Too many amongst them were forced to ask themselves whether their turn would not come soon, and whether, when it came, they would have to choose between yielding to the Axis demands or resisting unaided.

Eden and Delbos sought to defend the system of non-intervention, arguing that there had been intervention on both sides, and that at any rate the war had been confined to Spain. Even a leaky dam, said Eden, may yet serve its purpose. But both admitted that the system could not be kept up much longer in the face of its open violation on a huge scale. The French, indeed, now desired to abandon it: and it was believed that if Eden could have his way, he also would insist on a clear and rapid decision either for enforcement or for abandonment.

The Spanish delegation called on the Assembly to declare that Spain was the victim of foreign aggression: that the non-intervention plan had broken down: and that unless foreign combatants were withdrawn immediately and completely, non-intervention should be brought to an end, and the Spanish government be permitted to import all the arms and munitions it required. The debate on this proposal was long and hard-fought. The Italians, although not officially taking part in the Assembly, worked with feverish energy to prevent its adoption. They could count on three obedient satellites, Austria, Hungary, and Albania. Poland, Switzerland, Ireland, and some Latin American States could not bring themselves to vote for a policy which Italy would resent and Russia approve. Portugal would do nothing unfavourable to the cause of Franco. But the French and British, on whom so much depended, were compelled to face the facts, not only by those who supported the Spanish demand, but by Mussolini himself. On September 25th, in the course of gigantic demonstrations in Berlin of the strength and spirit of the Axis, he declared that thousands of Italians were dying in Spain to save civilization from the false gods of Geneva and of Moscow. There was little they could say in defence of a situation thus clearly defined. They accepted a resolution which affirmed that unless the immediate and complete withdrawal of foreign combatants could be carried out in the near future, the Members of the League would consider ending the policy of non-intervention. This resolution, in spite of its painfully diplomatic wording, was in substance an acceptance of the principal Spanish contention: and the British and French delegations made it plain that they intended it as such. When it was submitted to the Assembly, two States, Portugal and Albania, voted against it: a considerable number abstained; while thirty-two States voted in favour, including almost the whole of Europe—that is

to say, almost the whole of the powers bound by the Non-Intervention Agreement except Italy and Germany.

In the formal sense, the resolution was defeated, since the Covenant required unanimity for any such decision. But in the political sense it could not be supposed that the negative votes of Albania and Portugal could frustrate the action of the rest of Europe. Britain and France had declared what they believed to be right: and though the Assembly vote was not legally binding, it constituted an overwhelming moral confirmation of their avowed intentions. Since everybody knew that the Italians would not withdraw their troops from Spain, the Spanish delegation could announce to their colleagues at home that non-intervention would cease in the near future, and that they would be able to acquire war material without further difficulty. At that time the delegates could still telephone to Valencia; and could sometimes hear, from their tranquil Geneva hotel, the sound of bombs bursting at the other end of the line.

Their hopes were kept alive for a few days. Mussolini returned a contemptuous negative to the Franco-British proposal that the question of withdrawing foreign combatants from Spain should be immediately discussed between the three powers. Even the right-wing papers in France were beginning to resent his attitude. Eden, in a public speech on October 15th, declared that his patience was almost exhausted. But the Duce had no misgivings as to what the British government would do. In the previous July, Neville Chamberlain had succeeded Baldwin as Prime Minister; and he was an unshakeable adherent of the policy of co-operation with Italy. One of his first acts as Premier had been to write a personal letter to Mussolini expressing his admiration for the Duce's personality and his desire to collaborate with him in removing all misunderstandings between their two countries. He was determined not to carry out the threat contained in the Geneva resolution. Under pressure from London the French also were induced to change their mind, though they did relax the strict control of the Pyrenees frontier. Grandi and Ribbentrop were allowed to reduce the meetings of the Non-Intervention Committee to an even more dreary farce than before. By the beginning of the following year the only progress made was to authorize the spending of £5,000 on a preliminary study of the administrative arrangements which would be required if foreign combatants were ever withdrawn.

A few weeks later, on February 20th, 1938, Eden and Cranborne resigned rather than sign a new pact with Italy in which the British government consented to the presence of Fascist forces in Spain until the civil war was ended. But their resignation had no influence on

British policy. Eden had waited too long; he had permitted public opinion to be misled as to the real situation in Spain and indeed had himself contributed to keep it in ignorance. In the last phases of the struggle, the Republican government invited the help of the League only in regard to certain specific objects, which will be briefly related as they occurred.<sup>1</sup> The Assembly's action having been brought to nought, there was never again any serious possibility of the whole question being laid before the League, and the field was left clear for the Non-Intervention Committee in London, and, in Spain, for the armed forces of the Axis.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 65.



## WAR IN CHINA

*Sino-Japanese tension—Japan's aggression and China's resistance—  
China appeals to the League—The Assembly condemns Japan—Roosevelt's  
Chicago speech—The Nine-Power Conference—Some help for China*

(JULY 1937—SEPTEMBER 1938)

SINCE the signing, in May 1933, of the Tang-ku Truce, the League had not been called upon to concern itself directly with the conflict between China and Japan. The Truce was in no sense a period of peace, nor was there any serious tendency on either side to make it so. The fundamental conditions of the situation were unchanged. Japan was resolved to make herself the effective ruler of China; China was resolved to remain mistress in her own house. But though these facts were well understood on both sides, neither was willing, during those four years, to provoke an open collision. Japan was trying to establish the puppet State of Manchukuo as an orderly and prosperous colony. She was spreading her influence westward into Mongolia, and southward from the Great Wall to the Yellow River. Politically, she sought to detach these two vast territories from their always uncertain allegiance to the National government at Nanking: economically, she aimed at bringing their resources entirely under her own control, both as an export market and as a source of raw materials. Both these purposes were opposed by the Chinese with their usual tactics of resilience. Confronted by the threat of force, or by a too powerful industrial and financial organization, they would appear to give way; but it would not be long before the Japanese found themselves menaced or frustrated in some new direction. Four years after the signature of the Truce, it was hard to say which side was getting the upper hand.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government under Chiang Kai-shek had resumed the process, interrupted by the Japanese attack in Manchuria, of consolidating its position at home and abroad. In both directions it was making rapid progress. Despite the unending war which it carried on against the Communists in the north-west, it was steadily gaining in influence over the greater part of the country. Controlling the rich provinces of the Yangtse valley, it held the power of the purse; and contrived, with American and British aid, to maintain some sort of order in the national finances, and to pay most of its foreign debts.

It had engaged German officers to train its army. It was making plans to reform the public services in many fields—health, finance, agriculture, administration, education. In these efforts it was still receiving a good deal of assistance from the League. Its prestige abroad, and in Geneva, was high; in 1936 China was once more elected to the Council. The National government refrained from openly challenging Japan. But each year its spokesmen reminded the world, from the platform of the Assembly, that China would never accept the separation of the northern provinces nor recognize the independence of Manchukuo, and that she had the right to expect the help of her fellow Members in recovering what had been taken from her in defiance of the Covenant.

The Japanese, although in many ways they were able to impose their will on all China north of the Yellow River, could not but feel uneasy in contemplating the resilience and vitality of the National government. The Army leaders, in particular, considered every sign of independence by any Chinese authority as a display of intolerable arrogance. They knew little, and cared less, about any outside opinion, or about the growing economic difficulties into which their insatiable demands were plunging their country. To bring all China under their heel would to their mind be a simple, pleasant, and profitable undertaking. They hated and despised the elderly bankers, diplomatists, and admirals in their own government who shrank from bold decisions. A number of these were murdered in a spectacular military plot in 1936. But this led to no change of policy. Indeed in March 1937 Naotake Sato, a well-known Geneva figure, became Foreign Minister, and seemed to be inclined to a policy of collaboration with Nanking, until the outcries of the extremists forced him to recant and, soon after, to resign. Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist leaders had agreed to end their civil war, in order to present a common national front against Japan. By the summer of 1937 the Japanese Army had clearly decided that the time had come to take the reins into its own hands.

The new war began, on July 7th, 1937, with a local skirmish close to the famous Marco Polo Bridge, a few miles outside Peiping. Each side declared that the other had been the attacker. But that question was of no importance. The incident was no different from many others which had occurred at one or other of the numerous points on Chinese soil where Chinese and Japanese troops were liable to come into contact. These had been settled by the local authorities, the settlement being in each case an acceptance by the Chinese, after a show of resistance, of the demands of the stronger party. It seemed that the same thing would happen again, and that the Chinese and Japanese commanders on the

spot were ready to follow the usual practice. But on this occasion the Japanese requirements were far from being limited to a local settlement. They amounted in effect to a demand that the Nanking government should relinquish all military or political connexion with the great provinces of Hopei and Chahar. They were backed by extensive movements of Japanese forces in North China and by the arrival of important reinforcements from home.

Chiang Kai-shek was thus faced with the crisis which he had foreseen for the last six years. The moment had come when, as he believed, China must fight or perish. He had no illusions as to the overwhelming military superiority of Japan. For years he had borne the responsibility of a policy of concessions and retreats, facing immoderate criticism from many sections of Chinese opinion, because he knew that defeat was certain, and that the nation would thereby be exposed to incalculable suffering. But he had always reckoned that a time would come when he would have to make, on behalf of his country, the tragic choice—either to yield at the cost of its independence, or to fight and be utterly defeated; and he was resolved to choose battle, holding that the soul of the nation might survive defeat, however crushing, but could not survive passive capitulation to foreign rule. Now, therefore, he made it plain that China desired peace but would not give way to the new demands of the invader.

In these conditions, the war between China and Japan entered upon a new and desperate stage. The actual fighting was murderous in the extreme. In the Yangtse valley the Japanese could advance only after long and obstinate battles, in which their losses were very heavy, while those of the Chinese were counted by the hundred thousand. Meanwhile the Japanese air force spread terror by repeated and heavy bombardments of undefended cities behind the front. But the sufferings thus inflicted were tolerable in comparison with those of the teeming population of the country-side. The unspeakable cruelties of the Japanese soldiery caused a vast movement of flight before their advance, and millions of refugees brought their own misery, starvation, and disease to the provinces which were still free of enemy occupation. Nevertheless the Chinese showed no sign of capitulating. By the end of the year, the invaders were in full control of the chief cities and communications north of the Yellow River; they were masters of Shantung; they had occupied Nanking; they were blockading the coast. But the avowed purpose of Japan, 'to beat China to her knees',<sup>1</sup> was as far as ever from being accomplished. Chiang Kai-shek had moved his capital to Hankow. The morale of the army was still high. Much even of the industrial

<sup>1</sup> Speech of Prince Konoyé, Japanese Prime Minister, August 28th, 1937.

equipment of the great coastal cities had been moved far inland by incredible exertions. Guerilla warfare was springing up everywhere in the occupied provinces.

All this time there was no declaration of war. Japan still chose to avoid that irrevocable commitment. China would have preferred to make a formal declaration. But under the latest Neutrality Act, no belligerent country might import war materials from the United States; and other supplies could be acquired only under the conditions known as cash and carry, that is to say, they could be exported only after full payment had been made, and only in non-American ships. Japan could pay for, and transport, what she needed. China could do neither. Hence she dared not make a formal declaration of war; and President Roosevelt, for the same reasons, refrained from proclaiming the existence of a state of war. American opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of China, and the Administration fully shared that sentiment. But the isolationist wave which had followed on recent events in Europe, above all on the Hoare-Laval plan, effectively prevented these strong feelings from being translated into action. Even after the terrible reports of the effects of air-raids on Chinese towns; even after an American warship had been deliberately bombed and sunk on the Yangtse by Japanese aircraft; Roosevelt and Hull were still unable to take the action which they clearly desired. The United States continued to be Japan's chief purveyor of oil, cotton, scrap metal, and other raw materials necessary to the war effort. But she was also the chief purveyor of all the supplies which kept China on her feet.

In her new trouble, China first approached the signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty, doubtless in the hope that the United States government would find some way to help her. Receiving no response, she once more appealed to the League (September 1937). Her chief representatives in Europe, Wellington Koo and Quo Tai-chi, presented her case with their accustomed skill. They could not hope that any claim for the full assistance provided in the Covenant would be seriously considered. Their purpose was to secure, first, the moral support of the League; secondly, such material assistance for their hard-pressed country as the other powers might be induced to give; thirdly, the co-operation of the United States. This last was equally desired by the League Members: and the latter willingly followed a Chinese suggestion that their appeal should be dealt with, in the first place, not by the Council or the Assembly, but by the Far East Committee which had been set up after the Assembly's fateful vote on the Manchurian conflict, and on which the United States was represented. However, the State Department did not depart from its usual prudence. The American

Minister in Berne attended as an observer; and throughout the proceedings maintained a courteous silence.

The Far East Committee began by declaring its condemnation of the bombardments of Nanking, Canton, Hangchow, and other cities, in which the destruction and loss of life had been appalling. It then proceeded to deal with Japan's claims that the conflict could only be settled by direct agreement between the two countries, without intervention by third parties; that her object was to ensure friendship and co-operation between them; and that she was acting in self-defence and therefore not breaking any treaty. All these claims were rejected by the Committee. It pronounced that the plea of self-defence could not be accepted and that Japan was violating the Kellogg Pact and the Nine-Power Treaty; as she was no longer a Member of the League, she could not be accused of violating the Covenant. The Assembly at once endorsed the Committee's resolutions and Cordell Hull cabled the agreement of the American government. Thus the Chinese delegates had secured, promptly and completely, the moral support for which they asked; but in spite of their studied moderation, it was not to be expected that they could be so easily satisfied. They now urged that the Members of the League should pledge themselves to do nothing which could help the aggressor or make it more difficult for China to resist. Was this too much to ask from States which had just condemned Japan both as a breaker of treaties and as responsible for inexcusable brutalities?

Except for Italy's satellites and for Poland, the sympathy of the Assembly was entirely on the side of China. In the days of the Manchurian crisis there had been powerful groups, within the chief League countries, which looked with approval on the firm action of Japan and obstructed any suggestion that the League should intervene. But these had now realized that Japan aimed not only at predominance in the Far East but even at the complete elimination of Western influences. All, therefore, now desired nothing better than to witness a successful resistance on the part of China. But those who had the power to help or hinder were openly resolved to take no measures which might lay them open to Japanese retaliation. Holland and Australia saw themselves at the mercy of Japanese sea-power. Britain and France, already in undignified retreat before the threats of Hitler and Mussolini, were in no mood to challenge the third member of the triangle. A promise to do nothing to assist Japan might be taken to mean that she should no longer be permitted to import raw materials from the territories of the State which gave it: and no delegation save those of Russia and New Zealand spoke in favour of this course. All that the Assembly could offer, besides the promise not to hinder China's resistance, was that

each Member should consider what help it could give. This slight concession was proposed by Cranborne, the British delegate, under pressure from William Jordan, his colleague from New Zealand. Jordan, a truly English figure, who might have stepped straight from the ranks of Cromwell's New Model Army, not infrequently embarrassed the Council by a tendency to quote the Bible and to pour ridicule on the best-accepted euphemisms of diplomacy. He knew what he wanted, and he represented a government which was still, in spite of all that had happened, determined to follow a policy of complete loyalty to the Covenant. In the midst of so much uncertainty, this simple force was not to be despised. But when all was said, the essential question was still what the United States would do. It was Bruce of Australia who suggested that the Assembly should invite the signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty to meet, because in such a meeting the United States would be on the same footing as the rest. Wellington Koo, having extracted all he could hope for from the League, welcomed the suggestion. So it was decided: and on October 5th, 1937, within a few hours after the decision was taken, the delegations heard the unexpected news of Roosevelt's famous Chicago speech.

In spite of past disappointments, that speech could not fail to create new hopes among the supporters of the League. They had been aware for some months of a growing sympathy between Washington and Geneva. On July 16th, Cordell Hull had issued a general statement of the principles by which American foreign policy was guided. The resemblance between the principles laid down by Hull and those of the Covenant was unmistakable: and he had underlined the fact by the unprecedented step of sending his statement in a formal communication to the League of Nations. But the more closely American objectives resembled, in theory, those of the Covenant, the more striking was the practical difference. Where the one could go no farther than the enunciation of its principles, the other provided a complete plan for putting those principles into effect and for enforcing them when required. And now Roosevelt declared that 'The peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort to uphold laws and principles on which alone peace can rest secure. . . . There is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality. . . . The epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community . . .' Was it his intention to bridge the gulf at last and to do what he had fought for in Wilson's days?

There can be little doubt that Roosevelt and Hull were in fact seeking, as Stimson had sought six years before, to find some means of

combining the efforts of the United States with those of the League and so producing a far stronger and more effective action than either could achieve alone. Stimson himself added his voice to theirs, bidding his countrymen choose between stopping supplies to Japan or being the partners of her guilt. But the leadership even of these three eminent men was not enough to change the isolationist trend of their country. A reaction, familiar in substance and in method, forced Roosevelt to disappoint the hope that his speech was the beginning of a new policy. At the Nine-Power Conference, which met at Brussels in November, the American delegate could do no more than urge that China and Japan should be helped to find a peaceful settlement of their differences. And the Conference itself ended in a failure which gave satisfaction only to the Axis powers. Germany and Japan having refused to attend, the Italian delegate warned his colleagues that they could do nothing and had better return home. A few days later, Italy signed the Anti-Comintern Pact. Her representative, having shown at every point that his government was in full sympathy with Japan, was able at the close of the Conference to point out that his admonition had been justified by the event.

From the standpoint of 'realpolitik' he was possibly right. It might well be thought that if the peace-loving nations (Roosevelt's phrase, which was to reappear in the Charter of the United Nations) were unable or unwilling to do more than express their sympathy, it would be better to leave China alone to make the best terms she could. This, however, was not the view of the Chinese themselves. Except during the few weeks which followed Roosevelt's Chicago speech, they had never expected decisive action from the Western powers. But they did not cease to remind the Members of the League of the claim which they would have been constitutionally justified in making. They attempted to prove that Japan's economic situation was so precarious that the application of sanctions would at once force her to withdraw her armies from China; and indeed it was true that, as the months went by, the miscalculations of Japan became more and more evident. Her gold reserve was melting away; poverty and distress were widespread; the whole national economy had to be concentrated on maintaining the war effort. Her export trade, already dwindling, was further reduced by an unofficial boycott promoted by the International Peace Campaign. Though no country seriously considered the imposition of sanctions, the Chinese still thought it worth while to keep the question alive. They made no further appeal to the Nine-Power Treaty, but on every occasion they reminded their fellow Members of the promises made by the Assembly of 1937. And these promises were not altogether without practical effect. They justified the substantial financial aid which

Britain, like the United States, extended to China. They had some influence also on a still more important matter. As the Chinese retreated further west, their communications with the outer world became longer and more difficult, and depended entirely on the will of Britain, France, and Russia. In spite of Japanese threats, the British refused to be frightened into denying China the facilities of Hong Kong or closing the newly constructed Burma road.<sup>1</sup> The French did consent for a time to prevent the transport of arms by railway from Indo-China to Yunnan; but they shut their eyes to irregularities and eventually withdrew the prohibition. Russia, it was believed, was sending small quantities by the long and difficult trail to Lanchow.

In the autumn of 1938 China actually made a formal attempt to secure the application of sanctions under Article 16. Japan was invited, in accordance with the Covenant, to accept the rights and obligations of League membership so far as the Sino-Japanese war was concerned. It was a foregone conclusion that she would refuse. Thereupon, on September 30th, 1938, the Council solemnly declared that the Members of the League were entitled to carry out the measures provided under Article 16, in other words, to treat Japan as having committed an act of war against them. But all this meant nothing real. Most Members had already announced that they no longer considered themselves bound by the strict obligations of the Covenant. Hypnotized by the crisis which led through Berchtesgaden and Godesberg to Munich, the Council and Assembly went through the motions of international action as a man may go through the motions of a ritual which has lost all meaning for his mind and will. The League powers, yielding to the victorious pressure of the Axis in Spain and in Czechoslovakia, were even less ready to face the risk of opposing Japan.

One small thread of League action was strong enough to resist the strain. In spite of Japanese opposition, the Secretariat had continued without interruption to organize technical help for the Chinese government. This great plan, which Rajchman and T. V. Soong had created years before, had been designed as the bridge whereby China could move forward, in peace and dignity, into the modern world. It had never been allowed to grow as they had hoped. In face of the new situation, it was now concentrated on reducing the terrible danger of epidemics caused by the masses of refugees in flight from the Japanese armies. Several teams of scientists were organized and equipped at League expense, and remained in the field until the end of 1940. Thus the work ended as it had begun, in the provision of medical help under the direction of the same untiring intellect which had first conceived it.

<sup>1</sup> The road was closed, during the Second World War, from July to October 1940.



NEAR EASTERN QUESTIONS AT  
GENEVA

*Increasing ties between Moslem States and the League—The Montreux Conference—Egypt joins the League—Frontier disputes between Iraq and Persia—The problem of Alexandretta—Conflicts in Palestine*

(1936-1939)

WHILE in Europe the influence and prestige of the League were fading, the countries and territories which had been part of, or closely connected with, the Ottoman Empire were increasingly inclined to bring their affairs to Geneva; and the Council was much concerned with the problems of the Near and Middle East. The reason was not far to seek. Countries such as Persia, Egypt, and Turkey herself, had had, in pre-war days, long experience in dealing with nations more advanced politically and more powerful in a military and financial sense than themselves. Even when the stronger powers made only a moderate use of their strength, which was not always the case, the weaker ones had suffered from that sentiment of inferiority whose psychological consequences are hardly distinguishable from those of actual injustice. At Geneva they could debate on equal terms with other States, great or small; they had the same opportunity to express their views and, if it came to voting, their vote had the same effect. To be in the League enhanced their security, not simply by bringing them under the now uncertain protection of the Covenant, but by making it easy for them to insist on exercising the same rights as those of other Members. Their appreciation of these advantages was shown in their attitude on the 'reform' of the Covenant. No Members were more insistent than Turkey, Persia, and Iraq that the essentials of the League system must be maintained without change.

It might have been supposed, by those who continued to think on what were called imperialist lines, that the fact that the backward States of the Near and Middle East now stood up to speak as juridical equals with the Western powers would lead to friction and bad feeling between the two groups. The exact opposite proved to be the case. Taken as a whole, and leaving on one side the special problem of Palestine, the Moslem countries were perhaps never either so tranquil in themselves or so well disposed towards the West as during the last few years before the Second World War. In this condition of things,

the status of League membership enjoyed by Persia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey was an important element. Geneva served them as a convenient place for their own meetings, as well as for discussions with the Balkan States and with the outside world in general. It was in Geneva that they negotiated the treaty of peace and friendship subsequently signed at Saadabad on July 5th, 1937, and known as the Middle Eastern Pact: and having at the same time formed a Middle Eastern Council on the lines of the Balkan Entente, they prescribed that this Council must meet once a year in Geneva or elsewhere. The leader amongst them was Turkey: her two strong-minded chiefs, Atatürk and İnönü (they had risen to fame as Mustafa Kemal and Ismet Pasha), hard-bitten soldiers both, were firmly resolved to keep their country at peace, and had chosen to base their policy on the institutions of the League. One at least of the group—which included Egypt after her admission to the League—was always on the Council. They had risen to a new level of responsibility and self-confidence in the conduct of their external affairs. There can be little doubt that the calm and steadiness which, in spite of one or two lapses, they maintained under the immense pressures of the war, were due in great part to the progress thus made in the preceding years.

If the Moslem countries found in the League a valuable support for their first uncertain steps on the path of independence or equality, the Western powers on their side found in it the only instrument by which, in the circumstances of the time, they could solve their chief difficulties in the Near East. They could no longer attempt to impose their own solutions in such problems as those of the right of passage through the Black Sea Straits, or the defence of the Suez Canal; yet they were reluctant to abandon these vital issues to the uncontrolled will of the territorial sovereign. It was fortunate, therefore, that both Turkey and Egypt were ready to bind themselves, in certain cases of dispute, to accept, in the last resort, the decision of the League Council.

The new regime for the Straits was settled at a conference held at Montreux in June–July 1936. While for practical purposes Turkey there gained the freedom of action on which she insisted, she agreed to two important derogations. The first was that in a war in which she was not a belligerent she would close the Straits to all belligerent warships except those of powers which were acting in defence of the Covenant. The second concerned her action if she considered herself in imminent danger of war. In that case, she was free to take whatever measures she judged necessary: but she pledged herself to discontinue these measures if the Council of the League were to decide by a two-thirds majority that they were not justified.

In much the same way a solution of the contentious problem of the defence of Suez was agreed upon between the British and Egyptian governments and embodied in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance signed in London on August 26th, 1936. It was laid down that Britain should have the right to station forces in the Canal zone for a period of twenty years: if, at the end of that period, the two countries were in disagreement as to the necessity of their further presence, the question should be submitted for decision by the Council of the League. A clause of this sort, together with the provision that Egypt should apply for membership of the League, and would be supported in that application by the British government, had already been part of the proposals by which Austen Chamberlain in 1928 and Arthur Henderson in 1930 had tried to settle, in consultation with the Egyptian government of the time, the obstinate problems of Anglo-Egyptian relations. It was not on these points that the negotiations had then broken down. But they were, nevertheless, the heart of the Treaty: and without them Nahhas Pasha and Eden would never have been able, as they did, to reach agreement at last and thereby to stabilize the political situation in the eastern Mediterranean just in time to meet the violent impact of the Second World War. Thus it was that, in March 1937, Egypt applied for admission; and since both Egypt and Britain were anxious to settle the matter without waiting for the regular session of the Assembly, a special session was held and, in the course of proceedings which began and ended on the same day, Egypt was welcomed by unanimous vote (May 26th, 1937). This was the last occasion on which a new Member was admitted to the League.

An increased sense of responsibility and of self-confidence was certainly the great gift which membership of the League brought to the Moslem States. But the Council was able to help them also in solving certain individual difficulties, which were of high importance to the States concerned, though they might appear secondary in the minds of the great powers. Two such episodes have already been described—the quarrel over the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and the problem of the Assyrians of Iraq. A third, more threatening to peace, was a dispute which arose in November 1934 between Iraq and Persia over a number of frontier questions, including a serious controversy concerning the Shatt-al-Arab, the great waterway formed by the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates sixty miles from their mouth in the Persian Gulf. Iraq claimed sovereignty from bank to bank, and therewith sole control over dredging, navigation, police, and the rest: Persia claimed that the boundary lay in mid-stream, that she therefore had a right to share in control, and

that her shipping could not be subjected to orders from the Iraqi authorities.

Long and learned speeches were made and exhaustive documents put forward by both parties, ranging from arguments over the validity of ninety-year-old Treaty to complaints of the behaviour of individual ships' captains. Neither government seemed to be willing to consider any compromise which could possibly be acceptable to the other; and, on the side of Iraq, which had come forward as plaintiff in the case, there were clear signs of ill humour and a demand for an urgent decision. The Council, however, held to its usual practice of trying to reach an agreed conclusion by negotiations with the parties concerned, before attempting to impose a solution of its own. There followed, therefore, a series of meetings between the two, some in Geneva and some in Rome, with Aloisi as representative of the Council. Progress was very slow; but new suggestions and even new facts gradually emerged and, though reluctant to give up their maximum claims, both countries began to see the advantages of compromise. For two years the question appeared on the agenda of each session of the Council; and at each session the two delegations jointly requested that its further consideration might be postponed until next time. Finally, in September 1937, they reported that they had arrived at a satisfactory agreement and asked that their dispute should be removed from the Council's agenda once for all.

A still more serious question was that of the Turkish claim to the district in north-western Syria known as the Sanjak of Alexandretta. From the first moment when the Turkish Republic began to be conscious of itself as a nation reborn, it had shown the strength of its feelings on this subject. Mustafa Kemal was compelled to agree to a frontier line which placed the Sanjak, with its two famous cities of Antioch and Alexandretta, within the area administered by France as the future holder of the mandate over Syria. But, asserting that the great majority of its population was of pure Turkish race, he in October 1921 asked for, and obtained, the setting up of a special regime in their favour. In the Sanjak alone of all the territories ceded by Turkey, Turkish continued to be an official language. Teachers and officials were of Turkish race. Turkish ships enjoyed particular privileges in the port of Alexandretta. In these conditions, the Turkish population, though numbering in actual fact rather less than half the 220,000 inhabitants of the area, had remained a strong, contented, prosperous and, on the whole, united body. Their racial sentiment was increased by propaganda and by pride in the remarkable achievements of the young Republic.

In the autumn of 1936 the French government succeeded, after many

failures, in reaching an agreement with the governments of Syria and the Lebanon whereby, as it then seemed, the political future of the whole territory under French mandate was foreseen and decided. The mandate was to last for three more years. Thereafter, two new independent Arab States would come into existence. Various safeguards were planned, some to provide for the safety of minorities, some (on the model of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty) to protect the interests of France. The Sanjak was to be part of Syria and the privileges of the Turkish inhabitants were to be maintained. But the government at Ankara had other ideas. They announced that Turkey could not consent to see her children transferred from the rule of France to that of Syria; and that the Sanjak had as much right as Syria herself, or the Lebanon, to become an independent Republic. This claim the French were not prepared to admit, unless it was first sanctioned by the Council. After a correspondence which became, on the Turkish side, increasingly acrimonious, each government laid the question before the League, the French asking for the Council's view of their duty as mandatory power, the Turks, on the contrary, asking for a decision on their dispute with France, and for protection for the lives and liberties of the population of the Sanjak.

In December, when these requests reached the Secretary-General, a special session of the Council was about to meet in order to discuss the first appeal from Spain: and the question of the Sanjak was added to its agenda. League observers were at once sent to the spot: but no progress was made on the substance of the affair, and Turkey continued to exercise pressure on lines that were becoming unpleasantly familiar. The Turkish nation discovered that the fate of its brothers across the frontier was inspiring it with emotions which it could hardly keep under control. Reports of imaginary outrages perpetrated by Arabs on Turks in Alexandretta were given much publicity. Troops were moved to the frontier. Atatürk himself took up his quarters at a point from which he could direct operations. The Grand National Assembly—a body almost, though not quite, as well-disciplined as the Reichstag in Berlin or the Senate in Rome—passed resolutions expressing both the anxiety and the determination of the country.

In ordinary times the French might not have been greatly alarmed by these demonstrations. But methods of violence had been only too successful of late: and Turkish friendship was of special importance to France. It was therefore a profound relief to the French, and hardly less to the British, when, through the exertions of Rickard Sandler, the Swedish Foreign Minister, as rapporteur, and of Eden as the friend of both parties, the Council arrived, during its session of January 1937, at what appeared to be a satisfactory compromise. It was decided that the

Sanjak should remain nominally part of Syria, but should be endowed with almost complete independence in regard to its internal affairs. Its integrity in this form was to be guaranteed by France and Turkey. The Council was to draw up two elaborate documents: the Statute of the Sanjak, defining its relations to the future government of Syria and the various conditions—such as demilitarization, protection of minorities, economic rights for Turkey—which would govern its existence from an external point of view; and the Fundamental Law of the Sanjak, which would provide it with its own legislative, executive, and judicial institutions, and in particular with an Electoral Law. A permanent delegate of the Council was to reside on the spot in order to see that the Statute and the Fundamental Law were duly respected and to mediate, if necessary, between the Sanjak government and the government of Syria. Turkey was to have the fullest possible rights in the port of Alexandretta: Turkish was to be an official language. No further privileges were asked on behalf of the Turkish inhabitants of the Sanjak, since they were expected to be no longer a minority but the dominating element.

By the non-Turkish inhabitants the agreement was received with dismay. These included, besides Arabs and Alawis, an important percentage of the Armenians who had escaped the war-time massacres; Musa Dagh, where the Armenians had made their famous and heroic stand against the Turks in 1915, was a part of the territory which was soon to come once more under the control of the hereditary enemy of their race. The Syrians also were indignant: but they looked to Turkey as the chief outside supporter of their hope of independence, and friendly relations between Damascus and Ankara were not profoundly disturbed. The French were ready to welcome any solution which was acceptable to Turkey, so long as it could be made tolerable for Syria. The Turks themselves were delighted with the plan. It needed much working out in detail; this was done in a protracted series of meetings at Geneva, and in May 1937 the Statute and the Fundamental Law were formally ratified, at the table of the Council, by the Foreign Ministers of France and Turkey. Many were the congratulations uttered by Eden, Litvinov, and other members at this settlement of a difficult problem: was it not a renewed proof of the importance of the Council and the effectiveness of League methods? But though they were glad to see a dangerous moment thus safely passed, they can hardly have supposed that so artificial a constitution could last very long.

In bringing the agreement into force, the first necessary step was to organize the election of the Sanjak Assembly. For this purpose, an Electoral Commission was appointed by the Council and sent to Alexandretta. Its work, however, was interrupted, in December 1937, at the

demand of Turkey, as soon as it became clear that the electoral procedure, in the drafting of which her representative had played a leading part, would not ensure a Turkish majority. The Council, not very willingly, consented to a change in the Electoral Law, and in April the Commission returned to its duties. But as long as an impartial body was there to supervise the proceedings, the Turkish population could never get a majority in the Assembly. Accordingly, the Turkish government brought new pressure to bear in Paris: and the French, in their deep anxiety about events in Europe, were in no mood to quarrel with a country whose friendship was essential to their security. The French authorities in the Sanjak combined with the Turks to make the task of the Commission impossible. Its orders were neglected. Leading members of the Alawi and Arab communities were arrested, including members of the Electoral Boards. On June 26th the Commission suspended its labours and returned in indignation to Geneva. A Franco-Turkish organization took its place, and election results of a more satisfactory character were soon forthcoming.

