SIXTH MEETING (PRIVATE, THEN PUBLIC)

Held at Geneva on Saturday, December 11th, 1926, at 4 p.m.

Present: All the representatives of the Members of the Council, and the Secretary-General.


M. Scialoja read his report (Annex 932), and submitted the following resolution:

"The Council decides that, owing to the high cost of living in the Saar Territory, an increase in salary of 25,000 French francs shall be granted to each member of the Governing Commission for the financial period 1926-27."

The resolution was adopted.

The Council went into public session.

1862. Award of the Nobel Prize to M. Briand, Sir Austen Chamberlain and Dr. Stresemann.

The President spoke as follows:

Gentlemen, we have been informed that the Nobel Prize has just been awarded simultaneously to a citizen of the United States, General Dawes, and to three of our distinguished colleagues, M. Briand, Sir Austen Chamberlain and Dr. Stresemann, the representatives of the Great Powers who took the initiative as regards the Conference of Locarno.

As Dr. Nansen said at the University of Oslo, the Nobel Institute desired to honour in their persons the loyal and sincere effort to put into practice the policy founded on friendship and mutual confidence between the former adversaries of the war. Some of us here have been associated in this task and have been able to see these persons at work during a difficult period, when that policy had wavered in the balance under the shock of opposing forces which have not yet lost all their strength. We are aware of the full measure of energy, tenacity of purpose, wide understanding of the general interest of Europe and — I do not hesitate to say — of courage necessary to bring to a successful conclusion that great enterprise with which their names will always be associated.

I am glad, in the name of the Council, to express to them our sympathy, our gratitude and our admiration.

M. Briand spoke as follows:

Mr. President, I do not know how to thank you for the very friendly words which, on your own behalf and on behalf of the Council, you have been so kind as to address to me, in association with my colleagues, Sir Austen Chamberlain and Dr. Stresemann.

I cannot conceal that, so far as I am concerned, the high honour which has been conferred upon me has touched me very deeply: I shall not be reproached for having, during my long political career, sought for what may be described as honourable distinctions. I must confess, however, that this distinction gives me particular pleasure in associating my name with an idea which has always been dear to me, and to which I shall be profoundly happy to devote the rest of my life.

I know that there are still many stages to pass before we can fully realise the ideal which is consecrated by this distinction, and I am fully aware that on the path we have taken there are still many obstacles to be encountered. I realise that there may be some injustice, in an Assembly like ours, in attributing to one person rather than to another such an honour. In reality, my colleagues and I constitute, if I may say so, a composite whole. This distinction has been conferred upon us because it was desired to honour in our persons, as it was impossible to do so in the persons of all who deserved it, the efforts which the League of Nations, which it is our honour to serve, has made in the direction of peace.

In spite of the irony and in spite of the discouraging doubts which have been expressed, I think we have the right to say that peace has made some progress. We have noted during the past months that not a few events which formerly might perhaps have lighted the world with the beacons of war have been settled peacefully, and we have the feeling that, if we do not allow ourselves to be discouraged by any difficulty or to be hindered by any obstacle, the efforts of yesterday, continued to-morrow, will finally be crowned with a success which will not be ours but that of all humanity.

So far as I personally am concerned, I will endeavour to deserve the congratulations which you, Mr. President, have addressed to me on behalf of our colleagues and on your own behalf, by continuing to put all my strength at the service of the noble ideal which you yourself have served with so much eloquence, energy and skill.

Sir Austen Chamberlain spoke as follows:

I thank, sir, and my colleagues, for the generous words which you have just pronounced in their name. No one can receive such congratulations from a body like the Council of the League of Nations and not be sensible of the honour which has been done to him.
At Locarno, seven Powers were represented, and goodwill and some sacrifice on the part of each was necessary to the success which we achieved. I recognise that my own position there was perhaps the easiest of all, for, situated as it was, my country had fewer difficulties to meet and its representative spoke for a more united nation than was possible to his collaborators at that moment. I rejoice to think that the unanimity among my own countrymen, which supported me in those discussions and in their results, is being approached in other countries, where the work was viewed at first with less warm appreciation.

