

In the first place, the Committee was concerned with reduction and limitation of armaments, a problem still to engage attention and on which nothing better than marking time could be expected at the moment. Note was taken of the action already recommended and in part under way to ensure publicity of defence expenditure and to supervise the manufacture of and trade in war material. It was, for example, in this connection not without value to exchange detailed information on measures that have been applied in various countries to deal, in one way or another, with the grave and complex problems that inevitably arise from the plain fact that war and preparations for war, though so tragically destructive of the common good of humanity, are a source of gain to certain special interests. And, again merely to illustrate rather than to attempt exhaustively to cover the relevant papers, I cite the following summary of measures of one type that have been adopted in some countries:—

*Bulgaria.*—Prohibition of manufacture of war materials except certain specified war materials manufactured for Army and other military formations in single State factory. (Law of 9th January, 1925.)

*Colombia.* “(a) The . . . manufacture of implements of war and ammunition are strictly forbidden. The Government alone has the right to . . . manufacture . . . such articles.

“(h) There is no arms-factory of any kind in Colombia. The Government alone possesses one munitions-factory. If any arms or munitions factory were subsequently established, it would be by authorization of the Government, and under its supervision.”

(Communication from Colombian Government dated 5th January, 1938.)

*France.*—French Government was authorized, up to 31st March, 1937, to expropriate, in whole or in part, establishments engaged in manufacture of war materials. Twenty-nine factories have been thus expropriated (twelve outright, seventeen through acquisition of majority of shares). (Law of 11th August, 1936, and decrees thereunder.)

*Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.*—State monopoly of industry. (Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.)

The Committee noted with gratification the progress that the United Kingdom was able to report in the entry into force of the Anglo-German and Anglo-Soviet Naval Agreements; and regretted to record that the Japanese Government's attitude had made it impossible for other Powers to maintain their provisionally agreed limit of 35,000 tons for capital ships.

The protection of civilian populations against air bombing was discussed—and this, by some delegates, with tragically intimate knowledge of its life-and-death importance for the people for whom they spoke; by the rest of us, with the feeling that, removed though we still were from the barbarities against which we sought safeguards, we were in fact dealing with a question that might have tragic import for our people also.

As President of the Council, in opening the Assembly I briefly introduced the subject in sentences which I may quote:—

“May I before ending mention one matter on which the whole world could well agree? I refer to the total prohibition of aerial bombardment. If there is one form of warfare that in its indiscriminate barbarity has earned universal condemnation, it is this. If there is one perversion of science that makes men question whether our vaunted progress is real, it is this. The use of men in battle as a means of settling disputes or satisfying desires is tragic enough, but the slaughter of innocent non-combatant women and children is unworthy of the stage of civilization mankind has reached. Will not the nations of the world agree to abolish this new menace?”

When the matter was followed up in the Third Committee, Senor Azcarate, for Spain, and Mr. Wellington Koo, for China, dealt in some practical detail and in impressively temperate terms with its present realities in relation to their countries. It was impossible to remain unmoved when the Spanish representative admitted that his Government were “disinterested,” in the sense that they expected from present League action no practical results in time to rescue Spain from her plight; he again affirmed his Government's refusal to take reprisals against the civilian population in territory under the rebels' control; and, in the hope perhaps of being of service to countries not yet the victims of extensive air bombing, he described dispassionately some of the late experience of the Spanish people. Senor Azcarate also paid a tribute to the United Kingdom Government for what they had done in making their experts available for independent inquiry in Spain into cases of air bombing of civilian areas. A committee of these British officers had already carried their inquiry far enough to allow their first reports to be circulated to delegations at Geneva (Document A. III/4, 1938).

The United Kingdom representative spoke next. He admitted the practical limitations to possible action at this time; he looked to the mobilizing of world opinion against barbarities of the kind described by the previous speaker; and, giving what proved to be a valuable basis for later discussion and a resolution, he suggested that, by analogy