The rest of the story is quickly told. A Turkish majority in the Sanjak Assembly led to a Sanjak government composed only of Turks. Turkish troops were stationed in Alexandretta on the pretext of fulfilling the territorial guarantee given before the Council. In June 1939 a formal agreement was signed in Ankara by which the Sanjak, now known under its Turkish name of the Hatay, was detached from the mandated territory of Syria and annexed to Turkey. Arrangements were made for the emigration of such of its inhabitants as preferred to become Syrian citizens, and Turkey solemnly engaged herself to regard the new Turco-Syrian frontier as final. These latter stages of the episode were carried out without reference to the Council or the Mandates Commission of the League.

The tragic conflict of wills in Palestine stood out in ever darker colours in contrast to the notable political progress of the neighbouring States. Egypt achieved full independence in 1936: Syria and the Lebanon expected to do so in 1940; even Transjordan, the weakest and most backward of all the territories under 'A' mandate, had been recognized as an independent government by the mandatory power. Only in Palestine could the Arab majority see no prospect of emancipation from the mandate, with its double weight of a foreign administration and of foreign protection for Jewish immigration and settlement, which were stimulated by the exodus of European Jews in flight from Nazi atrocities. These conditions, and the heavy fall in British prestige as a result of

Mussolini's victory over Ethiopia and the League, led to a period of turbulence which lasted, with brief intermissions, from the spring of 1936 until the outbreak of war. Arab terrorism was directed partly against the Jews and partly against the mandatory power, while the Jewish retaliation cost a few British and many Arab lives.

Even in comparison with the still more ominous events in Europe, conditions in Palestine were such as to arouse anxiety throughout the world. Their direct impact upon the League, however, was only gradually felt: and the Second World War supervened at the moment when the Council was about to be faced, for the first time, with responsible decisions. The duty of maintaining order in Palestine lay upon the mandatory power, not upon the Council or the Permanent Mandates Commission. The liberation of the Arabs, the creation of the Jewish National Home, the acceptance of a mandate over Palestine, the terms of the mandate itself, the obligation, subject to certain general reserves, to facilitate Jewish immigration and encourage Jewish settlement—all these great enterprises were the work of British arms and British policy, though the last steps had been endorsed by the Council. Certainly it would be necessary, if the burden became too heavy, and changes in the mandate were desired, to ask for the Council's approval; but nothing in the attitude of the Council itself, or of the Mandates Commission which advised it, suggested that such approval would be unreasonably withheld.

A Royal Commission, appointed in consequence of the Arab risings of 1936, reported, in substance, that the terms of the mandate were no longer workable, and that its proper termination, that is to say the evolution of a self-governing State, was inconceivable if thereby a Jewish minority were to be subjected to an Arab majority, or an Arab minority to a Jewish majority. The only solution was to partition the territory into two independent countries, while keeping Jerusalem itself and the Holy Places under British mandate. This proposal was approved, in general terms, by the British government; and the Mandates Commission, which held a special session to study the question, was also inclined to agree that the best hope now lay in the plan of triple partition. It advised, however, that each of the new States should be administered, under some form of mandate, for a long enough period to prove itself capable of self-government. Fortified by this opinion, but still postponing all definite decisions, the mandatory power, on September 16th, 1937, asked for and received the authorization of the Council to set on foot a study of the many questions of detail to which partition would of necessity give rise.

These steps, preliminary and inconclusive as they were, removed the



essential problem of Palestine from further consideration by the League for nearly two more years, during which the Mandates Commission continued as before to receive the annual reports, and to examine the administrative record, of the Palestine government, on no other basis than that of the mandate. Meanwhile, the policy of partition was assailed both by Arabs and Jews, though the principal aim of Jewish agitation was rather to extend the area proposed for the Jewish State than to force the total abandonment of the scheme. In any case, the British government became so impressed by the difficulties involved, and by the violent opposition of the Arabs both in Palestine and in the neighbouring countries, that it decided to relinquish the plan of partition and make a last attempt to induce Arabs and Jews to reach a common agreement as to the future of Palestine. In February 1939 the leaders on both sides, together with representatives of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Transjordan, and the Yemen, were convoked to a conference in London. It was a forlorn hope; every mediatory proposal was indignantly rejected by both sides; and the British government concluded that it had no alternative but to announce, and in due course to impose, its own solution. What that solution would be, it set forth in the famous White Paper of May 17th, 1939.

The main provisions of the White Paper were based on the principles first, that the mandate ought to evolve into the institutions of self-government; second, that the State thus created should be neither Jewish nor Arab but Palestinian; and third, that the existing inhabitants should not be turned into a minority by immigration. Jewish immigration would therefore be continued for five years on a limited scale, which would bring the Jewish population to one-third of the total; thereafter, it would be stopped altogether, except by Arab consent. Meanwhile the mandatory power would increasingly associate the inhabitants with the actual responsibilities of government, so that, by the end of ten years, Palestine might be ready for independence. These decisions, it was argued, were in full accord with the intentions of the mandate, as well as being the best solution of the problem. The British government, therefore, had reversed its policy of two years earlier, not only by the abandonment of partition, but also by claiming to fulfil the mandate, which it had then declared to be unworkable.

Like the proposals of the Royal Commission, those of the White Paper were angrily attacked by both Arabs and Jews, though on this occasion the Jewish opposition was the more uncompromising of the two. As before, the mandatory power asked that the Mandates Commission might be instructed to give its advice without delay; and the Commission, meeting in June, drew up a report for the Council to

consider at its regular session in the following September. The Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, came out to defend the plan: and for several days he engaged in close debate with a predominantly critical Commission. Had he, like his predecessor in 1937, maintained that new events, such as the Nazi persecution of European Jews, made the original terms of the mandate no longer applicable, his defence might have been more successful. But he sought to prove that the White Paper was strictly based on the true intentions of the mandate: whereas four out of the seven members of the Commission were convinced that its general policy, and in particular the decision to stop Jewish immigration at the end of five years, were a violation of that instrument. Further, the Commission was now, as it had always been, suspicious of all moves to bring any mandate to an end. It had been reluctant to give advice in favour of the independence of Iraq: it welcomed the opposition which threatened to delay the promised emancipation of Syria and the Lebanon. Its report to the Council, though expressed with its usual exaggerated prudence, was, when the record of its discussions with the Colonial Secretary was taken into account, unfavourable to the proposals of the White Paper, and implied that in its view partition would, after all, be the wisest solution.

The conclusions of the Mandates Commission were by no means acceptable to the British government, though they were welcomed by a large section of public opinion. Being merely advice to the Council, they were devoid of any legal effect until that body had approved them: and it was expected that, when it met, the British representative would emphasize the fact that, on the critical point of consistency with the mandate, only a bare majority of the Commission had uttered an unfavourable verdict, and would ask the Council to reject the advice of the majority and endorse the proposals of the White Paper. In that event, the Council would have been compelled, for the first time since the original confirmation of the mandate in July 1922, to attempt a radical settlement of the whole question. But before it could meet, the Second World War had broken out, creating completely new situations and new problems in the Near East as everywhere else. The proceedings of the Mandates Commission in regard to the White Paper were the last act of the League's connexion with Palestine; and the future developments of the conflict between Arab and Jew were not destined to be subjected to the provisions of the mandate or to the decisions of the League.

## THE RENAISSANCE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AGENCIES

*New methods of work—The promotion of individual welfare—The Nutrition Committee, its report and consequences—The Housing Committee—Need of new institutions—Proposals for an economic organization outside the League—Cordell Hull's reply—The Bruce Committee's plan*

(1935-1939)

**D**URING the years which followed the failure of the ill-timed Economic Conference of 1933, and which witnessed the gradual breakdown of the political institutions of the League, its economic and social agencies enjoyed an unexpected renaissance, and discovered new fields of work wider and more fruitful than the old. Experience had proved that it was hopeless to go on trying to bring about formal international agreements. In Geneva the spokesmen of individual governments, experts, administrators, politicians, would declare their full accord with the principles enunciated by the Economic and Financial Committees; but so soon as they were asked to bind themselves by treaty to put those principles into effect, they all began to make excuse. Arguments in favour of reducing tariffs, of facilitating trade, of relaxing the paralysing network of quotas, prohibitions, exchange restrictions, and the rest, were convincing so far as other countries were concerned: for itself each government found exceptional and temporary reasons for taking the opposite course. The League Committees urged in vain that the total result of all these exceptional measures was a general and growing strangulation of trade; that poverty and debt were on the increase, that each government's efforts damaged the interests of its neighbours and were in turn frustrated by the counter-measures to which those neighbours were driven. The Committees were by no means ready to admit that their advice had been mistaken; indeed, the actual course of events was an unmistakable proof that they had been right. But they were forced to acknowledge that the methods hitherto followed were now proving almost completely ineffective.

No further attempt, therefore, was made to hold general conferences of delegates arriving with powers to sign, or refuse to sign, agreements with other plenipotentiaries. Instead, recourse was had to a plan already successfully tried on various occasions, more especially by the Health

Organization—that of organizing meetings limited to certain groups of States which had the same kind of problem to face, either because of geographical propinquity, or because of some other common feature. Two such conferences were held at Bandoeng in Java, one on the prevention of the traffic in women in the Far East (February 1937), the second on Rural Hygiene in the same region (August 1937). Other conferences on special questions brought together representatives of the countries of the Southern Pacific, of African States and those possessing colonies in Africa, of Latin American countries. Or meetings were held of officials, groups or individuals specially concerned with the trade in particular commodities—wheat, sugar, quinine; a conference on the coal trade was planned but abandoned owing to the refusal of British coal-owners to take part.

A further change was that the new processes were less official and less rigid than the old. The object of most meetings was not to draft precise texts, but to exchange information, to receive the advice of disinterested experts, to lay down general principles. Even where formal treaties were prepared, they were no longer submitted to fifty governments to sign or reject; but were regarded as models which any two or more governments might accept between themselves, modified if necessary to suit their special requirements, with the assurance that, in concluding such conventions, they were acting in accordance with expert advice and for the general good. Such procedure was followed, for example, over the complex and difficult problems of double taxation, i.e. of taxation laid on profits or income first in the country where they were earned and then in the country of residence of the person concerned; and in a few years some two hundred agreements, based on the League Committee's model, had been signed between various governments. Similarly, a statement of principles, drawn up with a view to counteracting the disadvantages of the clearing agreements which were a particularly unfortunate phenomenon in the international trade of the nineteen-thirties, was utilized, with satisfactory results, by a considerable number of different countries.

During the last years before the war these tentative steps developed into a fundamental change in the work of the social and economic agencies of the League, which may be briefly described by saying that their primary attention was no longer concentrated upon the action of governments but directed towards the cares and interests of the individual and his family. This change came about, in the first place, owing to the repeated disappointments of the Economic and Financial Committees, whose members grew tired of seeing their plans and proposals

approved in theory and disregarded in practice. It arose, also, from the growing conviction that untold possibilities of material advance were being neglected, and that opportunities which might never recur were being allowed to pass. Never perhaps in history had there been so wide a gap between the actual and the possible conditions of human life. New discoveries and new methods made it easy to raise to new heights the production of all that men needed for a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. Yet in actual fact the standard of living of the workers, and of the poorer sections of the community, was, on a wide view, falling rather than rising. In some countries, as in Germany and Japan, reduction was deliberately imposed for purposes of rearmament. In the democracies, while the conditions of pay and work of those in good employment tended to improve, the general balance was none the less negative owing to the heavy burden of unemployment. For a good standard of living demands not only reasonable material satisfactions in the present, but also a normal sense of security for the future. Only the most privileged and protected trades could feel such security even in the rich industrial States. The agricultural population was hardly more sure of its economic future than the town-workers, since its livelihood was threatened by competition and low prices, or buttressed by artificial expedients which cast an intolerable burden on the national finances.

Though perhaps only a few experts realized the true extent of the gap between what men's lives might be made and what they actually were, none but the most benighted could fail to realize that big changes were necessary. When hungry men heard that, in order to keep up prices, maize and coffee were being used as fuel for railway engines, that fishing vessels were being kept in harbour, or that farmers were being subsidized to reduce their crop areas, how could they not be puzzled and resentful? Yet each individual country could show its strong reasons for such decisions. It was only through international action that the hidden causes and cures of their obstinate difficulties could be sought and found.

At the same time economic anxieties were tending to accelerate the drift to war. Men who saw their families undernourished, young men faced with a lifetime of unemployment, were easily persuaded to listen to leaders who laid all the blame on other countries and promised them relief through military power. Just as peace and security are conditions necessary to prosperity, so prosperity is a condition necessary to peace and security. This, like the old debate on security and disarmament, involves a logical but not a practical deadlock. Translated into terms of action, it means that every step towards the welfare of the individual

is a step towards peace, so long as it is not gained by means which cause an equal or greater loss of welfare to some individual on the other side of the frontier. In the light of this principle a new view was taken of the scope and nature of the economic and social work of the League. No longer did it seem necessary, as in Austen Chamberlain's day, to limit its competence in such questions strictly to their international aspect in the narrow sense, nor to deal only with such matters as could be settled by formal agreements between governments. It was now realized that, in these fields, 'the primary object of international co-operation should be rather mutual help than reciprocal contract—above all, the exchange of knowledge and of the fruits of experience'.<sup>1</sup>

Extensive work therefore began to be undertaken on the main problems which beset the individual citizens of civilized States—above all on food, which led on to questions of agricultural production and prices, of child welfare and of education; and on housing, which involved the study not only of rents and of the finance of public and private building, but also that of heating, light, water supply, and many other questions of everyday life. Some of these had already been the subject of inquiries by League organs, in particular by the Health Organization and the International Labour Office, each of which had managed, not without difficulty, to establish its right to take initiatives of its own. But such inquiries had been limited in scope and purpose. Now they were treated as part of a general advance along the whole front—a front extended to cover the living conditions of the human race in every continent and every country.

Since it is difficult to describe in clear and concrete terms so wide a development of international action, we shall here interpolate a brief account of the work done on one particular subject, that of food—officially described, perhaps for good reasons, as 'nutrition'. Ever since 1925, the Health Committee had from time to time called for expert study on particular questions connected with food and health. It had published studies on the regulation of manufacture of food products; on the food problems of Japan; on the milk supply of the United States; on the nutrition of the poor in Chile and its effect on the death-rate of children and mothers. Such studies were usually taken up at the request of individual governments, and the reports were intended for the benefit of the public health services in those countries. But as the great economic depression made its effects more and more widely felt, one country after another began to realize its own need for help and reform. Unemployment and wage-reduction lowered the demand for

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Committee's Report, p. 11 (see p. 761, below).

agricultural products; prices fell; farmers were impoverished, and could buy fewer manufactured goods; hence further unemployment, and so on in a disastrous circle. The first efforts to break the circle aimed at cutting down production and so raising prices: this was the expedient, for instance, used on a great scale in the first stages of Roosevelt's New Deal. But the method of restriction inflicted greater sufferings than ever on the hard-hit industrial population; and the Health Committee began to protest at its effects on the health of the poor. They called upon experts to draw up schedules of the dietary needs of the human body in the light of the new discoveries in this field, particularly of the part played in health by vitamins and minerals; and they compared the result with the actual diet of various groups in a number of countries. The result of these inquiries, and of similar work by independent experts, was startling. They showed that, even in the richest countries, large numbers of the population were undernourished, and that, taking the world as a whole, an enormous proportion of human beings were unable, through poverty or ignorance, to get the food which was necessary for the maintenance of health.

Hidden between the covers of scientific treatises and official reports, these revelations did not immediately strike the public imagination. But their importance was quickly grasped by the health authorities and economists. And if the general public did not know that it was being unscientifically nourished, a large number of its members knew very well that they and their children were hungry. They knew something too about the policies of scarcity which were being followed. Attacks on such methods were growing in bitterness. They satisfied nobody—not the producer who was forced to cut down his crops, not the taxpayer who was forced to compensate him, nor the consumer who had to pay more and get less.

By 1935 new ideas were in the air. Might it not be wiser to reverse the process, to seek to stimulate consumption rather than to limit production? If this could be done in regard to food, would it not doubly benefit each nation, by improving the health and physique of its people, while giving the farmer the hope of full production at better prices? Might the process not then move on, reversing the circle of impoverishment, towards a prosperous agriculture, an increased demand for manufactured goods, less unemployment?

These ideas found a powerful champion in the Australian government and in Bruce, who represented it at the Council and Assembly. With his clear brain and strong personality Bruce had already won a leading position in Geneva. The plan for a new approach to economic and social problems, based on a policy of plenty and on scientific planning

for health, was evidently in conformity with the interests of Australia as a great exporter of primary products; certainly it appealed to the constructive mind of Bruce and of his talented economic adviser, F. L. McDougall. They proposed to the Assembly of 1935 that a general study should be made of the question of nutrition, not only from the point of view of health but in all its aspects. It was of special importance to industrial workers—the International Labour Office must therefore be invited to take part. It was vital to agriculture: an invitation must be sent to the International Institute of Agriculture. The Child Welfare Committee must be represented; the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation also, since education about food was a necessary part of any great reform.

At that Sixteenth Assembly Bruce's proposals aroused less public interest than might have been hoped, because all attention was concentrated on the imminent war in Ethiopia. And in actual fact, though Bruce himself was less than lukewarm on the question of sanctions, the Italian army in Africa was setting in motion a train of events which in due course was to choke and destroy the Australian plans. Nevertheless, the proposals were warmly supported by many delegations and were unanimously accepted by the Assembly. A Committee was set up on which all the various elements concerned were duly represented; and an enthusiastic chairman was found in Lord Astor. In two years of hard work by its expert members, by many outside authorities who gave their help, and by the Secretariat, the Committee produced a series of reports culminating in a volume published in the summer of 1937, in which it set forth its final conclusions 'on the relation of nutrition to health, agriculture and economic policy'. This famous Report showed the real character of the connexions, hitherto ignored or misunderstood, save by a few pioneers, between food and health. It explained the function of the different kinds of food, and drew up tables indicating the diets needed for health at various ages and in various types of occupation. It discussed recent scientific developments in agriculture and the enormously increased production which they made possible. It described the various ways in which governments could help to improve the nutrition of town and country dwellers alike; it described also the various ways in which they were in fact preventing such improvement. It pictured the unlimited possibilities of advance in the material welfare of men and of nations through the establishment of higher food standards, and suggested methods of education whereby the general public might learn to benefit so far as possible by the new knowledge.

In spite of its cumbrous title and official character, the Nutrition



Report enjoyed wide and immediate success. It became the best seller among League publications in both the official languages, and was translated into a number of others. Its popular appeal was proved by the space devoted to it in the daily press of many countries. This, indeed, had been the ambition of its authors. Unlike most League Committees, they had deliberately aimed not merely at providing governments with information and advice, but also at creating an active and enlightened public opinion. They were resolved not to allow their work to meet the fate of so much that their predecessors had done—to be received with words of praise and then buried in official pigeon-holes. In this they were highly successful, first through the publicity given to their final report, and still more through the creation of national committees formed for the double purpose of pressing for the execution of the proposed reforms, and of keeping the League informed of the situation in their own countries. When Bruce laid his plan before the Assembly, nutrition committees existed in only three States; four years later there were thirty. Their delegates met in Geneva from time to time at League expense to exchange information and organize mutual help.

In the two years between the issue of the Nutrition Report and the outbreak of the Second World War, much was done by governments, by municipal authorities, and by private groups in a number of countries, to carry out such of its recommendations as were within their means, and to make its teachings known to the public. Much more would have been done but for the overriding claims of rearmament. But the authors of the Report were well aware that to reach the standards which they had set would take many years, even in those States where the level of living and education was already high. The greatest needs, and the greatest obstacles to progress, were to be found in the populous countries of the East, where the vast majority of families were undernourished throughout their lives; the next greatest, among the many impoverished and ill-educated communities of Africa. When the war began, plans had been made for special inquiries to be undertaken, and for regional meetings to be held, in the Far East, in Africa, and in South America. All, save the last, had to be abandoned. The high hopes and the great schemes had to be laid aside. By a painful irony, the scientific standards of diet drawn up by the League were used first by Germany, then by other governments, as a basis for their rationing systems in time of war. It may be long before the vast and beneficent possibilities which had been held up before men's eyes can again be brought within the reach of practical politics. Yet the arguments of the Nutrition Report have lost nothing of their essential wisdom and truth.

Side by side with these extensive enterprises for improvement in the field of nutrition, other expert groups were studying the problems of housing and town-planning. The Health Committee regarded housing as prior even to food in the fight for the health and happiness of an unsatisfied world. Sunshine, light, warmth, water-supply, sewage disposal, reduction of smoke and of noise—such were the questions on which it set its advisers to work, establishing for this purpose a League Housing Committee and demanding that individual States should form their own national housing committees to co-operate with the new body in Geneva. Here also it was realized that many different expert capacities must be called upon to help. The special problems of housing finance, government subsidies, public or private credit systems, were submitted for the advice of the Financial Committee. The International Labour Office brought its immense knowledge of the needs and difficulties of workers, whether industrial or agricultural. Unofficial societies for town-planning, for smoke or noise abatement, for playing-fields and open spaces, were all ready to offer their contribution. Social workers in the democratic countries began to be conscious that a new impetus was animating the efforts, whether official or private, to further the well-being of the population.

In the summer of 1939 the Housing Committee of the League, hoping like the rest of the world that war might still be somehow staved off, drew up a programme of the many things it intended to do during the next three years. Meanwhile much of its work, as also of the work of the Nutrition Committee, was being used in the preparation of two great Conferences on Rural Life, one for Europe, and one for America. These would have dealt with every aspect of life in the countryside—the material problems of housing, nutrition, employment, health, and also those of education and recreation. Such labours can never, of their nature, reach finality. But the Conferences foreseen for 1939 would have marked an important stage in many converging lines of advance. The principles established by the national or international experts on behalf of the League would have received fresh publicity. Governments and governed alike would have gained a clearer understanding of the possibilities put into their hands by scientific discoveries and by the lessons of administrative experience. But both Conferences were first postponed and then abandoned. Swept aside by war, such plans can only be brought to fruition when political and economic recovery have proceeded farther than in the first years of peace.

Thus, during the years when the League was progressively losing its power to control or influence the great issues of peace and war, its

economic and social activities had enjoyed a renaissance of energy and initiative. In turning their attention to the problems of the individual rather than of his government, the League's institutions had been, in a sense, retreating against their will from the positions they had originally occupied. But in their second line they had found elements of strength which had never been fully available in the first. They had opened up new springs of popular interest and support. They had learned much about the interdependence of the activities which they had hitherto carried on in separate compartments. Connexions of the League organs with one another, with the International Labour Office, and with outside agencies, had been multiplied. They had at least drawn the outline of a common front against poverty, ignorance, and disease.

Their new enterprises transcended all differences of nationality, race, religion, continent, or colour. There remained one boundary which they could not cross. None of the authoritarian States would participate, although it was always open to them to do so. Germany, Italy, and Japan were hostile to every sort of international institution. The Russian attitude was different. They were particularly well-disposed towards the Health Committee. In June 1936 they had invited it to hold a session in Moscow, had shown it cordial hospitality, and taken its members to visit a number of public health institutes in provincial centres. But they took no part in any of the studies or meetings concerned with a general raising of the standard of living. In many aspects, these activities were based on ideas which found no place in a Communist economy. And, above all, the Russians desired to discourage any suggestion that all this could be placed on a level with the essential duties of the League, or that its Members were entitled, like the United States, to join in economic co-operation while holding aloof from the collective responsibility for peace.

A characteristic of the new work was its comparative detachment from official influence. Its moving spirits were economists and scientists, men who, even when in government service, are apt to preserve a considerable degree of independence. So long as the function of League committees had been to prepare international conventions, that is to say, texts which could have no valid effect until they had been adopted by an adequate number of governments, their first object was of necessity to propose nothing which any important government was likely to reject. Now they could put such considerations aside: and indeed no one could read such a document as the Nutrition Report without seeing in it a general criticism of the inadequacy of official policy in every country. Detachment was fostered also by co-operation with the International Labour Organization, whose famous tripartite system

deliberately aims at bringing in representatives of workers and employers to state their views side by side with those of governments.

The move towards independence led in due course to a desire for a change in the constitutional position of the social and economic agencies of the League. Hitherto, the general rules laid down by the First Assembly had continued in force, with only minor variations. The main committees—whether composed of States or individuals—were designated by the Council. They were debarred from taking up new questions until invited to do so by the Council. Their recommendations had no validity until approved by the Council. Their reports were made to the Council, and could not even be formally communicated to the Members of the League until the Council had so decided. Yet the body which thus controlled them at every turn was rarely capable of giving them help or guidance. Its members were almost always Foreign Ministers or professional diplomatists, who had no special knowledge of economic and social problems. The natural consequence was that while hours might be spent on the discussion of some minor political or constitutional question on the Council's agenda, business connected with finance or economics, with health or transport, with child-welfare or intellectual co-operation, was dispatched with little sign of interest or attention. The proposals made were, indeed, usually accepted without opposition, though the Council was jealous of its authority and always ready to apply the brake to any agency which seemed to be trying to go farther or faster than it had been already authorized to go, or to be trespassing upon the guarded areas of national sovereignty. But even though the chief agencies could usually count on securing formal assent for their proposals, they were far from satisfied with the system. While the Council's disapproval could hamper their work, its approval was a mere formality, adding nothing to their influence or effectiveness. Its fiat carried no weight with the technical departments in the various capitals, whose co-operation was essential. It gave no opportunity to arouse the attention of public opinion: on the contrary, nothing could be more calculated to discourage the interest of press and public than the perfunctory manner in which it discharged the social and economic part of its business.

These disadvantages might well have led long since to a demand for a change, had they not been to some extent compensated by the Assembly. To that body many governments sent not only delegates concerned with the diplomatic aspects of foreign policy, but also ministers or high officials from their technical departments. The Second Committee of the Assembly, which by a quickly established tradition dealt with the principal economic and social questions on its agenda,

provided an annual occasion to take stock of the past year's results and to lay down the programme for the coming year. Its debates provided something at least of the guidance and inspiration which was necessary to the life of the economic and social organs, and which the Council was unable to give them. But it did little to create what was equally necessary, an aroused and sustained public interest in the work. Its meetings were public, but were often overshadowed by the more exciting business of political conflicts. In any case, there was too much to discuss in too short a time. At best, the action of the Assembly was little more than a brief annual interlude.

A further weakness in the established system was that while the United States was taking a full share in the activities of all the expert organizations, effective decisions still rested with a body in which American representatives had no place. This had been natural enough in earlier years, when the United States was holding aloof from everything connected with Geneva. But it was contrary to common sense when she was a full member of the International Labour Organization, and was represented, officially or by experts, on almost every committee or sub-committee engaged upon the economic and social business of the League. The contributions of American experts, the co-operation of American government departments, were at least as great as those of any League power. Yet the American government had no share in nominating the members of any committee, in establishing their budget and their programme, or in deciding whether their proposals should be carried out.

For all these reasons some leading figures in the various institutions of the League, with Bruce at their head, began to plan for a change in the system hitherto followed. Their purpose was to get rid of Council control; to introduce in its place a new directing organ which should be technically competent and capable of enhancing the authority of the various agencies; to ensure greater publicity; and to give to the United States, and other non-Member States which genuinely desired to collaborate, a proper share of responsibility and power in the management of the work.

There were others who would have preferred to go much further, and to set up a new international organization for economic and social questions, which should be completely separate from the League. A suggestion to this effect was put forward in July 1937 by King Leopold of Belgium and his Prime Minister, van Zeeland. Their chief preoccupation was to bring Germany and Italy back into economic collaboration with the democracies: and since the former declined to take part in meetings held under the auspices of the League, van Zeeland

concluded that the best hope of progress lay in creating a new plan in which the League should have no part. The separatist idea had a wide appeal. In earlier years the driving force which enabled the League to build up its economic and social organizations, had come from the conviction that the Covenant was to be the bulwark of world peace. But many Members besides Belgium had now ceased to look to the Council and Assembly as their first line of defence, and had even begun to consider the security provisions of the Covenant as an embarrassment and a danger. Organic connexion with the League had once been a source of power; had it not now become a source of weakness? Why allow the search for economic appeasement, for the restoration of trade and the promotion of health, to be handicapped by being chained to an institution which the Axis hated, to which the United States did not belong, and in which many of its own Members no longer believed?

On the other side it was urged that to liquidate the economic and social agencies of the League might well prove to be sacrificing the substance to the shadow. Was it certain—was it even probable—that the Axis States would join in any new institution on terms which would be acceptable to the democracies? Was there really such a distinction between political commitments on the one hand and economic co-operation on the other, that an economic organization could flourish while its Members possessed no common basis of political purpose? Even if both these questions could be answered in the affirmative, would it prove possible in a distracted world to hold the conferences, draft the conventions, secure the ratifications, establish the budgets and the offices, which would be necessary before the new agencies could begin to function?

While Members of the League hesitated between these opposing points of view, the United States stepped in to decide the controversy. The Assembly of 1938 had decided to give non-Member States an opportunity of expressing their opinion on the future development of the economic and social activities of the League, and in particular on the possibility of extending their own co-operation in these fields. If the Axis powers had been ready to join in this great work on condition that it was dissociated from Geneva, now was their opportunity to say so. But only the United States replied: and its answer was clearly and conclusively on the side of maintaining the League connexion. 'The League', wrote Cordell Hull, 'has been responsible for the development of mutual exchange and discussion of ideas and methods to a greater extent and in more fields of humanitarian and scientific endeavour than any other organization in history.'<sup>1</sup> But, he went on, much more was

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Secretary-General, dated February 2nd, 1939.

still to be done, in the health, social, economic, and financial fields: and each step forward was a step towards that national and international order which the United States government believed to be essential to real peace. That government looked forward to the development and expansion of the League's machinery for dealing with these problems, would continue to collaborate therein, and would willingly consider the means of making its collaboration more effective.

It was long since Geneva had heard words so generous in their recognition of its labours, or so clear in their choice between two opposing policies. The Secretariat was quick to seize the occasion. Hull had given a death-blow to all talk about setting up a new economic and social organization in separation from the League. Now, therefore, was the moment to press forward reforms within the League system. In May 1939, on the Secretary-General's proposal, the Council invited Bruce to preside over a small committee, which included Charles Rist, the foremost economist of France; Harold Butler, who had recently handed over to John Winant the headship of the International Labour Office; Hambro, President of the Norwegian Parliament; Maurice Bourquin, a Belgian delegate of noted ability; Francisco Tudela of Peru, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose moderation and public spirit had won all hearts in Geneva. This powerful group produced a plan which might well have been one of the chief landmarks in the history of international affairs.

In a few vivid pages, Bruce and his colleagues described the past achievements and the future hopes of the economic and social agencies. Both their achievements and their hopes depended on the fact that 'the League represents the aspirations of mankind towards a higher degree of co-operation and organization in the service of world peace'. They therefore made no proposal to detach these services from the rest of the institutions of the League. But they proposed a new Central Committee for Economic and Social Questions which should exercise effective power over them all. It was their intention that this Committee should be made up of Ministers of Commerce, Finance, Transport, or Health, so that its deliberations would possess the same authority, in economic and social affairs, as the Council had possessed in political affairs in the days of Chamberlain, Briand, and Stresemann. Its membership would be decided by the Assembly, but, once set up, it would take over most of the responsibilities hitherto discharged by the Assembly and the Council. It would nominate the technical committees, control their programmes, draw up their budgets, approve or reject their plans. It would be open to non-Member States, placed on an equal footing with League Members, and thus taking a full share in every stage of the

work, including the payment of a proportionate contribution to its cost. And it would be allowed to co-opt a few individual experts to sit side by side with the delegates of governments.

The Bruce Report was issued on August 22nd, 1939, only a few days before the German invasion of Poland. In one sense, it must be counted as a plan whose execution was rendered impossible by the same catastrophes which finally destroyed the tottering structure of the League itself. But in another sense it was more than a plan. It was the conclusion of twenty years of experience unprecedented both in extent and in variety. It was the summing-up of the first great attempt to organize the social and economic interests of the world as a whole. In consequence, when, in the last months of war, the powers met to construct the institutions of the United Nations, they adopted, with slight changes, the system proposed in the Bruce Report. The Central Committee for Economic and Social Questions, still-born, as it seemed, in 1939, came to life as the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.



## REARMAMENT, 1937-1939

HAVING renounced the League system of security, dismissing with impatience the arguments of those who advised them to rebuild a peace front based on the Covenant, and no longer possessing any common plan or policy for meeting the danger of a new war, the principal Members of the League were devoting an ever-increasing proportion of their resources to rearmament. Though the details of German warlike preparations were much disputed, it was no secret that the Reich was rearming on a huge scale: indeed, the Nazi leaders were less inclined, during the last three years of precarious peace, to hide their preparations than to boast of them. Hitler's favourite theme now was that he desired nothing better than to attain his purposes by peaceful means, but that, if this should prove impossible, Germany was strong enough to impose her will by force. Mussolini echoed the refrain; what was lacking in the spirit and equipment of his armies was compensated by the splendour of his adjectives; and a mistaken belief in Italian military strength continued to play an important part in the calculations of the democratic States.

They in turn were driven along the same disastrous road. Rearmament was forced upon them: and though it was with reluctance that they accepted the German challenge, rearmament was not entirely devoid of a specious attraction of its own. It delighted the general staffs: it sent up prices and dividends; it even affected, though not greatly, the unemployment returns. Above all, it seemed to be a policy. British ambassadors constantly advised their government that its word would not regain its due weight until it was backed by adequate military power, and that the army, the navy, and the air force should be reinforced with all speed and to the utmost possible extent. If the peace-loving countries showed themselves willing and able to keep up the race, Hitler would surely hesitate to risk war; might he not even conclude that it was useless to go on trying to acquire an overwhelming superiority in arms? With such hopes in mind Eden opened his speech at the Assembly of 1937 on an unaccustomed note, by describing the unprecedented expansion of the British navy and the formidable increase of British air power both for offensive and defensive purposes. And henceforward the official spokesmen of Britain and France did their best to convince the dictators that it was a hopeless task to compete in armaments with nations whose

resolution was equal to their own, and whose resources were infinitely greater.

