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36. — SLAVERY: PROPOSAL BY THE UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION.

The President:
Translation: I have received the following communication from the United Kingdom delegation:

"On behalf of the United Kingdom delegation, I have the honour to request you to be good enough to propose to the Assembly that, as in previous years, the chapter on Slavery in the report on the work of the League since the last session of the Assembly should be referred to the Sixth Committee.

(Signed) Samuel HOARE."

1 Document A.35.1935.

This letter has been printed and distributed to the delegations, and I propose at a subsequent meeting to make suggestions to the Assembly as to the action to be taken on this proposal.


The President:
Translation: M. Pierre Laval, first delegate of France, will address the Assembly.

M. Laval (France):
Translation: In so serious a discussion as this, in which each one of us must take his share of responsibility, it is my duty to speak on behalf of my country.

I have explained myself to the Council of the League, and I think I did so clearly. France is loyal to the Covenant. She cannot fail to carry out her obligations. The League of Nations was born of the suffering of mankind. It was reared on the ruins, and conceived in order to prevent the return of war. The unreserved support we have given the League has been at once enthusiastic and considered. We place our hopes in the co-operation of all nations in the work of realising our ideal of peace.

Sometimes, at difficult moments, we have suffered real disappointments at Geneva; yet our faith has never wavered. With a perseverance which no difficulty has ever been able to discourage, the representatives of France have constantly sought to increase the moral authority of this supreme international institution. They were resolved, and they are still resolved, to make it stronger, to give it the means to act.

From the 1924 Protocol to the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, they
have supported with the same zeal the doctrine of collective security. That doctrine is and will remain that of France.

The Covenant is our international law. How could we allow such a law to be weakened? To do so could be to deny a whole ideal, and it would be contrary to our interest to do so. France's policy rests entirely on the League. All our agreements with our friends and with our allies are now concluded through Geneva, or culminate at Geneva. I need only mention the Treaties of Locarno, our agreements with the Petite Entente, the Franco-Soviet Pact and the Rome Agreements.

Any attack on the League would be an attack on our security. In affirming our loyalty to the Covenant, I renew and confirm the declaration made from this platform by all the representatives of my country. If it be necessary in the present circumstances, that will not occasion any surprise.

In a speech reflecting great loftiness of thought, and imbued with the liberal tradition of England, and her sense of the universal, Sir Samuel Hoare told us, the day before yesterday, that it was the desire of the United Kingdom to associate itself unrestrainedly with the system of collective security. He affirmed that this desire was, and would continue to be, the guiding principle of the United Kingdom's international policy. His words have nowhere been received with more satisfaction than in France. No country can better appreciate and determine the scope of such an engagement.

The spirit of solidarity in the matter of responsibilities of all kinds, in all circumstances and at all times and places, which is implied for the future by such a statement, marks an epoch in the history of the League.

I rejoice at this, and so does my country, which understands the vital necessity of close collaboration with the United Kingdom in defence of peace and for the safeguarding of peace.

As early as February 3rd last, our two Governments jointly drew up in London a programme fraught with hope. The news was received throughout the world with real enthusiasm. Obstacles have arisen which have hindered the realisation of that programme. I dreamt a beautiful dream: is it possible that that dream is about to be fulfilled? I speak on behalf of a country which does not fear war, but which hates it; a country which intends to remain strong, and which, rich in the highest military virtues, is inspired by a fierce desire for peace. We do not harbour prejudices against any nation. We desire peace for all through the collaboration of all.

It is not without emotion that, after having signed the Rome agreements, I now speak of the dispute which is weighing so heavily on our Assembly.

On January 7th last, M. Mussolini and I, acting, not only in the interests of our two countries, but also in that of the peace of Europe, reached a final settlement of all our differences. Conscious of the immense value of the Franco-Italian friendship, I have left nothing undone to prevent any blow to the new policy happily established between France and Italy.

At Stresa, together with the delegates of the United Kingdom Government, we found the head of the Italian Government imbued with the same desire and the same will to serve the cause of peace. I know he is prepared to persevere in this collaboration. I need say no more to show how much importance I attach to the maintenance of such solidarity in the interests both of the European community and of general peace.

I have spared no effort at conciliation. We all desire to reach an understanding, and, in the supreme effort being made by the Council, I shall have the satisfaction of once more fulfilling my duty as the representative of a Member of the League and that dictated to me by friendship.

