

smaller Powers are not infrequently—I think I might say almost usually—represented by their Foreign Minister or somebody of equal authority in their country: Dr. Benes on behalf of Czecho-Slovakia, M. Nincic on behalf of Serbia, M. Kalfoff on behalf of Bulgaria, and Dr. Nansen on behalf of Norway, and so on; consequently a very large proportion of them speak directly for their Governments, and those who are not actually Ministers are usually people of such importance that anything they say carries the opinions of their countries with them. It was therefore of great importance that there was a really strong, vehement feeling that the League must act and must do its duty, and a strong feeling also, of course, that the occupation and bombardment of Corfu was, in the circumstances, not a defensible proceeding.

Further Proceedings of Council.

There had been delivered on the 2nd—and this is an important fact in the situation—the reply of the Greeks to the note from the Ambassadors' Conference, and in that reply they expressed their willingness to accept whatever the Ambassadors put upon them. On the same day I received, and was intensely grateful to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary for them, the instructions from the British Government authorizing me to take whatever action I thought right to support the Covenant. The next day the Greek note to the Ambassadors was received, of course, and we received—I need not go into the detail of it—we received information of the rather vehement and formal rejection of all competence of the League on behalf of the Italian Government. That was the 2nd September. When we met on the 4th September, in the first public meeting of the Council, the Italian instructions had not arrived. They had sent somebody, one of their members, to Rome to get personal instructions, and all that we did on that occasion was to hear a further proposal from the Greek Government offering the deposit of 50,000,000 lire in a Swiss bank to await whatever damages might be awarded against them. Then came the meeting of the 5th September, and then we had a communication for the first time from the Ambassadors' Conference telling us what was going on in Paris. We had a speech from the Italian representative denying the competence of the League, in a very much more moderate form, it must be said, than the language which had been used outside the Council of the League, and it was on that occasion that we had read to us the relevant articles of the Covenant, in French and English, pointing out what the duties of the Council were, and that we could not infringe those duties without breaking the Covenant and incidentally breaking the Treaties of Peace of which the Covenant was part. It became clear at this stage, both from what Signor Salandra said to us in the Council and from information conveyed to us from outside, that the Italians were now prepared—they had not said so up till then—to accept the Conference of Ambassadors, not only as the proper authority for dealing with the offence to the Ambassadors, but as determining what ought to be done between Greece and Italy, and therefore on that date we were for the first time in the presence of an agreement by the two parties of the dispute to accept the decision of a tribunal, of a body, outside the League. We had a meeting; a certain number of members of the Council met and considered what reply we ought to send to the Ambassadors, and we felt that our business under the Covenant was to do everything we could to promote a settlement; and, since the two parties had agreed to accept the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors, our object henceforward was to do everything we could to facilitate the task of the Ambassadors, and to make their decision as nearly in accordance with public opinion of the world as expressed at Geneva as we could. We therefore drew up the proposed terms of settlement apart from the question of the evacuation of Corfu, and these were proposed by the Spanish member of the Council at the meeting of the Council on the 6th. We were unable to send those proposals as agreed recommendations to the Council of Ambassadors, and it was in order to get over that difficulty that at my suggestion we decided to send the whole of the minutes of our proceedings to the Ambassadors, who, as we knew, were going to meet the next day to deal with the matter; and the minutes included not only the actual proposals, which were, in fact, the proposals which were afterwards adopted practically without alteration, or very small alterations, by the Conference of Ambassadors, but also included certain very important declarations by other members besides the British member of the Council as to the competence of the League. The Belgian member, for instance, M. Hymans, made a very strong declaration as to the clear competence of the League. That was assented to by the Swedish member and by the Uruguayan member, and also by the Spanish representative. It was, of course, quite well known that that represented the strong feeling, as I have already said, of all these nations there assembled at Geneva; and I happen to know, as a matter of fact, that that feeling was conveyed by a great number of different nations both at Paris and at Rome to the Governments of France and Italy. I have not myself the least doubt that that strong feeling had a considerable effect upon the readiness with which the Conference of Ambassadors on the 7th September adopted the suggestions which the Council of the League had put forward as to the settlement of the question apart from the evacuation of Corfu. The Conference of Ambassadors did adopt them. They were accepted by Greece and Italy; and then took place a rather awkward pause. We were informed that the Conference of Ambassadors were going to deal with the question of Corfu also. As I have said only too often, the business of the League was to promote an agreement and a settlement, and as long as there was any prospect of a settlement being reached it was not the duty of the Council of the League to intervene. They therefore held their hand altogether during the next few days, awaiting the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors as to what was going to happen in Corfu. They, of course, reserved to themselves the right to take the matter up again if no settlement was reached, or if a settlement was reached so plainly in defiance of all public law that they could not allow it to pass. As a matter of fact, on the 13th the settlement was reached, and the note which was sent by the Conference of Ambassadors to Greece was not unsatisfactory. It said that it adhered to the terms, of course, of the 7th September, the first note, and that, having received from the Italian Ambassador a statement that Italy would in any case evacuate Corfu on the 27th September—which,