The international situation thus presented once more the characteristics of the years preceding the First World War. Each country could persuade itself that it was arming solely for purposes of defence. (Eden's reference to the offensive strength of the Royal Air Force was based on the theory that the only defence against air bombing was the ability to retaliate.) In any case, on the assumption that it was now impossible to uphold an international order based on the Covenant, great armaments became essential, not only for actual defence but because without them no government could join effectively in diplomatic discussions with others. The return to international anarchy necessarily led to a new armaments competition. At the same time all reasonable men knew that peace could not long be preserved among a group of States each of which was seeking to be at least as well armed as the others. Equilibrium was bound to be ever more difficult to maintain, and it had to be sought on ever higher levels. An air force which might in 1936 appear to put its owner comfortably ahead of his competitors, was nothing like good enough, two years later, for the barest purposes of defence. The statesmen who led their countries along the road of competitive rearmament must have been blind indeed if they did not know that they were on the road to war.

The rearmament stampede<sup>1</sup> need not be described in detail in this history, for the simple reason that it became a stampede in exact proportion as the issues upon which it turned were withdrawn from the active work of the League. The Council, the Assembly, the Committees and Conferences of Geneva had for years devoted their sessions to the double theme of security and disarmament. Politicians, soldiers, the general public, had all alike grown sick and tired of the endless debate as to which should precede the other. No conclusion was ever arrived at: and it was natural to infer that the debate was in its nature fruitless and useless. Those who took part in it had too often lost sight of the vital importance of reaching agreement, and had obstinately refused to make the reciprocal concessions by which alone practical results could be attained. But subsequent events proved only too clearly that though they had lacked the firm will to solve the problem, they had not been wrong in their method of approach to it. Once the brake was off and the armaments race restarted, the two-sided question became infinitely

<sup>1</sup> A vivid picture of the development of rearmament is given by the chapter-headings in the annual review, *The United States in World Affairs*, published in New York by the Council on Foreign Relations. In 1936 its chapter on this subject was entitled: 'The Race to Rearm'. In 1937, 'The Rearmament Stampede'; in 1938, 'Armaments Unlimited'; in 1939, 'Twenty Thousand Millions for Armaments'.

more difficult; but its essential nature was unchanged. So far from producing any increased sense of safety, rearmament only deepened in every country the consciousness of imminent and deadly danger. It was evident now that nothing but some great new factor of security could bring about a reversal of the movement. It was equally evident that without such reversal a new world war could hardly be avoided. But while new air squadrons, warships, and guns were easy enough to plan, no government of a great power, except that of Russia, claimed to see how the sense of security could be regained. 'I do not altogether despair', said Chamberlain, 'of presently finding some new scheme . . . which would avoid the necessity for the pursuit of this folly to the bitter end'.<sup>1</sup> No such scheme was destined to be found, and indeed there is little to suggest that it was ever sought. If it had been, the seekers would perforce have been exploring once again the paths familiar to the organs of the League since the days of Cecil's Treaty of Mutual Guarantee. They would have re-discovered the fact—so simple in its essence, so complex in its application—that, in a world of independent States, armaments control can never be possible without an effective system of international assistance against aggression.

The principal League governments, having allowed sanctions against Italy to fail, attributed the failure not to their own weakness of purpose, but to the imperfections of the League; and so long as they maintained that attitude, no country could fail to draw the conclusion that it must first seek to provide for its own safety by whatever means were open to it. No possible ground could now be seen for any proposal to reduce or limit the competition in armaments. Germany was setting the pace, and all the rest followed. Even her small neighbours strained their resources to the utmost to buy or manufacture the greatest possible number of aeroplanes and tanks. As with the greater powers, their rearmament went hand in hand with a return to the ideal of neutrality or isolationism. Switzerland, having refused to join in economic sanctions against Italy on the ground that several thousand men would lose their employment, raised, only a year later, in October 1936, a defence loan of 335 million francs; and the bells of the Swiss churches were rung to announce that this total, enormous for so small a country, had been reached. Not only the Little Entente and the Balkan States, but even Holland, Belgium, and the Scandinâvian countries were rearming to their utmost capacity.

Meanwhile the war preparations of the great powers advanced to astronomical figures. Since Russia and Germany both maintained the strictest secrecy about their military budgets, while the figures published

<sup>1</sup> Speech in House of Commons, February 25th, 1937.

by other powers cannot be considered as reliable or complete, no definite estimates can be quoted: but there is no doubt that, by the end of 1937, expenditure was running at not less than four times as much as in 1913, when armaments were already so excessive that in Edward Grey's view they were the primary cause of the world war.<sup>1</sup> By the middle of 1939 it had doubled itself again. Such a wastage of the world's resources was in itself a disaster. The Economic and Financial Committees of the League continued year by year to warn the governments of the desperate economic situation into which they were plunging. Speakers in the Assembly, while emphasizing the strictly defensive nature of their own rearmament, admitted that rearmament was no guarantee against war and indeed was steadily making war more and more certain. But no one could suggest any alternative policy: the helplessness of the Assembly was shown by the fact that in 1937 it no longer even set up its famous Third Committee, in which year after year so many debates on disarmament and security had taken place. The question of armaments had disappeared from the purview of the League.

<sup>1</sup> See Grey of Falldon, *Twenty-five Years* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1925), i. 92.

## THE COUNCIL IN DEFEAT

*The Axis presses forward—The fall of Eden—Change in British attitude—Hitler annexes Austria—The Council of May 1938—Recognition of Italian conquest—Ethiopia, Spain, China appeal in vain—Czechoslovakia in danger*

(JANUARY—AUGUST, 1938)

THE 1937 Assembly had closed with some prospect of a new policy towards the Spanish war, and of a serious effort, under American leadership, to put an end to Japanese aggression in China. But these prospects faded within a few weeks. As the winter passed, the sense of failure deepened in Geneva. The League was, it seemed, fated to be identified with the beaten side. It had backed Ethiopia against Italy. It was giving its moral support to China against Japan. It was rightly regarded as being favourable to the Spanish government and hostile to Franco. That this was so, was loudly proclaimed by the Axis press; and it was freely admitted by those who desired to restore the power and influence of the League. Seeing the institutions in which they had put their hopes daily undermined and insulted by Mussolini and Hitler, how could they not long to see the discomfiture of the dictators? And the Republicans themselves, in spite of rebuffs and disappointments, clung to Geneva, where they were treated as the legitimate government of Spain, and admitted to those discussions on the affairs of their country from which, in London, they were excluded.

In these months the believers in the League as an institution for peace were more and more conscious of defeat. They were compelled to look on while the armies for whose success they hoped were steadily losing ground. With helpless indignation they received the telegrams from Nanking or Valencia telling of cities bombed, of women and children dying in terror, of ships sunk, of gas warfare, and of the inexorable advance of the powerful forces of aggression. They were convinced that, in refusing to come to the help of Ethiopia, China, and Spain, the democracies were making it certain that at no distant time they too would be fighting for their existence, and fighting without the allies on whom they might have counted.

While London and Paris gave no sign, the Axis powers were showing themselves ever more confident, arrogant, and united. In November

1937 Italy signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, and openly took the side of Japan throughout the Brussels Conference. A month later, on December 11th, Mussolini gave notice of Italy's withdrawal from the League: next day, Hitler announced that Germany's separation from the League was now final and irrevocable. The solidarity of the conquerors was ostentatiously displayed in the diplomatic field. Japan followed the lead of Rome and Berlin in recognizing Franco as the legitimate ruler of Spain. Franco, Hitler, and Mussolini recognized the State of Manchukuo. Franco, Hitler, and the Japanese recognized the new Italian Empire of Ethiopia. Poland, Hungary, and Austria followed these examples of realism. Such moves were clearly part of a general purpose to shatter the existing order of things, and rebuild it nearer to the heart's desire of Hitler and Mussolini. But the governments in London and Paris preferred to consider them as being aimed at the League and not at themselves, and therefore to be regarded without undue anxiety. The lesser States of Europe, however, could read the writing on the wall. Some hastened to make their peace with the Axis by getting rid of politicians who were known to favour close relations with the Western democracies. Others claimed that the breakdown of the Covenant had forced them to recover the right to remain neutral in any new war.

Meanwhile it began to be rumoured that Eden's position in the British Cabinet was threatened; and on February 20th, 1938, his resignation was announced. He had come to Geneva for the last time in January. It was the hundredth session of the Council. The delegates could not let pass the occasion without some oratorical tribute; and Eden had been the first to speak. Like most others, he could find nothing of substance to say. Litvinov and Jordan could consistently declare that their governments still upheld the Covenant and were ready to make it the basis of their action in the critical times ahead. Wellington Koo, since his country was asking for help against the Japanese invader, was bound to affirm that the principles of the Covenant were still in full force. But the rest could do no more than praise the ideals of the League, and regret that the Council was now, in its membership, its powers, and its spirit, no more than a symbol of what it was meant to be, and a shadow of what it once had been. The session had been brief and formal. It had confirmed the evident fact that, at any rate for the time being, the Council had lost all influence over the main course of international events.

Eden's resignation was in essence a refusal to connive at giving Mussolini a free hand in Spain. It thus brought him once again into line with that policy on the Spanish war which he himself and the rest of the Council had laid down in May 1937, and which the Assembly had

endorsed by an overwhelming majority in October. For a moment it seemed to League supporters that his decision might lead to important consequences. He had been the leader in organizing opposition to Mussolini in October 1935. If now he were ready to put himself at the head of those in Britain who believed that the best hope of peace lay in resisting the Axis in Spain, was there not at least a chance that he might compel a great reversal in British policy? Not only from Geneva, but from all over the world, and especially from the United States, all eyes were turned towards London. But it was soon seen that the German and Italian press was right in its assertion that Eden had not resigned in order to challenge the dictators, but had been forced out in order to leave the way open for a policy of which he disapproved. And that policy, though conceived in the hope of maintaining peace, was in fact exactly suited to advance the purposes of the Axis.

The new Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, had always been a warm-hearted supporter of the League, as of all great and generous causes. But except Halifax and one or two others, the members of the British government, from this time on, adopted a new tone of contempt and dislike for the League. It was clear that in so doing they were expressing the sentiments of the majority of their followers in Parliament. Chamberlain himself declared<sup>1</sup> that the League should throw off its shams and that small nations should not be deluded into thinking that it could protect them against aggression. Such words from the British Prime Minister were everywhere regarded not as a judgement of fact but as a statement of policy: for to every small power the most important consideration in estimating the degree of confidence which it could place in the League was the question of what the British government might be expected to do. True it was that the experience of the last few years, and especially the shattering blow of the Hoare-Laval plan, had deeply undermined the confidence of the small powers in general. They had lost faith not in the League so much as in the strength of purpose of its chief Members. Nevertheless, the attitude of the British government was rightly understood as carrying the retreat from collective security a very long step farther. Hitherto, that government had continued to affirm that it still held to the principles of the Covenant, though it was debarred by circumstances from applying them in full. Now it rejected for an indefinite time the whole conception on which the League was based. The results were quickly seen. When the Assembly next met, the greater number of League Members had already declared themselves to be no longer bound by those Articles which provided that all must join in defending a fellow Member against aggression.

<sup>1</sup> Speech in House of Commons, February 22nd, 1938.

Chamberlain and Halifax now proceeded (April 16th, 1938) to make a fresh agreement with Mussolini, the principal points of which were that the Italians promised to withdraw their forces from Spain after the war in that country was over, while the British promised to give official recognition to the Italian annexation of Ethiopia. As a first step to this end, the Secretary-General was asked to place the question of Ethiopia on the agenda of the forthcoming session of the Council.

In the meantime, the Axis programme was being carried out with increasing speed. In March and April Franco's troops, in which Italian infantry and German aeroplanes played a prominent part, undertook a victorious offensive. They drove a deep wedge down to the Mediterranean coast, dividing the territories still held by the Republicans into two parts.

Barcelona and Valencia or Madrid could now communicate only by sea, and sea communications were under continuous air attack from Italian squadrons stationed in Majorca. No one, except the incredibly obdurate Spaniards themselves, supposed that they could maintain their resistance much longer. While final victory in Spain thus seemed imminent, Hitler marched his forces into Austria. The Austrian government collapsed: it made no attempt to resist, nor did it ask for help either from Italy or from the Western powers, all of whom had repeatedly declared that Austrian independence was of vital importance to the peace of Europe. No government suggested that any appeal should be made to the League. Germany's act was an open breach of the Treaties of Peace and of Hitler's own subsequent pledges, but no country was prepared to offer any opposition, nor was there any reaction when, on March 18th, 1938, Germany officially informed the League that the Austrian State had ceased to exist.

In itself the departure of Austria was no loss to the League. She had been nursed through the first years of her feeble post-war existence by the efforts of the Council and the Financial Committee; yet she had not dared to join the common action against Italian aggression, and her spokesmen at Geneva had for years done little more than carry out the instructions of Rome. Nevertheless, the extinction of an independent European State through treachery and violence could not fail to be felt as a warning of still more disastrous events to come. And the map showed what a tremendous strategic advantage the acquisition of Austria gave to Hitler. He could now threaten Czechoslovakia, not with a frontal attack against the strongly fortified barrier of the mountains, but across the open length of her southern frontier.

No one doubted that Czechoslovakia would be the next object of Nazi attack; and Hitler's campaign was started immediately after the



annexation of Austria. It proceeded in characteristic fashion, first by an assurance that no unfriendly action was intended, next by a press campaign of vituperation and hatred, and then by reports and rumours of troop movements calculated to upset the nerves of the intended victim.

Such was the situation in Europe when, on May 9th, 1938, the Council opened its hundred-and-first session—the last which merits description in any detail, the last also which aroused any serious public interest. There was general curiosity to see what would be the effect of Eden's resignation and of the new Anglo-Italian agreement—an agreement which, both in its contents and in the circumstances of its making, was unmistakably equivalent to a declaration of indifference towards the League on the part of that State which had been from the beginning its most powerful Member, and whose people had always been its most convinced supporters. And the session did in fact present a strangely vivid picture of the actual condition of the League. The Council was called upon to consider the British proposal to recognize Italian sovereignty in Ethiopia, and so to wipe out the last trace of collective resistance to Mussolini's imperial ambitions. It heard an announcement by the Swiss government, claiming a complete return to that traditional neutrality which Switzerland had partly relinquished in acceding to the Covenant; and a triumphant oration from Edwards of Chile, who had persuaded his government to announce its withdrawal from an institution which had disappointed all its hopes. Side by side with these signs of defeat and dissolution, the Council had to listen to the spokesmen of Ethiopia, China, and Spain, who came forward, one after the other, to denounce their invaders, and to reproach those from whom they had expected help.

The Council's proceedings displayed before the world the weakness not only of the League but still more of the democratic powers. For it was evident that if Britain and France remained silent on the rape of Austria and the threat to Czechoslovakia; could offer no more than sympathy to China; and openly accepted the Axis victories in Ethiopia and Spain, this was not because they regarded with indifference or approval such violent changes in the established order. It was because they believed themselves unable to prevent them. It was painful to see Halifax, a man both sincere and merciful, forced to defend a policy which involved rejecting the just claims of the weak and leaving them defenceless in face of ruthlessness and violence.

Remembering its past pledges, and still compelled to take account of the pro-League sentiment of British public opinion, the Chamberlain

government had affirmed in Parliament that its recognition of Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia would be granted only with the approval of the League. The new agreement with Italy depended both in form and substance on that recognition. Chamberlain's promise, therefore, strictly interpreted, subjected the coming into force of the agreement to a Council decision on the status of Ethiopia. He had given it without full consideration of whether such a decision could in fact be secured, and, in particular, without realizing that Ethiopia had not ceased to be included in the list of League Members, and was therefore entitled under the Covenant to participate in any discussion affecting her interests. Her representative would thus be in a position to prevent the adoption of any formal resolution. Haile Selassie was quite aware of this, and informed the Secretary-General that he would himself attend the meeting. The scruples of the British government thus exposed it to a confrontation with the victim of Fascist invasion—an ordeal which could not but be painful to the sensitive mind of the Foreign Secretary, and which a number of League Members had avoided by the simple process of recognizing Italian sovereignty without further reference to the Council or the Assembly.

Halifax began by a prepared statement on the Anglo-Italian agreement, which he affirmed would reduce tension in the Mediterranean, and therefore deserved to be welcomed by the Council as a contribution, by both powers, to world peace. The French representative was Georges Bonnet, a clever but shifty politician who had just, to his country's misfortune, achieved a lifelong ambition in becoming Foreign Minister. Bonnet had little more to do or say, at this or subsequent meetings, than to endorse the observations of Halifax: French foreign policy at this time consisted chiefly in following wherever London led, and France was trying, in the face of repeated rebuffs, to negotiate a Franco-Italian agreement on similar lines. After further approving comments from Roumania, Belgium, and Poland, Litvinov observed that it was always satisfactory to see two countries clear up their misunderstandings, provided that they did not thereby increase the difficulties of others.

The meeting of May 12th, at which the Ethiopian question was debated, was marked by a dramatic tension such as had long been absent from the Council chamber. This was due in part to the personality of Haile Selassie and the memory of his wrongs, but still more to the fact that British policy towards Italy, and its consequences as regards Ethiopia and Spain, was fiercely contested at home and criticized abroad. That policy was now exposed to the protests of the Emperor, who had brought with him highly competent British and French

advisers. Although the two protagonists treated one another with every courtesy, the debate was a bitter one. Halifax admitted that the proposed recognition was contrary to the principles of the Covenant. But to withhold it was to endanger peace: and if a choice must be made between peace and the Covenant, peace must surely prevail. His government still condemned the means by which Italy had acquired her new Empire. From that Empire, however, she could not be expelled without war: and who was ready to go to war for such a purpose? He asked for no formal decision, but hoped that the Council would share his view that each Member of the League was free to decide for itself whether to recognize Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia.

The Emperor's answer was that his country had never accepted defeat or ceased to resist. The Italian hold, maintained only by force of arms and by extreme cruelty, had never extended beyond a few centres: it was weaker now than ever before, and the strain on Italy's resources was becoming steadily harder to bear. Was this the time to help the occupying power, and to dishearten the national resistance, by recognizing Italy as the legal sovereign of the country? To renounce the principles which all Members of the League had solemnly engaged themselves to maintain, could never lead to peace. Such a policy could only encourage the aggressors. The States which today abandoned Ethiopia would be threatened in their turn: and when that day came, they would find that they had destroyed the treaties on which they might have relied.

No attempt was made by any Member of the Council to answer the Emperor's speech. Several among them had already recognized Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia: Britain and France had made up their minds to do the same. Russia, New Zealand, and China spoke on the other side, thus proving that, even if Ethiopia had not been present, a formal Council decision would still have been impossible. But the President rightly summed up the debate as showing that the majority agreed that each League Member was free to act as it thought right in this matter. Such a result could not be described as constituting the approval of the League. But the British government considered itself justified thereafter in granting the recognition which Mussolini desired.

The trials of Halifax and Bonnet were by no means over. Though Spain was no longer a Member of the Council, the Republican government had made a last appeal for the ending of non-intervention, and del Vayo was there as its spokesman. The Italian troops on Spanish soil had, he said, been strongly reinforced of late. Non-intervention was just as one-sided as ever; and in the light of what had happened in Austria, and of the threat to Czechoslovakia, how could it even be

argued any longer that, in spite of its being, as Eden had said, a leaky dam, it was nevertheless preventing the war from spreading to the rest of Europe? And now the Anglo-Italian agreement formally condoned Italian intervention: how then could the British government continue to impose, and to urge others to impose, restrictions on the right of the Spanish government to buy arms? Since all hope of stopping Axis intervention was openly given up, he had a right to ask that the principles laid down by the Council and endorsed by the Assembly should now be carried out, and that his government should be allowed to procure arms where and how it could.

In the affair of the war in Spain the dice were all cast, the decisions all taken. Del Vayo's case seemed to half his hearers unanswerable: to the other half not worth listening to. Halifax and Bonnet made it plain that they were even more determined than their predecessors had been to maintain the system of non-intervention: they could not claim that it was effectively applied, but they continued to believe that it was saving Europe from war. The Spanish proposal was defeated, since only Russia and Spain voted for it, while Britain, France, Poland, and Roumania voted against. Del Vayo retired in anger, declaring that his arguments had not received the serious and careful consideration which they deserved. Nor was the vote consoling for the British and French: nine countries had abstained, and their only supporters had been States which at this time were strongly under Axis influence.

Next it was the turn of Wellington Koo to describe the wrongs and sufferings of China, and to call for the help which he knew only too well the Western powers were unable or unwilling to give. Like Haile Selassie and del Vayo, he warned the Council that the gathering danger of war would only be intensified, so long as no combined effort was made to resist aggression in the countries where it was actually taking place. He argued that, if peace were restored in the Far East, the situation in Europe would at once become more stable. It was the same question which was posed, in a still more acute form, to the allied powers during the Second World War—should they seek first to finish the war in the Pacific and then bring all their strength to bear on defeating the Axis in Europe, or should they take Germany and Italy first and Japan second? In 1942, with the United States in the war, the answer was by no means a foregone conclusion. But in 1938, for the League powers, including Russia, no hesitation was possible. Japan was already exercising an unfriendly pressure upon their interests and possessions in the East; if they withheld the supplies required by her fleets and armies in China, it was certain that sooner or later she would retaliate by war. That was a risk they dared not run, while the United States stood aside,

and they themselves might at any time be called upon to defend their own frontiers against a German assault.

In truth the League itself, and the principal Members taken as individual States, were now paralysed before the German threat and the intensification which that threat received from Germany's two allies. In the Far East, the conquests and ambitions of Japan were a constant danger. In Europe, the support given by Italy to her partner was political rather than military: thanks to Italian diplomacy, League action was inhibited by the attitude of the British and French governments, which held obstinately to the conviction that there was more to be hoped for from Mussolini than from everything the League could offer. They believed that if only they made it worth his while, the Duce would enable them to come to terms with Hitler; that he would restrain his fellow dictator from further acts of aggression, or that, if he failed in this, he would throw the military power of Italy on their side. But if these comforting prospects were to be realized, the Covenant must be thrust into the background. How could there be agreement with the dictators through an organization which they had abandoned, whose meetings they refused to attend, and whose Council included Soviet Russia as one of the chief Members?

These considerations explain why the conflict between Czechoslovakia and Germany was never brought before the League. There was indeed every reason why it should have been so brought. The case was very different from that of Austria. Neither the Austrian government, nor the Austrian people as a whole, wished to offer forcible resistance to annexation by Germany: nor were any of the other European powers willing to run any risk to prevent it. But when Czechoslovakia was threatened, the Czech people and their government were ready to fight and die for their independence. France and Russia were pledged by treaty to come to her assistance, and the British government used language which was meant to convey the belief that Britain would do the same. Such pledges were in full harmony with the Covenant: and indeed the treaties between Czechoslovakia, France, and Russia were specifically based upon the principles and the action of the League. If the Western powers had in truth been ready to give Czechoslovakia the support they promised, they had nothing to lose and much to gain by laying the question before the Council.

Further, Hitler's campaign against the Czechs was based on accusations as to the treatment of the German minority in that country. But Czechoslovakia was one of the States which were bound by a minorities treaty. The rights of her citizens of German race were guaranteed by

the League; and, like other minorities so protected, they had the privilege of direct appeal to the Members of the Council. This system of protection had indeed been planned with the object of averting the danger of intervention by any State in the affairs of its neighbour on the ground of the latter's treatment of its minorities. The government in Prague had, generally speaking, sincerely tried to carry out the obligations of the Treaty and, unlike the German minority in Poland, it was only on a few occasions that the Sudetens had submitted petitions to the Council. But they were quite aware of their rights; and in so far as they genuinely believed that they had reason to complain of their treatment, they would doubtless have again brought their grievances to the attention of the Council, but for the orders of Berlin. Hitler's purpose was exactly the opposite of that which the Minorities Treaties had been intended to serve: the existence of a German minority in any neighbouring State was for him the ideal opportunity to open a campaign against that State as soon as he desired to do so. The Prague government, on the other hand, could have submitted the question to the Council. Whatever the German reaction might be, this was the right way, and the only effective way, to prove before the world that its conduct towards the minority had been proper, and that it was ready to accept the judgement of a disinterested tribunal. Such action must certainly have been considered by Beneš. But it would not have suited the plans of Britain and France. In the case of Czechoslovakia, as in that of Ethiopia, they acted on the assumption that they had to choose between respect for the principles of the Covenant and of the Minorities Treaties on the one hand, and the maintenance of peace on the other. In consequence, the threat to the independence and integrity of a Member of the League was dealt with by diplomatic conversations between London, Paris, Rome, Berlin, and Prague. And the question of the Sudeten minority was studied, not through the careful, thorough, and constitutional procedure of the Council, but by a hastily improvised expedient. Lord Runciman was sent to the spot with ill-defined powers and ambiguous responsibilities. After a few weeks of feverish investigation under totally abnormal conditions, he produced a report which the British government chose thenceforth to consider, without any discussion with the country chiefly concerned, as an authoritative basis for the most far-reaching decisions.

THE ASSEMBLY ABANDONS THE  
COVENANT

*The German-Czechoslovak crisis—The League is excluded—The majority declares against collective action—Russia's last efforts at Geneva*

(SEPTEMBER 1938)

THROUGH the summer of 1938 the German menace to Czechoslovakia grew more acute. When the Assembly met in September, all the world could see that the League as guardian of the peace was on its death-bed. During the Assembly Litvinov revealed that, just before it met, the Soviet government had been asked by the French to state what its attitude would be in case of a German attack on Czechoslovakia; and that its reply had been, first, that it intended to fulfil its treaty obligations and was ready to enter into military consultations at once with the French and Czechoslovak staffs, and second, that it considered that the whole question should be submitted to the League, with the object of mobilizing public opinion and also of ascertaining the attitude of certain other States whose passive aid might be of value. This proposal went unheard in Paris and London, and no other move appears to have been made to call upon the League. On the contrary, except for a brief visit by Georges Bonnet, the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, Poland, and Belgium decided that the crisis made it necessary for them to stay each in his own capital. No single fact could mark so unmistakably the downfall of the Council. The Articles of the Covenant had in part been devised with the very purpose of bringing together, if world peace were in jeopardy, such a conference as Edward Grey had vainly tried to convoke in July 1914. Now no eye was turned to Geneva: the eyes of all the world, including the Assembly itself, were fixed successively on Nuremberg, on Berchtesgaden, on Prague, on Godesberg, and finally on Munich. And, in truth, governments which were ready to escape from the imminent threat of war by the methods of Munich, were well advised to avoid discussion in the Council. However powerless the League institutions were to impose a solution in conformity with the Covenant, they had never relinquished the principle that every Member had a right to full participation in all proceedings which affected its interests. Such terms as those laid down by the four powers at Munich could not possibly have been adopted at Geneva.

Meanwhile, the Members of the League were one by one taking their

final precautions in the hope of keeping out of the expected war. Until recently, they had taken it for granted that they would be called upon, if such a crisis arose, to join in the public consideration of the rights and wrongs of the dispute; and if the crisis turned to war, to join in the common action against those whom the Council or the Assembly judged to be responsible. Now, in the discussion of the German-Czechoslovak dispute, they were no more than onlookers; and onlookers they were determined to remain, if those discussions failed. One Member after another came forward to declare that it was henceforward the sole judge of its own actions. The move towards neutrality had begun two years before, as soon as the great powers had announced their intention to put an end to sanctions against Italy. It had been carried forward during the meetings of the Committee set up to discuss the 'reform' of the League, in which many governments had already claimed that the Covenant provisions for automatic action against an aggressor were no longer capable of application. It was completed during the Assembly of 1938: and by the time the Assembly closed, there were few Members which had not openly reverted to the pre-Covenant position, in which they were free to remain neutral when other States were attacked, and had no claim on international support if they were attacked themselves.

Thus the double process was now complete. International judgement and international action were alike abandoned. In the case of Ethiopia, the whole dispute had been fully considered by the organs of the League: and when the Covenant was violated, the Members of the League as a whole had joined in sanctions. In the case of Spain, the principal powers had insisted on keeping the real decisions in their own hands through the Non-Intervention Committee: just as, in the case of China, consideration at Geneva had been held up while the signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty were conferring in Brussels. But both of these conflicts had been laid before the Council and the Assembly: the rights and wrongs had been judged, and various forms of action had been recommended. The German-Czechoslovak dispute was never in any form submitted to international judgement or discussion, nor was there ever any question of action by the League.

The object of the majority of Members, with Britain at their head, was to free themselves completely from those obligations of the Covenant which involved actual resistance to aggressors, without finally destroying either the institutions of the League or the ideal of collective security. It was a difficult, perhaps an impossible, course they had to steer—to declare that the principles of the Covenant were right and wise, but could not be carried out in practice: to proclaim their hatred of war and aggression, while taking back all their pledges to join in preventing



them: to insist that the work of the Council, the Assembly, and the other organizations of the League must still go on, while withdrawing from their consideration the matters with which above all they were planned to deal. Such a position was open to devastating criticism by the minority which still called upon their fellow Members to fulfil their whole duty under the Covenant. That minority was made up of a few Members which, though not specially threatened, still believed in the Covenant and were prepared to act on it if others did so: of China and Spain, whose territory was actually invaded; of Russia, living in daily fear of German attack. The French also were eloquent on the same side, though their actions continued to belie their words. The Czechoslovak delegation were silent throughout the Assembly. They had played a loyal and zealous part in all that the League had done since its earliest days. In previous debates on the same question they had consistently stood for the full maintenance of the Covenant. Now, thinking only of the tragic fate which was closing down upon their country and themselves, they wandered resentful and miserable among the other delegations, like ghosts among living men. How could they join in debating the future of the League, who could see no future for their country?

At the opposite extremity were two League Members, Poland and Hungary, which, while remaining in the League, nevertheless showed themselves ostentatiously hostile to its principles and obstructive towards every proposal laid before the Assembly. They watched with malicious pleasure the approaching dissolution of their neighbour, and marked out the fragments which they hoped to snatch from the table when the German appetite was satisfied. History can contain few spectacles more full of tragic irony than that of the Polish delegate affirming that his country was too great a power to have any fear of international pressure, but could not allow her policy to be influenced by any considerations except her own interests.<sup>1</sup>

Between the two extremes stood the countries of the British Commonwealth, the Scandinavians, and other small European powers such as Belgium, Holland, and Portugal, the Baltic group, the Balkan group, the Arab States, and a number of the Latin American Members. All of these endorsed, in its general lines, a carefully drafted statement, in which the British government submitted its new definition of the duties involved by membership of the League in case of war or threat of war in violation of the Covenant. No Member, it was suggested, was any longer bound to apply either economic or military sanctions. But Members were not free to treat the question as one that did not concern them. The Council or Assembly must meet and consider the situation; if it concluded that

<sup>1</sup> See Assembly records, September 24th and 26th, 1938.

there was a breach of the Covenant, then all Members would still be able to claim that an act of war had been committed against them, and it would be their right and their duty to consider how far they could go in resisting the aggressor and helping the victim. The Cranborne report on the 'reform' of the Covenant had spoken of three possible kinds of League; a coercive League, a purely consultative League, and an intermediate form in which consultation would be obligatory, while coercion of a war-maker, though not obligatory, would be permissible. It was this intermediate League which, in the British view, should be considered as having taken the place of the coercive system provided by the Covenant. But while it sought to give this change a constitutional basis by proposing that it should be acknowledged by the Assembly, the British government affirmed that it still considered that the full Covenant plan was the best safeguard of world peace, and that no attempt ought to be made to change the original text.

Litvinov and his party had no difficulty in demonstrating the logical weakness of such a plan. If sanctions were to be applied, not, as the Covenant prescribed, to every case of aggression and by every Member of the League, but only by those Members who chose to do so and in such cases as they might select, the whole system of collective security would be gone. Those who were preparing war—all knew who they were, and that they were growing bolder every day—would no longer have anything to fear; it would be easy for them to make sure beforehand that the particular victim which they had selected would be left unsupported. If the action of League Members was to depend, not on the merits of the case, but on their own view of their own interests, they did not need a League to enable them to decide their policy. What was the value of the consoling reference to a restoration of the full Covenant system at some future date, when that system was being abandoned now, not on the ground that it was faulty, but because those who were pledged to carry it out shrank from the risks of fulfilling their obligations? And Litvinov repeated his effective gibe of two years before: the Assembly was being asked to act like a Town Council which dissolved its fire brigade when it thought there was danger of fire, promising to reconstitute it as soon as all such danger should have disappeared.

These arguments made no impression on the majority. They replied that they were making no real change in the situation, but merely admitting and defining a state of things which had existed in fact for at least two years. It might be illogical to demand simultaneously that the text of the Covenant should remain unchanged, and that its signatories should be released from its principal obligations: but the answer to that criticism, if it were pressed too far, was simple enough—they had only to

withdraw from the League altogether. But they believed that the total extinction of the League would be a still greater catastrophe than the abandonment of Article 16.

The conclusion of the debate was that the majority, following the British lead, maintained their new definition of the duties of League membership. They were forced to renounce their attempt to get it formally approved or accepted by the Assembly: but their own position was henceforth clear. For three out of four Members, it was now officially on record that they were no longer under any obligation to join in resistance to aggression. They acknowledged at the same time that, if they themselves were the victims of attack, they could no longer claim as a right the help of their fellow Members. This consequence might seem self-evident; but a few months earlier, when Switzerland had informed the Council that she was henceforward reverting to complete neutrality, she had refused to admit that this change in her commitments to other Members could release them from their commitments towards her.