I still hope that the Council may shortly be able to carry out its mission of conciliation. The task is doubtless a difficult one, but I still do not think it hopeless.

On the Committee of Five we are studying every proposal likely to satisfy Italy's legitimate aspirations so far as is compatible with respect for the sovereignty of another State Member of the League.

It must be realised that there is no disagreement between France and the United Kingdom in our efforts to secure a pacific solution. During the current year, we have met with difficulties which seemed to be insuperable; yet they were overcome. Because the Saar question and the dispute between Hungary and Yugoslavia were European problems, must we conclude that they were on that account easier to settle? We succeeded yesterday. Shall we fail to-morrow? Should we fail, we shall be called upon to examine a new situation, which will be still more anxious for us all and urged by bonds of solidarity which point the way to duty. Our obligations are inscribed in the Covenant; France will not shirk them.

The President:

Translation: His Highness the Aga Khan, first delegate of India, will address the Assembly.

The Aga Khan (India).—On the one subject that is dominating the mind of this Assembly there is much that I could say, but I am a man of few words and I shall be very brief.

In India, criticism of the League of Nations is growing. India is under the League's lack of universality, the incompleteness of its composition and the tiny representation of Indians in its organisation. She is troubled by the great preponderance, as India sees it, of the energies the League devotes to Europe and European interests. She is troubled by the magnitude of her own contribution to the League budget, large and unimportant, for it is larger than the contribution of any non-permanent Member of the Council, disturbingly large when placed side by side with the poverty of so many or her many, many millions. She is troubled by the League's failures, troubled by the Disarmament Conference, growing out and inconclusive — and here I can speak feelingly as a member of the Disarmament Conference from the beginning — whereas the rearmament of States is in full swing. She is troubled above all by the wars, declared or undeclared, that have been waged between Members of the League.

Now a fresh trouble greater than any is on the horizon. Should the worst come to the worst — which Heaven forbid — who dare foretell the evils, world-spread, age-lasting, that might follow? India's criticism of the League is directed to its shortcomings, not to the ideals of which the League was the outcome and which inspired her being and the best thought of the world. On the contrary. Those ideals spring from the same source as India's own philosophy and idealism, and the conception of collective security is appealing with ever growing force to my countrymen as the only alternative to international anarchy. The world is to-day at the parting of the ways. Let wisdom guide her choice.

The President:

Translation: Mr. te Water, first delegate of the Union of South Africa, will address the Assembly.
Mr. te Water (Union of South Africa).—The peculiar position of the Union of South Africa in the great African continent, on which the searchlight of history has so dramatically turned, is at once the earnest of the profound interest and anxiety of the whole South African people, both African and European, in the rapidly degenerating situation in Ethiopia, and my reason for taking part in this discussion before the Assembly.

It is fitting, I think, that this moment should be seized to explain as briefly as possible (because, Mr. President, the delicacy of the situation demands both brevity and caution), from this most important platform, the reactions of these developments on the one permanent and indigenous white civilisation in Africa, of European nations, and particularly those who are interested in the African continent, should understand that the people of South Africa are moved deeply by policies which appear to them to be directed once again to the threat of a new partition of Africa by European Powers. Their actions in this regard, dictated, after all, by passing policies—so it seems to me—can never fundamentally affect their nationhood or that national culture which their own particular genius has evolved. They are motivated doubtless by some pressing national manifestation. They find their urge in some momentary national need. But to us who are Africans, now, in the fullest sense of the word, the result of such manifestations or of such urge is not ephemeral or passing. European action in Africa leaves always its permanent mark, and how often in the long history of Africa has the mark not become a deeply reacting scar!

Let it be said now, so that the nations are enabled at once to regard the fundamentals of our South African attitude, that a partition of Africa, outside the covering blanket of the League, is fraught with danger and menace—danger to the adventuring nations themselves, danger to the black peoples of Africa, and menace to our own white civilisation, now, after centuries of trial and sacrifice, so firmly, and, we believe, beneficently established in Southern Africa.

Those of us who in Africa live in daily and intimate contact with its deep and complex problems, and whose very instincts are vitally engaged in seeking for their right solution, are wondering. We are wondering how far the Governments and peoples of the nations of Europe—indeed of the world—have considered this acute crisis, which darkens the European sky at the moment and fills all our minds with forebodings, as the beginning of a yet undefined movement by Europe towards the capitalisation of the still thinly overlaid war-mindedness, the savage and warlike instincts of Black Africa—the training of the teeming black races of Africa for war.