For my part, Mr. President, I shall ever grateful that it fell to my lot to represent my country in a work which will, I believe, be judged by history to have marked the real division between the mentality of war and the mentality of peace in Europe.

When, two years ago, I was called to the office which I at present hold, the outlook in Europe was gloomy: progress had been arrested for a long time; it had only just recommenced with the successful conclusion of the work of the Dawes Committee, the Chairman of which is associated with us in the honour which the Nobel Committee has conferred. Looking ahead, I saw dangers thick upon the horizon and I felt convinced that, unless we could lay before former enemies — and lay quickly — the basis, at least, of a reconciliation, the world would not escape a repetition of the disaster through which we had come. It was with particular pleasure and satisfaction, therefore, that I received the first intimation of the proposal which Dr. Stresemann made, and after months — as it seemed, long months — of negotiation (but months of sound work where the foundations of our success were laid), I received that initiative from Dr. Stresemann which led us ultimately to Locarno. All of us who were then in Paris in his own country and when speaking to the representatives of other countries, asked of the public two things: “Do not underrate what has been accomplished, but, at the same time, do not exaggerate it.” As M. Briand has said once again to-day, we are, at least, conscious that the path we still have to travel is a long one, that we shall meet with many obstacles and difficulties on the way, but — I think I may say it — we are also convinced, when we think of the greater difficulties already overcome, that, with courage, patience and perseverance, we shall ultimately reach our goal.

I have spoken of the attitude of my own countrymen in Great Britain towards the work in which I participated at Locarno. It was to me a profound satisfaction — it will have been, I think, scarcely less satisfaction to my colleagues in this task — to have noted the congratulations which were offered to the British Government, for its share in this great work of peace, by the assembled representatives of the free nations which compose the British Empire; and now there comes from a more independent source, a more international source, a further recognition of our work. It dedicates us afresh to the efforts we have made and shall continue to make for the reconciliation of our peoples, for the peace of the world and for the edification and fortification of the League of Nations.

Dr. Stresemann spoke as follows:

I desire to thank you, Mr. President, for the kind manner in which you have referred to those members of the Council who have had the honour to receive the Nobel Prize. My colleagues, M. Briand and Sir Austen Chamberlain, have so well described the field of our action in their speeches that I have but little to add. The decision taken at Oslo by a Committee whose independent spirit is rightfully recognised by everybody does not concern individuals but the representatives of certain ideas which have been fought for during these last years of European political history.

The present situation is dominated by a great moral struggle which is being carried on alike between the various nations and within their own borders. In this struggle I have not had the good fortune to be able to say, with Sir Austen Chamberlain, that my position has been easy to maintain. I have had continually to overcome fresh obstacles. You will readily understand that the road which the great majority of the German people has followed, and one which the immense majority of that people will continue to follow, I hope, in the future, has, from the moral point of view, been full of sacrifice and self-denial. An Italian poet has said that there is nothing more sad than to call to mind in present misfortunes days of past grandeur.

At a time when I was not yet Minister and when another man with the same ideas was Minister for Foreign Affairs, I said once, at a meeting of the Reichstag, that for a long time still to come all Foreign Ministers of Germany would find themselves faced with the great difficulty of conciliating the remembrance of the German people for their great past with the policy which is the only possible one at the moment. I have been sometimes blamed for this policy. I have been asked whether it was consonant with the dignity and the progress of the nation. I replied: history teaches us that the greatness to which a nation aspires and the best efforts which its capacities allow it to make are founded always on the idea of peace, and that he is always the best servant of his people who makes it possible for them to use their capacities for peace both to achieve it within the nation itself and throughout the whole world. This is the honourable and dignified national policy which we have all followed.