While thus making it clear that the League had no longer any duty or power to save its members from attack, the British government embarked on a belated attempt to increase the Council's capacity to deal with disputes in their earlier stages, and thus to ward off the danger of war before it became imminent. For this purpose it proposed to restore to Article 11 the character which that Article had been intended to possess when the Covenant was first drafted, by laying down that when the Council was contemplating action to safeguard peace, the vote of the directly interested powers should not be counted. This reform was sensible and necessary: it might possibly have been carried out with general agreement ten years before: but it was put forward too late. There could be little drive behind such a proposal at the very moment when the European crisis was being carefully kept outside the purview of the Council, and settled by methods which were the exact contrary of those foreseen in Article 11. Though most delegations were favourable to the idea, it was briefly discussed and quickly defeated. Only the pro-Axis countries, Poland and Hungary, voted against it, but eleven others, including Russia and Canada, showed, by abstaining, that they were doubtful whether such a reform could have any meaning at that time.

The incident possesses some historic interest because this was the last discussion at Geneva concerning the preventive duties of the Council; and because the experience of the League induced the authors of the Charter of the United Nations to attempt, by the provisions of Chapter VII, to give the Security Council more effective powers in that respect than those of its predecessor. But for this it would have been hardly worth relating.

For the Council and Assembly had now ceased to exercise any shred of political authority. Ceaselessly attacked by the Axis, progressively abandoned by the democracies, the League had been deprived of all the powers by which its founders had hoped to make of it the guardian of the world's peace. Without a complete reconversion to the principles of collective security on the part of Britain, France, and the United States, those powers could not be revived. No such reconversion was destined to occur. More years must pass, and worse tragedies must take place, before Roosevelt could win the support of a Congress vowed to neutrality and inaction. In Britain and France the men who had been deceived and outmanœuvred over Spain and Czechoslovakia were still to hold office for nearly two more years; if they were gradually driven to open resistance, it was only because Hitler deliberately chose to provoke them to war, and not as a consequence of any steadfast policy of their own. The abandonment of the Covenant was only one part of the political disintegration which overcame Europe on the eve of the Second World War.

It is true that the parallel process whereby the political cohesion of Europe was broken up, and the League's authority was undermined, had been going on for some years. It was a general degeneration, marked by a few outstanding events—the Stresa meeting, the Hoare–Laval plan, the smashing of Locarno, the lifting of sanctions, the founding of the Axis, the Spanish war, the invasion of China, the annexation of Austria—but moving continuously forward under the ceaseless activity of nationalist diplomacy. But the Czechoslovak crisis and the Munich agreement brought the double movement to its climax. Its immediate consequences both for the League and for Europe were shown by the attitude of Russia. She was excluded from the negotiations between the four powers, although more directly concerned with their outcome than either Britain or Italy. At the same time she was compelled to admit the failure of her efforts to revive the security system of the Covenant, under which her full right to speak and vote could not be ignored.

From these events the Soviet government was justified in concluding that the British and French did not desire its participation in their search for peace. It drew also, doubtless with less justification, the conclusion that they secretly hoped to see Russia attacked by Germany and that, if this should happen, she could not count upon their help. Reluctantly, as it would seem, the rulers of Russia accepted the isolation into which they were being thrust. From the end of the Assembly onwards, their relations with Geneva became rapidly colder and more detached, and this was the sign of the increasing division between them and the Western democracies.

The 1938 Assembly was Litvinov's last meeting in Geneva; and he was the principal figure of that uneasy gathering. No other Foreign Minister of a great power was present. The delegations in general gazed with silent apprehension towards Berlin and Prague, Godesberg and Munich; even those whose countries were taking part in the negotiations dared not express any opinion, and indeed knew little of what was going on. For Russia, on the other hand, the Assembly provided the only suitable forum in which her views and intentions could be published; and Litvinov stated them with complete clarity (September 21st, 1938). It was for Czechoslovakia, he said, to decide for herself how she should act under the German threat of unprovoked aggression. She had not asked for Russian advice: and Russia appreciated her tact. His government was ready to carry out its obligations in full on the condition, clearly laid down in the Russo-Czechoslovak Treaty, that France did the same. It seems probable that Litvinov's reiterated assertions of Russia's loyalty to her treaty engagements were intended both to stiffen the attitude of Czechoslovakia and of France, and to emphasize his own right to be consulted. He continued to urge upon the British and French delegations the need to put the whole question before the Council. It was even reported that he had brought some high staff officers with him in order to be ready at once if the call to consultation should come. At the same time, the Russian delegation stood out as the champion of the victims of German, Italian, and Japanese violence, and as the protagonist of that considerable minority of League Members which demanded the full maintenance of the Covenant.

Litvinov never claimed to speak as an idealist. He argued that the prevention of war being the common interest of all peace-loving countries, it was a realistic policy to support the League just so far as it could contribute to that essential purpose. After Munich, and after the passive acceptance of defeat which characterized the Assembly of 1938, the Russian government concluded that it was useless to look to Geneva any longer. No spectacular change took place at first. Russian experts found themselves unable to attend the meetings of League Committees to which they belonged. If a Russian Committee-member died or resigned, it was indicated that Moscow did not desire that the vacancy should be filled for the time being. Litvinov, though still at the head of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, did not attend the Council session of January 1939. On May 3rd, a few days before the date fixed for the next session, he was replaced by Viacheslav Molotov; and, contrary to the comforting assurances of the official press, this change of men was the signal that the policy which Stalin had followed hitherto was being reconsidered and might well be reversed.

## THE DRIFT FROM GENEVA

*The League without sanctions—European membership reduced by violence  
—The Pan American movement; the Lima Conference—Latin American  
withdrawals*

(OCTOBER 1938—AUGUST 1939)

EVER since the Japanese invasion of Manchuria had set on foot the first acute controversy on the problem of sanctions, there had been a certain number of writers on international affairs who argued that the League would be a stronger and better organization for peace if it gave up all threats of coercion against an aggressor and relied solely on publicity and moral pressure. This change had now taken place, not through any agreed decision, but as a result of the defeats inflicted on the League by Japan and Italy. It had been confirmed and defined by the majority of Members during the 1938 Assembly. They did not, indeed, admit that it was a desirable change. On the contrary, they protested that the Covenant system was still the best, and that they had been compelled to abandon it against their will. Nevertheless, once the new situation had been accepted, many delegates began to emphasize the opinion that the League could still play its full part in all other aspects of international life, and might even do so the more effectively in so far as it no longer attempted to impose its own system of peace and justice on States which rejected its authority.

Even to long-standing believers in the Covenant such a view was undeniably attractive. It offered consolation for their defeat and a new hope for the future. It had the special advantage of being in exact harmony with the policy of the United States, which, while remaining as far aloof as ever from participation in the political responsibilities of the Council, was sharing with zeal in all the economic and social agencies, and displaying in general a growing cordiality towards the League as a whole. But it carried no real conviction to their minds. They had always held that the simple doctrine of collective action against war was the basic foundation of the League; that all its other functions, political, legal, economic, financial, or social, were bound up with its function as the guardian of peace, not merely by formal administrative connexions, but by the deep interfusion of their essential nature. They believed that all these activities derived their vital force from the fact that they were a part of the structure in which the peoples of the world had once em-

bodied their longing for peace and security. Now that source of energy had been dried up; and even on the supposition, which few reasonable men could accept, that world peace might still be maintained for a long period, they looked upon the various agencies of the League as doomed to a gradual process of separation, weakness, and failure.

The period of less than a year which elapsed between the close of the Assembly and the outbreak of the Second World War, was far too short to provide conclusive evidence as to which of these two contrary views was the right one; nor in any case could such evidence be drawn from the events of a year studded with so many acts of violence and terror. The activities of the League proceeded on what might, on a superficial view, have seemed almost a normal rhythm. The powers and duties entrusted to the Council by hundreds of treaties and agreements were, formally at least, unchanged. But signs of decay and dissolution were not lacking. Though the total of the League budget had been considerably reduced, Members were becoming reluctant to pay their share. The Secretariat had to cut down its staff; problems of compensation and reorganization began to take up a proportion of the time which had been devoted to constructive international work. The chief Foreign Ministers either ceased to attend the Council, or departed after the first or second day, leaving officials of secondary rank to occupy their places. It was growing harder to arrange meetings of conferences and committees. Some proposals on which a general agreement among League Members was already assured, could not be carried through to formal conventions because the Axis countries refused to attend a conference prepared by the League, and others were unwilling to proceed without them.

Meanwhile the decline of the League was marked by a reduction of its membership both in Europe and America—in Europe through violence, in America through the growing detachment of the Western Hemisphere from the dangerous contagions of European strife. Both processes had begun before the crisis of Munich. On the European side, Austrian membership had been liquidated in March 1938: Czechoslovakia and Albania disappeared a year later from the category of independent States.<sup>1</sup> In April 1939 Hungary, held half unwillingly in the Axis grasp, notified with evident reluctance her withdrawal from the League. In May, Franco's government in Spain made the same decision with evident satisfaction.

The movement in Latin America was of a different character. It was the consequence of no act of force: it was not even encouraged, as it

<sup>1</sup> Czechoslovakia was treated as a Member after a government in exile had been formed during the war; and a Czechoslovak delegation took its place in the last Assembly of April 1946. Austria also claimed, at that Assembly, to be still a Member; but the Austrian delegates were admitted only as observers. No communication was received from Albania.

might have been in earlier years, by the influence of the United States. It was, like the movement of the smaller democracies back to neutrality, a natural consequence of loss of confidence in the League's capacity to prevent aggression by the great powers. It was also, to a considerable degree, a consequence of the strong and conflicting emotions aroused in America, as in Europe, by the Spanish war. Except in Mexico and Colombia, the ruling elements in the Latin American States were on the whole strongly on the side of Franco. To their way of thinking, the Council and Assembly of the League were too friendly to the Spanish government: the denunciations of Geneva as being under the control of Moscow, which were tirelessly repeated by the Axis propagandists, found ready hearers among their diplomatic representatives in Europe, and coloured to an increasing degree their views about the League. Their natural desire to keep clear of European dangers was reinforced by the consideration that, if war broke out and the democracies called on them to fulfil the pledges of the Covenant, they might find themselves acting in concert with the Soviet government against those of Italy and Germany. They disliked the Nazis, but they detested the Soviet; they might entertain friendly sentiments for Britain, France, and the smaller democracies, but with the gradual disintegration of the League these sentiments ceased to carry with them any quality of political solidarity.

Part of the vitality and strength which were slowly drained from the veins of the League was flowing into the veins of the Pan American Union. In spite of all attempts at fraternization, there had been a certain rivalry between the two institutions, ever since the United States, having rejected the Covenant, had set itself to establish the Union as a regional organization for peace. This plan was contrary to the original purposes of the Union; it was contrary also to the wishes of the greater number of the Latin American Republics, who feared to find themselves helpless to resist the peaceful but overwhelming impact of the intellectual, financial, and military power of the United States. They had for this reason held the more firmly to the League. But they had no wish to oppose a categorical resistance to the advances of Washington. A change came over the scene as they became gradually convinced that the United States intended to treat them as equals, to exercise no undue pressure and to regard their security and prosperity as part of its own national interest. Many of them began to feel a new sense of confidence and pride in their own organization, and Washington exerted itself to the full to maintain this growing sentiment.

Enough hemispheric pride and prejudice were thus generated to produce a disastrous diversion of effort in dealing with the Chaco war, and the same thing might well have happened in the Leticia dispute but for



a series of fortunate chances. But the Latin American States were still far from being ready to convert the Pan American movement into a regional system of foreign policy. They did not wish to cut themselves off from Europe. While acknowledging the benefits received from the Monroe Doctrine, they distrusted its possible developments. Even after the failure of sanctions—and though their record in that respect was far from perfect, the sight of a backward State being wiped off the map in the name of duty to civilization was disquieting to several among them—there was no immediate change in their attitude towards the League. At the Pan American Conference held in Buenos Aires at the end of 1936, they still showed their preference for the League system over a regional security plan in which the leading role would inevitably be taken by the United States.

Between the meeting at Buenos Aires and the succeeding Conference at Lima in December 1938, the world had lived through two years of war in Spain, a year of war in China, the political breakdown of the League, a vast and general rearmament. In the American continent these had been years of tranquillity from the international point of view; they had even witnessed the ratification, after many vicissitudes, of the Treaty of Peace between Bolivia and Paraguay. Events in Europe were disturbing the internal unity and the economic prosperity of the American Republics: but their external peace was not yet openly threatened, and it was natural that their principal object was now to keep the danger of war as far away as possible from the shores of the Western Hemisphere. In such a conception of security the League could be of no service.

The real issue at the Lima Conference was, therefore, no longer whether the Latin American States as a whole preferred the world-wide system of the League to the specifically American organization, but how far they were now prepared to define and strengthen the American organization. The United States desired the Conference to lay down binding obligations, the effect of which would be to establish a common front against any threat of aggression from Europe or Asia. Argentina was still hostile to such a plan: her opposition was enough to prevent the making of any treaty, but she was induced to join in solemn declarations which went far to meet the plans of Roosevelt and Hull. The diplomatic, commercial, and propaganda agents of Germany and Italy were openly campaigning against the United States; and they were not without powerful support in many countries of South America. But on the whole their activities served the purposes of Roosevelt rather than those of Hitler and Mussolini. They emphasized the contrast between totalitarian methods and the attitude of the good neighbour; and they illustrated the

truth of Roosevelt's warning: 'Let no-one imagine that this Hemisphere will not be attacked.'<sup>1</sup>

The Latin American States continued to value and support the work which the League was carrying on for the improvement of economic and social conditions, and for intellectual co-operation. Several amongst them, wishing for expert advice on public finance, public health, nutrition, labour conditions, and other similar problems, addressed themselves to the League organizations: they had confidence that the advice given would be disinterested, and there was nothing wounding to their self-respect in applying to a world-wide organization of which they were Members, as there might have been in applying to a single country more advanced in such matters than themselves. But these considerations did not strengthen in any way their political relations with the League. In the economic and social work of the League the United States was playing a major part, and Brazil a part at least proportionate to her importance and resources. These powers were admitted to a full share in the material advantages of membership, yet absolved from whatever political difficulties the Members might have to face. And as the difficulties became more manifest, so did the attractions of this fortunate combination of detachment and of privilege. When Chile notified her resignation in April 1938, Venezuela in July 1938, and Peru in April 1939, it was specifically stated by Chile and Peru, and implied by Venezuela, that they intended to maintain co-operation with the economic and social organs of the League. They kept up their connexion with the International Labour Office and with the Court of Justice. But of the twenty Latin American Republics which had belonged to the League either as original Members or through later adhesion, only ten—Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay—were still in full membership in the summer of 1939.

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Chicago, October 5th, 1937.

## THE APPROACH OF WAR

*The last sessions of the Council—Spanish affairs—The Aaland Islands  
—Burckhardt at Danzig—The last days of the Free City—The Anglo-  
Polish guarantee—Anglo-French negotiations with Russia*

(OCTOBER 1938—AUGUST 1939)

THE Council maintained its regular sessions till the last. It met in October 1938, in January and May 1939, on its appointed dates. It still had work to do. True, a sense of fatality, of impending change, of embarrassment, of haste hung over the meetings. Yet they had to deal with questions which at any other time would have seemed to be of great interest and importance. Nor could the chief Members, for all their desire to do so, entirely prevent the major problems from being evoked at the Council table. Czechoslovakia, indeed, was scarcely mentioned: those who insisted in keeping the Czechoslovak-German conflict away from the League were completely successful in that aim from first to last. But China still came forward at every meeting to demand that her fellow Members should help her and cease to help Japan. And Republican Spain was not yet silenced, though the total victory of Franco and his allies was not far off.

The demands of the Spanish government were moderate enough. It had never asked for aid in carrying on the war. It now no longer asked that Italy and Germany should be prevented from aiding its enemies, nor even that it should be permitted to buy arms: not that it had any less need of these things, but that it had given up any hope of securing them. But Negrín and his colleagues had decided to withdraw and send away all foreign volunteers fighting in their armies: and they asked the Assembly (September 21st, 1938) to send impartial observers to satisfy themselves on the spot that this decision was being honestly and completely executed. They asked also for assistance in feeding the millions of refugees who had fled before Franco's advance. The territories still held by the government had to support an ever-growing population with ever-shrinking resources; and the morale of Madrid, Valencia, and Barcelona, which had been proof against constant air attacks and all the other miseries of war, was beginning to be affected by famine.

Though all delegates professed their appreciation of the decision of the Spanish government to send away the foreign volunteers, the request for a League commission to verify the operation met with a good

deal of resistance. Not only their open enemies, such as Poland and Portugal, but also the British delegation, would have preferred that this task should be entrusted to the Non-Intervention Committee. But the Spaniards were absolutely determined that the action which they had taken of their own free will should not be subjected to the authority of a body which they believed to be dominated by the representatives of Mussolini and Hitler, and in whose good will and good faith they had no confidence. Their protest was supported by the rank and file of the Assembly: the British withdrew their opposition, and the question was sent to the Council, of which neither Poland nor Portugal was at this time a Member. The Council having agreed to the Spanish request, a Commission of some fifteen officers from ten different countries, with the Finnish General Jalandar at its head, was rapidly constituted. Three months later, after long and careful investigation, it reported that the withdrawal was complete and that the Spanish government had dealt loyally and sincerely with the Commission. Its report could not but be endorsed by the Council in spite of the evident reluctance of some of its Members to incur the disapproval of Mussolini. But neither the authoritative evidence of the Commission, nor its acceptance by the Council, could prevent the supporters of Franco from describing the withdrawal as a fraud.

As for the starving refugees, the Secretariat sent two men of experience in dealing with famine, Sir Denys Bray and Lawrence Webster, to ascertain the facts. They reported that the need was desperate: and, like the military Commission, they bore witness to the efficiency of the Spanish authorities as well as to the generosity of the people, who shared their scanty rations equally with the refugees from other parts of Spain. Some help was given by the French and British governments, by the American Red Cross, and other charitable organizations. But it was only a fraction of what was needed. As the winter passed, the situation of Catalonia grew swiftly worse. Late in December Franco and his Italian generals launched their decisive attack. It was actually in progress when the Council, at its January session, was receiving the reports of General Jalandar and Sir Denys Bray. A few weeks later, the long and cruel struggle in Spain came to its unhappy close. Franco was henceforth the ruler; his government was rapidly recognized as such by those countries which had not already done so, and their example was followed by the Secretariat. The use which he made of his victory is not the concern of this history. As regards the League, it was only to be expected that he should look on it with detestation, and that he should in due course give satisfaction to his Fascist and Nazi allies by announcing, on May 9th, 1939, the withdrawal of Spain.

Between the session of January and that of May, events of far-reaching importance had taken place. Spain was under a Fascist dictator and had withdrawn from the League. Hitler and Mussolini, freed from the long anxiety and heavy expenditure imposed upon them by the unexpectedly obstinate resistance of the Spanish government, had thrown off all constraint. On March 15th Germany and Hungary partitioned Czechoslovakia. On April 8th Italy annexed Albania. The orchestra of Goebbels was turned eastward, no longer against Russia but against Poland.

These events found but little echo at the Council table. The Spanish Republicans were silenced at last. Protests were received from Beneš, now an exile in the United States, and from King Zog, who had taken refuge in Turkey from the Italian invaders. But no Member suggested that the fate of either Czechoslovakia or Albania should be discussed by the Council. Since the last session, Britain had undertaken far-reaching commitments to Poland, Roumania, and Greece; and Halifax volunteered a public statement concerning the policy which his government had been forced by recent circumstances to adopt. It was, he declared, evident, to his deep regret, that the League could no longer be asked to play any part in the new efforts to re-establish security and peace. But the British government still believed in the ideals of the Covenant. The economic and social work of the League was still of value. And its great purpose, the pursuit of peace, would not fade or die, though it might be necessary to change the methods by which that purpose was translated into practice. Bonnet followed with similar declarations on behalf of France. And both added a brief reference to their negotiations with Moscow.

One problem of some importance was discussed at this session. The regime of the Aaland Islands had been the first serious political question laid before the Council: it was now, by coincidence, the last such question discussed at Geneva before the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1920 the Council had settled an acute quarrel between Finland and Sweden by deciding that the Islands should belong to the former; at the same time, in view of their strategic importance as commanding both the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia, it laid down that they should be completely demilitarized. Now Finland and Sweden had jointly come to feel that for their security they must be allowed to fortify the Islands, lest they fall into the hands of some other power, that is to say, either of Germany or of Russia; and they asked for the approval of the Council. They had requested the consent of all the signatories to the Convention in which the rule of demilitarization had been embodied, and also of Russia, which, though politically and strategically concerned

with the question, had not in 1921 been invited to sign the Convention. All the signatories had agreed: but the Soviet government had waited four months without replying and had then demanded more information on various aspects of their plans. Maisky, the Russian Ambassador in London, who was presiding over the Council, was instructed to secure the postponement of the question until a later session. Though he could not say so openly, Russia was considering the probability of finding herself at war with Germany, and the possibility that in such a case Finland would not remain neutral. The fact that Sweden was acting in partnership with Finland on the Aaland Islands question appeared to increase her suspicions, though to the rest of the world it was a clear proof that both countries were sincere in affirming that their joint purpose was precisely to ensure respect for their neutrality. Maisky was able to prevent any formal resolution, but not to prevent discussions, both secret and public, which showed that the rest of the Council would have readily given their consent. The delegates of Finland and Sweden reacted with vigour: they observed that Council approval had been requested as an act of courtesy, but was not legally required. All the signatories of the Convention had agreed to their plan, and they would now proceed to execute it. However, when Sandler returned to Stockholm, more prudent counsels prevailed, and his government decided to take no action until the question had been further discussed with the Russians.

Thus closed the hundred-and-fifth session of the Council of the League of Nations. Its members separated expecting, or at least hoping, to open their next session on September 8th, the Assembly being fixed for September 11th. But on September 1st the Germans invaded Poland: on September 3rd Britain and France declared war on Germany. Except for one strange, unnatural, almost unreal episode, the Council was not destined to meet again.

Before the May session of the Council, it was already clear that in Hitler's eyes the policy of good relations with Poland had served its turn. He was making the first moves in the campaign for the restoration of Germany's eastern frontier, on which the hopes of every German had been fixed for twenty years. His own ambitions went far beyond restoration; and it must have been his conviction, as it was certainly his desire, that this time the German army and air force would come into action. But a process of political preparation was first required. The treatment of the German minority would again be a useful subject for propaganda. Since the German-Polish agreement of 1934, Poland's German subjects in Poznan, Pomorze, and Silesia had, under orders from Berlin, ceased

the massive stream of complaints which they had previously poured out before the Council. This fact was doubly convenient for German policy. It helped for the time being to convince the Poles of the political value of being on friendly terms with the Nazis; at the same time it cleared the ground for a sudden outbreak of violent and exaggerated accusations, which might be less effective if the complaints of the minority concerned had continued to be submitted to the scrutiny of the organs of the League.

An even better basis for insisting on a revision of the territorial settlement in the east was provided by Danzig. Here was a purely German city, torn from the Fatherland, made to serve the economic interests of Poland, placed under a guarantee of the League, which used its position, not to assist the Free City but to intrigue against the Reich. It was evident that Danzig was to become, during the summer of 1939, the chief pretext for a conflict which might be the beginning of a new European war.

The German campaign against Poland thus centred round two questions, the treatment of the German minority, and the status of Danzig. Both were matters which the Polish government had the right and indeed the duty to submit for judgement to the League. But the cunning of Hitler had been in perfect harmony with the pride of Beck and his colleagues. Poland had accepted the German suggestions that these questions should, in future, be settled by direct discussion between the two States. She had ostentatiously displayed her satisfaction in having cut free from the shackles of her treaty obligations. She considered it beneath her dignity to be called upon to justify her treatment of her minorities before the Council of the League, or to have to appeal to the League High Commissioner to protect her rights in Danzig. A great power, in Beck's philosophy, should reach understanding by direct negotiation with its equals, and should impose its will upon those weaker than itself. In March 1938, by the threat of military action, he had forced Lithuania to resume diplomatic relations. In Czechoslovakia's hour of bitterness he had organized a propaganda campaign about the sufferings of the Polish minority in Teschen, and had followed it up by issuing an ultimatum to Prague and concentrating Polish troops on the frontier. The government of Colonels had vied with Hitler and Mussolini in its contempt for the League. Beck's substitute in the Council had opposed every constructive suggestion, and taken pains to be seen reading the newspaper while Halifax and Litvinov were speaking. It had made its full contribution to the deterioration of the general situation of Europe, and in particular to the destruction of the League's power to prevent aggression. Under the imminent German threat, which all the world

except the Polish government itself had been expecting, there could be no question for that government of any sort of appeal to the League. The German minority being prevented by Berlin from sending petitions to Geneva, and the Polish attitude being one of detachment, this question was kept entirely away from the consideration of the Council. As for Danzig, although the League High Commissioner still remained at his post, it was more often from the German than from the Polish side that any attempt was made to call on his services.

When, in February 1937, Carl Burckhardt had taken up his office in Danzig, the connexions between the League and the Free City had nothing left of their original character and purpose. The main function of the High Commissioner had been to settle disputes between Poland and Danzig: and the two governments now preferred to settle them direct, or else to leave them unsettled. His secondary function had been to watch over the constitutional life of the Free City: and in spite of Lester's persistent struggle, the Constitution had by that time practically ceased to exist, and the Council had tacitly abandoned all effort to insist upon its being respected. The Council itself, and Eden, its rapporteur, in particular, would have preferred to admit openly that the Statute of Danzig as laid down in the Peace Treaty had lost all validity, and to leave to Poland and Germany the full responsibility for the situation which they had themselves created. But this would mean that the two countries must either bind themselves by a new agreement, or decide the issue by force: and neither was at that time ready to face the dilemma. In consequence, the Council reluctantly consented to maintain the pretence of being still the guardian of the external and internal peace of the Free City, and to appoint a new High Commissioner. All concerned knew that the latter would be from the first in a false position, neither exercising the functions, nor possessing the powers, which nominally belonged to his office.

Thanks, however, to his exceptional personal gifts, Burckhardt did in fact attain a certain degree of success in what appeared to be an impossible task. He had no longer any legal arguments to put forward—not that such arguments would have affected the actions of Förster, Greiser, and their masters in Berlin; for by the time he reached Danzig, the Nazi government had, by terrorist methods, secured a two-thirds majority in the Volkstag and could therefore alter the Constitution at its will. To appeal to the Council would only make matters worse. Burckhardt's relations with Geneva were conducted through the Council Committee, consisting of the British, French, and Swedish representatives. Their proceedings were secret; and throughout his tenure of office no question connected with Danzig appeared on the Council's agenda.



They did what they could to second his efforts through diplomatic action in Berlin. But whatever he was able to achieve was due above all to the personal influence which he established not only over the Nazis in Danzig but even in some degree over Hitler himself. He was criticized in many quarters for not forcing the Council to a public discussion of the many injustices which, in spite of all he could do, were inflicted by the Danzig Nazis on Liberals, Socialists, Communists, and Jews in the Free City. These criticisms were the sharper because Hitler always spoke of him with appreciation and respect. But Burckhardt deliberately judged (and the minorities in Danzig agreed with his judgement) that by open defiance of the Nazis he would only deprive himself of any power to influence them, and that the lot of their victims in Danzig would thereby be made worse and not better. And in fact he succeeded in dissuading the Nazi leaders from many of those acts of cruelty in which their colleagues in Germany freely indulged, and in saving a number of individual citizens who had incurred their hatred. Three times, during 1937 and 1938, it was officially announced that the anti-Jewish laws of Nuremberg were about to be applied in Danzig: three times he persuaded Hitler and Förster to postpone their action.

By the last weeks of 1938 Burckhardt was finding it more and more difficult to induce the Nazi chiefs to listen to the voice of reason. The Munich settlement redoubled their confidence in themselves and their contempt for the opinion of the democracies. In November a fresh wave of anti-Jewish savagery swept over the Reich. By strenuous efforts, Burckhardt halted it for a time at the Danzig frontier; but when he left Danzig for an official visit to Berlin, the promises made to him were broken, anti-Jewish riots were organized, and a part of the Nuremberg laws was introduced. For some weeks, in agreement with the Council Committee, he declined to return. But in March, as the signs multiplied that Danzig would be Hitler's next target, and as both Warsaw and Berlin asked that he should go back, it was considered right that he should do so. As long as it seemed possible that the Danzig question might be treated on its merits, and not as a mere pretext for an assault on Poland, the British and French were anxious that he should be ready to act as mediator. They were not contemplating any resort to the Council. They continued to hope that Germany and Poland might agree together as to the future status of Danzig; and they esteemed it fortunate that, through the accident of a League appointment, there was in the Free City a man who, perhaps alone in Europe, was equally liked and trusted by the Nazis and by themselves.

Throughout the agitated summer months of 1939 the High Commissioner worked with unruffled sagacity to prevent any explosion in

Danzig. If the solution of that question had been enough to save the peace, it is possible that it might have been found. Hitler's first proposals were not unreasonable, if they could have been taken as sincere. But they were accompanied by a press campaign reminiscent of that against Czechoslovakia: and they were treated as a minimum which did not admit of discussion. Further, the day on which they were put forward in a formal memorandum was March 21st, six days after Hitler's annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, and at the very moment when he was annexing Memel from Lithuania under threat of occupying the whole country. How could it be expected that Poland would trust his promises? Beck rejected his proposals, apparently on the flimsiest of reasons, really because he knew that they were only a first step towards more drastic demands. A month later Hitler denounced the German-Polish agreement of January 1934. From that time on, German propaganda harped continuously on the wrongs of Danzig, while Nazis on the spot created one incident after another, and openly prepared to recover the city by force.

For a moment it seemed possible that the conflict might be at least postponed. On July 19th Hitler himself confidentially notified Burckhardt that he did not intend to provoke a war over Danzig; that the question could wait for a year at least; and that in order to put an end to acrimonious correspondence, German complaints or claims would henceforth be made not to the Poles but to the High Commissioner. This surprising step lit a brief ray of hope in the mind both of Burckhardt and of the British government. Halifax urged the Poles to seize the chance, however slender it might be. But the sudden prospect that the High Commissioner might, after a long interval, become once more the effective mediator, quickly faded away. Beck was still convinced that he could achieve better results by addressing his protests and threats direct to the Senate of Danzig, and expressed the liveliest surprise that the German government should intervene at all in matters with which it had no legal concern. Whatever its purpose may have been, Hitler's move towards a relaxation of tension was soon reversed. The war of notes became sharper than ever.

In the climax of ferocious hatred against the Poles, which filled the German press and radio during the latter half of August, the question of Danzig receded into the background. More violent emotions could be stirred by uncontrolled stories of barbarities inflicted upon the German minority. But active provocation was maintained in the Free City. On August 23rd, the day on which the Russo-German Pact was signed in Moscow, the Constitution was dissolved and Förster was declared to be officially, what he had long been in fact, the ruler of Danzig. On

September 1st, to the sound of heavy gunfire from the harbour, where a German cruiser was shelling the small Polish garrison on the Westerplatte, Förster presented himself at the residence of the High Commissioner and informed him that Danzig was once more part of the German Reich.

The final rape of Czechoslovakia and the opening of the political campaign against Poland led the British government to a dramatic reversal of its foreign policy. It now (March 31st, 1939) offered to the States of Eastern Europe a guarantee of the most far-reaching character. Poland was assured that if she were engaged in hostilities with another European power owing to direct aggression by that power, or if she felt compelled to take up arms against a European power either because it was, directly or indirectly, threatening Polish independence, or because it was threatening the independence or neutrality of some other European State in such a way as to menace Polish security, she would receive immediate and full support from Britain.<sup>1</sup> France, already bound by treaty to come to Poland's help in case of a German attack, followed the British lead. During the next weeks similar guarantees were given to Greece and Roumania; and were offered to, and refused by, Yugoslavia. The treaty with Poland was accompanied by a secret agreement specifying that it applied only to the case of war with Germany and not to war with any other power.

The extent of the change which Hitler's aggressions had thus brought about in British policy will be evident when it is remembered that Britain had hitherto treated it as an axiom that she could accept no commitments in Eastern Europe save those of the Covenant. She had discouraged all endeavours to extend the Locarno guarantees to Germany's eastern frontiers. Repeated attempts made in Zaleski's time by the Poles themselves, and later by Barthou, Litvinov, Beneš, and others, to negotiate an Eastern Locarno or a pact of security in Eastern Europe, had always met with a warning from London that Britain could never be a party to such an agreement. Even as regards the obligations of the Covenant, there had always been reluctance to consider what these really meant, and a strong tendency to minimize them. Finally, at the 1938 Assembly, the British government had set the seal on its refusal to accept any automatic commitments by declaring that henceforth, even in cases of violation of the Covenant or aggression by a non-Member State, it reserved its full liberty of action.

<sup>1</sup> The above summary is taken from the treaty signed on August 25th, 1939, which the Prime Minister stated did not in any way alter, add to, or subtract from, the obligations already accepted.

The change of policy met with almost universal approval at home. But believers in the Covenant, though they could not but support the new decision, reflected bitterly on the contrast between what was now done and what had been left undone in the past; and doubted whether such precipitate methods could rebuild the structure of security which had been deliberately allowed to fall into ruins. It was useless to urge that the new crisis should be submitted to the League. Britain and Poland had been foremost in declaring that other Members could no longer count on them to join in resisting aggression in virtue of the obligations of the Covenant. How could they then, in their time of danger, expect such help from their fellow Members?

