

On the following day Baron Aloisi, the representative of Italy, addressed the Assembly. His speech, in the original French and in an English translation, will be found amongst the documents enclosed with this report. I invite your attention to it because, as he himself said, he was setting forth completely the point of view of the Italian Government as regards both procedure and the political and historical aspects of the dispute.

He began by alleging that neither the Council nor the Committees appointed by the Council had taken into account, or even examined, the Italian memorandum submitted on the 4th September (Document C. 340, M. 171). Further, that at a critical moment—the meeting of the Council on the 7th October—the Italian member of the Council had been refused an opportunity of stating his views. He then drew attention to the differences in procedure which had marked consideration of the Sino-Japanese and the Chaco disputes on the one hand and the Italian-Abyssinian dispute on the other, procedure which in two instances savoured of leisure, whilst in the third it was characterized by undue haste.

Then followed a recital of the grounds on which Italy based her case :—

- (1) The Italian Government had asked that the League should have regard to the fact that Ethiopia, far from being a united State, was composed of two distinct geographical and political regions. The position was that Ethiopia was in possession of non-Abyssinian colonies over which her rule was exercised only by means of atrocities and oppression. The League of Nations, which imposed on civilized States limitations of sovereignty with a view to safeguarding the rights of minorities, had remained indifferent to a denial of the right of mere existence.
- (2) Why had the League not deemed applicable the measure of exclusion referred to in Article 16 of the Covenant, paragraph 4, in the case of a country proving incapable of fulfilling its engagements ?
- (3) Italy, unable to rely upon the assistance of the League for the guarantee of its security and the recognition of its rights, had found it necessary to fall back upon its own resources in order to meet a danger imminent and considerable, which had culminated in the recent mobilization of more than a million men.
- (4) As to the international, legal, and political aspects of the question, Italy was within its rights in appealing to three clear and fundamental articles of the Covenant: Article I, Article 23, and Article 16 (paragraph 4).

Baron Aloisi made a significant reference to Article 22 of the Covenant (that dealing with mandates) and in particular the first two paragraphs, which he claimed appeared to have been drafted explicitly to meet the case of Abyssinia.

The recommendations of the Committee of Five, to which the Italian delegate earlier in his speech had alluded as containing suggestions involving a limitation of sovereignty and constituting a recognition of the fact that Ethiopia did not fulfil the conditions necessary to retain her position as a member of the League, had not been accepted by Italy. But, apart from the allusion to recommendations, there was not a word of recognition of an attempt, and a far-reaching attempt, to meet the Italian view.

Baron Aloisi then dealt with the alleged breaking by Italy of the Briand-Kellogg Pact, and referred to the reservations made by certain countries, and particularly Great Britain, when adhering to that Pact.

The Italian representative, who in the course of his speech had referred more than once to the want of League action, especially in regard to the non-imposition of sanctions in the Sino-Japanese dispute and in that between Bolivia and Paraguay, concluded by stating that “ Italy was convinced that she was fighting not only her own battle, but that of the League also, and that she was interpreting the true spirit of the League, which was a living thing, by exalting that spirit against the letter of the League, which was a synonym for death. Italy was proud to show the League the path which it must follow to render itself vital and effective. That path was marked by two principles : It must firmly set aside the policy of two different standards and it must regard the Covenant as a whole, harmonizing the part which dealt with the evolution of international life with the part which embodied the principle of conservation, in order to achieve an elasticity necessary to enable it to follow the movement of history and to deal with new situations which, failing such elasticity, would become a sure source of disputes.”

As the Italian delegate had questioned the legality of the Assembly's procedure, the President thought it advisable again to consult the Assembly on the point. No voice was raised against it, however.

The moment had arrived. The representatives of two countries who opposed the opinion of the Council had spoken ; the representative of a third (Albania) had not yet mounted the rostrum, but had been promised an opportunity of speaking later. The President therefore interpreted the silence of the remainder as an acquiescence on the part of their Governments in the opinion which had been expressed by the Council.

I now come to speeches made by other delegates.

M. Laval (France) stated that his country would observe the Covenant, but that, at the same time, the French Government would devote itself passionately to the work of peace.

Mr. Eden (United Kingdom) said that the foreign policy of the British Government was firmly based upon its membership of the League of Nations, for the maintenance of peace was the first objective of British foreign policy and the constant ideal of the British people. The League had two main tasks—the first, to avert war by just and peaceful settlement of all disputes ; the second, if it failed in its first task, to stop war. Action must be taken, and it was for the members of the League of Nations collectively to determine what that action should be.