

Other delegates, like those of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Yugo-Slavia (speaking on behalf of the Little Entente), accepted the implications of the Covenant.

There were interesting speeches from M. Motta, representing Switzerland, and from the delegate from Haiti.

Parts of three Swiss cantons march with the frontiers of Italy, and in one (Ticino) nearly one-fourth of the inhabitants are Italian subjects. Apart from this, Switzerland is in a unique position as regards membership of the League of Nations: the status of the Swiss Confederation in respect to its external relations is governed by the principle of neutrality, and this was recognized by the Council of the League when Switzerland was admitted in 1920. While M. Motta agreed that economic and financial sanctions were not intended to be, and were not in his opinion, hostile acts, and whilst he stated that the Swiss Confederation would not fail in its duty to stand with the other members of the League, Switzerland did not consider herself bound by sanctions which from their nature and effects would expose her neutrality to real danger.

I have made particular reference to the question of an alien population, because Switzerland is not unique in that respect. There are countries in South America faced with the same problem, as became manifest from speeches made by some of the representatives of Latin-American States.

The delegate from Haiti, speaking for a Black Republic, maintained that there were not two truths—one for Africa and another for Europe—that the period of colonial wars had ended, and that one race could no longer be exploited by another. He protested against an attempt to crush an independent coloured race in a so-called colonial war.

Finally, the Abyssinian delegate came to the platform. He said that for ten months his Government had patiently, but with full confidence, waited for justice to be done according to treaties and the Covenant. The solemn verdict had been pronounced, and he asked every member of the League to discharge its duty under Article 16 of the Covenant. I cannot forbear quoting the conclusion of his speech as summarized in the Journal:—

“The Ethiopian Government was engaged in operations of legitimate defence. Nevertheless, it desired to reiterate that it was at the disposal of any organ that might be set up by the Council or by the Assembly for the purpose of interrupting hostilities immediately. It was ready to conclude an honourable peace, but those words must not be misinterpreted. It was the duty of the Ethiopian Government, in all loyalty, to proclaim that, having been made subject to an unjust war and being determined to defend its independence and its integrity to death, however long that war might last, it would not yield to force. It would not accept any condition which gave a premium to its aggressor, for that would be a challenge to international morality.”

In the meantime, a motion emanating from the General Committee of the Assembly had been circulated. It was expressed in the following terms:—

“The Assembly—

“Having taken cognizance of the opinions expressed by the members of the Council at the Council's meeting of 7th October, 1935;

“Taking into consideration the obligations which rest upon the members of the League in virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant and the desirability of a co-ordination of the measures which they may severally contemplate:

“Invites the members of the League (other than the parties) to set up a Committee, composed of one delegate, assisted by experts, for each member, to consider and facilitate the co-ordination of such measures, and, if necessary, to draw the attention of the Council or the Assembly to situations requiring to be examined by them.”

At the conclusion of the Abyssinian delegate's speech the President, when referring to this proposal, said it was not a resolution of the Assembly in the strict sense of the term, but an invitation addressed by the Assembly to the members of the League.

The representative of Italy then spoke. He said that, so far, there had not been any decision of a competent body of the League declaring that a case such as that contemplated in Article 16 had arisen. The proposed Committee could not be regarded as an organ of the League, for it would be a conference of States consulting together on the steps which they would agree to take on their own responsibility. He added that he would vote against the proposal.

The President met Baron Aloisi's two points by stating—(1) That no body of the League had the power to decide compulsorily for all members that one of them had committed a breach of the Covenant. That obligation followed directly from the Covenant and must be observed by members of the League by virtue of their fidelity to treaties. This had been in fact noted by the fourteen members of the Council at the meeting of 7th October, the minutes of which had been forwarded to the Assembly; and (2) that the Assembly was not asked to consider a resolution in the strict sense of the word, but an invitation addressed by the Assembly to States members, and he proposed the replacement of the word “invites” by the word “recommends.”

The proposal was then put to the vote and carried, one country (Italy) voting against, and two countries (Austria and Hungary) abstaining. It should be here noted that the Albanian representative did not speak until the next meeting.

Early in the afternoon of the 11th October the President replied to the observations which had been made by Baron Aloisi on procedure and the alleged omission by the Council to take into consideration certain documents. The remarks of M. Benes will be found in No. 23 of the Journal. The President then adjourned the Assembly after referring to the work accomplished during the preceding three days and to the duty of the Council under Article 11 of the Covenant.

The work accomplished by the Committee of Co-ordination established under the resolution quoted above will be found in a separate report.