Here we are in the presence of fundamentals. Here, to the South African mind, lurks the ultimate danger, the danger to Africa and to ourselves. And, indeed, we are facing at this moment the possible destruction, for this purpose, of one of the last surviving sovereignties in Africa.

For, if that crime is to be permitted, if Africa is to be conscripted by Europe for its own purposes and designs, armed Africa will, we profoundly believe, determine its fate and purpose, rise and overthrow, as it has done before, in its long and dark history, and revert to that black barbarism which has been our difficult destiny in the south to penetrate and enlighten.

If our southern civilisation, if the south African nation has made a single contribution to the solution of the African problem, it is that it has brought peace to the tribes and has resolutely taught the native that he has no concern in the white man's madnesses and wars. That is our most fundamental concept. That other concept, we believe, is the last sin against Africa.

It is this fateful principle, acknowledged by the nations at Versailles, and explicit in the system of mandates then established for the future governance of the backward races, which now threatens to be destroyed.

And so, my Government and the whole people of my country, both black and white, view with deep concern, and with an anxious-born or the instinctive knowledge of its consequences, the slow and apparently relentless march of the disease of war into our continent. Let it never be forgotten: the long memory of Black Africa never forgets and never forgives an injury or an injustice.

Surely, here is no problem made insoluble by some long conflict of the mighty that cannot be justly resolved by taking counsel at these tables. Cannot that great people, whose renaissance so many of us in the South have admired and acclaimed, cannot their powerful and purposeful leader, who by his own imagination and will has created that nuisance, pause and consider, even at this eleventh hour? We are their colleagues here at this place to-day, as we were yesterday. We and they have bound ourselves, voluntarily, by simple oaths to maintain this structure of the League, and to resolve our difficulties by its machinery.

Once more, in conformity with my duty and my instructions, I stand at this bar of the League of Nations as the representative of a most friendly Government and people, more closely affected than any other nation by these issues, and ask my question of these great Powers. The answers are vital to my country in the consideration, to which it has been driven by these events, of its association with this system. For we who have been, and desire to continue to be, a most loyal Member of the League, believing profoundly in its purpose, can continue as such only by a deep conviction in its honesty.

My delegation therefore heard with the most lively satisfaction the declaration of the distinguished representative of that great country with which the Union of South Africa stands in such close association. I would add that the important declaration of the British Foreign Secretary seemed to us to have been made in a spirit of calm and helpful sincerity. It is equally a real and sincere satisfaction to my delegation, as I believe it must be to every delegation in this Assembly, that the distinguished Prime Minister of France decided this morning to break his silence. For the South African Government and the people of South Africa have justly regarded the powerful and cultured French nation as the very corner stone of the collective system, as the most insistent voice in the name of collective action and collective security.

In that name, it is now, I believe, not possible that France any longer hesitates to insist that we are all bound by our undertakings under the Covenant and by the solemn terms of the Pact of Paris.

Lastly, may my country, through me, make this appeal to the leader and people of the new Italy, appealing to them, both as a friendly African nation and as a Member nation of this League, let that act be done which will set the nations of Europe safely back on that road which they and we have all been so urgently seeking, so that it may be proclaimed to the world that statesmanship still lives; and that Europe is yet master of its own genius and not slave to its destiny; that this instrument which has been so laboriously and so earnestly constructed by the nations may be enabled to continue its vital existence.
The President:

Translation: M. Rivas Vicuña, first delegate of Chile, will address the Assembly.

M. Rivas Vicuña (Chile):

Translation: Following her unbroken tradition, Chile has most enthusiastically subscribed to the principles of the League from the first moment when its work began.

In virtue of a unanimous vote of the Assembly, which expressed the equally unanimous will of Latin America, Chile finds herself for the second time a Member of the Council, and in this position of confidence she has continued to collaborate in the work for peace among the nations and for the welfare and progress of mankind which the League is accomplishing through its different organs.

Last year, we were concerned with an American problem—war between two sister nations. In our continent, as here in the world Assembly, Chile took the necessary steps and afforded her assistance towards putting an end to the war, thus opening up the path towards the restoration of a fruitful and fraternal friendship.

In order to carry out its duty as a Member of the League, and in face of the difficulties in the way of the settlement proposed, my Government took the initiative, of which you are all aware, to propose an end to the Chaco war by means of a settlement within the framework of the League. It was able to announce, jointly with the Argentine Republic, last March, the steps which these two States, bound together as they are by a long tradition and the same noble aspirations, proposed to take with reference to the belligerents, in concert with limitrophe States and the United States of America.

