

FREE CITY OF DANZIG.

Appointment of High Commissioner.—Mr. Eden, the Rapporteur on Danzig questions, informed the Council that Admiral de Graaf, a Dutchman, had been asked to accept this appointment, and that it was hoped he would accept. In the event of a negative reply, however, Mr. Eden trusted the Council would leave the selection to the Committee of Three—that is, the Committee of the Council which deals with questions relating to Danzig, in collaboration with the Polish Government. The Council concurred.

The Council then went into public session in order to discuss three items of great international importance, the situation in Danzig, the report of the Health Mission which visited Spain, and the question of Alexandretta and Antioch. With these I will proceed to deal, but before treating of them I will dispose of the remaining item, which is—

CONSTITUTIONS PROCEDURE AND PRACTICE OF COMMITTEES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

As so great a bulk of the League's work is done through committees it naturally follows that the greatest care must be exercised in seeing that they function to the best advantage. The inquiry into the work of the League's committees is not only of importance in itself, but it has occasioned, in its results, much thought and care on the part of the Council and the Secretariat. The question has been referred to in reports of the New Zealand delegate at recent Assemblies, and there is no need to go into details here. The Council's Rapporteur on the question is the representative of France, and his report (Document C. 80) deals with certain aspects which have recently been under review. It was approved by the Council. (See also Documents C. 23 and C. 67.)

FREE CITY OF DANZIG : SITUATION AT DANZIG.

The Committee of Three of the Council which deals with Danzig questions had had an unenviable task. The situation *vis-a-vis* the League has almost completely changed since it took over, through its High Commissioner, the duties imposed on it by the Treaty of Versailles. Instead of being called upon to settle differences between the Free City and Poland, as in the early post-war years, it has recently been the League itself, through its High Commissioner, which has come into conflict with the Senate of the Free City; and the period of office of the late High Commissioner, Mr. Lester, was one of great difficulty and anxiety.

To go into the matter in all its political bearings, to touch, even briefly, on the interference with civil liberties in the city, would here serve no useful purpose. The Committee of Three was constantly meeting during the session of the Council, and frequently associated with it was the President of the Senate, who came to the Council Chamber when Mr. Eden's report was brought up for consideration. To that report (Document C. 90) I refer you; and also to the report of the Polish Government (Document C. 89), which had been entrusted by the Council to seek a means of bringing to an end a difficult situation. Happily, the labours of the Committee of Three were not in vain, and agreement between those concerned was arrived at. The report was approved by the Council, which passed the following resolution :—

“The Council, having taken note of the report submitted to it by the representative of Poland, adopts the report of the Committee of Three, and requests the Committee of Three to continue to follow the situation in Danzig.”

We will hope for an improvement, but we cannot escape from an element of doubt after reading the following concluding sentence of Document C. 90 :—

“In any case, the new High Commissioner will see on the spot what the situation is, and, as soon as he has been able to form a definite opinion, he will certainly wish to let the Council know under what practical conditions he thinks he can carry out his functions, taking the present report into account.”

QUESTION OF ALEXANDRETTA AND ANTIOCH.

In my report dated 23rd December last I dealt very briefly with the conflict which had arisen between France and Turkey concerning the territory of Alexandretta and Antioch, which is governed by France as part of the mandated territory of Syria and Lebanon. I then mentioned that the substance of the question would be considered by the Council at its next session. The dispute, which had been the subject of continuous negotiations in the meantime, came again before the Council on the afternoon of the 27th January, but before proceeding to an account of the final examination by the Council I will endeavour to give a brief picture of the dispute itself.

On the 9th September last the Franco-Syrian Treaty, referred to in my report of the 23rd December, was signed, and on the 1st October the Turkish Government communicated with the French Government in regard to the future status of the Sanjak (or prefecture) of Alexandretta. It was the desire of the Turkish Government to secure for the Sanjak a special status which would safeguard the interests of the Turkish section of the population. After some negotiations between the two Governments it was agreed that the matter should be referred to the League. As you know, under resolution of the Council passed at its Ninety-fifth (Extraordinary) Session, three observers were appointed to proceed to the Sanjak, it being understood that the substance of the question should be dealt with at a later session. The observers, in the persons of M. Holstad (Norwegian), M. Caron (Dutch), and Colonel von Wattenwyl (Swiss), arrived at Alexandretta on the 31st December last.