

For example, according to public statements made respectively by her Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs during the previous three months, France rejected in advance any proposal which would impair the structure or the spirit of the Covenant, and while she would be prepared, and would indeed advocate, the strengthening of it by improving its application, any plan which would make of the League a merely academic consulting body could not be accepted by her. She placed great importance on the principle of collective security.

The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, Lithuania, Colombia, and Latvia expressly or implicitly adopted the same view, while New Zealand, as you know, was prepared to reaffirm with the utmost solemnity her continued acceptance of the Covenant as it stands. Indeed, most of the eighteen Governments referred to were either opposed to or not strongly in favour of the idea of drastic amendment of the Covenant. On the other hand, the Argentine Republic considered it desirable not to enter into undertakings beyond those which all members were in a position to observe, taking the view that consideration should be given as to what provisions of the Covenant had been shown by experience to be no longer in keeping with the realities of international life, holding that these provisions should be given an optional character instead of one of strict obligations. The Swiss Government, remarking that the disparity between hopes and realities had proved to be very wide, and was indeed largely responsible for the decline of the League's prestige, took a similar view. Other Governments such as Hungary, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Sweden, and Iraq, in their respective proposals, laid particular stress upon the League's function of preventing war, arguing that in the first place an agreement must be reached to make more definite preparations for the application of the rules in the Covenant, which are designed to obviate any violation of its principles by strengthening the preventive activities of the League.

The foregoing are typical examples of the divergence of view ascertained prior to the first meeting of the Assembly.

ASSEMBLY.

After an eloquent exhortation by the President of the Council, acting as President of the Assembly until that body should choose its President for the session, the Assembly proceeded to its business.

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE.

Its first action was to appoint the Credentials Committee. On this occasion a secret ballot was taken on a proposal of the Abyssinian delegate, and the following is the result of the voting :—

Mr. A. Eden (United Kingdom)	47
M. Litvinoff (U.S.S.R.)	47
M. Delbos (France)	46
M. Osusky (Czechoslovakia)	43
M. Politis (Greece)	43
M. Rüstü Aras (Turkey)	41
M. Tudela (Peru)	41
Mr. W. J. Jordan (New Zealand)	40
M. Limburg (Netherlands)	39

It would, I think, be correct to interpret the inclusion of her representative as a compliment to New Zealand, for although the work of the Credentials Committee is generally more or less formal, on this occasion its task was rendered more delicate and difficult because of a question which had been raised, not by the Assembly nor by any delegate, but rather in the form of a discussion in the press as to the legal standing of the delegation which had been appointed by the Emperor of Abyssinia, whose country had been virtually annexed by Italy.

The Committee had before it a memorandum from the Secretary-General of the League reporting on the results of his recent visit to Rome where he had called upon Signor Mussolini and the Italian Foreign Minister. The question of the collaboration of Italy with the League had naturally been raised. The Italian Government, M. Avenol understood, was anxious to resume loyal, unrestricted, and unreserved collaboration with the League, but it saw one obstacle—namely, the presence of an Ethiopian delegation at the Assembly. On his explaining that there could be no question of bringing up again in any form the matter of the status or of the existing legal situation, the Secretary-General stated that he understood that the Italian Government had no intention of raising the point, but that it intended to make its collaboration depend exclusively on the presence *de facto* of an Ethiopian delegation.

In view of the fact that the Ethiopian delegation had taken its place in the Assembly Hall, the Italian Government, in line with its intentions as described above, took no part in the deliberations of the Assembly, and the seats allocated to its representatives remained vacant throughout the session.

The questions which confronted the Credentials Committee were twofold :—

- (1) Whether His Majesty Haile Selassie I was in law or in fact still exercising dominion over Abyssinia and was thus justified in issuing credentials to the Ethiopian delegation.
- (2) Whether in any case Abyssinia as a State Member of the League could on any ground of justice or principle be excluded from representation in the Assembly. The present conditions had been brought about not by any delinquency on the part of Abyssinia, but by the act of a State pronounced by the League itself as the aggressor.