

Faced with these considerations, among others, the Credentials Committee met twice during the first day (21st September) under the Chairmanship of M. Tudela (Peru), who at the second meeting of the Assembly presented the Committee's interim report on the credentials of the delegates as a whole. This showed that six States—namely, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Salvador—had not appointed delegates. With one exception there is no need to refer to the other countries with which the report deals. The exception was the delegation appointed by His Majesty Haile Selassie I, in regard to which the report observed that the Credentials Committee was of the opinion that the question called for closer examination.

On the 23rd September the final report (Document A. 41, 1936) of the Committee was presented to the Assembly. After calling attention to certain facts—the absence from his country of the Emperor, and of the Government from the capital, and the nature and extent of the power of the authority established in that part of the country not occupied by Italy (which the Ethiopian delegation had contended was more than half of the whole territory)—the report stated that the question the Committee was called upon to examine was whether the head of the State from which the credentials under examination emanated was in fact exercising his legal title effectively enough to make these credentials perfectly in order. No member of the Committee had suggested that the question should be settled in the negative. Some doubt, however, had prevailed as to whether the credentials were in order. At one time it was proposed that an advisory opinion should be sought of the Permanent Court of International Justice. That procedure, however, meant delay and involved the question as to what would be the position of the Abyssinian delegation in the meantime. The Rules of Procedure entitle a delegation, to whose admission objection had been raised, to sit provisionally unless otherwise decided by the Assembly, and, presupposing objection, in practice the question would be settled before the advisory opinion was formulated. Accordingly it was proposed by the Credentials Committee that the Abyssinian delegation should receive the benefit of the doubt and be allowed to sit during the present session.

The delegate of Hungary asked that a vote by roll-call should be taken by the Assembly, his proposal being seconded by the Austrian and Albanian delegates. As a result of this voting thirty-nine countries were found to be in favour of the adoption of the report, four (Albania, Austria, Ecuador, and Hungary) voted against it, and six States abstained from voting—namely, Bulgaria, Panama, Portugal, Siam, Switzerland, and Venezuela.

The Rules of Procedure required an absolute majority. As 43 votes had to be taken into account and thirty-nine States had voted in favour, the report was declared adopted. The first delegate of Ethiopia, while making reservations concerning the grounds on which it was based, gratefully accepted its conclusions.

It will be noted that the question is not finally disposed of, the solution being a temporary one and holding good “only for the present session.”

As a Member of the Committee, and thus able to speak with first-hand knowledge of its discussions, I think it appropriate to say that I was deeply impressed both by the thoroughness with which the problem was examined and thrashed out and by the obvious anxiety of all the delegates to find a solution based solely upon principle and in accord with a just interpretation of the spirit of the Rules of Procedure.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT.

As its President the Assembly elected M. Saavedra Lamas, the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Argentine Republic, who received 44 votes out of 45 valid votes cast. The name of M. Lamas is well and honourably known even beyond the confines of the South American Continent, as are also his unwavering efforts in the cause of peace. His opening speech, which will be found amongst the documents which accompany this report, included the following striking passages :—

“ We must proceed with our quest for peace and mutual understanding. We must not be disheartened, either by the diversity of our problems or by their unvarying complexity. During the seventeen years of its existence the League has known alternately success and deep disappointment. Such is the lot of every living organism in its necessary efforts to adapt itself to circumstances. This is a biological process which should cause us no surprise . . . Law can only be the expression of a moral reality. We may amend the Covenant according to forms of law, but its efficacy will depend above all on the weight of the moral forces to which it owed its origin at a moment when civilization, in a great spiritual awakening, reacted against the barbarism of war. The League of Nations has been the subject of many criticisms and many reproaches, and it has been made to bear alone the weight of many responsibilities. It is justified in turning upon its critics and claiming before the world the moral contribution, the gift of good faith, solidarity, and even of sacrifice, which was promised to it at its birth, and with which it cannot dispense unless it is to fail in its mission.”

ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES.

On the 22nd September the Agenda (Document A. 2 (1), 1936) was adopted and the Assembly Committees appointed. It is to these Committees, normally six in number, that most of the items of the Agenda are referred. Actually five Committees were set up (Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6), but the Assembly reserved the right to appoint its Third Committee should it become necessary to deal with the questions relating to disarmament. It would be well to anticipate events and to state that