The League of Nations placed its confidence in this initiative, which has already borne good fruit, and the Conference of Buenos Aires will continue its task until the total and final liquidation of the dispute, surmounting any difficulties which may arise in a spirit of equity and justice.

The favourable outcome of these measures must be placed to the League’s credit as one of the successes achieved by it, whether directly or through the effective collaboration of its Members, taking their stand upon its decisions. There may be critics of the League’s work; but we can calmly await the impartial judgment of posterity, which will be able to appreciate the work done with such weak and imperfect instruments. It is a common error to attribute to the League powers not accorded to it by the Covenant and to demand of it solutions which are beyond its powers and do not correspond to the obligations contracted by States at the time of its foundation.

The Covenant, like every work of man, has its imperfections and defects, which hinder its rapid application, and which, coupled with the League’s present lack of universality, sometimes prevent complete and immediate satisfaction being given to public opinion.

We have been able to observe the omissions in the Covenant, not only in the case to which we have alluded, but also in other cases. The general agreement, like the Pact of Paris and others, prove that it will be necessary to complete and perfect the great work of the organisation of peace.

We have had the honour of collaborating in the work of the Committee entrusted with finding means of rendering the application of the Covenant more effective with a view to ensuring collective security, and we are convinced by experience that a revision of the Covenant ought to be under-

38. — INTERNATIONAL RELIEF UNION:

PROPOSAL BY THE DELEGATION OF VENEZUELA.

The President:

Translation: I have received from the delegation of Venezuela the following letter, dated September 12th. 1

“On behalf of the delegation of Venezuela, I have the honour to request you to submit to the Assembly the proposal to refer to the Fifth Committee the report by the International Relief Union (document C.546.M.175.1935.XII) which, in accordance with Article 10 of the Statutes of the Union, is brought by the Secretary-General to the notice of the Council and the Assembly of the League of Nations.

(Signed) C. Parra-Pérez.”

In accordance with precedent, the text of this communication will be printed and distributed to the delegations, and I will make suggestions to the Assembly at a subsequent meeting as to the procedure to be followed.

1 Document A.37.1935.XII.
39. — TREATY OF NON-AGGRESSION AND
CONCILIATION CONCLUDED AT RIO DE
JANEIRO ON OCTOBER 10TH, 1933: EXAMA-
INATION OF THIS TREATY BY THE COM-
MITTEE SET UP TO CONSIDER THE
QUESTION OF AMENDING THE COVE-
NANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS IN
ORDER TO BRING IT INTO HARMONY
WITH THE PACT OF PARIS: COMMUNICA-
TION FROM THE DELEGATION OF THE
ARGENTINE REPUBLIC.

The President:

Translation: I have received a communication from the delegation of the Argentine Republic which I will read to you:

"An obviously unintentional omission has occurred in the agenda of the present Assembly.

"Item No. 11 is the amendment of the Covenant of the League in order to bring it into harmony with the Pact of Paris, but no allusion is made to the Argentine Pact of October 10th, 1933.

"I would point out that, at the meeting of the fifteenth Assembly on September 10th, 1934, (Official Journal, Special Supplement No. 126, page 31), it was decided to examine the Treaty of Non-Aggression and Conciliation concluded on the initiative of the Argentine Government — a Treaty which has now been signed by all the States of America and has been unanimously ratified by the United States Senate. Several European nations, too, have already approved it.

"I should like to say that this treaty pursues the same general aims as the Covenant and the Pact of Paris. Consequently, in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution of September 10th, 1934, the Argentine treaty should be referred for examination to the Committee set up to investigate the agreements embodied in those treaties.

(Signed) Ruiz Guíñazú.

The Argentine delegation's communication is to the effect that, when the question of the amendment of the Covenant of the League in order to bring it into harmony with the Pact of Paris is examined, account should be taken of the Treaty of Non-Aggression and Conciliation which was concluded on the initiative of the Government of the Argentine Republic, and which has already been acceded to by a very large number of countries.

The Assembly will certainly see no objection to acceding to the Argentine delegation’s request, and consequently to deciding that this Treaty of Conciliation and Non-Aggression shall be included among the material to be considered by the Committee set up to examine the question of amending the Covenant.

The President's proposal was adopted."