At the Council meeting of May 23rd, 1939, Halifax himself spoke of the obligations now undertaken as being 'in strict conformity with the spirit of the Covenant'. Such a statement could hardly bear investigation. The differences between the spirit of the Covenant and the Anglo-Polish agreement were profound and vital. The Covenant provided that any threat of war was a matter of concern to the whole League and must be submitted to its consideration. The parties to the Anglo-Polish agreement, devised to meet an acutely threatening situation, made no move to bring that situation before the Council or the Assembly. The Covenant laid down a clear programme whereby the rights and wrongs of any dispute should be examined, and made the question of economic and military resistance to aggression dependent upon a verdict in which the votes of the States concerned were not to be counted. The Anglo-Polish agreement left the decision on peace or war to the uncontrolled judgement of a single State. The Covenant was a pledge of common action by fifty States. The Anglo-Polish agreement made no appeal to the other Members of the League, and one party to it was at that time actually refusing to accept help from its neighbour, Russia, and declaring that it would not permit Russian troops to cross its frontiers even as part of a joint resistance to German attack. The agreement was doubtless, in the circumstances, a necessary expedient. But so far from being in the spirit of the Covenant, it was a pure and simple military alliance necessitated by the very fact that the Covenant had been destroyed.

Nevertheless, the new British policy embodied in the Anglo-Polish alliance and in the guarantees given to Greece and Roumania might, with better fortune, have proved a first step back to the Covenant. It was so regarded by Churchill, and by the Opposition parties in Parliament, less perhaps on its own merits than because they saw in it a confession of past errors. It was at least a reversal of the attitude which had led to the discarding of the League in order to propitiate the aggressive dictators. Chamberlain himself described it as constituting a new epoch

in British foreign policy, and as an act so momentous that it would have a chapter to itself in future histories.<sup>1</sup> Such language suggests that it was designed not only to stave off the threat of a German-Polish war, but to be the beginning of a new system of security in Europe. But it was too late to improvise. The plan failed in its first purpose; and its wider possibilities were never put to the test. It was intended to prevent Hitler from attacking Poland by convincing him that such an attack would mean war with Britain and France. During the next months the ambassadors of these powers in Berlin laboured constantly to make the Führer understand that this time their governments meant what they said. Their endeavours were doubly unsuccessful. Hitler was not effectively convinced; and, once he had insured himself against Russian opposition, he welcomed rather than shrank from the prospect of war against the Western democracies. To lead Germany in a new world war had become his fixed ambition. With the concentration of genius or of insanity, he had built up an unprecedented military power. It was hardly conceivable that such forces should be left unused. The vast rearmament accomplished by Germany, the immense counter-armaments announced by Britain and France, were probably enough in themselves to have destroyed all real possibility of a return to sanity and peace.

The British alliance with Poland was followed by a new approach to Moscow. This, too, was in striking contrast to the policy followed in recent years. From its entry into the League until the Munich agreement, the Russian government had urged, in the face of repeated rebuffs, that the only way to prevent a new war was to rebuild the League under the joint leadership of Britain, France, and Russia. But the offers of Litvinov in Geneva, and the advocacy of the opposition parties and of Churchill in London, had been met with ridicule and contempt. The makers of British and French policy had convinced themselves that the road to safety lay in making such concessions as might be needed to gain the friendship of Mussolini and the quiescence of Hitler. That policy, as they well knew, involved the sacrifice not only of the Covenant but of a common peace front with Russia. The sacrifice was made; but the recompense was withheld. It was now clear that the ambitions of the Axis powers far exceeded anything which the democracies could permit without a struggle. It was too late to return to the Covenant. Was it also too late to find a new ground on which they could establish a common front with the Soviet Union?

Few episodes in diplomatic history can exceed in dramatic interest the story of the long and fateful negotiations in Moscow. But it is only in

<sup>1</sup> Speech in House of Commons, April 3rd, 1939.

a negative sense, as being one more attempt to organize security outside the Covenant, that they can be considered as part of the history of the League. Halifax and Bonnet, as mentioned above, made brief statements on the subject at the Council table, adding that the results of the negotiations would in due course be communicated to their fellow Members. Indeed, it was generally believed that the chief object of the two Ministers in coming to Geneva at that time was to put the finishing touch to the expected Anglo-Franco-Russian agreement. It was Russia's turn to preside over the Council; and the meeting had been postponed for a week, at Molotov's request, in order to allow Potemkin, his Vice-Minister, to make the journey. But at the last minute Potemkin was kept in Moscow, and Maisky was sent to Geneva in his place. It was a first public indication that things were not going well. Maisky had nothing to say on Russian policy in response to the British and French declarations. In his presidential capacity he drily observed that the Council would note those declarations with interest, and called for the next item on the agenda.

The Anglo-French negotiators did indeed at one moment (May 27th, 1939) propose that the new agreement should take the form of a joint plan to bring Article 16 of the Covenant into immediate effect in case of any fresh act of aggression by Germany. The suggestion may have seemed to them a logical one: was it not exactly what the Soviet Union had been demanding as lately as the previous October? But an Article of the Covenant was not a mere diplomatic formula, which could be revived for a particular case after its main purpose had been rejected and abandoned. After all that had passed, the proposal could no longer make any appeal to Russia; and its only result was to start the European neutrals considering whether they had not better withdraw from the League altogether. But their alarms were soon quieted, as it became clear that London and Paris had dropped their suggestion. In truth it was no longer a question of reviving any part of the League system, but of finding an alternative policy. The negotiations with Moscow, like the Anglo-Polish treaty, were necessitated by the very fact that the League had been forsaken and destroyed. In their anxiety to propitiate the Axis powers, the French and British had forced the Russian government, against its will, into a position of isolation. It had not, before Munich, wished to be free from the commitments of collective security. But having had that freedom thrust upon it, it decided in the end to reject the approaches of the democracies and accept those of Hitler. A disastrous decision for itself and the world: but one for which the Russians do not bear all the responsibility.

## THE WAR YEARS

*Preparations for emergency—The first months—The Soviet-Finnish War  
and the exclusion of Russia—The Secretariat in wartime*

(1939-1945)

FOR months before the war started the permanent services of the League had been living in Geneva in the state of mind of a man in daily expectation of sentence of exile, or death. They continued to carry on the normal work of their various departments, conscious all the time that it might at any moment come to an abrupt and even a violent end. They drew up plans for future meetings and future studies, knowing only too well that probably their meetings would never be held and their studies would never be completed. At the same time they were taking certain precautions to meet the expected catastrophe. At the 1938 Assembly, the Secretary-General of the League and the Director of the International Labour Office were given power, once a state of emergency had been declared, to take all financial and administrative decisions after consultation, not with the Assembly itself as would normally be required, but with the Supervisory Commission, whose five members could be easily convened.

The Secretariat had made heavy cuts in its staff, partly owing to the general contraction of its work, partly because the Members pressed for a reduction in their contributions. Its position in Switzerland was also not free from embarrassments. Switzerland had indeed recovered her full status of neutrality while remaining a Member of the League. But Germany and Italy had both given her reasons for nervousness: they alternated their assurances of respect for her integrity with organized displays of bad temper. The Axis diplomatists were constantly ready to complain, protest, and threaten. The Swiss authorities were painfully anxious not to give either of their ill-conditioned neighbours any ground for suggesting that Swiss neutrality was not complete and impartial. They desired to do their duty by the League, even while taking no part themselves in any political decisions; and their duty clearly included giving full facilities to all League organs to carry out their functions at Geneva. But if it were ever necessary to choose between maintaining their neutrality and protecting the activity of the League, they were determined to maintain neutrality. If war came as a consequence of

German or Italian aggression against a Member of the League, and if that Member exercised its right of demanding a meeting of the Council or the Assembly, Switzerland would be in a highly uncomfortable position. Germany and Italy would certainly press her to forbid such a meeting on Swiss soil, and would accuse her, if she rejected their pressure, of un-neutral action. She was, therefore, unlikely to reject it, the more so since Swiss opinion, though strongly anti-Nazi, was still more strongly anti-Soviet, and had been much affected by the propaganda which accused the League of being at the service of Communism and revolution.

Avenol was well aware of this situation and desired that the Swiss government should not be involved in any embarrassment. He made ready, therefore, to transfer the Secretariat to France at short notice. Accommodation was secured at Vichy, a name which then carried no political significance; and elaborate plans were made to move all necessary staff and material without loss of time. But when the long-awaited crisis actually came, nothing happened which could cause any special discomfort to the Federal authorities.

Had the Covenant still been in force, the Western democracies would have had a clear right to call for the help of their fellow Members in resisting the German attack on Poland. But no proposal or suggestion to that effect was forthcoming: nor could it be expected, after the events of the past four years. The incorrigible Churchill could still, in January 1940, foreseeing the doom which overhung the European neutrals, ask whether they might not yet, with one spontaneous impulse, do their duty in accordance with the Covenant. But he was speaking only for himself. The one passionate desire of the smaller countries was to keep out of the war at all costs: and the governments in London and Paris, having themselves rejected the obligation to aid the victim of aggression, did not think of asking aid from others. On the contrary, they sincerely sympathized with those who clung to a precarious neutrality. When Hitler invaded Poland, the Council was about to meet; but the Poles, the British, and the French made no suggestion that it should concern itself with the German aggression. The French and British governments informed the Secretary-General of the fact that there existed a state of war between them and Germany: they referred to the obligations they had undertaken towards Poland, and to the Kellogg Pact, but not to the Covenant. From the Polish government nothing was heard until, two months later, the government in exile sent formal protests against the transfer of Vilna to Lithuania and against the German-Russian agreement for the division of Polish territory.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letters to the Secretary-General, dated October 23rd and 27th, 1939.



No request, therefore, was made that the League should leave Geneva. The forthcoming meetings of the Council and Assembly were postponed by general consent. The Secretariat underwent further reductions: many of its members were mobilized by their respective countries; others resigned, preferring in such uncertain and tragic times to return to their own homes. Those that remained found that they still had work to do. Though the motive power had been cut off, though the League had lost all vestige of interest for the public and for governments alike, so great a machine still took many months to run down. During the first seven months of the war an uneasy calm still hung over Western Europe; communications with Geneva were maintained, government offices continued to send their reports, treaties still came to be registered and published, the work of study and information was still carried on. Even the meetings of expert committees did not cease, though they became less frequent, were attended by fewer members, and lasted a shorter time than usual, because their members were in a hurry to get home again. In the last weeks of 1939, when Europe had already been three months at war, nearly all the important League Commissions held meetings in Geneva. The International Labour Office continued its activities almost on a pre-war level of intensity. And since all this could not be carried on without funds, a brief and formal meeting of the Budget Committee of the Assembly was convened early in December, in order to vote the budget for the following year.

It is likely that future historians will find a psychological explanation of the delusions which persisted in Geneva and elsewhere during the first months of the war. Everywhere there was a refusal to accept the fact that the existing foundations of national and international life had disappeared on September 1st. Europe had been living for six years on the edge of catastrophe. For two years there had been continuous crisis; and for six months, since Hitler's annexation of Bohemia and the Anglo-French guarantee to Poland, there had not been a day when men had not asked themselves whether they would be at war on the morrow. The armaments spiral was revolving at dizzy speed. After these long months of anxiety, war itself was almost a relief. There was little of the excitement, and nothing of the enthusiasm, which had marked the opening stages of other wars. On the Anglo-French side, in particular, men tried to think as little as possible about fighting. They were resolved to bear whatever ordeal was in store for them; they had no desire for a peace of compromise which could only bring back the nervous strain of the pre-war period. But they instinctively closed their eyes to the knowledge that a storm of unheard-of violence and destruction was about to burst. Modern war, in which the whole nation is

involved, produces in men's minds an abnormal condition. In Britain and France this abnormality, during the first months of the war, took the form of clinging so far as possible to the attitudes of peace. Among the countries then neutral the same delusions were prevalent. And the organs of the League shared them also.

In this situation of abnormal normality arose the last great political question with which the League was called upon to concern itself—the attack on Finland by Soviet Russia on November 30th, 1939. Negotiations between the two countries had been going on secretly for over a year, openly for several weeks. Russia demanded that Finland should cede or lease certain parts of her territory, the occupation of which the Russian Staff considered essential to Russian security. She offered other areas in exchange, larger but of no economic or strategic importance. Finland had yielded a large part of these demands, but two important points remained in dispute. In the first place the Finns refused to give a thirty-years' lease of the port of Hanko, which Russia wanted for a naval base. In the second place, being asked to cede a considerable belt of territory extending across the Isthmus of Karelia in the neighbourhood of Leningrad, they replied that this belt comprised their main frontier defences and could not be given up, though they offered to move the frontier back a few miles. Russia had made similar demands, during the previous month, on Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and these small States had yielded with as good a grace as they could. Finding that discussions with Finland brought them, in spite of small concessions on both sides, no nearer to achieving their main purposes, the Russians lost patience. They accused the Finns of firing across the frontier, and on this pretext, which convinced nobody, the Russian armies invaded Finland, while their bombers raided Helsinki and other Finnish towns. There had been no declaration of war. A Finnish Communist, Kuusinen, who had been an exile in Russia for twenty years, was proclaimed as head of the Democratic Republic of Finland. In that capacity he immediately signed a pact giving the Russians everything they had demanded. Thereafter, Molotov replied to Roosevelt's offer of mediation, as subsequently to the communications from the League, by claiming that Russia was not at war with Finland: on the contrary, she had established peaceful relations and full agreement with the legitimate government of that country. To the offer of the real government to resume negotiations, he returned no answer.

It did not at first sight appear probable that Finland would appeal to Geneva. If no move had been made to submit to the League the issues which had led to war between Germany and Poland, France, and

Britain, what result could be expected from its intervention in this new conflict? But the Soviet aggression had loosed a storm of anger from one end of the world to the other. All those States whose policy had been affected by fear and hatred of Communism denounced the perfidy of Stalin in language which none of them used about Hitler. In the United States and other neutral countries, whose democratic traditions made them hostile to Nazism and to Communism alike, there was intense sympathy with Finland—a land of free men, whose conduct had been honourable, who were counted as members of that Scandinavian community which possessed, and deserved, the respect of all democratic peoples. In France, and in the countries of the British Commonwealth, there was not only sympathy for Finland as a country unjustly attacked, but also deep resentment against Russia, not, in the main, on ideological grounds, but because of the moral and material support which she was giving to Germany. The gathering waves of indignation soon began to penetrate the backwater of Geneva. On December 2nd the Finnish government came to the conclusion that it could lose nothing, and might gain some advantage, by appealing to the League.

The Finnish appeal set in motion the one clear duty of a political nature assigned to the Secretary-General by the Covenant—that of convoking an immediate meeting of the Council when asked to do so by any Member of the League which found itself engaged in, or threatened by, war. Avenol therefore called the Council to meet on December 9th; the Assembly, to which Finland appealed at the same time, was convoked for December 11th. These dates were as early as the circumstances of the time allowed. During the week which elapsed before the meetings, Finland's resistance to her powerful assailant surprised the world in general, and the Russians in particular. In the greater war, the lull continued. All eyes, even in the belligerent countries, were turned on the Russo-Finnish conflict. Everywhere sympathy for Finland was growing: the desire to help her was keen, but the first care of each neutral was to keep out of the war. All those countries, from China to the Baltic, which had a common frontier with Russia, were afraid of offending her: the Scandinavians and other European neutrals were afraid of Russia, and still more afraid of saying or doing anything which could arouse the malevolence of Germany. France and Britain were not, at that time, inclined to give any lead. They rejoiced in Finland's resistance, which cut down Russia's ability to furnish Germany with food and raw materials; but they still shrank from action which might reinforce the uneasy partnership between the two. The Latin American Republics, however, were ready to be more

definite and outspoken than their fellow Members. Even before it was known that the Finns would ask for a meeting of the Assembly, messages of protest were arriving in Geneva from a number of Latin American capitals. Several of them demanded the expulsion of Russia from the League: Argentina and Uruguay announced that they would resign forthwith unless this were done.

The real reason for Russia's war against Finland was the fear lest that country might become an ally of Germany in an attack on the Soviet Union. The Russians believed that they could install a pro-Russian government and thereafter feel sure of Finnish neutrality. It was a crime and a blunder. In 1939 the Finns were firmly resolved to defend their neutrality. In 1941, as a consequence of Russia's preventive war, they willingly abandoned neutrality to join in Hitler's aggression against the Soviets. This fact was seized upon in Moscow as a proof that the Finns had lied when they protested, two years before, that they were determined to be neutral; just as the Russian aggression was seized upon by all her enemies as a proof that her support of collective security had been a fraud all along. Both judgements were superficial and unjust. They are clear examples of a form of argument seen only too often in the history of international relations—the argument of men who first create a situation and then proclaim that they were right to foretell it. So had the French pointed to Hitler's perfidies as a proof that they had been wise in refusing all confidence to the Weimar Republic. So had the Americans, after denying to the League the power and impartiality which only they could give it, congratulated themselves on their foresight in keeping out of an organization which they accused of partiality and weakness.

The Russian action was not an imperialist move: it was inspired by fear, not by greed. The outbreak of war on a great scale induced an abnormal mental condition both in peoples and governments, whether they were already belligerents or still trying to keep out. And if the attack on Finland was a manifestation of emotional unreason on the part of Russia, the reaction to it all over the world was almost equally marked by delusion. On the day when Germany, France, and the British Commonwealth became locked in a struggle for life or death, peace had been shattered over the whole surface of the globe. The Russo-Finnish war, like all the other wars which flamed up during the next five years, was in its essence a part of the general world war. Yet it was everywhere treated as an unexpected, isolated event. A great American paper, contrasting Russia's acts in December 1939 with her words at the time of Munich, could write: "The fundamentals of the European situation have not changed in fifteen months. What has changed is the position of the

Soviets vis-à-vis that situation.<sup>1</sup> During those fifteen months three European States had been destroyed by force; the three principal powers of Western Europe had entered upon the greatest of wars. What could be more unreal than to treat the Russo-Finnish war exactly as though no other war were going on, and as though the rules and principles of peace could be applied to it? Yet this was exactly the attitude adopted all over the world, symbolized by the appeal to the League, and illustrated by the whole treatment of the question in Geneva from first to last. While German and French troops were facing one another across the Rhine only 120 miles away, the Assembly met to discuss the war in Finland on the express understanding, imposed by the Swiss and accepted by their fellow Members, that nothing was to be said or done about the war in the West.

The Finns themselves had no particular wish to see Russia expelled from the League. They hoped, in the first place, that through the efforts of the Assembly the Soviet government might be persuaded to stop the war and resume negotiations; and, in the second place, if this should prove impossible, that the world-wide sympathy with their cause might take the form of military and economic assistance. The hope of peace quickly faded: the Russians refused to be represented at the meeting and claimed to have already reached complete agreement with the democratic government of Finland. The Assembly then proceeded to express its solemn condemnation of the Russian aggression. It avoided any reference to sanctions or to military support. But it called upon the Members of the League to give Finland all the material help they could, and charged the Secretary-General to organize their action. It further resolved that Russia had by her own action placed herself outside the Covenant, and called upon the Council to draw the appropriate conclusion. Later that day—December 14th, 1939—the Council met, and exercised, for the first and only time in its history, the power granted it under Article 16 to exclude from the League a Member which had violated the Covenant.

These decisions were unanimous in the formal sense: that is to say, no Member voted against them. But a considerable number abstained, some from fear of Russian resentment, others in their anxiety not to commit themselves to any decision which could bring them an inch closer towards actual contact with the war, whether in East or West. Of the fourteen Members of the Council, only seven actually voted for the exclusion of Russia—South Africa, Belgium, Bolivia, Britain, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, and France. The rest were absent or abstained from voting. In the Assembly also there were a number

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, editorial of December 9th, 1939.

of abstentions and reservations. However, League Members were in substantial agreement in their desire to give help to the hard-pressed Finnish nation. The Secretariat threw itself with energy into the task of organizing the collection of relief. It received from the Finnish government lists of the articles chiefly needed, and tried, not without success, to arrange for these to be provided by one or other of the States which had promised to help. During the next three months various countries notified the Secretary-General that they were sending, or were prepared to send, large amounts of food, clothing, medical supplies, and money. Some help was given by the United States, and much by the Scandinavian countries, but each shrank from any official action and preferred, therefore, to make no report to the League. Nor was the Secretariat concerned in the dispatch of war material, which was sent in considerable quantity by Sweden, South Africa, France, and Britain.

Meanwhile the Finns themselves were putting up against the overwhelming Russian power a resistance which ranks among the greatest deeds of free and brave peoples. But there could be only one end. At the beginning of March 1940, they were forced to sue for peace and to accept the Russian terms, which were not in the circumstances severe, though world opinion cried out against them. And the exertions of the League powers were therewith brought automatically to an end.

Those exertions had been far from negligible in extent. They did something to mitigate the sufferings of the Finnish people; but they never appeared likely to affect the course of the war. They have, none the less, a certain theoretical interest to a student of League history, since they represent the furthest step it ever took in the direction of bringing positive help to a Member which had been attacked in violation of the Covenant. The Covenant itself did not specifically require that such help should be given. Finland herself had preached, in season and out of season, the need to remedy this omission. She had succeeded in persuading her fellow Members to approve a convention to provide financial assistance to the victims of aggression; but their approval had not been translated into a binding engagement. In the case of Ethiopia, the question of positive assistance had never been seriously considered. In the case of China the Assembly had for the first time called on the Members of the League to give help to China, since they declined to consider applying sanctions to Japan. But no attempt was made to follow up this proposal. It was left to individual Members to act upon it if they felt inclined to do so; they were not asked to inform the League of their action, nor was any role assigned to the Secretary-General in this connexion. The resolution on Finland, whereby the Secretary-

General was authorized to stimulate and co-ordinate the assistance which governments might be ready to give, might in other circumstances have proved an important precedent and led to substantial development of the Covenant system.

One month after Finland's capitulation the storm broke in full violence on Western Europe, and all the dreams inspired by the long period of military inactivity were finally shattered. Denmark, Norway, Luxemburg, Holland, Belgium, and France, were defeated and occupied. Switzerland was under constant threat: the French and British consulates officially urged their compatriots to leave the country, and the Secretariat itself went so far as to send its archives to Vichy, only to bring them back a few days later. When Italy declared war on France and Britain (June 10th, 1940), Geneva was almost cut off from the free world. The only route left was through the unoccupied zone of France and then through Spain to Lisbon: a route which the Axis powers could, at any moment, bring completely under their control. It was evident that if any of the League agencies were to continue to function, they must escape from Switzerland.

In June, the University of Princeton, the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, and the Rockefeller Foundation, invited the Secretariat to move all its technical services to Princeton, where, with the help of other American institutions, the University was prepared to supply every necessary form of hospitality. The United States government was favourably disposed to the plan. Avenol, after some hesitation, accepted the invitation on behalf of the Economic, Financial, and Transit Department; and Alexander Loveday, its Director, with the main part of his staff, crossed the Atlantic in the late summer. That same autumn the League Treasury moved to London, where the Refugees Department was already established; and in the spring of 1941 the Section dealing with the Drug Traffic was officially invited to set up its office in Washington. As for the International Labour Organization, Winant decided to transfer not merely certain departments, but its main headquarters, to Montreal. For the duration of the war it carried on its work with energy on Canadian soil, leaving only a caretaking staff in its Geneva home.

Meanwhile, the process of dissolution went on apace. The springs of finance were rapidly drying up. By the end of 1940 the numbers of the Secretariat, including those in England and America, were reduced to no more than a hundred, less than a seventh of its normal complement. On August 31st Avenol resigned. His leadership of the Secretariat had been marred by grave faults, especially in the last years. He had not

kept himself free from the infection of ideological prejudice: his sympathy with the reactionary forces in his own country had made him less than half-hearted in regard to the League itself. The unenviable burden of his office devolved upon Seán Lester, who carried it courageously until the formal dissolution of the League.

With great good sense Lester confined his efforts to maintaining, so far as possible, the continuity of each of the technical and social services of the Secretariat, in such a way that their work could be restarted after the war with the minimum of loss and interruption. He received steadfast encouragement from London. He was able also to count upon the help of the Supervisory Commission, with Hambro at its head: its members met in Lisbon, in America or in London as the exigencies of war travel might dictate, and exerted themselves ungrudgingly to ensure the financing of the modest programme which they and Lester had drawn up. The budget was cut to a fraction of its former figure. Even so, very few Members continued to pay their contributions; almost the whole income of the League was supplied by Britain and the other Commonwealth Members, in spite of their war burdens. However, thanks to the skilful and prudent manner in which the financial affairs of the Secretariat had been conducted, it possessed large reserve funds. Thus a nucleus of officials was kept together in Geneva, which continued to be the headquarters of the Secretariat. The immense palace of the League was empty and silent, save for a small group of offices clustered round the Secretary-General's room, and a still smaller group in the Rockefeller Library.

While all other departments could do little more than preserve their records and a nucleus of their staff ready to restart their work if circumstances should make this possible, the Economic and Financial Section at Princeton was able to undertake labours of a more constructive character. Thanks to the generous support of American friends, this group of experts, besides keeping up its regular publications, produced an important series of studies on the vital questions of post-war reconstruction. Through Loveday and his colleagues, the Secretariat took an active part in the formation of the new international agencies which began to be organized in the closing stages of the war. The last dying exertions of the League thus merged almost imperceptibly into the prehistory of the United Nations.



## DEATH AND REBIRTH

*Rebirth of the League idea—The institutions of the United Nations  
developed from those of the League—The last Assembly*

(APRIL 1946)

MEANWHILE, the battle for the world's future was being fought out in English skies, beneath Atlantic waves, on the plains of Russia and the beaches of the Pacific. This was not the battle for the League: it may be that it was a battle that need never have been fought, if the betrayal of the Covenant had not opened the gates once again to isolationism, nationalism, rearmament, and war. Nevertheless, upon its outcome depended the possibility of attempting once more to establish an international system for the maintenance of peace. It was strange to see how, when the first overwhelming shocks had been sustained, and the victory of the democracies began to be more than a forlorn hope, public opinion throughout the English-speaking countries accepted almost as a matter of course that the first and most essential need, when the war was over, would be to rebuild, if possible upon better foundations, and if need be under a different name, the institutions of the League. For the first time there was a British Prime Minister who believed in the Covenant: for the first time an American President had the support of both great parties in declaring that the United States must henceforth take its full part in international life. Isolationists in both countries still had the same arguments at their command, the same sarcasms, the same appeals to national selfishness. But their opposition carried little weight; the great mass of opinion had never abandoned its belief in the general principles of the Covenant, and once it had found leaders who shared its convictions, the issue was no longer in doubt. Nothing can better illustrate the change than the attitude of Canada. During the life of the League, Canada's influence had regularly been on the side of cutting down the obligations of the Covenant. But it was with the assent of almost the whole nation that the Prime Minister declared, during the war, that the ideas of neutrality and isolation were a dangerous delusion, that the cause of freedom throughout the world was one and indivisible, and that Canada would do her full part in ensuring that there should always be preponderant power to protect the peace.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statements of May 30th, 1942, and August 8th, 1944, quoted in S. Mack Eastman, *Canada at Geneva* (Toronto, Ryerson, for Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1946), p. 108.

The Atlantic Charter, the United Nations Declaration, the Conferences of Moscow and Yalta, the Dumbarton Oaks meeting and the San Francisco Conference, belong to the records of the United Nations, not of the League. The men responsible for these acts preferred to think of themselves not as reviving the past but as planning the future. Nevertheless, the establishment of the United Nations throws a revealing illumination backward over the whole story of the life and death of the League of Nations.

Throughout its twenty years of existence the Covenant system had been attacked and ridiculed by nationalistic press organs, and by many individuals holding positions of power in the service of their countries. They had condemned it as an unrealistic appeal to the sentiment of the ignorant masses. They had frustrated its efforts, grudged its successes, and rejoiced in its failures; they had created doubt and confusion in the minds of many who had at first believed in it; and they had watched it go down to an inglorious defeat. And now the victorious nations showed themselves resolved to repeat the experiment. With some differences, indeed, but differences which were small compared with the resemblances, they set up once more a world-wide organization for collective security. In its purposes and principles, its institutions and its methods, the United Nations bears at every point the mark of the experience of the League. In judgements upon the records of the League and all that it did, this truth must be always borne in mind. Whatever the fortunes of the United Nations may be, the fact that, at the close of the Second World War, its establishment was desired and approved by the whole community of civilized peoples, must stand to future generations as a vindication of the men who planned the League, of the thousands who worked for it, of the many millions who placed in it their hopes of a peaceful and prosperous world.

Years must pass before it becomes possible to compare the development of the great directing organs of the United Nations, the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Secretariat, with the Assembly, Council, and Secretariat of the League. In the general aspects of their form, functions, and character, they of necessity followed closely the earlier models. But in the means at their disposal and the methods prescribed for their action, the draftsmen of Dumbarton Oaks introduced changes whose effect cannot yet be estimated. For the rest, as the new organizations took shape, each absorbed in one form or another, the functions, the plans, the records, and in many cases the staff, of the corresponding organ of the League. In the wider vision of a time of rebirth, and with the additional confidence, initiative, and resources supplied by the adhesion of the United States, most of the new agencies

were able to start their career on a scale which those of the League could never attain. But continuity remained unbroken. The International Labour Organization was maintained, and the Permanent Court re-established, with little change in their form and status. The Economic and Social Council in its form, its powers, and its purposes was modelled upon the plans made by the Bruce Committee during the last days of peace. Its subordinate economic and financial organizations took up, with new energy, the same problems with which their predecessors wrestled throughout the inter-war period. Its services kept up without interruption the records and the publications of the League's Economic Intelligence department. The Health Organization of the League developed into the World Health Organization, and the League's Nutrition Committee into the Food and Agriculture Organization. The Committee on Intellectual Co-operation became the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, with an annual budget equal to that which before the war supplied all the needs of the League, the International Labour Office, and the Permanent Court. The mandates system was replaced by trusteeship, and the Permanent Mandates Commission by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. A new International Refugees Organization took over the work of the High Commissioners of the League, and spent millions where its predecessors begged in vain for hundreds. The Drug Control services continued without change. The duty laid upon Members of the League to present all their international agreements for publication by the Secretariat, was accepted also by the Members of the United Nations, and the League Treaty Series was maintained without a break.

Two of the general activities of the League were, at least for the time being, left on one side—the organization of disarmament and the protection of minorities. The attempts of the League to bring about the limitation and control of armaments had been a long story of disunity and failure. Its endeavours to protect minorities in Europe had been partially successful, but they had been an embarrassment to some governments and an irritation to others. Both had been practically abandoned in Geneva well before the outbreak of war; and the delegates who at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco laid the foundations of the United Nations, shrank from reopening the old controversies. Yet even on these two subjects the Charter of the United Nations contains at least an indication of future action. With these partial exceptions every specific League function was revived in one form or another; and for every one the new agencies found a continuous thread leading back to the experience of their predecessors.

The Charter of the United Nations, signed at San Francisco on June 26th, 1945, came into force four months later. Meanwhile the Conference established a Preparatory Commission to set the wheels of the new Organization rolling, just as the Paris Conference had done after adopting the Covenant twenty-six years earlier. The Preparatory Commission met in London in September, and the Supervisory Commission, acting on behalf of the Members of the League, came to London to meet it. At that time no definite steps had yet been taken to bring the League's existence to a final and formal close. Forty-three States were still Members, including a few, such as Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland, which were not among the Members of the United Nations. It was clearly necessary that the obligations of the Covenant should be officially abrogated: that the functions attributed to the League by countless international agreements should be duly transferred to the new Organization; that final dispositions should be made regarding the material possessions of the League, its archives, its library, its buildings.

In the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations there was a strong tendency to allow all that concerned the League to sink as quickly as possible into oblivion. It was suggested that all that was necessary was to hold a meeting of the Assembly in London, at which the proposals of the Commission might be endorsed without discussion or delay. The Commission included representatives of almost all the States which were still Members of the League: the few Members not so included were sure to acquiesce in its conclusions, and could easily appoint delegates to record that acquiescence by a formal vote. This ungenerous proposal was thwarted by the British government. Ernest Bevin and Noel-Baker at the Foreign Office insisted that the Assembly should meet in its own home in Geneva, where its rules and traditions could be respected and its last decisions taken in dignity and tranquillity. A meeting in Geneva might be described, in the official jargon of the time, as serving no useful purpose. But it was a debt owed to history, to the past achievements of the League, to the memory of the men who had gathered there in other days.

Accordingly, on April 8th, 1946, the Assembly of the League met once more in the Palais des Nations. It was a quiet and business-like gathering. Few of the old delegates were there, but the greatest of them came, in his eighty-second year, to inspire the last Assembly as he had inspired the first. Others were Paul-Boncour, Noel-Baker, Hambro, who was elected President, Carton de Wiart and Bourquin for Belgium, Costa du Rels, the President of the Council, for Bolivia, Hume Wrong for Canada. All delegates were agreed on what they had to do, and that

it was best done without spending time in vain regrets. Cecil set the tone in a speech whose simple words showed little of the deep emotion which he actually felt. He spoke briefly of the hopes and purposes of the League, and of the true reasons of its defeat. But he claimed that the efforts of those who had founded it and shared in its work had not been lost, and that without them the new world organization could not have been established. The peoples had always understood: surely the governments must now have learnt their lesson. And he ended with words which represented the essential sentiment of the whole meeting: 'The League is dead, Long live the United Nations.'

