

Minutes of a Meeting held in the Secretary General's
Room, on Wednesday, October 22nd, 1919 at 3.30.p.m.

Present:-

The Secretary General
Monsieur Monnet
Dr. Nitobe
Sir Herbert Ames
Mr. Colban
Monsieur Comert
Mr. Salter
Dr. van Hamel
Captain Gilchrist
Captain Walters.

The Secretary General said that he had recently received a report from the British Delegation in Paris, to the effect that the Treaty was likely to come into force next week. In view of this, he had had meant to go to Paris on Friday. Monsieur Monnet, however, had now given him a different account of the matter, and the proposed visit could, he thought be safely postponed, at any rate until next week.

Labour Conference. Mr. Wilson, the American Secretary for Labour, had issued a statement in the press, implying the possibility that, if the United States had not ratified and therefore could not attend the Conference and if, as was possible, other States invited to send delegates were in the same position, the Conference would think it necessary to adjourn until a later date. In reply to a telegram from us, Mr. Bulter had said that this statement had been based exclusively on the legal possibilities of the situation, that the Conference would meet in any case, and would decide its own future. This, he thought, was satisfactory, as they were certain to go ahead with their discussions.

As regards adhesions of "invited" states, there was nothing new to report. All were waiting to see what the United States would do.

Monsieur Monnet said that during his stay in Paris, the question of the coming into force of the Treaty had gone through various stages./

stages. When the Italian ratification became known, the first view taken was that it would be best to bring the Treaty into force at once, and base the action upon the ratifications by France, Great Britain and Italy. Then, however, it was realised that the coming into force of the Treaty entailed two sets of problems:-

1. the carrying out of the actual measures to be taken immediately on the coming into force of the Treaty - e.g., the holding of plebiscites and the appointment and despatch of various Commissions;
2. the problem connected with the position of Germany on the coming into force of the Treaty.

As to 1, when the work of Monsieur Tardieu's Committee on the Execution of the Treaty was reviewed, it was found that for some Commissions arrangements were ready and appointments made; for others not. For the plebiscites the presence of Allied troops was necessary and in no case were they effectively on the ground. In some cases, the Supreme Council had not yet agreed as to their position. All these points must be seen to in order to bring the Treaty effectively into force.

As to 2, it was found that Germany had in some respects not carried out the conditions of the Armistice, especially with regard to the evacuation of the Baltic Provinces. Should the treaty come into force immediately, the armistice would lapse, and to enforce its terms it would be necessary to have recourse to the machinery of the League of Nations, which would evidently in the circumstances be a long and difficult affair,

Finally, there was the situation in the United States. Without the participation of the United States it was very difficult to bring the Treaty and the League into operation, and it seemed possible that, by the time the tasks outlined under headings 1 and 2 had been performed, the United States might have given its decision.

The Supreme Council is now, therefore, pressing the Allied Governments to nominate members of Commissions and to make the preparations for the necessary military occupation; pressing Germany to carry out the terms of the armistice; and hoping that the United States may by then have ratified the Treaty, or be on the point of doing so.

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This plan was not formally adopted by the Supreme Council, but he thought he could confidently assume that this would be the course taken. He could take it that three weeks at least would elapse before the coming into force of the Treaty. The message from Paris published in this morning's press was only a suggestion made by an official, and was not adopted by the Supreme Council.

Mr. Colban said that he had been looking through his Memoranda, and thought that the fresh delay would not necessitate any alteration in them.

Sir Herbert Ames said that his schedule of apportionment of expenses was very nearly ready, but further action could not be taken until the Treaty should have come into force.

The question was mooted of asking the French Government for their share. Other members had been asked as and when they ratified. Monsieur Monnet thought that, if our financial position allowed us to wait until the Council had held a meeting before asking the French Government, the necessary operation of getting the Parliamentary assent to the further contribution (which had not been asked for for the first contribution) would be made much easier.

Mr. Salter said the fresh delay caused much difficulty with regard to the problem of the countries of chief industrial importance. The Council ought to decide this question before the break up of the Labour Conference, as dates can now be foreseen we shall be running matters very close. The problem would perhaps have to go to the very first meeting of the Council. He thought now that it would not be necessary to communicate again with the Governments concerned, as the existing data, though not complete, gave sufficient ground for forming a judgment. The question was now reduced to a fairly narrow compass, as two of the claimants had little chance.

The Secretary General suggested telegraphing to Mr. Fosdick, telling him the position and urging that the Governments should settle the matter between themselves, the delegates acting as ~~Government~~ representatives and not as a Conference.

Monsieur Monnet/

Monsieur Monnet thought there would be very little chance that the Council would have time to give a decision. They could not be expected to settle so important a question in a few days, which they would undoubtedly refer to their Ministers or expert advisers at home. The suggestion that a provisional agreement might be reached in Washington to be confirmed later by the Council, was, he thought, open to the same criticism. The delegates would only refer to their home Governments. A decision was improbable unless the Governments had already been unofficially approached, had had the proposal explained to them and been engaged to instruct their delegates to support it.

It was agreed, for the present, to cable to Mr. Fosdick, explaining the situation and asking for his views. On the receipt of his report we could then consider what action, if any, should be taken by the Secretariat.

In reply to a question from Mr. Salter, the Secretary General said that as regards the date of the Assembly nothing could be said more than that it would be about ten weeks after the coming into force of the Treaty, irrespective of whether the United States had ratified or not.