It is quite true that the road which has led us to Geneva has been a long one. Sometimes we have almost felt that the atmosphere of Geneva was not so sunny as that of Locarno. I think, however, that it might almost be considered as a law of nature that any progress must be followed by reaction, and that new obstacles continually arise. I think I am able to say that the satisfaction felt at results obtained is never stronger than when the road leading to them has been set about with obstacles and difficulties. The policy which we follow will not be free from the danger
of reverses, but it will be seen that a great idea is capable, among men, of overcoming resistance at first sight insurmountable, and that great ideas are always those which finally triumph.

The Greeks said that the gods wished that any success should be won at the expense of suffering. This is true of the policy which we have followed during these last years, and it will be equally true in the future. Let me, therefore, express the hope that the road which we are following will be that leading to progress and universal peace.

In conclusion, let me inform you, Sir, that throughout the events of the last years we have always been glad to find you on our side, playing the part of a mediator, full of generosity and wisdom.

I hope that the decision taken at Oslo — which, as I have just pointed out, concerns rather the ideas themselves than those who have upheld them — will be fully ratified by posterity.

r863. Execution of the Naval, Military and Air Clauses of the Treaty of Peace: Chairmanship of the Commissions of Investigation.

M. Beneš read the following report:

"As the Secretary-General has reminded us in his memorandum, it is the duty of the Council to appoint the Chairmen of the Commissions of Investigation provided for in the scheme for the organisation of the exercise of the right of investigation which has been entrusted to the Council by the Peace Treaties. As the terms of office of the existing Chairmen expire during the months of January and February 1927, it is necessary to make new appointments.

"After consulting with those concerned, I have the honour to propose to my colleagues the appointment of the following Chairmen for a period of one year (renewable):

"Commission of Investigation in Germany:
General Baratier;

"Commission of Investigation in Austria:
General Marietti;

"Commission of Investigation in Bulgaria:
A superior officer of the Netherlands Army, whose name will be communicated to the Acting President of the Council by the Netherlands representative on the Council;

"Commission of Investigation in Hungary:
General C. Bonham-Carter, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

"It is understood that these appointments will date respectively from the termination of the present appointments.

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"On this occasion, and in reply to certain questions submitted by the German Government regarding the regulations adopted by the Council on September 27th, 1924, and March 14th, 1925, I propose that the Council should give the following explanations:

"1. The Council of the League of Nations, acting by a majority vote, shall decide, in conformity with Article 213 of the Treaty of Versailles, whether it is necessary, in any particular case, to hold an investigation, and it shall then specify the object and the limits of such investigation. The Commissions of Investigation shall act under the authority and on the instructions of the Council; the Council’s decisions shall be taken by a majority vote.

"2. To render an effective investigation possible, the Commission shall apply to the representative appointed by the German Government or to his delegates, who will procure without delay the assistance of the administrative, judicial or military authority competent under German law. Such investigation shall then be carried out and findings reached as the Commission, acting within the limits of its instructions, may consider advisable, the interested party being given a hearing (contradictoire).

"3. The prohibition laid down that the nationals of a State subjected to the right of investigation shall not form part of commissions of investigation shall be understood in the sense that the nationals of the State in the territory of which an investigation is undertaken shall never form part of a commission holding such investigation.

"4. It is understood that the provisions of Article 213 of the Peace Treaty with Germany relating to investigations shall be applicable to the demilitarised Rhine zone as to other parts of Germany. These provisions do not provide in this zone, any more than elsewhere, for any special control by local, standing and permanent groups. In the demilitarised Rhine zone, such special groups not provided for in Article 213 shall not be set up except by convention between the Governments concerned.

"5. The explanations given in Articles 1, 2 and 3 above naturally apply to cases under Article 159 of the Treaty of St. Germain, Article 143 of the Treaty of Trianon and Article 104 of the Treaty of Neulîy.

"The report was adopted."