There were many points of detail to be settled, and it was not until April 18th that all was ready for the final act. Before the last resolutions were taken the Assembly voiced its gratitude to Lester and formally nominated him as the third and last Secretary-General. Then it heard the spokesmen of the Permanent Court and of the International Labour Organization. Each of these great institutions, while independent in various respects, had been an integral part of the organization of the League. Each, happily, was destined to survive the League's dissolution. Each now came forward to bid hail and farewell to the Assembly. The President of the Court, Dr Guerrero of Salvador, had been elected President of the Court set up by the United Nations, which was being inaugurated on that very day. His message of farewell to the Assembly emphasized that the new Court was in all essentials the continuation of the old one; and that nothing could deprive the League of the honour of having created the first international Court, with all the progress in the realm of law which that event implied. For the International Labour Organization, the Chairman of the Governing Body came to acknowledge the help it had been given, and the generosity with which it had been treated, throughout its existence, by the Assembly, the Council, and the Secretariat.

And then the Assembly, having adopted a number of resolutions whereby the powers and functions of the League were transferred to the United Nations, which had already agreed to accept them; having settled all its financial obligations, and distributed its reserve funds among the Members which had supplied them; having handed over its Palace and its material possessions to the United Nations, and granted to the new Secretariat the full control of its Library and its Archives; declared, by the unanimous vote of the thirty-four Members there represented, that as from the day following, April 19th, 1946, the League of Nations should cease to exist.

# APPENDIX

## NOTE ON SOURCES

THE material consulted in the course of this work belongs to different categories.

1. The official publications of the League.

This immense mass of material covers practically all the direct work of the League, whose business was carried on to a very large extent in public. Even when meetings were held in private, the minutes and reports were usually published in full.

2. The archives of the Secretariat of the League.

The archives of the Secretariat contain little that was secret at the time, and nothing that need any longer be so considered. The records preserved at Geneva of secret sessions of the Council or other political organs are not complete. This is regrettable, but not of much moment from the historical point of view. As a general rule, such bodies resorted to secrecy, not in order to conceal their purposes, but to enable delegates who had arrived in Geneva with no clear intentions, and often with no great knowledge of the questions to be discussed, to hold a first exchange of views, hear the explanations of the Secretary-General, discover what questions were likely to be the subject of serious controversy, and thus prepare themselves for debate and decision in public. Such preliminary discussions were rarely of any great interest.

Where the discussion in secret meeting dealt with important political problems, the position taken by the various delegates is usually to be understood either from their public declarations at a later stage or from contemporary reports in the press.

Apart from matters which were confidential at the time, the Secretariat archives reward the careful searcher with much information on points of detail of small importance: they naturally contain also a large amount of memoranda and correspondence which help to explain the sequence of events.<sup>1</sup>

3. The contemporary press.

From 1921 to 1940, the Secretariat prepared each day a Press Review,

<sup>1</sup> I desire here to express my gratitude to the Director of the European Office of the United Nations, who allowed me to consult once again the familiar archives, and to the Heads of Section, who took endless pains to meet my requests. But I must also record a protest. The archives of the League are now the property of the United Nations. It will surely seem incredible in the future that this unique collection of 150,000 dossiers should not have been carefully kept and preserved as a whole. So far from this, considerable groups of files on various subjects have been taken from Geneva to New York. The Secretariat of the United Nations naturally needs from time to time to consult not only the printed records of the League, but also the unprinted contents of particular dossiers. But it would surely be possible to make copies or photostats as required. A collection so broken up will soon be past restoration. Much of it consists of perishable carbon copies. In many instances there will be no possibility of replacing lost pages or even of knowing when a particular note or document is missing.

containing extracts from the daily press of all the great, and most of the small, powers on the subject of the League. This Review, which sometimes runs to 40 or 50 roneoed pages a day, taken from the press of up to 20 different countries, is a valuable guide to the fluctuations of public opinion. Apart from the Press Review, two other sources of contemporary record deserve special mention: the Paris weekly *L'Europe Nouvelle* (1918-39) and the *Journal des Nations*, a brilliant, if violently controversial, daily paper published in Geneva from 1931 to 1938 under the inspiration of an Italian refugee, Carlos a'Prato.

4. Official records now in course of publication by certain governments.
5. Periodical contemporary surveys or studies of international affairs.

One more tribute must here be paid to the annual *Survey of International Affairs*, published in London by the Royal Institute of International Affairs. From 1928 a somewhat similar annual record, but limited to United States affairs, was issued by the New York Council on Foreign Relations. The annual series called *Problems of Peace*<sup>1</sup> is often enlightening; and the series of Special Studies brought out at intervals by the Geneva Information Centre—an unofficial body—has many papers of value.

6. Memoirs and biographies; and
7. Books, &c., on particular aspects of the constitution or the activities of the League, or on particular episodes in its history.

The number of these is very great, and I refrain from adding one more to the many lists which are to be found in books on contemporary history. I have mentioned a few books, for various reasons, in the text or in footnotes.

In regard to quotations or summaries of passages in the official records of the League, or of speeches by well-known statesmen, I have thought it better to give exact dates rather than references to the official publications: this method should enable the specialist to find the original without difficulty, and at the same time help to make the narrative clear to the ordinary student.

<sup>1</sup> London, Peace Book Co., 1925-38.





## INDEX

- Aaland Islands, 103-5, 791-2  
 Abyssinia, *see* Ethiopia  
 Adatci, Baron, 334, 472, 496; as Council member, 340; as Rapporteur on minority questions, 407; and plans for Palais des Nations, 417  
 Addis Ababa, Pact of, 398, 624 ff.  
 Adjournment, characteristic of League, 553-4  
 Ador, Gustave, 187  
 AFGHANISTAN, 355, 442, 511, 563, 650, 740  
 Aga Khan, 650  
 Aggression, definition of, 225-6, 228, 269-70, 273, 383, 386, 502, 547-8  
 Aghnides, Thanassis, 502  
 Agricultural Mortgage Credit Co., International, 457  
 Agriculture, International Institute of, 7, 523, 754  
 Agüero y Bethancourt, 259-60, 391  
 Air bombardment, prohibition of, 509-11, 547, 554  
 ALBANIA, 140, 158-61, 174 n., 511, 562, 728; admission to League, 123; conflict with Yugoslavia, 159-61; and Corfu affair, 244-5; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 656; annexed by Italy, 785, 791  
 Aldrovandi-Marescotti, Count, 482  
 Alexander (King of Yugoslavia), 599-600  
 Alexandretta, Sanjak of, 742-5  
 Aloisi, Baron, 742; at Disarmament Conference, 514-15; Rapporteur on Saar plebiscite, 589-97; and Yugoslav-Hungarian crisis, 604-5; and Stresa front, 609-12; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 630-82  
 Ambassadors, Conference of, 138, 210, 300; great powers and, 94; small powers and, 126-7, 248; and Polish-Lithuanian frontier, 142, 238; and Albanian frontiers, 159-61; and Corfu affair, 244-54; and Memel, 303-5  
 America, Latin, *see* Latin American States  
 Ames, Sir H., 79  
 Angell, Norman, 16, 706  
 Anglo-German Naval Agreement, 610, 613-14, 637  
 Anglo-Italian agreement (1938), 770-4  
 Anglo-Persian Oil Co., 571-3  
 Anglo-Polish alliance, 791, 797-9  
 Anschluss, 205, 451-2  
 Anti-Comintern Pact, 704, 768  
 Anzilotti, Dionisio, 44 n., 78  
 Arbitration, in nineteenth century, 9-10; at Hague Conferences, 12-14; in pre-Covenant studies, 19, 21, 27-8; Arbitration, Security, Disarmament, 228, 270-4, 369; *see also* Locarno, Permanent Court: Optional Clause, Protocol  
 Arbitration and Security Committee, 369, 380-4, 391  
 ARGENTINA, 229, 298, 323, 389, 393, 611, 638, 682, 788; quits First Assembly, 124; and Monroe Doctrine, 391; and Chaco war, 529-36; returns to League, 561-2; and entry of Russia, 581-3; at Pan American Conference (1938), 787; and Russo-Finnish war, 806  
 Armaments, embargo, *see* Chaco war, Italo-Ethiopian war; limitation of, *see* Disarmament; private manufacture of, 48, 218, 554-5, 706; traffic in, 58-9, 218, 528, 533, 554-5; *see also* Ethiopia  
 Armaments Commission, Permanent, 48, 63, 121, 171, 219, 224-5, 302, 362.  
 Armenia, 83-4, 109, 120, 123  
 Armenians, 189, 744  
 Askenazy, Simon, 108  
 Asquith, Herbert, 17, 18, 19, 242  
 Assembly, in plans for League, 28, 29; name, 37; first convocation of, 110; relations with Council, *see* Council; Salle de la Réformation, 114-15; organization of, 117-18; general debate in, 118-19, 250, 344, 700, 722; characteristics of, 127-8; controls budget, 132-3; including I.L.O. budget, 195-6; effectiveness or otherwise of resolutions of, 208-9; discusses Mandates and minorities, 210-13; Vice-Presidents of, 247 n.; new Assembly Hall, 300-1, 699-700; importance of procedure in, 582-3; Credentials Committee of, 689-90; as platform for economic and social questions, 758-9; *and passim*  
 Assyrians, 189, 308-9, 574-8  
 Astor, Lord, 754  
 Atlantic Charter, 233 n., 812  
 'Atmosphere of Geneva', 215, 296-7  
 Attolico, Bernardo, 78, 233, 419  
 AUSTRALIA, 34, 63, 181, 274, 336, 456, 715; and institution of mandates system, 58; criticizes budget, 129; opposes admission of Ethiopia, 258; and Optional Clause, 415; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 638, 649; and Sino-Japanese war, 735; proposes study of nutrition, 753; *see also* Commonwealth  
 AUSTRIA, 82, 138, 140, 174 n., 288, 335 n., 511, 549, 728, 768; admitted to I.L.O., 80; to League, 122; financial reconstruction of, 205-10; disarmament of, 301; offers Schönbrunn to League, 417; in Italian orbit, 432; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 649, 656-61; annexed by Germany, 770, 775; at last Assembly, 785 n.  
 Austro-German Customs Union, 450-2  
 Avenol, Joseph, 805, 809; mission to China,

- 332; becomes Secretary-General, 556-60; visit to Rome, 689; initiates Bruce Committee, 761; plans to move Secretariat, 802; resigns, 809-10
- Aviation, civil, 442, 505, 507, 554
- Axis, 698, 767-9, 785, 787, 799; formation of, 704; attacks on League, 704-6, 768, 782, 801-2; and Spanish war, 703, 722-30; and economic and social agencies, 757, 759-60; *see also* Anti-Comintern Pact
- Azcarate, Pablo de, 558
- Azerbaijan, 83-4, 123
- Badoglio, Marshal, 625, 666-81
- Balbo, Marshal, 512
- Baldwin, Stanley, 242; on Corfu affair, 254; and Ruhr occupation, 257; attitude to League, 283; on rearmament, 606; election pledges towards League, 666; and Hoare-Laval plan, 673
- Balfour, Arthur, 19, 87, 98-9, 109, 127, 223, 236; proposes Rapporteur system, 87; British representative in Council, 88; attitude to League, 88, 93, 147; opposes compulsory arbitration, 125; and Upper Silesia, 152, 155; at Washington Conference, 163; and Austrian reconstruction, 207-10; proposes increase in Council, 238; views on Geneva Protocol, 283-4
- Balkan Entente, 314, 553, 599, 649, 740
- Balkan States, 342, 599-600, 765; reconciliation among, 123, 314; and Art. 16, 779
- Baltic States, 355; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 226; support Covenant against Italy, 649; and 'reform' of Covenant, 716, 779
- Bandoeng, Conferences of, 750
- Barcelona, Conference of, 111, 143, 179, 398; candidate for Disarmament Conference, 443
- Barnes, George, 117
- Barthou, Louis, 797; at Genoa Conference, 165; at Disarmament Conference, 551-2; and entry of Russia, 580-4; assassination of, 599, 604
- Batalha Reis, Jayme, 33
- Beck, Josef, 616-17, 619, 696, 793-6
- Beclaerts van Blokland, Jkr., 315, 399-400
- Beer, George Louis, 57-8, 78
- BELGIUM, 136, 149, 163, 210, 252, 302, 519, 583, 715, 765, 772, 777, 807; asks that Brussels be seat of League, 36; Council membership, 38, 127, 319; and Intellectual Co-operation, 190; supports French views on disarmament, 221 ff.; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 226; and Ruhr occupation, 234-7; and Locarno Pacts, 288-92, 693-8; at Disarmament Conference, 504, 511; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 641, 649; and Art. 16, 779
- Bellegarde, Dantès, 212
- Benedict XV, Pope, 18, 19, 150
- Beneš, Eduard, 155, 320, 412, 442, 451, 511, 604, 611, 797; at First Assembly, 116; and Austrian reconstruction, 207; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 225; as member of Council, 259, 340; and Geneva Protocol, 272-5; and Minorities protection, 409-10; and Anglo-Persian Oil dispute, 573; president of 1935 Assembly, 647-71; and Sudeten complaints, 776; protest against German annexation, 791
- Bergson, Henri, 191-2
- Bernardes, Arturo, 325
- Bernstorff, Count J. H. von, 151, 363 ff., 440-1
- Bethmann Hollweg, Theobald von, 15, 23
- Bevin, Ernest, 814
- Black Sea Straits, *see* Straits
- Bliss, General, 269
- Blum, Léon, 683-8, 721
- BOLIVIA, 393, 718, 788, 807; *see also* Chaco
- Bonnet, Georges, 772-4, 777, 791, 800
- Bonnet, Henri, 192
- Bono, Marshal de, 624-5, 631, 640-1, 652-66
- Borah, Senator, 137, 387, 445; hostile to Covenant, 34, 72; and Permanent Court, 352, 565; Stimson's letter to, 488
- Borden, Sir R., 335, 439
- Boris (King of Bulgaria), 599
- Borodin, Mikhail, 329-30
- Bourgeois, Léon, 16 n., 98-9, 236; and plans for League, 22-3, 27-8; and drafting of Covenant, 33-8, 56, 61-3; presides over first Council, 86; Rapporteur on Vilna dispute, 106-9, 141; at First Assembly, 127; views on League, 147; and Upper Silesia, 152, 155; proposes increase in Council, 238; resignation, 299
- Bourquin, Maurice, 761, 814
- Branting, Hjalmar, 204; and Aaland Islands question, 104-5; at First Assembly, 116; in 'left-wing' group, 147; and Ruhr occupation, 235-7; and Saar government, 241-2; and Corfu, 247-53; Rapporteur on Mosul, 306-10
- Bray, Sir D., 790
- BRAZIL, 179, 182, 229, 275, 443; Council membership, 38, 127, 238; and Monroe doctrine, 56; sends Ambassador to Geneva, 298; claims permanent Council seat, 318-24; withdrawal from League, 324-5, 388-90; continues in I.L.O., &c., 196, 389-90, 788; and Chaco war, 529-32; and Leticia dispute, 537-9; and Assyrian settlement, 576
- Briand, Aristide, 165, 438, 449, 451, 460, 586; and Upper Silesia, 145-6, 155; and Geneva Protocol, 274-6, 284; attitude towards League, 275, 286, 339; and Locarno Pacts, 286-93; and German

- membership of League, 286, 317-27; French representative in Council, 299, 337-40; and Greco-Bulgar crisis, 312-14; and Locarno group, 341-6; and Kellogg Pact, 384; and Chaco conflict, 393-4; on minorities protection, 409; and European Union, 427, 430-4; and Sino-Japanese conflict, 475-81; last appearance at Council, 481-2
- Briand-Kellogg Pact, *see* Kellogg Pact
- BRITAIN, *passim*; plans for Covenant, 22-3; and Aaland Islands question, 104; and League budget, 134, 168, 378, 515-16, 810; and Albania, 160; and German membership, 203-5; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 226-7; and Saar government, 241-2; and entry of Ethiopia, 258; and Geneva Protocol, 276, 283-5; and Optional Clause, 284, 346, 414; and commitments in Eastern Europe, 284-5, 288-9, 797-9; in Mosul dispute, 305-10; on China and the League, 329-30; and Convention on Financial Assistance, 382; Anglo-Italian agreement, 396-8; and European Union, 432-4; Rapporteur on Danzig, 454, 794; and arms traffic convention, 555; dispute with Persia, 571-3; and Assyrians, 573-7; and International Force, 592-3; rearmament of, 606; Anglo-German Naval Agreement, 613-14; and 'reform' of League, 710-19, 778-81; and guarantees to Poland, 719, 791, 797-9; and Spanish war, 721-30, 774, 790; Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, 741; and German-Czechoslovak crisis, 775-7, 783; negotiations with Russia, 799-800; and Russo-Finnish war, 805-8; supports Secretariat in Second World War, 810; and last Assembly, 814; *see also* Disarmament, Economic Conference, Iraq, Italo-Ethiopian war, Kellogg Pact, Palestine, Permanent Court: Optional Clause, Sanctions
- Brockdorff-Rantzau, Count Ulrich von, 67-8, 167, 266, 279
- Brouckère, Louis de, 364, 379-80, 707
- Browne, Brigadier, 576-7
- Bruce, Stanley, 611; at Second Assembly, 151; and 'reform' of League, 680-1; as president of Council, 695; proposes Nine-Power Conference, 736; and study of nutrition, 752-3; proposes new economic and social organization, 759
- Bruce Committee, Report, 752 n., 761-2, 813
- Brüning, Heinrich, 437, 461, 503-7, 544
- Brussels, Financial Conference of, 89, 111-12, 423; First Assembly, 110; conference on Russian famine, 150; Nine-Power Conference of, 737
- Budget of the League, 110, 129-35, 418, 785; allocation between Members, 47, 134-5, 148; criticized by Britain, 134, 168, 378, 515-16; attacked by France, 259; Chinese debt, 130, 332; Brazilian contribution to, 390; Latin American Members and, 392; during Second World War, 803, 810
- Buero, Juan Antonio, 532, 558
- BULGARIA, 82, 175 n., 215, 239, 511, 553; admitted to League, 123; financial reconstruction of, 301; disarmament of, 301; Greco-Bulgar crisis, 294, 311-15; in Italian orbit, 432; relations with Yugoslavia, 599; *see also* Balkan States
- Burckhardt, Carl, 794-7
- Butler, Harold, 557, 761
- Caballero de Bedoya, Ramon, 525-6
- Cadogan, Sir A., 542, 557
- Calonder, Felix, 156-7
- CANADA, 233, 341, 584; and drafting of Covenant, 34; and Art. 10, 49, 258-9; at First Assembly, 117; and minorities protection, 175; and Geneva Protocol, 274-6; and Council membership, 335-6; and Optional Clause, 415; and Manchurian conflict, 493; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 649, 675; 'reform' of League, 710, 715, 781; and rebuilding of collective system, 811; *see also* Commonwealth
- Cantilo, José Maria, 589, 597, 611
- Capper, Senator, 386
- Carnegie Endowment, 349
- Carton de Wiart, Count, 814
- Castillo Nájera, Francisco, 534
- Cecil, Lord Robert, 31, 204, 283, 379, 415, 717; and League idea, 19; at Peace Conference, 27, 32-8, 49, 62-3; on Council membership, 45; at First Assembly, 117, 123-4; in 'left-wing' group, 147; and treaty registration, 149; and Albanian question, 160; and L. N. Union, 201; and reparation, 214; in Temporary Mixed Commission, 220 ff.; and Resolution XIV, 223-4; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 223 ff., 288; on Preparatory Commission, 364-70, 415, 440-4; and Saar government, 242-3; and Corfu affair, 247-53; on publicity in international business, 323; resigns from government, 344; and world disarmament campaign, 445; and Manchurian crisis, 473-85; and sanctions against Italy, 683; and International Peace Campaign, 706-7; at last Assembly, 814-15
- Chaco war, 131, 393-5, 525-36, 787; Chaco Commission of League, 531-3, Report of, 533; 'Neutral Commission', 395, 527-30; Peace Conference, 535-6
- Chamberlain, Sir Austen, 134, 356, 359, 402, 421, 435, 741, 752; and social work of League, 186; and Geneva Protocol, 283-5;

- and Locarno, 285-93; attends Council regularly, 290, 300, 337-40; attitude towards League, 299, 339-40; and Greco-Bulgar crisis, 312-14; and permanent seats for Spain and Poland, 317-18; and entry of Germany, 318-21; note to League on China, 330; and Locarno group, 341-6; on minorities protection, 408-9
- Chamberlain, Neville, and guarantee to Poland, 284, 797-9; election pledges on League, 666; calls for abandonment of sanctions against Italy, 683; letter to Mussolini, 729; on rearmament, 765; attitude to League, 769; and Anglo-Italian agreement, 770-3; and Anglo-Polish alliance, 797-9
- Chang Hsueh-liang, 468, 471 ff.
- Chardigny, Colonel, 107
- Chatterjee, Sir Atul, 456
- Chiang Kai-shek, 330-2, 471, 467-8, 731-3
- Chicherin, G. V., 95-6, 102, 150, 358; note on Vilna question, 142; at Genoa Conference, 165-7; and invitations to League meetings, 357; isolationist speech, 359
- Child Welfare Committee, 186-7, 585, 754
- CHILE, 341, 401, 611; and Geneva Protocol, 275; and Monroe Doctrine in Covenant, 391-2; and Chaco war, 529-36; and violation of Locarno Pact, 696-7; in committee on 'reform', 716; withdrawal from League, 716, 771; maintains connexion with economic and social work, &c., 788
- CHINA, 84, 323, 342, 373, 773; membership of Council, 127, 238, 259, 319, 331-2, 470; and contribution to League budget, 130, 332; and Washington Conference, 162-3; on Opium Committee, 184-5; relations with League, 328-34, 414; technical assistance by League, 331-4, 732, 738; at Disarmament Conference, 511, 553; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 650; opposes weakening of Covenant, 716, 779; and reconsideration of Treaties, 718; *see also* Shantung, Sino-Japanese war
- Chinda, Viscount, 23
- Christy, Dr C., 558-9
- Churchill, Winston, 430, 712, 798, 799, 802, 811
- Ciano, Galeazzo, 161 n., 488, 600, 685-90
- Cinema, International Institute of, 192
- Clemenceau, Georges, 30, 81, 409; attitude to League, 23, 36; negotiations with Wilson, 55; and International General Staff, 61-2; reply to German delegation on disarmament, 67; on League membership, 68
- Colban, Erik, 79, 140, 403 n.
- Colijn, Dr H., 457
- COLOMBIA, 716, 786, 788; *see also* Leticia
- Comert, Pierre, 79
- Commonwealth, British, Members of, 49, 68, 188, 293, 318, 392, 437, 463, 517, 546, 648, 714, 805; in anti-Covenant campaign in U.S., 71; and League budget, 130, 132, 192, 810; and Greco-Turkish war, 215; and disarmament, 221, 270; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 224, 227; and control of raw materials, 233; and Geneva Protocol, 283-4; and commitments in Eastern Europe, 288; and Council membership, 335-6; attitude to League, 346, 459; and Optional Clause, 415; and European Union, 433; at Disarmament Conference, 504, 553; and 'reform' of League, 780
- Communications and Transit Organization, 59, 89, 111, 143, 304, 363; First General Conference of (Barcelona), 143, Second, 179, 260, Third, 358, 425 n.; description of, 178-80; transition to United Nations, 180
- Communism, 30, 357, 583, 805; undermines Socialist Parties, 85; hostility to League, 202; in Axis campaign against League, 703-6; *see also* Anti-Comintern Pact, International: Third, Russia
- Communist Party, in China, 330, 492, 497, 731-2; in Germany, 156, 235, 265, 446, 461
- Concert of Europe, 7, 9, 342
- Coolidge, President, 270, 350 ff., 366-7
- Corfu, 244-55
- Costa du Rels, Adolfo, 525-6, 814
- COSTA RICA, 37, 122, 137, 325, 390-2, 443
- Cot, Pierre, 542, 706-7
- Council, in plans for League, 29; name, 37; composition of, 45-6, 237-8, 321 ff.; method of election, 46, 148, 259, 321 ff.—group system, 335; opening session, 81, 86; 'Elder Statesmen', 98-9; relations with Assembly, 110-12, 118-19, 122, 126-7, 489-90; Council Chamber (table), 246, 343, 490, 699-700; Foreign Ministers at, 290, 298, 299-300, 701, 785; fixed dates of sessions, 297-8, 435; presidency of, 311-12; semi-permanent Members, 323-4; and Locarno group, 341-2, 402; arrangements for urgent meetings, 378; and economic and social agencies, 424, 758; routine work in time of crisis, 566-7; *and passim*
- Covenant, drafting of, 27-39; supreme importance of, 40-1; summary of, 41-3; Articles of: full text, 43-61—Art. 1, 388—Art. 4, 318, 324—Art. 8, 218-19 (*see also* Disarmament)—Art. 9, 171 (*see also* Armaments Commission: Permanent)—Art. 10, 70-1, 123, 258-9, 717-18—Art. 11, 274, 315, 379-80, 462, 470, 477-8, 646, 781 (*see also* Preventive Action)—Art. 12, 246—Art. 15, 246-8, 252-3, 479, 487-94, 534-5, 538-9, 573, 631-2, 651 ff.—Art. 16, 292-3,

- 315, 355, 380-1, 530, 800, 807 (*see also* Sanctions)—Art. 17, 645—Art. 18, 149 (*see also* Treaty registration)—Art. 19, 717-18—Art. 23, 423, 591; 'gap' in, 52, 271; amendments to, 124-5, 134-5, 147-9; and Intellectual Co-operation, 190; and Kellogg Pact, 385-6, 462-3; 'reform' of, 680-1, 687-8, 709-19, 778-81; and Anglo-Polish Treaty, 798; *and passim*
- Cranborne, Lord, 717, 729, 750, 786
- Croatia, 599-601
- Crowdy, Dame Rachel, 79, 185
- CUBA, 788
- Cunha, Gastão da, 86, 98, 153-5
- Curtius, Dr Julius, 440, 456, 446-9, 451-2, 461
- Curzon, Lord, 86, 116, 215, 257
- Cushenden, Lord, 371, 381
- Customs formalities, Convention on, 260
- CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 82, 140, 174 n., 239, 320, 450, 584, 602, 638, 641, 789; and Austrian reconstruction, 206 ff.; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 226; membership of Council, 259; and Geneva Protocol, 275; and Locarno, 288, 292; at Disarmament Conference, 511; attacked by Germany, 770-1, 775-6, 777, 779, 782-3; German minority in, 775-6; at last Assembly, 785 n., *see also* Little Entente
- D'Abernon, Lord, 203, 281, 317 n.
- Dandurand, Senator, 276, 406-10
- Danube Commission, 7
- Danzig, 82, 111, 131, 616; League functions in, 90; questions for Council, 140, 301, 453-5; and Gdynia, 140, 454-5; guarantee of constitution, 617-21, 794; and German attack on Poland, 793-7
- Davis, J. W., 270
- Davis, Norman, 349, 473; and Memel problem, 303-5; at Disarmament Conference, 514-15, 546-53
- Dawes, General, 479
- Dawes Committee, 261-2, 277
- Delbos, Yves, 685-90, 728
- DENMARK, 210, 638, 641; and sanctions, 293; at Disarmament Conference, 511; and Stresa group, 611-12; *see also* Neutrals, Scandinavian States, Small powers
- De Valera, Eamon, 528, 582-5, 649
- Diamandy, Kramar, 33
- Disarmament, frequently, and 12, 14, 48, 61-2, 111, 143-5, 813; Assembly and, 120-1, 216, 361-2, 766; Temporary Mixed Commission, 144, 171, 220 ff., 362; Preparatory Commission, 171, 316, 343, 363-76, 440-2; gas, &c., warfare, 192, 365, 681; popular demand for, 217, 362, 373, 444-5, 502; in League proceedings (1920-4), 217-30—(1925-9), 361-76—(1930-2), 440-4; Moscow Conference on, 228-9; at fifth Pan American Conference, 229; naval meeting in Rome, 229-30; Disarmament Conference, 273, 299, 362, 442-4, 500-15, 541-55; Three-Power Naval Conference, 343, 366-8; Draft Convention on, 366, 369-76, 440-2, 500-1; international supervision of, 365-6, 441, 543; budgetary limitation, 366, 440, 442, 554
- Dmowski, Roman, 33
- Dollfuss, Engelbert, 604
- DOMINIGAN REPUBLIC, 37, 788, 807
- Dominions, *see* Commonwealth, Covenant: Art. 1
- Drugs, traffic in, *see* Opium
- Drummond, Sir Eric, 38, 39, 86, 129, 317, 332-3, 390, 434, 447, 502; plans for Secretariat, 75-9; and establishment at Geneva, 113-14; and Genoa Conference, 166; methods of work, 196; and Greco-Bulgar crisis, 311-12; and United States, 348-9, 482; and Chaco war, 393-4, 529; and Sino-Japanese war, 482, 487-8; and Leticia dispute, 539; resignation, and record, 556-9; *see also* Secretariat, Secretary-General
- Dumbarton Oaks, Conference of, 149 n., 812
- Ebert, President, 156, 286
- Economic Committee, 177-8, 363, 423, 426, 457, 749-51
- Economic Conference, World (1927), 291, 316, 357-8, 424, 425-7, 703 n.;—(1933), 517-22
- Economic and Financial Organization, 89, 111, 177-8, 522-3
- Economic and Social (Technical) Agencies, 42-3, 58-9, 73, 132, 166-7, 340, 343; importance of, 175-7; and withdrawal from League, 389-90, 497; and non-Members, 564; renaissance of, 749-62; transition to U.N., 813; *see also* Bruce Committee
- Economic depression, world, 424-5, 427 ff.
- Eckhardt, Tibor, 603-4
- ECUADOR, 393, 443, 563, 681-3, 695-7, 788
- Eden, Anthony, 551, 584, 607-8, 613, 636, 713, 743, 763; demands economy, 515; and arms embargo, 534; at Disarmament Conference, 542-4; and Liberia, 571; and International Force (Saar), 592; Rapporteur on Hungaro-Yugoslav crisis, 604-5; and on Danzig, 619-21, 794; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 629-91 frequently; Foreign Secretary, 673; and violation of Locarno, 696-8; and Spanish war, 728-9; resignation, 729-30, 768-9; and Egypt, 741
- Edwards, Agustín, 695, 716, 723, 771
- EGYPT, 289, 443, 739-40, 747, 807; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 663; Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and League membership, 701, 741

- Einstein, Albert, 191, 193  
 Epidemics, in Eastern Europe, 100-2  
 Esher, Lord, 220-1  
 Estigarribia, General, 532  
 ESTONIA, 82, 83, 123, 175 n., 804; *see also*  
   Baltic States  
 ETHIOPIA, and admission to League, 258;  
   and Anglo-Italian agreement, 396-8;  
   Italian sovereignty in, 686-7, 768, 770-3;  
   *see also* Italo-Ethiopian war  
 European Union, 415, 427; Commission of  
   Inquiry for, 433-4, 449, 457  
 Fabian Society, 22  
 Faisal (King of Iraq), 575  
 Fascism, *see* Italy, Mussolini  
 Fernandes, Raul, 116-17  
 Ferraris, Maggiorino, 86  
 Fethi Bey, 306-9  
 Financial Assistance to States Victims of  
   Aggression, 382, 439, 674, 710, 808  
 Financial Committee, 246, 262, 298, 363,  
   457, 585, 597, 749, 756; described, 177-8;  
   and reconstruction of Austria, Hungary,  
   &c., 206-10, 239, 301, 518; limitations on  
   work of, 423-4  
 FINLAND, 82, 140, 175 n., 226, 355, 401;  
   admission to League, 122; dispute with  
   Russia, 238-9; and financial assistance to  
   victims of aggression, 382; Russo-Finnish  
   war, 804-8; *see also* Aaland Islands,  
   Scandinavian States  
 Firuz, Prince, 103  
 Fisher, Herbert, 117, 160, 223  
 Fiume, 84, 254  
 Flandin, Étienne, 460, 608-9, 677-8, 694-6  
 Foch, Marshal, 36, 62, 121, 141  
 Foreigners, Convention on treatment of, 428  
 Förster, Albert, 617-20, 794-7  
 Fosdick, Raymond, 78  
 Foster, Sir George, 336  
 Four-Power Pact, 544-6  
 FRANCE, *passim*; and plans for Covenant,  
   22-3; and drafting of Covenant, 38, 49,  
   61-3; and amendments to Covenant,  
   148 n., 149; and Three-Power Naval Con-  
   ference, 367; and Upper Silesia, 153-5; and  
   admission of Germany, 124, 204, 260, 281,  
   and frequently; and refugees, 188; and  
   Intellectual Co-operation, 190-3; 'Service  
   Français de la S.D.N.', 197-8; and Treaty  
   of Mutual Assistance, 225-6; occupation  
   of Ruhr, 234-7; and Corfu crisis, 247-52;  
   and Geneva Protocol, 275; and Locarno  
   Pacts, 286-93, 693-8; and Eastern Europe,  
   286-8; and German armaments, 301-2,  
   488, 506-15, 541-2, 608 ff.; and Optional  
   Clause, 346 n., in Arbitration and Secu-  
   rity Committee, 380-3; and European  
   Union, 431-4; 415; and Anschluss, 450;  
   negative leadership of, 460; and Four-  
   Power Pact, 545-6; as mandatory for  
   Syria, 577, 742-5; and entry of Russia,  
   580; and Saar plebiscite, 590-5; and  
   Anglo-German Naval Agreement, 613-  
   14, 637; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 628-91;  
   and 'reform' of League, 709-19, 779-81;  
   and 'peaceful change', 718; and Spanish  
   war, 721-30, 774; and help for China,  
   738; and Alexandretta, 742-5; and Ger-  
   man-Czechoslovak crisis, 775-7, 783; and  
   guarantees to Poland, &c., 791, 797;  
   and negotiations with Russia, 799-800;  
   and Russo-Finnish war, 805-8  
 Franco, General, 723-7, 768, 785, 790  
 Franco-German Treaty of Commerce, 426  
 Franco-Russian Treaty, 693-6  
 Furugi, Mirza, 572  
 García Calderón, Francisco, 525-6, 537-40  
 Gaus, Friedrich, 355  
 Gdynia, 140, 454-5  
 General Act, 383-4, 439  
 Geneva, 139, 300, 443, 708; choice of, as  
   seat of League, 36-7, 417-18; establish-  
   ment in, 113-15; communications with,  
   378-9; *see also* 'Atmosphere of Geneva'  
 Genoa, Conference of, 164-7, 220  
 Georgia, 83-4, 123  
 GERMANY, *passim*; at Hague Conferences, 12,  
   13; and League idea, 23-4; at Peace Con-  
   ference, 67-8; German armaments, 67,  
   237, 281, 437, 440-1, 506-7, 512-15, 541-  
   52; League control of, 301-2 (*see also*  
   Disarmament); and membership of  
   League, 68, 124, 150-1, 164-8, 203-5, 260,  
   277-82; and I.L.O., 80, 565; and occupa-  
   tion of Duisburg, &c., 137-8; and Genoa  
   Conference, 164-8; minorities in, *see*  
   Upper Silesia; and Treaty of Mutual  
   Assistance, 226; and Locarno Pacts, 286-  
   93; and eastern frontier, 286-9, 446, 792;  
   admission to League, 316-27; and Op-  
   tional Clause, 346; and treaty to improve  
   means of preventing war, 381-2; rela-  
   tions with Poland, frequently, and 406-8,  
   437, 448-9; and Secretariat, 419-20,  
   557; and European Union, 432-4; Austro-  
   German Customs Union, 450-2; rearmam-  
   ent of, 542, 551, 607-8, 763; and  
   Four-Power Pact, 545; withdrawal from  
   League, 550, 565, 768; Anglo-German  
   Naval Treaty, 613-14; and Italo-Ethio-  
   pian war, 662-3; and separation of  
   Covenant from Treaties, 693, 711, 714;  
   and Spanish war, 721-30; and economic  
   and social work, 707; annexation of  
   Austria, 770; attack on Czechoslovakia,  
   770-1, 775-6, 777; attack on Poland,  
   792-7, 802; *see also* Axis, Danzig, Dis-  
   armament, Memel, Ruhr, Saar, Upper  
   Silesia

