

is much that is known only in the chancelleries of the Great Powers, but the dispassionate observer can point to a series of situations, which, even if they are not related, have had a cumulative effect. The Manchurian incident, the German reactions to the Treaty of Versailles, the Abyssinian trouble, the conflict between political schools of thought of an extremist nature, the growth of armaments in some countries and the weakness of armaments in others, and, above all, the ineffectiveness of the League, which ultimately has refused to face squarely more than one problem not perhaps because it is not sufficiently equipped, but because the Governments which compose the League have not been prepared to accept all the consequences resulting from action.

The truth may be that the majority of Governments will not risk a war waged on a matter which is not the domestic concern of the countries they represent. Nor is this to be wondered at if we reflect on a conception of League membership which was propounded at Geneva in 1935 by the then Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom :—

“ In the first place, let us clear our minds as to what the League is and what it is not. It is not a super-State, nor even a separate entity existing of itself, independent of or transcending the States that make up its membership. The member States have not abandoned the sovereignty that resides in each of them, nor does the Covenant require that they should, without their consent in any matter touching their sovereignty, accept decisions of other members of the League. Members of the League, by the fact of their membership, are bound by the obligations that they themselves have assumed in the Covenant and by nothing more. They do not act at the bidding of the League, but in virtue of agreements to which they themselves are parties, or in pursuance of policies to which they themselves assent.”

I have dealt at some length on factors which may not be quite germane to the business in hand, because I wish to emphasize that the League as a body goes as far and no further than the Governments composing it are willing to go, and this slowness of gait is effectively controlled by the unanimity rule which is ever present in the minds of those who, willing to go further, fear to risk the loss of that which is capable of achievement.

The representatives of all members of the Council were present during the session except the representatives of Italy and Ecuador.

The Council met in private on the evening of the 10th December, but at this, its first meeting, it accomplished little more than the taking of a decision respecting its agenda. In addition to the Spanish question, the Turkish Government had proposed the consideration of a dispute between Turkey and France concerning the future of the territories of Alexandretta and Antioch. The French Government raised no objection to a consideration of these matters by the Council. For the present, however, I propose to limit my remarks to the Spanish question.

On the morning of the following day the Council met in public, and the President began with a speech by the Spanish representative, Senor Alvarez del Vayo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In my opinion, the Spanish representative's speech was a sober recital of a situation which, simple as it may appear in its domestic aspects, has considerable complexity considered from the international point of view. He said it was not a question of submitting to the Council any request on behalf of the Spanish Government or the Spanish people. The council was not being asked to assist the Spanish people to solve their own problems. It was the activities of foreign countries, the cynical evasions of the Non-intervention Agreement, the recognition by certain Governments of General Franco, the rebel leader, which had produced a situation of danger to the peace of Europe, a situation which, if allowed to grow, might become unmanageable, with results fatal to democracy. He repudiated the suggestion that a meeting of the Council might lead to an increase in the danger of the international situation. To have remained silent, not to have given warning, might, in the event of the outbreak of a general conflagration, merit reproach. But the Spanish Government was not alone in its view of the dangers which threatened peace. He hoped that, even if the Covenant had not been applied to stop aggression, it could at least be used to prevent the outbreak of a general conflagration. As to the steps which already had been taken to prevent the extension to the rest of Europe of the Spanish conflict, the Spanish representative argued that no one could have any doubt of the complete ineffectiveness of the system as conceived and applied by the Non-intervention Committee. It was true that the Spanish Government had accepted the agreement, but, at the same time, it was convinced that it had every right openly to obtain everything it needed to put down rebellion and that the restriction imposed on its right to trade freely was a measure more arbitrary than anything hitherto known in international life.

On the evening of the 11th December five members of the Council spoke—the representatives of Great Britain, France, New Zealand, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and Poland.

Lord Cranborne, the representative of Great Britain, admitted that the tendency to intervene in the civil war constituted a threat to international peace. He dealt with the inception of the Non-intervention Agreement and the steps which had been taken by the International Committee to prevent intervention. He thought that the establishment and maintenance of the committee had proved a factor of importance deterrent to the indiscriminate supply of arms to Spain and in preventing the struggle from extending beyond the frontiers of Spain, and he could not accept the view that the system of control as conceived and applied had proved ineffective. He thought, however, that of late the agreement was not being scrupulously observed, was indeed being violated in favour of both parties to the struggle whose forces were being augmented by foreign forces to a degree which had assumed alarming proportions. He spoke of the new efforts being made to check intervention, and he expressed the hope that the Council would show itself favourable to the strict enforcement of the Non-intervention Agreement. He then dealt with the approach made by the Governments of the United Kingdom and France to other Powers with a view of negotiating an armistice, and he