

under which these nine seats had always been distributed as follow: Two to the so-called semi-permanent Members of the Council—Spain and Poland; three to Latin-American States; one to a Little Entente State; one to the group of ex-neutrals; one to a British Dominion; and one to an Asiatic State. This left a considerable number of Members of the League known as the “non-grouped” States who were not, in practice, able to secure election to the Council. In 1933 a temporary and partial remedy was found by the creation, for three years only, of a tenth non-permanent seat to which one of the “non-grouped” States—Portugal—was elected. This tenth seat would have expired with the Assembly of 1936, and even this provision was not considered sufficient to enable a number of the “non-grouped” States to obtain adequate representation on the Council within a reasonable period of time.

The Special Committee set up to consider this subject recommended, therefore, that the non-permanent seats should be increased from nine to eleven. While the majority of this Special Committee favoured the creation of the two extra seats for three years—the normal period of membership on the Council—a minority felt that these seats should be created for one year only.

The discussion of this matter in the First Committee was lengthy and detailed. Objection was raised in several quarters to any increase in the size of the Council, which was considered to be even at present a more numerous body than was completely consistent with the prompt and accurate discharge of its duties. But the majority of the members of the First Committee realized not only that the convention allotting seats to certain groups of States was now so firmly established that it could be altered only with the greatest difficulty, but also that the existing position had created an actual injustice to the “non-grouped” States.

The First Committee’s conclusion, therefore, was that two additional non-permanent seats should be created for a period of three years, but at the same time it recommended the appointment by the Council of a small committee of experts to consider a final solution of the problem.

The report of the First Committee is contained in Document A. 48, 1936, and its concluding resolution reads as follows:—

“The Assembly—

“Having considered the report of the Committee appointed to study the composition of the Council:

“Approves the recommendation of the Committee for the provisional creation of two new non-permanent seats on the Council and, accordingly, declares that it is desirable that, for the period commencing with the election of the non-permanent Members of the Council at the Assembly’s session of 1936, and ending with the election of the said non-permanent Members in the year 1939, the number of non-permanent seats on the Council should be provisionally increased to eleven;

“And considering that, in the opinion of the Committee appointed to study the composition of the Council, with which the Assembly agrees, ‘it would be undesirable that a definitive solution of the problems connected with the composition of the Council should be postponed longer than is necessary’:

“Recommends that, so soon as circumstances permit, the Council will appoint and convene a small committee of experts to draw up proposals on the subject.

“The Assembly instructs the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of the Council.”

INTERNATIONAL REPRESSION OF TERRORISM.

As a result of the murder at Marseilles in 1934 of King Alexander, of Yugoslavia, considerable attention has been directed to possible methods of improving the means of preventing the preparation and execution of terrorist crimes, and especially those which have an international character and thus in some degree might escape the operation of national laws.

In 1934 the Council of the League set up a Committee of Experts to consider this matter, and it was the report of this Committee which was referred for the consideration of the First Committee. The Committee of Experts had prepared two draft conventions which they suggested should be the subject of consideration at an international diplomatic conference in 1937, the first, for the prevention and punishment of terrorism, laying down for the acceptance of all signatory States certain crimes which should be made punishable by their national laws, and the second providing for an International Criminal Court by which such international crimes might be tried instead of by national Courts or in cases where extradition was not granted.

This subject gave rise to a lengthy and animated discussion in the First Committee. Those nations which had been directly or indirectly affected by the Marseilles crime, with others who had reason to fear the activities of terrorists, were most anxious that action should be taken in connection with one or both of these draft conventions at the earliest possible moment. Other delegations felt that the draft prepared by the Committee of Experts was still imperfect, that it covered perhaps too wide a scope, and that in particular it jeopardized, by its insistence on extradition for the wide list of crimes specified in the draft, the right of political asylum to which many States attached the greatest importance. This aspect of the matter was particularly stressed by the representative of Belgium, who not only emphasized the importance which Belgium attached to the right of political asylum in suitable cases, but pointedly referred to the increasing difficulties of this matter in view of the forcible methods of repression adopted by certain existing national Governments.

The Belgian views were shared by a number of other delegations, and it was made plain that the United Kingdom had no intention of jeopardizing its right to provide an asylum for political refugees in appropriate cases. There was a general consensus of opinion that the draft should be referred back