- Gibson, Hugh, 363 ff., 440, 503-9  
 Gilbert, Prentiss, 476-7  
 Goebbels, Joseph, 549, 565 n., 618  
 Gondra Pact, 393  
 Grandi, Dino, 449, 456; as Council member, 436; at Disarmament Conference, 503-12; and violation of Locarno, 679, 695-8; on Non-Intervention Committee, 725-9  
 Gravina, Count, 454-5  
 Graziani, General, 631, 674, 681  
 Grazynski, Michal, 448  
 Greco-Turkish war, 83, 111, 146, 214-15  
 GREECE, 140, 174 n., 239, 602, 797; on first Council, 38, 127; and admission of Bulgaria, 123; and Albania, 158-9; financial aid to, 239, 301; Greco-Bulgar crisis, 294, 311-15; *see also* Balkan States, Corfu  
 Greiser, Arthur, 618-21, 794  
 Grey, Sir Edward, 9, 15, 17, 86, 498; and League idea, 18, 19; and excessive armaments, 219, 766  
 Grimes, Louis, 569  
 Grotius, 5-6  
 Guani, Alberto, 248, 274  
 Guarantee, Treaties of (Franco-British, Franco-American), 55, 222  
 GUATEMALA, 525, 537, 720  
 Guerrero, Dr J. G., 815  
 Guinazu, Ruiz, 655, 680, 965  
 Haas, Robert, 179, 488  
 Hague Conferences, 22, 351; First, 12-13; Second, 13-14  
 Hague Conference on Codification of International Law, 416  
 Hague Conference on trade with Russia, 166  
 Haile Selassie, 258, 396-8, 623-86, 772-3  
 HAITI, 650, 684, 788  
 Haking, Sir R., 140  
 Halifax, Lord, 241, 796; Foreign Secretary, 769; and Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia, 770, 771-3; and Spanish war, 773-4; and Anglo-Polish alliance, 791, 798; and negotiations with Russia, 791, 800  
 Hambro, Carl, 761; and Assembly delegates, 421-2; and Secretariat, 556; in Supervisory Commission, 810; at last Assembly, 814  
 Hamel, Joost van, 79  
 Hankey, Sir Maurice, 75-6  
 Hanotaux, Gabriel, 117, 207, 242, 248  
 Harding, President, 115-16, 137-9, 350 ff.  
 Hardinge, Lord, 274-6  
 Harvey, Colonel, 137-8  
 Health Office, International, 7, 181-2  
 Health Organization, 59, 89, 111, 138, 164, 331, 390, 523; and epidemics in Eastern Europe, 101-2; description of, 180-3; Russian attitude to, 102, 164, 265, 585, 757; Rockefeller contribution to, 182; work on nutrition, 752-5; on housing, 756; transition to U.N., 183, 813  
 Henderson, Arthur, 449, 453, 569, 741; and Geneva Protocol, 274-6; at Tenth Assembly, 414-15; as Council member, 435-6—President, 447; on disarmament, 439; President of Disarmament Conference, 442, 501-15, 548-53; and Austro-German Customs Union, 451-2; and General Act, 456  
 Herriot, Edouard, 226, 262-7, 299, 542; and arbitration, 228; attitude to League, 264; and security, 266-7; and Geneva Protocol, 268-71; and disarmament, 445, 508-15; and International Peace Campaign, 706  
 Hertzog, General, 439  
 Hindenburg, President, 286-7, 461, 505-7  
 Hitler, Adolf, 260, 305, 432, 447, 505, and frequently; speeches, 547, 607, 693; and withdrawal from Disarmament Conference, 550; from League, 550; and Saar Plebiscite, 587-97; and German rearmament, 606-8; and Poland, 617, 620-1, 792-6; and Locarno, 692-8  
 Hoare, Sir Samuel, 613 n.; Foreign Secretary, 636, 673; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 646-73  
 Hoare-Laval Plan, 668-72, 674, 685, 692  
 Holland, *see* Netherlands  
 Honjo, General, 475  
 HONDURAS, 38, 393, 650, 720  
 Hoover, President, 69, 458, 530; and disarmament, 374-5, 508-10; and Manchuria, 473  
 House, Colonel, 31, 368, 514; and Covenant, 23, 32 ff., 49; and seat of League, 113  
 Housing Committee, 523, 756  
 Hugenberg, Alfred, 432  
 Hughes, Charles Evans, 69, 137, 270, 284; attitude to League, 69, 350-1; and Permanent Court, 352  
 Hughes, William, 151  
 Hull, Cordell, 720, 787; and Sino-Japanese war, 495, 734-5; attitude to League, 565, 736; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 639; and economic work of League, 760-1  
 HUNGARY, 82, 84, 174 n., 175, 239, 335 n., 728, 768, 791; admission to League, 150, 211; financial reconstruction of, 260-2; and Treaty revision, 288, 401, 604; and armaments, 301, 400-1; at Disarmament Conference, 511, 553; Szent-Gothard affair, 400-2; and minorities protection, 408, 459; satellite of Italy, 432; Hungaro-Yugoslav crisis, 599-605; and sanctions against Italy, 649, 656-61; and 'reform' of League, 779-81; withdrawal from League, 785

- Hurst, Sir Cecil, 32
- Hymans, Paul, 236, 248, 439; and drafting of Covenant, 33, 37 n., 45, 190; as member of Council, 86, 238; President of First Assembly, 116-17; of Special Assembly on Manchuria, 489; and Vilna, 142; and Upper Silesia, 153-5
- Imperiali, Marquis, 139, 207
- Import and Export Prohibitions Conference, 425 n., 426-9
- INDIA, 274; delegation to Assembly, 117, 414, 562; and League expenditure, 129, 192; on Opium Committee, 184-5; and Optional Clause, 415; and General Act, 456; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 650
- Inönü, President, 740
- Intellectual Co-operation, 190-4, 524, 754, 813
- Inter-Allied Organizations, 75
- International Associations, Union of, 190
- International Chamber of Commerce, 426
- International Force, proposed for League, 61-3, 444, 502-4; planned for Vilna, 109, 141-2; at Leticia, 538, 592 n.; in the Saar, 592-3
- International Labour Organization, 82, 110, 129 ff., 171, 186, 188-9, 291, 300, 363, 418, 597, 801, 803, 809, 813; in Covenant, 58-60; First Conference of, 79-80; Director, 80, 557, 761; and United States, 80, 196-7, 564; and Inquiry in Russia, 95-7; described, 194-7; and withdrawal from League, 389-90, 788; and Economic Conference of 1933, 518-19; and economic and social agencies of League, 523, 752-8; at last Assembly, 815
- International law, 5-6, 9-10; codification of, 415-16
- International Law Association, 8, 12
- International Peace Campaign, 202, 702, 706-8, 737
- International, Second, 8, 662-3, 667; Third, 667
- Internationalism, 7-8, 11-12
- Interparliamentary Union, 8, 13
- IRAN, *see* Persia
- IRAQ, 650, 740, 747; as mandated territory, 308-10, 449; and minorities, 175 n., 449; admission to League, 562-3, 573-4; and 'reform' of League, 715, 739; dispute with Persia, 741-2; *see also* Assyrians, Moslem States, Mosul
- IRELAND (IRISH FREE STATE), 274, 336, 525, 537, 575, 728, 814; admission to League, 258; and Optional Clause, 415; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 649
- Ishii, Viscount, 98, 246, 274-6, 321, 340, 496
- Italo-Ethiopian war, 608-9, 623-91
- ITALY, and League idea, 23; and First Assembly, 116; and raw materials, 116, 233; and Upper Silesia, 145, 153; and Albania, 158-9, 161; and Genoa Conference, 165-6; International Cinematograph Institute, 192; and help to Austria, 206-10; and disarmament, 221, 367, 440-1, 443; at Disarmament Conference, 503-15, 544, 550; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 224-5, 226-7; Fascist régime in, 232-4; and Secretariat, 233-4, 419-20, 557-8; and Yugoslavia, 254-5, 342-3; and Ethiopia, 258, 396-8; and Geneva Protocol, 276, 283; and revision of peace treaties, 288, 401, 432, 544-5, 604; and Locarno Pacts, 285 ff., 695-8; and Szent-Gothard affair, 401-2; and Optional Clause, 415; and European Union, 432-4; and General Act, 456; and Four-Power Pact, 544-6; and entry of Russia, 581, 584; and Saar International Force, 592-3; and Hungaro-Yugoslav crisis, 599-605; and Stresa Conference, 608-12; rearmament of, 609, 763; and 'reform' of League, 681, 711; and Spanish war, 722-30; and Sino-Japanese war, 735-6; and economic and social work, 757; withdrawal from League, 768; Anglo-Italian agreement, 770-4, *see also* Axis, Corfu
- Jacklin, Seymour, 130 n.
- Jalandar, General, 790
- Janka-Pusztá, 601-2
- JAPAN, and drafting of Covenant, 38, 63-4; and Shantung, 55-6, 84; and First Assembly, 116, 128; at Washington Conference, 162-3; as mandatory power, 172 n., 173 n.; on Opium Committee, 184-5; and Geneva Protocol, 274, 276, 283; and League help for China, 333-4; attitude to League, 333-4, 414; and Secretariat, 334; and Locarno Powers, 341; and disarmament, 366-8, 374, 441; and Kellogg Pact, 386, 492-3; withdrawal from League, 495, 496-7, 565; continues in I.L.O., &c., 196, 497; at Disarmament Conference, 503-10, 547, 553; and anti-Comintern Pact, 704-5; recognizes Franco, &c., 768; *see also* Axis, Sino-Japanese war
- Jews, in Germany, 410; *see also* Palestine
- Jèze, Gaston, 643
- Jordan, *see* Transjordan
- Jordan, William, 736, 768
- Jouhaux, Léon, 706
- Jouvel, Henry de, 213-14, 223-4, 344, 445
- Kaectenbeck, Georges, 154 n., 157
- Karnebeck, Abraham van, 116
- Kellogg, Frank, 69, 350
- Kellogg Pact, 372-3, 384-7, 710, 802; in Chaco war, 393, 528; and Covenant,



- 385-6, 415, 462-3, 492-3; and Sino-Japanese war, 475-7, 735; in British Draft Convention, 543, 546; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 639, 652
- Kemal, Mustafa, 561-2, 740; and Greco-Turkish war, 83, 214-15; and entry of Turkey, 310; and minorities in Turkey, 404; and Alexandretta, 742-3
- Knox, Geoffrey, 588-98
- Konoyé, Prince, 733 n.
- Koo, Wellington, 329; and drafting of Covenant, 33, 37 n., 328; at First Assembly, 117; and Upper Silesia, 153-5; and Sino-Japanese war, 492-3, 734-8, 768, 774
- Kramar, Karel, 33
- Krassin, Leonid, 165
- Kundt, General, 530-1
- Kuomintang, 329 ff.
- Kuusinen, Otto, 804
- Lafontaine, Henri, 117, 190
- Languages, official, 78
- Larnaude, Ferdinand, 33
- Latin American States, 192, 270, 350, 421, 481, 553, 563, 614, 715, 779; and Art. 21, 56; and compulsory arbitration, 125-6; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 224, 227; and Corfu affair, 252; and Council membership, 238, 335; and Germany's Council seat, 320; attitude to League, 392-3, 395, 414, 524-5, 533, 719-20, 785-8; and international law, 415, 524; and European Union, 433; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 650, 787; and Spanish war, 728, 786; and Russo-Finnish war, 805-6; *see also* Monroe Doctrine, Pan American Union
- LATVIA, 82, 83, 123, 150, 175 n., 398; and demands of Russia, 804; *see also* Baltic States
- Lausanne, Conference of, 215; Treaty of, 305 ff., 404; candidate for Disarmament Conference, 443; Conference of, on Reparation, 508
- Laval, Pierre, 460, 485; and Saar plebiscite, 592-5; and Hungaro-Yugoslav crisis, 604-5; and Stresa front, 608-12; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 629-77, frequently; *see also* Hoare-Laval Plan
- Law, Bonar, 235, 242
- League of Nations, name, 18 n.
- League of Nations Associations, 199-202, 706; International Federation of, 150-1, 201, 406; League of Nations Union, 18, 22, 200-2; 'League to Enforce Peace', 18, 22, 71, 199, 200; Liga für Völkerbund, 150-1, 199, 202; Société Française pour la S.D.N., 150-1, 200; Swiss Association for the League of Nations, 199, 202
- 'League of Nations, American', 360
- 'League of Nations, Asiatic', 360
- Lebanon, 743
- Lebrun, Albert, 223
- Lenin, 19
- Leopold (King of Belgium), 759
- Leprosy Institute, 182, 390
- Lerroux, Alejandro, 453, 475
- Lester, Seán, and Chaco war, 525; and Leticia affair, 537-40; High Commissioner in Danzig, 619-21; Deputy Secretary-General, 622; Secretary-General, 810, 815
- Leticia, 525-6, 536-40
- LIBERIA, 449, 568-71
- Lichtenstein, 123
- LITHUANIA, 82, 83, 143, 356; and admission to League, 123, 150; minorities in, 175 n., 398, 403-4; Polish ultimatum, 793; Russian demands on, 804; *see also* Baltic States, Memel, Vilna
- Little Entente, 207, 211, 252, 287, 417, 614, 765; formation of, 261; and aid to Hungary, 261; and Council membership, 335; and Szent-Gotthard affair, 400-1; and Disarmament Conference, 504, 553; and Four-Power Pact, 545-6; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 647, 649, 661; and 'reform' of League, 716
- Litvinov, Maxim, 95, 165, 247 n., 400, 439, 520, 768, 772, 797, 799; as Russian delegate in Geneva, 358-9, 712; on Preparatory Commission, 370-6; at Disarmament Conference, 504-12, 547-8, 552; and entry of Russia, 579, 582-5; and Saar Plebiscite, 594; and crime of Marseilles, 604; and Stresa resolution, 611-12; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 637-8, 649-90; and violation of Locarno, 696; and 'reform' of League, 712, 715-16, 780; and German-Czechoslovak crisis, 777, 783
- Lloyd George, David, 213, 214; and League idea, 19-20; at Peace Conference, 30 ff., 55, 58, 67-8, 81; and Upper Silesia, 145-6; and Albania, 160; and Genoa Conference, 164-8, 220; attitude to League, 116, 203
- Locarno, Treaties of, 285-94; entrusted to Secretary-General, 316; and German membership of Council, 317; Russian attitude to, 286, 354-5; denunciation of, 678-9, 692-8
- 'Locarno Powers', 402; contrast with League methods, 318 ff., 341-6; and denunciation of Treaty, 693-8
- Lodge, Senator H. C., 18, 25, 34, 69-72, 352
- London, Naval Treaty of, 376, 440, 507, 543
- Loudon, Jkr. J., 364 ff.
- Loveday, Alexander, 809-10
- Lugard, Lord, 172-3.
- Luis, Washington, 325
- Luther, Hans, 287, 319
- LUXEMBURG, 122, 659
- Lytton, Lord, 482; Lytton Commission, 480-95

- MacDonald, Malcolm, 748  
 MacDonald, Ramsay, 221, 299, 306, 608-9, 636; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 226; and Arbitration and Disarmament, 227-8; Premier and Foreign Secretary, 262-7; attitude to League, 264-5; and entry of Germany, 265, 269; and entry of Russia, 265; and Geneva Protocol, 268-71, 283; at Tenth Assembly, 414; at Disarmament Conference, 506-7, 514-15, 544; and Four-Power Pact, 544-5; and British rearmament, 606
- McDougall, F. L., 754  
 Mackenzie, Dr Melville, 570-1  
 Madariaga, Salvador de, 419, 510-11, 525-8, 679-80  
 Maisky, I. M., 792, 800  
 Makino, Baron, 33, 63  
 Maltzán, Baron von, 167, 266  
 Manchukuo, 490-7, 580, 704, 731, 768  
 Manchuria, 468-9  
 Mandates, 109, 111, 138, 279, 562-3; in Covenant, 42, 56-8; discussed in Assembly, 121-2, 211-13; system described, 171-3; list of, 172 n.; transition to United Nations, 173, 813  
 Mandates, Permanent Commission, 122, 340, 585, 745, 813; work of, 171-3; Assembly support for, 212; and emancipation of Iraq, 449, 563, 574; and Palestine problem, 746-8  
 Mangabeira, Octavio, 389  
 Mantoux, Paul, 79  
 Maritime Ports, Convention on, 174, 260  
 Mar Shimun, *see* Assyrians  
 Marx, Chancellor, 269, 277-9, 286  
 Massigli, René, 542  
 Matsudaira, Baron, 479, 503  
 Matsui, Shigarū, 106  
 Matsuoka, Yosuke, 492-5  
 Maurras, Charles, 667  
 Mello Franco, Afranio de, 274, 298, 320-5, 540  
 Members of League, list of, 64-5  
 Memel, 302-5, 449-50, 455, 796  
 MEXICO, 35, 393, 575, 611, 788; not included among original Members, 37; at Disarmament Conference, 443; admitted to League, 462; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 638, 645, 687; and 'reform' of League, 716  
 Meyer, Sir W., 151, 181  
 Miller, David H., 32; *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 32 n.  
 Minorities, Protection of, 82; at Peace Conference, 91, 409; Council action described, 173-5, 402-6; discussed in Assembly, 211-12; controversy in Council, 406-11; not continued in United Nations, 813  
 Minorities, Congress of, 405-6  
 'Model Treaties', 383-4  
 Molotov, Vicheslav, 579, 783, 804  
 Monnet, Jean, 78, 89, 117, 419  
 Monroe Doctrine, 71, 787; in Covenant, 38, 55-6, 391; and League action, 137, 350-1, 391-2, 395, 524; *see also* Latin American States  
 Monteiro, A. R., 654  
 Montenegro, 122 n.  
 Montreux, Conference of, *see* Straits  
 Moscow Conference, on Disarmament, 228-9  
 Moslem States, 562, 701, 739-45  
 Mosul, 305-10  
 Motta, Giuseppe, 116, 124, 204, 208, 323, 583-5, 657  
 Munch, Peter, 611-12, 697  
 Munich, Agreement of, 545, 777, 782-3, 795  
 Murray, Gilbert, 191, 212  
 Mussolini, Benito, 232, 299, 319, 602, 725, 728; attitude to League, 233-4, 342, 512, 689; and Treaty revision, 437; and armaments, 438; and Stresa Conference, 608-9; and 'reform' of League, 711; *see also* Axis, Corfu, Four-Power Pact, Italo-Ethiopian war, Italy  
 Mutual Guarantee, Treaty of, 223-7, 267, 271, 288, 710, 765  
 Nadolny, Rudolf, 512, 544  
 Nahhas Pasha, 741  
 Nansen, Frijthof, 253, 279; and repatriation of prisoners, 100; at First Assembly, 116; and 'left wing' in Assembly, 147; and Russian famine, 149-50; and refugees, 187-9; and Greco-Turkish war, 214-15  
 Nansen Office, *see* Refugees  
 Nansen Passports, *see* Refugees  
 Nazis, *see* Axis, Danzig, Germany, Hitler, &c.  
 Negrín, Juan, 727, 789  
 Nemours, Alfred, 653  
 NETHERLANDS, 18, 136, 163, 210, 401, 539, 735, 765; and Opium Convention, 138, 184-5; and Geneva Protocol, 369; and Council membership, 320, 325, 341; and disarmament, 511; and entry of Russia, 581-3; and Saar International Force, 592; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 649; and 'reform' of League, 711, 779; *see also* Neutrals  
 Netherlands East Indies, 184  
 Neuilly, Treaty of, 604  
 Neurath, Konstantin von, 514-15, 544, 549  
 Neutrals in First World War, 68, 73, 235-6, 238, 302, 344, 437, 590, 614, 714-15; and League idea, 17, 24; and draft Covenant, 34-6, 46; original Members of League, 37, 112; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 226; and Geneva Protocol, 270-1; and Council membership, 335; and disarmament, 370, 553; and sanctions against Italy, 683; *see also* Scandinavian States, Small powers  
 New Guinea, 58  
*New York Times*, quoted, 387, 579, 806-7

- New York Tribune*, quoted, 20  
 NEW ZEALAND, 63, 181, 336, 456, 735, 773;  
 and Mandates, 58; and Optional Clause,  
 415; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 649, 686;  
 and 'reform' of League, 716; *see also*  
 Commonwealth  
 NICARAGUA, 720  
 Nicholas II (Tsar of Russia), 12, 13  
 Nitobe, Inazo, 78, 419  
 Noblemaire Report, 131-3  
 Noel-Baker, Philip, 445, 706, 814  
 Non-Intervention Agreement, 722-30, 773-  
 4, 790  
 Non-Intervention Committee, *see* Non-Inter-  
 vention Agreement  
 Non-Recognition, with reference to Man-  
 churia, 483-4, 487-8, 494; in Latin  
 America, 528; and annexation of Ethiopia,  
 686-8  
 NORWAY, 511, 575; *see also* Neutrals, Scandi-  
 navian States  
 Nutrition Committee, 523, 752-5, 813  
 Nye Committee, 553  
 Nyon, Conference of, 721, 725-6  
  
 Oliván, López, 576, 589, 597  
 Opium and other dangerous drugs, traffic  
 in, 58, 125, 138; Advisory Committee on,  
 183-6; Permanent Central Board, 185-6;  
 Supervisory Body, 185-6; Conventions  
 on: The Hague, 183 ff.—Geneva (1925),  
 185-6—Geneva (1931), 185-6; transition  
 to United Nations, 186, 813  
 Orlando, Vittorio Emanuele, 30 ff., 33-8, 81  
 Olet, Paul, 190  
  
 Pacific Islands under Mandate, 58, 172 n.,  
 173 n.  
 Pacifism, 5, 10-12, 199  
 Paderewski, Ignacy, 106 ff.  
 Palais des Nations, 300-1, 416-18, 699-700  
 Palestine, 213, 746-8  
 PANAMA, 38, 137, 581, 650, 788  
 Pan American Conferences: (1923), 229;  
 (1928), 391; (1933), 532-3; (1936), 719-  
 20, 787; (1938), 787-8  
 Pan American Union, 7, 394; and the  
 League, 351, 354, 786-7; and European  
 Union, 433  
 Pangalos, General, 313  
 Papan, Franz von, 507, 513, 544  
 PARAGUAY, 719; *see also* Chaco war  
 Paris, Pact of, *see* Kellogg Pact  
 Parmoor, Lord, 266-7, 275-6  
 Passports, Convention on, 154, 180  
 Paul-Boncour, J., 680; and Geneva Protocol,  
 274; on Preparatory Commission, 364-  
 70; at Disarmament Conference, 508-10,  
 542; at last Assembly, 814  
 Pavelić, Anton, 602  
 'Peace Ballot', 201 n., 636, 706  
  
 Peace Conference of Paris, 26-7, 30-9;  
 appoints Committee to draft Covenant,  
 32; and Organizing Committee of League,  
 38; and Committee for I.L.O., 59, 194-5  
 Peace societies, 10-11  
 'Peaceful change', 49, 717-18  
 Permanent Court of International Justice,  
 53-4, 88, 111, 130, 138, 195, 239, 249,  
 292, 395, 572, 788; Statute adopted by  
 Assembly, 125-6; Optional Clause, 125-6,  
 652; organization of, 170-1; Optional  
 Clause and Geneva Protocol, 274-5;  
 United States and, 231-2, 351-4, 564-5;  
 and Mosul case, 309-10; and Brazil, 389;  
 and Austro-German Customs Union, 451-  
 2; survival of, 813; at last Assembly, 815  
 Permanent delegates, 140, 197-9, 298-9  
 PERSIA, 84, 355-6, 414, 562, 650; Enzeli  
 affair, 103; and Art. 10, 259; and Anglo-  
 Persian Oil Co., 571-3; and 'reform'  
 of League, 716, 739; closer ties with  
 League, 739-40; dispute with Iraq, 741-2  
 PERU, 393, 529-32, 718, 788; *see also* Leticia  
 Pessôa, Epitacio, 33, 56  
 Phillimore, Lord, 22; Committee, 22-3, 27-8  
 Pilotti, Massimo, 558  
 Pilsudski, Marshal, 103, 107-8, 398-400,  
 615-16  
 Poincaré, Raymond, 36, 168, 263; and  
 Treaty of Versailles, 83; and Genoa Con-  
 ference, 165-6, 220; and Ruhr occupation,  
 203, 234-7; and entry of Germany, 204;  
 and reference of Reparation to League,  
 213-14  
 POLAND, 82, 140, 238-9, 275, 288, 428, 459,  
 584, 611, 615, 728, 735, 768, 772, 774,  
 775, 776, 781, 790; Minorities Treaty  
 with, 92, 174 n., 616; and fight against  
 epidemics, 100-2; and Treaty of Mutual  
 Assistance, 226; German minority in, 238,  
 404, 406-8, 447-9, 455-6, 616-17, 792-3;  
 and Locarno Pacts, 288, 292-3; and  
 Memel question, 303-5; attitude to  
 League, 304-5, 615-16, 793-4; and Coun-  
 cil membership, 304, 317-27; and Kellogg  
 Pact, 385; and disarmament, 221 ff., 442,  
 504, 553; Ukrainian minority in, 404, 448;  
 disputes with Germany, 406-8; and Four-  
 Power Pact, 545-6; and Italo-Ethiopian  
 war, 645, 649, 684; alliance with Britain,  
 791, 797-9; attacked by Germany, 792-7,  
 802; *see also* Danzig, Upper Silesia, Vilna  
 Polish-German agreement (1934), 616, 796  
 Polish-Russian war, 83, 93, 96-7, 108, 111  
 Politis, Nicolas, 116, 246-50, 272-5, 409-10,  
 642  
 PORTUGAL, 163, 181, 275, 611, 814; and  
 Council membership, 335 n.; and entry  
 of Russia, 581-3; and Italo-Ethiopian  
 war, 649; and Spanish war, 721-9, 790;  
 and 'reform' of League, 779

- Postal Union, Universal, 7, 60, 134  
 Potemkin, Vladimir, 680-1, 800  
 Press Conference, International, 425 n.  
 Preventing War, Convention to Improve  
 the means of, 381-2, 462, 710  
 Preventive Action, 379-80, 717-18, 781; *see*  
*also* Covenant: Art. 11  
 Primo de Rivera, General, 325, 389  
 Princeton University, 809  
 Prisoners, repatriation of, 99-100  
 Protocol of Geneva, 291 ff., 362, 384, 710;  
 drafting of, and contents of, 268-76; re-  
 jection by Britain, 283-5; proposed revival,  
 369  
 Publicity, 173, 323, 403; of Council meetings,  
 87-8, 242; of Assembly meetings, 118, 149  
 Pueyrredón, Honorio, 124
- Quakers, 5  
 Quiñones de León, J. M., 106, 317; as  
 member of Council, 98-9, 238, 298, 324,  
 453; and Upper Silesia, 153-5; and Corfu,  
 249  
 Quo Tai-chi, 734
- Railways, Convention on, 179, 260  
 Rajchman, Ludwik, 101-2, 181-3, 330-3,  
 559, 738  
 Rakovsky, Christian, 265, 356  
 Rappard, William, 78 n., 419, 556  
 Rapporteur system, 87, 596  
 Ras Tafari, *see* Haile Selassie  
 Rathenau, Walther, 167  
 Rault, Victor, 90, 239-43  
 Rauschnig, Hermann, 617-18  
 Raw materials, 116, 233, 648  
 Reading, Lord, 460  
 Rearmament, 551, 606 ff., 763-6  
 Red Cross Societies, 60, 99-100  
 'Reform' of League, *see* Covenant  
 Refugees, assistance to, 187-9, 597, 813  
 Regional agreements, 226, 719  
 Religious liberty, 63-4, 584  
 Reparation, 84, 262; withheld from con-  
 sideration by League, 94, 112, 204, 213-  
 14, 234-5, 518-19; London Conference  
 on, 228, 262-3; Hague Conference on,  
 412; Lausanne Conference on, 508, 518  
 Reparation Commission, 82, 94, 126, 138,  
 213, 234; and assistance to Hungary,  
 261-2  
 Réquin, Colonel, 223, 225  
 Rhineland, demilitarized zone of, 285, 595-  
 6, 693-4  
 Rhineland Pact, *see* Locarno  
 Ribbentrop, Joachim von, 696-8, 725-9  
 Riddell, Walter, 664, 675  
 Rist, Charles, 761  
 Rockefeller Foundation, 182, 349, 809  
 Rockefeller, John D., Jr., 349, 417  
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 495, 639, 654, 734;  
 and World Economic Conference (1933),  
 520-2; and Disarmament Conference,  
 520, 546-7; and arms traffic, 554-5;  
 attitude to League, 564-5; and Pan  
 American movement, 719-20, 787-8;  
 'quarantine' speech, 736-7; and rebirth of  
 League idea, 811  
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 15, 25  
 Root, Elihu, 15, 69, 138, 352-4  
 ROUMANIA, 84, 215, 239, 602, 772, 774, 797;  
 and admission of Bulgaria, 123; and  
 minorities protection, 174 n.; Hungarian  
 minority in, 404; and sanctions against  
 Italy, 661; *see also* Balkan Entente, Little  
 Entente  
 Ruhr, occupation of, 234-7  
 Runciman, Lord, 776  
 Rural life, conferences on, 756  
 RUSSIA, 30, 83-5, 103, 109, 123, 181, 188,  
 278, 520, 534; war and peace with Poland,  
 83, 93, 96-7, 108; proposed Commissions  
 of Inquiry in, 94-7; attitude to League,  
 94, 164, 167, 265, 354-60, 371, 585; war  
 prisoners in, repatriated, 99-100; epi-  
 demics in, 100-2; and Enzeli affair, 103;  
 and Aaland Islands, 104, 791-2; and  
 Vilna dispute, 105-9, 141-2, 399-400;  
 famine in, 149-50; at Genoa Conference,  
 and Rapallo Treaty, 164-8; and disarma-  
 ment, 220, 226, 228-30, 316, 363, 370-6,  
 440-1; quarrel with Switzerland, 232, 265,  
 357-8; and dispute with Finland, 239;  
 opposes Locarno, 286, 354-5; and Kuo-  
 mintang, 329-30; and Economic Con-  
 ference (1927), 316, 426; and Kellogg  
 Pact, 372-3; and European Union, 432-4;  
 and Sino-Japanese war, 491, 495, 580, 735;  
 at Disarmament Conference, 504-12;  
 joins League, 579-85; and economic and  
 social work of League, 585, 757; and  
 Italo-Ethiopian war, 629, 662, 773;  
 and 'reform' of League, 709-19, 779-  
 81; and Spanish war, 722-30, 774; and  
 rearmament, 765; and German-Czechoslo-  
 vak crisis, 777, 782-3; detachment from  
 League, 782-3; negotiations with Britain  
 and France, 799-800; Russo-Finnish war,  
 804-8; exclusion from League, 806-8; *see*  
*also* Communism  
 Russo-German treaties, of Rapallo, 165-7;  
 of Berlin, 355; of Moscow, 796, 800  
 Russo-Lithuanian Treaty, of Moscow, 106  
 Russo-Polish Treaty, of Riga, 108  
 Rüstü Aras, 309, 604, 611  
 Ruysen, Théodore, 201
- Saadabad, Treaty of, 740  
 Saar Basin, 82, 416; delimitation of, 86;  
 discussed in Council, 89-90, 239-43,  
 337-8; 'international government', 90 n.,  
 598; plebiscite in, 586-98

- St Germain, Treaty of, 205, 451
- Salandra, A., 247 ff., 274
- Salter, Sir Arthur, 78, 89, 177, 559; and Dawes Committee, 262; quoted, 429 n.; delegate to Assembly, 458
- Samoa, 58
- Sanchez Cerro, President, 540
- Sanctions, 73, 125, 226, 313, 355-6, 462, 502; in pre-Covenant studies, 19, 21, 28, 148; in Covenant, 42, 53; and Swiss membership, 92-3; in Second Assembly, 147-8, 660; threatened against Yugoslavia, 160-1; in Geneva Protocol, 269, 272-5; and entry of Germany, 279-81, 292-3; preparation of, beforehand, 381, 614; and Kellogg Pact, 386, 463; and Japanese aggression, 479, 499, 738; and Stresa resolution, 609-12; against Italy, 639, 650-1, 655, 656-88; and 'reform' of League, 714-17; abandoned by Assembly, 779-81, 784; *see also* Covenant: Art. 16
- Sandler, Rickard, 743, 792
- San Francisco, Conference of, 149 n., 233 n., 812, 814
- Santos, Eduardo, 526, 537-40
- Sapieha, Prince, 108
- Sastri, Srinavasa, 151
- Sato, Naotuke, 486, 496, 732
- Saudi Arabia, 747
- Scandinavian States, 18, 189, 221, 415, 552, 765, 805, 808; and Council membership, 325; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 646, 649, 683; and 'reform' of League, 710, 779; *see also* Neutrals
- Schanzer, Carlo, 117, 163, 274
- Scheidemann, Philipp, 67
- Schober, Chancellor, 451-2
- Scialoja, Vittorio, 209, 312, 320, 436, 445, 481; at Peace Conference, 33; and Geneva Protocol, 274, 276; views on League, 340
- Secretariat of League, 29, 47, 87, 110, 137, 139, 181, 259, 357, 392, 482, 487, 585, 704, 724, 790, *and passim*; organization of, 39, 75-9, 125, 131-2, 418-21, 556-60; offices, &c., 110, 113-14, 699-700; and Upper Silesia, 153-7; and Genoa Conference, 166-7; relations with governments, 197, 295-6, 420; and Fascist government, 233-4; and permanent delegates, 197-8, 298; and Chinese affairs, 333; and United States, 348-9; and arrangements for a crisis, 378-9; and case of Brazil, 389-90; and minorities protection, 405; and non-Members, 561; and Second World War, 801-4, 809-10; archives of, 815, 816
- Secretary-General, 38, 88, *and passim*; annual report of, 119, 212; political competence of, 137, 311, 393, 805, 807-9; duties of, connected with I.L.O., 195; *see also* Avenol, Drummond, Lester
- Seipel, Monsignor, 207-10
- Sèvres, Treaty of, 109, 305
- Shanghai Investigation Committee, 487-8
- Shantung, 55-6, 71, 328-9
- Shidehara, Baron, 163, 334, 471-83
- Shotwell, Professor, 269, 384 n.
- SIAM, 184, 494, 650
- Simon, Sir John, 519-20, 525, 544, 592, 607-8, 632-3, 636; and Manchuria, 479, 485-93; at Disarmament Conference, 503-14, 550-2; attitude to League, 543, 612-13; and Anglo-Persian dispute, 572-3; and Stresa front, 608-12; and Anglo-German Naval Treaty, 613
- Sino-Japanese war, 131, 463, 465-99, 731-8, 774
- Skrzynski, Count, 293, 304, 320
- Slavery, in Ethiopia, 258, 643; in Liberia, 568-71; Slavery Committee, 170, 258; Anti-Slavery Convention, 568
- Small powers, in relation to great powers, 33, 46, 168, 254, 326, 582-3; at First Assembly, 116, 126-7; at Eighth Assembly, 344-6; and Secretariat, 419-20, 556-7; and Sino-Japanese war, 478, 493, 499; and Disarmament Conference, 509-11; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 635, 684-5; *see also* Council, relations with Assembly
- Smith, Jeremiah, 261, 349
- Smuts, General, 19; at Peace Conference, 32-8, 45, 67-8, 82-3; *Practical Suggestion*, 27-30, 57, 217; on League in 1929, 413
- Socialist Parties, 17, 85, 94, 202, 235-7; *see also* International, Second
- Social Questions, Advisory Committee on, 186-7
- Soong, T. V., 332-3, 738
- SOUTH AFRICA, UNION OF, 336; as Mandatory Power, 58, 212; and Optional Clause, 415; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 650, 662, 686-8; and Russo-Finnish war, 807-8; *see also* Commonwealth
- South West Africa, mandated territory of, 58
- Soviet Union, *see* Russia
- SPAIN, 149, 210, 224, 298, 462, 511, 611, 790; as Council member, 38, 99, 127; and disarmament, 229, 511; claim to be permanent Member of Council, 318-24, 389; resignation—announced, 324-5—withdrawn, 388-9; attitude to League, 453; and Chaco war, 525-31; and Leticia dispute, 525, 537-40; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 645, 649; and 'reform' of League, 716, 779
- Spanish war, 702-3, 721-30, 770, 773-4, 789-90; *see also* Non-intervention
- Stahlhelm, the, 438-9, 542
- Stalin, Joseph, 495, 579
- Stimson, Henry, 375, 387, 472-95, 506-7, 530, 568, 736-7
- Straits, Black Sea, 215, 611; Montreux Conference on, 688, 740

- Strakosch, Sir H., 382
- Stresa Conference, 608-12, 615, 632-3, 'front', 690, 698
- Stresemann, Gustav, 157, 167, 219, 359, 368, 412, 438, 446, 586; Chancellor, 234, 262-3; and German entry into League, 265-6, 277-82, 287, 317-27; and Locarno Pacts, 285-93; as Council member, 337-40; and Locarno group, 341-6; and Russia, 354 ff.; and minorities, 406-10; his last Assembly, 416; and European Union, 427, 431; his death, 436
- Suez Canal, 662-3, 741
- Sugimura, Yotaro, 419, 496
- Supervisory Commission, 132-3, 801, 810, 814
- Supreme Council, 93-4, 138, 150, 167-8, 205, 210, 300; at Peace Conference, 32, 81 ff.; and Mandates, 57-8, 172; and Armenia, 109-10; contrast with League, 126-7; and Upper Silesia, 145-6, 155; and Albania, 159
- Suwalki, Agreement of, 107-8
- SWEDEN, 140, 210, 236, 302, 511, 794, 808, 814; and disarmament, 229; and Council membership, 238, 319-21; and Saar International Force, 592; *see also* Aaland Islands, Neutrals, Scandinavian States
- Sweetser, Arthur, 348, 559
- SWITZERLAND, 123, 136, 184, 198, 210, 323, 434, 457, 728, 765, 814; and seat of League, 36-7, 113-14, 300; and neutrality within League, 92-3, 94 n., 280, 771, 781; relations with Russia, 232, 357-8; and League wireless station, 378-9; and disarmament, 511; and entry of Russia, 581-3; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 649, 657-61; and League in Second World War, 801-2, 807; *see also* Neutrals
- Syria, 213, 575-8, 742-5; *see also* Alexandretta
- Sze, Alfred, 470-86
- Szent-Gotthard, 400-2
- Taft, William, 18, 25, 34, 69
- Tanaka Memorial, 580
- Tangier, 90 n., 325, 389
- Tanku Truce, 496, 731
- Tarashevich, Dr L., 102 n.
- Tardieu, André, 440, 502-7, 551
- Tariff Truce, 415, 427, 429, 457, 520
- Taxation, Double, Conventions on, 750
- Tecla Hawariate, 629-72
- Telegraphic Union, International, 7
- Tellini, General, 244-5
- Terrorism, 604; Draft Convention on, 605
- Teschén, 84
- Thomas, Albert, 80, 129, 195-6, 390, 557
- Thomas, J. H., 485, 499
- Tittoni, Tommaso, 98-9, 139
- Titulescu, Nicolas, 379, 394, 466, 604; at First Assembly, 116; as member of Council, 340; and minorities protection, 409-10; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 660-1, 686
- Trade Unions, 195; International Federation of, 8
- Transjordan, 745, 747
- Treaty registration, 111, 125, 803; in Covenant, 54; discussed in Second Assembly, 149; continued in U.N., 149 n., 813; and Italo-Yugoslav Treaties, 254-5; and Anglo-Irish Treaty, 290; *see also* Covenant: Art. 18
- Trendelenberg, Ernst, 558
- Treviranus, G. R., 446
- Trianon, Treaty of, 211, 400
- Tudela, Francisco, 761
- TURKEY, 83-4, 103, 109, 443, 584, 602; and minorities protection, 175 n., 215, 404; and disarmament, 229, 363, 373, 511; and membership of League, 215, 232, 310, 356, 561-2; and European Union, 432-4; and Black Sea Straits, 611, 740; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 638, 645; and 'reform' of League, 716, 739; attitude to League, 739-41; *see also* Alexandretta, Armenia, Balkan Entente, Greco-Turkish war, Mosul Tyrol, South, 233, 410
- Ukraine, 102, 123
- Unanimity Rule, in Covenant, 46-7; exceptions to, 52, 53; and budget vote, 133-4; and advisory opinions, 353; and preventive action (Art. 11), 380, 462, 477-8, 717, 781; *see also* Covenant: Art. 5
- Undén, Osten, 311, 320
- United Nations, Charter of, 63, 149 n., 178, 226, 273, 380, 499, 502, 781; competence of Secretary-General, 137; League institutions continued in, 171, 173, 175, 180, 183, 186, 189, 193-4, 197, 762, 812-13; and delegates' expenses, 422; revival of League idea, 811-12; League powers and functions transferred to, 814-15; League archives, &c., transferred to, 815, 816 n.
- UNITED STATES, and League idea, 17-18; membership opposed and rejected, 31, 68-72; effect on League, 72-4, 112; and I.L.O., 80, 196-7, 564; and Mandates, 122 n., 172; attitude to League, 137-9, 163-4, 231, 322, 348-54, 359-60, 414, 482, 564-5, 692; and Austrian debts, 138, 206; and social and economic work of League, 180, 181-2, 260, 349-50, 360, 429, 701, 759-61; and Opium, Committee, 184-5, 349; and disarmament, 221, 316, 351, 360, 363-76, 503-15, 546-53; and Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 226; and Geneva Protocol, 284; and Sino-Japanese war, 472-95, 734-8; and World Economic Conference (1933), 519-22; and traffic in arms, 530, 534, 554-5; and Liberia, 568-71; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 639,

- 662-3; Neutrality Acts, 639-40, 734; *see also* Chaco War, Kellogg Pact, Leticia, Monroe Doctrine, Pan American Union, Washington Conference
- Universal Christian Council, 647
- Universality of League, 713, 715-16
- Upper Silesia, 67, 84; dispute submitted to Council, 145-6, 152-8; Geneva Convention on, 154, 156-8, 407, 410 n., 448; Mixed Commission in, 154, 157-8; Mixed Tribunal in, 155, 157; minorities protection in, 157-8, 175 n., 406-8, 410 n., 447-8
- Urrutia, Francisco, 391
- URUGUAY, 38, 238, 275, 298, 788, 806
- U.S.S.R., *see* Russia
- Vandervelde, Émile, 320, 340
- Vasconcellos, Augusto de, 659-81
- Vatican, 12, 594, 647
- Vayo, Alvarez del, 531, 722-7, 773-4
- VENEZUELA, 394, 657, 788
- Venezelos, Eleutherios, 33, 37 n., 86
- Versailles, Treaty of, 81 ff., 194, and frequently; Covenant a part of, 31-2, 38; League duties under, 77, 302, 343; substance affected by League, 82-3; First Assembly and, 126-7; Art. 295 of (Opium Convention), 183; and German responsibility for war, 278-80; separation of Covenant from, 693, 713-14
- Vesnić, Milenko, 33, 37 n.
- Vienna, as possible seat of League, 417-18
- Vigier, Henri, 654
- Villegas, Enrique, 274, 391
- Vilna, Polish-Lithuanian dispute over, 83, 105-9, 140-3, 238, 359, 398-400, 802
- Viviani, René, 17, 117, 124, 144, 223, 236
- Voldemaras, Augustinas, 106 ff., 141 ff., 399-400, 449
- Volksbund, 407-8
- Vorovsky, V. V., 232
- Vuilloud, Captain, 577
- Wakatsuki, Reijito, 471
- Wambaugh, Sarah, 590 n.
- Warsaw, Health Conference at, 102, 181
- Washington Conference, 144-5, 162-4, 222, 329, 472; Five-Power Naval Treaty of, 144, 229-30, 376; Four-Power Treaty of, 144-5; Nine-Power Treaty of, 144-5, 486, 734-7
- Washington Conference of American States (1928), 394
- te Water, Charles, 650
- Waugh, R. D., 240-3
- Webster, Lawrence, 790
- Wheat Agreement, International, 521
- White, Francis, 528-30
- White, Dr Norman, 101
- Wilson, Woodrow, 1, 18, 25, 81, 259, 348, 391, 409; and plans for League, 23, 217-18; the Fourteen Points, 20-1, 25, 30, 54, 368 n.; at Peace Conference, 26, 30-8, 48-9, 55-6, 58, 62-4, 67-8; and the fight in the Senate, 69-72; and Armenia, 109, 120; and convocation of Assembly, 110; death, 268
- Winant, John, 761, 809
- Wireless Station, League, 378-9
- Wirth, Chancellor, 156, 167, 213
- Wolde Maryam, 672-82
- Women and Children, protection of, 58, 125, 186-7
- Woolf, Leonard, 22, 59
- Wrong, Hume, 814
- Yap, 138
- Yemen, 747
- Yen, Dr W. W., 486
- Yevtić, B., 603-4
- Yoshizawa, Kenkichi, 470-86
- YUGOSLAVIA, 140, 184, 215, 239, 245, 275, 450, 797; disputes with Italy, 84, 254-5, 342-3; and admission of Bulgaria, 123; and Albania, 158-61; and minorities protection, 174 n., Hungaro-Yugoslav crisis, 599-605; and Italo-Ethiopian war, 661; *see also* Balkan Entente, Little Entente
- Zaldumbide, Gonzalo, 695
- Zaleski, Auguste, 340, 398-9, 797; attitude to League, 304-5; and German minority, 406-8, 447-8; replaced by Beck, 616
- Zaunius, Dovas, 449
- Zeelaard, Paul van, 664, 679, 685-8, 694-6, 759-60
- Zeligowski, General, 107-8, 140-2, 398
- Ziehm, Dr Ernst, 455
- Zimmerman, Dr A. R., 210
- Zog (King of Albania), 791

# CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . . v

## VOLUME I

### PART I

#### THE MAKING OF THE LEAGUE

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
1. INTRODUCTORY . . . . .		i
2. THE ANCESTRY OF THE LEAGUE . . . . .		4
	Before 1815: philosophical essays; religious pacifism; international law— From 1815 to 1914: practical steps in international organization; the Concert of Europe; international law; pacifism—The Hague Conferences.	
3. THE LEAGUE IDEA IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR . . . . .		15
	The stimulus of war—Movement for a new organization in various countries—The Pope's message—The Fourteen Points—Unofficial and official plans—Position at the Armistice. (August 1914—November 1918)	
4. THE DRAFTING OF THE COVENANT . . . . .		25
	President Wilson's arrival in Europe—Smuts's 'Practical Suggestion'— Tasks of the Peace Conference—Wilson insists on beginning with the Covenant—The Committee set up to draft the Covenant—Its first draft (February 14th)—Second series of meetings and final draft (April 20th)— First steps to organize the League. (December 1918—May 1919)	
5. THE COVENANT . . . . .		40
	Supreme importance of the Covenant—A summary of its contents— Text of the Covenant, with a few notes on the various Articles—Three re- jected proposals: an International Force; a declaration of racial equality; a provision on religious liberty.	
	<i>Appendix: List of Members of the League.</i> . . . . .	64
6. THE UNITED STATES ABANDONS THE LEAGUE . . . . .		66
	Seven months of inactivity—Germany demands membership—The struggle in the United States—The isolationist campaign—The votes of November 1919 and March 1920—The consequences for the League. (May 1919— March 1920)	
7. THE SECRETARIAT . . . . .		75
	Drummond decides on an international Secretariat—Organization and membership of the new service—The first International Labour Confer- ence. (May—December 1919)	

### PART II

#### THE YEARS OF GROWTH

8. THE WORLD AFTER THE PEACE CONFERENCE . . . . .		81
	The world still unsettled—Political disputes, economic difficulties, internal dissensions.	
9. FIRST SESSIONS OF THE COUNCIL . . . . .		86
	The first formal session—Work of the second session—The rapporteur system—Plans for the International Court and other League institutions	



<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
—The Saar and Danzig—Minorities protection—Swiss neutrality— Proposal for a Commission of Inquiry in Russia. (January–May 1920)	
10. COUNCIL SESSIONS BEFORE THE FIRST ASSEMBLY . . . . .	98
The Elder Statesmen—The rescue of war prisoners (1920–1921)—The fight against epidemics (1920–1922)—Political questions: Enzeli—the Aaland Islands (June 1920–June 1921)—The Polish–Lithuanian dispute; Armenia—The summoning of the First Assembly. (April–November 1920)	
11. GENEVA: THE FIRST ASSEMBLY . . . . .	113
The League's new home—The opening of the Assembly—Some leading delegates—Methods of work—The general debate—Armenia, disarmament, mandates—Six new Members admitted—Argentina quits the Assembly—New bodies created—How the First Assembly revived the League. (November–December 1920)	
12. LEAGUE FINANCES . . . . .	129
Attack on the League budget—Its damaging effects—Rules laid down by the Assembly—The problem of allocation.	
13. THE SECOND YEAR . . . . .	136
The weakness of the Council—Hostility in Washington—The Council's work—The Vilna dispute—The Communications and Transit Conference in Barcelona—A sudden change—The Second Assembly. (January– September 1921)	
14. UPPER SILESIA AND ALBANIA . . . . .	152
A burning problem—The Council's plan—German indignation—The Geneva Convention on Upper Silesia (September 1921–June 1922)— Albania and her neighbours—Lloyd George's appeal to the Council. (April–November 1921)	
15. WASHINGTON AND GENOA . . . . .	162
Achievements and effects of the Washington Conference—The Genoa Conference—Importance for the League—The Rapallo Treaty—Eclipse of the Supreme Council. (November 1921–June 1922)	
16. GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEAGUE . . . . .	169
I. Political and legal institutions: the Permanent Court of International Justice; the Permanent Advisory Commission on Military Questions and the Commission for the Reduction of Armaments; the Permanent Mandates Commission; the Minorities Committees.	
II. Economic and social institutions: their general importance; the Economic and Financial Organization; the Communications and Transit Organization; the Health Organization; the Committee on Traffic in Opium and other Dangerous Drugs; the Committees on Traffic in Women and on Child Welfare; the Organization for Refugees; the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation.	
III. The International Labour Organization.	
IV. The Permanent Delegations.	
V. The League of Nations Societies.	

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
17. OPTIMISM IN THE THIRD ASSEMBLY: THE RESCUE OF AUSTRIA . . . . .	203
German application postponed—The rescue of Austria—The Assembly not an instrument of the victorious powers—Minorities and Mandates—The League and reparation—The League and the Greco-Turkish war—A tonic Assembly. (August–September 1922)	
18. DISARMAMENT: FIRST STAGES . . . . .	217
Disarmament in the Covenant—The Council chooses delay—The Temporary Mixed Commission—The Esher Plan—Controversy between the direct and the indirect method—‘Resolution XIV’ of 1922—The Treaty of Mutual Assistance—British rejection—MacDonald and Herriot intervene. (1920–1924)	
19. NEW TROUBLES IN EUROPE . . . . .	231
A period of setbacks—The victory of Fascism—The occupation of the Ruhr—League action prevented—Council membership increased to ten—Conflict over the Saar. (October 1922–September 1923)	
20. CORFU . . . . .	244
Murder of General Tellini—Italian ultimatum—Occupation of Corfu—The Greek appeal—Action of the Council and of the Ambassadors’ Conference—Indignation of the Assembly—Legal questions—Effect on the League. (August–September 1923)	

## PART III

## THE YEARS OF STABILITY

21. THE TURN OF THE TIDE . . . . .	257
Marking time in the Assembly—Admission of the Irish Free State and of Ethiopia—Canada and Article 10—Rehabilitation of Hungary—The Dawes plan—MacDonald, Herriot, Stresemann—Change in British and French attitude—Russia, Germany, and the League. (September 1923–August 1924)	
22. THE PROTOCOL . . . . .	268
The Assembly as a world parliament—Arbitration, Security, Disarmament—Drafting and contents of the Protocol—Briand’s first speech—Hostility in London. (September 1924)	
23. GERMANY STILL HESITATING . . . . .	277
Decision to ‘aim at entering the League’—Stresemann’s conditions—The Council’s reply. (September 1924–March 1925)	
24. THE REJECTION OF THE PROTOCOL: THE LOCARNO TREATIES . . . . .	283
The British Commonwealth rejects the Protocol—Stresemann’s new proposal—German, British, and French views on Germany’s eastern frontier—The Sixth Assembly—The Locarno Treaties. (November 1924–October 1925)	

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
25. THE YEARS OF STABILITY . . . . .	295
League methods now fully established—The 'Atmosphere of Geneva'—Regular dates for Council sessions—The Foreign Ministers now attend them—Business of the Council—Control of German disarmament—The Statute of Memel—The Mosul dispute. (1924—1925)	
26. THE GRECO-BULGAR CRISIS . . . . .	311
Greek invasion and Bulgarian appeal—Action of the Council—The Covenant and security. (October—December 1925)	
27. THE ADMISSION OF GERMANY: THE RESIGNATION OF BRAZIL AND SPAIN . . . . .	316
Germany applies at last—Unexpected difficulties—Claims of Poland, Brazil, and Spain—Fiasco at the Assembly—Its general effect—Reorganization of the Council—Resignation of Brazil and Spain—The Assembly's welcome to Germany. (February—September 1926)	
28. CHINA AND THE LEAGUE (FIRST STAGE) . . . . .	328
The Peking government and the League—Chiang Kai-shek in power—Chamberlain's note to the League—Plans of Rajchman and T. V. Soong—Co-operative attitude of Japan. (1920—1929)	
29. THE NEW COUNCIL AND THE LOCARNO POWERS . . . . .	335
The Council in its definitive form—Effect of increased numbers—The Triumvirate of Briand, Chamberlain, Stresemann—Other Council delegates—The Locarno powers and the League—Restriction on the Council—Indignation of small powers—'League Opinion'—A serious cleavage—Failure to use the period of stability. (1926—1929)	
30. THE GREAT OUTSIDERS . . . . .	348
Relations between League institutions and the United States—American view of the League as valuable for Europe—Proposals for adhesion to the Permanent Court—Failure to reach agreement—Soviet Russia in political opposition to the League—Gradual development of connexions—Arrival of Litvinov—Parallel between American and Russian attitudes. (1923—1927)	
31. DISARMAMENT: FRUSTRATION AND DELAY . . . . .	361
Disarmament after Locarno—The Preparatory Commission—First session: the report of the military experts—Second session: the Draft Convention—The Three-Power Naval Conference—Third and fourth sessions: Russian intervention—The Anglo-French agreement of 1928—Fifth session: the pressure of public opinion; the Hoover proposals—Further postponement. (December 1925—April 1929)	
32. THE MACHINERY OF PEACE . . . . .	377
Back to the Covenant—Material organization of Council action—Wireless station: Airfield—Studies of Article 11 and Article 16—The Treaty to improve the Means of Preventing War—The Treaty of Financial Assistance to a Victim of Aggression—Model Arbitration Treaties and the General Act—The Briand-Kellogg Pact. (December 1925—September 1928)	

CONTENTS

xi

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
33. THE RETURN OF SPAIN AND SOME LATIN AMERICAN PROBLEMS . . . . .	388
The return of Spain—The withdrawal of Brazil—Costa Rica and the Monroe Doctrine—Latin America and the League—Dispute between Bolivia and Paraguay. (June–December 1928)	
34. POLITICAL DISPUTES: PROTECTION OF MINORITIES . . . . .	396
Ethiopia's protest against an Anglo-Italian agreement—A new Polish-Lithuanian crisis—The smuggled arms of Szent-Gotthard—General situation as regards minorities protection—Fresh demands by the minorities—A Canadian move—Quarrel between Stresemann and Zaleski—Results of the controversy. (June 1926–June 1929)	
35. HALCYON DAYS . . . . .	412
The League's Tenth Birthday—Optimism and unity in the Assembly—The Palace of the League—Discussions on the Secretariat—Proposal for payment of delegates' expenses. (September 1929)	
36. ECONOMIC AFFAIRS: THE GREAT DEPRESSION . . . . .	423
League attitude towards economic problems—The World Economic Conference of 1927—The Great Depression and its effects on League affairs—Tariff truce proposed—Briand's plan for a United States of Europe. (May 1927–January 1931)	
37. THE REVIVAL OF NATIONALISM . . . . .	435
A quiet winter—Nationalism in German elections—New fears of war—British call for disarmament—Last meeting of the Preparatory Commission—Preparations for the Conference—The Armaments truce—Popular demand for disarmament and reactions against it. (October 1929–September 1931)	
38. TWO IMPORTANT COUNCIL SESSIONS . . . . .	446
German-Polish conflict over minorities—Appeasement at the Council—Declaration of European Foreign Ministers—The Austro-German Customs Union—Other important questions at the sixty-third Council—Danzig—Aggravation of the financial crisis. (September 1930–May 1931)	
39. THE LEAGUE IN DIFFICULTIES . . . . .	459
Anxiety and inactivity of the Twelfth Assembly—The admission of Mexico—First news of the Mukden incident. (September 1931)	

## VOLUME II

## PART IV

## THE YEARS OF CONFLICT

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
40. MANCHURIA . . . . .	465
A turning-point in world history—Japanese ambitions in Manchuria—The Mukden incident—Debate in the Council—A unanimous resolution—The United States at the Council—The Japanese veto—War-fever in Japan—The Council in Paris—The Lytton Commission—Stimson and Non-Recognition—Battles at Shanghai—China appeals to the Assembly—Creation of 'Manchukuo'—The Lytton Report—The verdict of the Assembly—Japan leaves the League—Consequences of the Manchurian conflict. (September 1931—May 1933)	
41. THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE, FIRST YEAR . . . . .	500
An unfavourable moment—First debates of the Conference—New chances of agreement—Brüning's proposals and their fate—The Hoover plan—Adjournment without progress—Germany refuses collaboration without equality—German collaboration resumed—An irrelevant interlude. (February—December 1932)	
42. THE WORLD ECONOMIC CONFERENCE . . . . .	517
The League's advice ignored—Origins of the World Economic Conference—Failure of the Conference—The economic work of the League. (June 1932—July 1933)	
43. WAR IN SOUTH AMERICA . . . . .	524
Latin America and the League—Early stages of the Chaco conflict—Pan American efforts at settlement—The Neutral Commission in Washington—The Council takes over—The League Commission in South America—Paraguayan victories—League plan rejected—The Arms Embargo—Peace by exhaustion. (June 1932—July 1935) The Leticia conflict and its settlement—League rule on the Amazon. (September 1932—June 1934)	
44. THE SECOND YEAR OF THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE . . . . .	541
Franco—German disagreement—The British Plan—Mussolini's Four-Power Pact—Hitler's 'peace' speech—Henderson's journey—The proposal for a 'trial period'—Germany refuses, leaves the Conference, and resigns from the League—Breakdown of direct negotiations—Roosevelt and the trade in arms—The Conference adjourns. (January 1933—June 1934)	
45. CHANGES IN THE SECRETARIAT . . . . .	556
Drummond resigns and Joseph Avenol succeeds him—Other changes. (June 1933)	
46. NEW MEMBERS . . . . .	561
Six new Members—The return of Argentina—The League's power of recovery—Reasons why new Members joined and old ones remained. (1931—1934)	

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
47. SOME PROBLEMS FOR THE COUNCIL . . . . .	568
Reform in Liberia (1929-1934)—The Anglo-Persian Oil Company (November 1932-April 1933)—The Assyrians of Iraq (1932-1937)	
48. THE ENTRY OF RUSSIA . . . . .	579
Russia turns towards the League—Her advances welcomed—Difficulties of Assembly procedure—An exciting debate—Russia as a League Member. (December 1933-September 1934)	
49. THE SAAR PLEBISCITE . . . . .	586
Conditions in the Saar—Hitler's attitude to the plebiscite and the Governing Commission—Plans for the vote—The maintenance of order and the International Force—The campaign and the vote—Final settlement—The Governing Commission's last report. (January 1934-March 1935)	
50. THE HUNGARO-YUGOSLAV CRISIS . . . . .	599
The Crime of Marseilles—Previous tension on the Hungaro-Yugoslav frontier—Yugoslavia appeals to the Council—War danger averted. (October-December 1934)	
51. REARMAMENT: THE STRESA FRONT . . . . .	606
A new armaments race—British rearmament—The German Army Law of March 1935—The Stresa Conference—Sir John Simon's last Council session—The Anglo-German Naval Agreement. (March-June 1935)	
52. POLAND AND THE LEAGUE: DANZIG . . . . .	615
The policy of Pilsudski—Polish-German Agreement of January 1934—Poland and the Minorities Treaty—Nazi tyranny in Danzig—The Council and the Danzig Constitution. (1934-1936)	
53. THE ITALO-ETHIOPIAN WAR . . . . .	623
Italian attack planned from 1933 onward—The Wal-Wal affair—The Council and the Ethiopian appeal—Public opinion is alarmed—Negotiations between Britain, France, and Italy—Italy's memorandum to the League—The Assembly debate—The Council's last efforts—The war begins—The Council's verdict—The Assembly's endorsement—The organization of sanctions—Italian difficulties—Fear of embargo on oil—The Hoare-Laval plan—Eden becomes Foreign Secretary—Italian victories—Flandin succeeds Laval—Collapse of League action—Annexation of Ethiopia—Britain renounces sanctions—Special meeting of the Assembly—Proposals for 'Reform'—The regular Assembly accepts an Ethiopian Delegation. (December 1934-September 1936)	
54. THE END OF LOCARNO . . . . .	692
Hitler denounces Locarno and re-militarizes the Rhineland—The Council in London—Ribbentrop at the Council—The end of Locarno. (March 1936)	

## PART V

## THE YEARS OF DEFEAT

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
55. THE LEAGUE DEFEATED . . . . .	699
The Palais des Nations—The possibilities of recovery—They are not realized—The ideological campaign—Formation of the Axis: its successful anti-League propaganda—The International Peace Campaign. (Autumn 1936)	
56. THE 'REFORM' OF THE LEAGUE . . . . .	709
'Reform' in previous years—Effect of Italian victory—The principal suggestions—Separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties—'Universality'—Preventive action—Peaceful change—Regional agreements for defence—The Latin American Members and the Conference of Buenos Aires. (December 1936–September 1938)	
57. WAR IN SPAIN . . . . .	721
'Non-Intervention'—The Spanish government appeals to the Council—Failure of non-intervention—The Nyon Conference—The Assembly resolution. (July 1936–December 1937)	
58. WAR IN CHINA . . . . .	731
Sino-Japanese tension—Japan's aggression and China's resistance—China appeals to the League—The Assembly condemns Japan—Roosevelt's Chicago speech—The Nine-Power Conference—Some help for China. (July 1937–September 1938)	
59. NEAR EASTERN QUESTIONS AT GENEVA . . . . .	739
Increasing ties between Moslem States and the League—The Montreux Conference—Egypt joins the League—Frontier disputes between Iraq and Persia—The problem of Alexandretta—Conflicts in Palestine. (1936–1939)	
60. THE RENAISSANCE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AGENCIES . . . . .	749
New methods of work—The promotion of individual welfare—The Nutrition Committee, its report and consequences—The Housing Committee—Need of new institutions—Proposals for an economic organization outside the League—Cordell Hull's reply—The Bruce Committee's plan. (1935–1939)	
61. REARMAMENT, 1937–1939 . . . . .	763
62. THE COUNCIL IN DEFEAT . . . . .	767
The Axis presses forward—The fall of Eden—Change in British attitude—Hitler annexes Austria—The Council of May 1938—Recognition of Italian Conquest—Ethiopia, Spain, China appeal in vain—Czechoslovakia in danger. (January–August 1938)	
63. THE ASSEMBLY ABANDONS THE COVENANT . . . . .	777
The German–Czechoslovak crisis—The League is excluded—The majority declares against collective action—Russia's last efforts at Geneva. (September 1938)	

CONTENTS

xv

*Chapter*

*Page*

64. THE DRIFT FROM GENEVA . . . . .	784
The League without sanctions—European membership reduced by violence—The Pan American movement; the Lima Conference—Latin American withdrawals. (October 1938—August 1939)	
65. THE APPROACH OF WAR . . . . .	789
The last sessions of the Council—Spanish affairs—The Aaland Islands Burckhardt at Danzig—The last days of the Free City—The Anglo-Polish guarantee—Anglo-French negotiations with Russia. (October 1938—August 1939)	
66. THE WAR YEARS . . . . .	801
Preparations for emergency—The first months—The Soviet-Finnish War and the exclusion of Russia—The Secretariat in wartime. (1939—1945)	
67. DEATH AND REBIRTH . . . . .	811
Rebirth of the League idea—The institutions of the United Nations developed from those of the League—The last Assembly. (April 1946)	
APPENDIX. NOTE ON SOURCES . . . . .	816
INDEX . . . . .	819



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