

take steps to recognize the conquest. He then briefly mentioned the fact that the action of the United Kingdom Government was dependent upon the progress made in the solution of "another large and difficult question" (he obviously referred to the withdrawal of foreign troops from Spain); and he added that "the acceptance of the opinion held by His Majesty's Government would, in fact, merely confirm the correctness of the attitude taken by a number of States by no means unmindful of their obligations to the League, that with the adoption of the Assembly's resolution of 4th July, 1936, their collective obligations in the matter of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict were discharged."

With Lord Halifax's allusions to past history, such as the imposition of sanctions and their discontinuance, we have no concern here. But he asserted that, according to the information at his command, the Italian Government had obtained control of virtually all the former territory of Ethiopia, and that whilst there was resistance in parts of the country there was no organized Native authority which had the slightest prospect of reconquering the country. He inferred that the conclusion to be drawn from this was that the only challenge which the League could effectually make to Italy would be military action.

Whilst the Emperor had come specially to Geneva to defend the cause of his people before the Council of the League his speech was read by his Permanent Delegate to the League. It is the tragedy of Ethiopia that, having placed full confidence in the League, that, indeed, she was counselled to do so by one of the Great Powers acting through its Minister, the League failed her not for want of trying, because, after all, sanctions were imposed, even if half-heartedly. Viewing now the situation as it existed towards the end of 1935, we can reasonably say that there was a chance of sanctions proving effective against aggression if only they had been applied more stringently, and if pressure had progressively increased. It is equally reasonable to say that had sanctions succeeded much that has happened since in Europe might not have happened. But we are not dealing with the past: we are dealing with the present, which is the result of a great tragedy, and of a miscalculation of the strength of the League acting collectively and of the resistance of the Ethiopian people. The Emperor, speaking through his Permanent Delegate, questioned the completeness of the conquest, for he gave particulars based on information on which he apparently is able to rely that in some parts of Ethiopia Italy's position is precarious. But, as the President remarked in his summing up, the Council was not in a position to ascertain the facts by the normal League methods of inquiry, and members were therefore obliged to draw their own conclusions from the statements available, and from such other sources of information as they possessed. However, opinion as to the completeness or incompleteness of the Italian conquest is beside the question, which is a moral one; and here we are on safer ground. The Emperor was almost scathing in his analysis. States in a panic had overthrown all the principles on which their existence rested; they had torn up treaties; they had violated the Covenant, and the result was a reign of fear; and he did not spare the British Government, although he paid a graceful tribute to the nation which had given him exile. He invoked the Covenant, and he pleaded for justice in the solution of this international question. But it was in vain: one member of the Council after another rose and expressed the opinion that the recognition of Italian sovereignty was within the competence of States acting individually; and for Ethiopia the cause was lost, at any rate so far as the Council of the League was concerned.

Among the points raised was that of the principle that members of the League are under covenant to refuse to recognize a situation brought about by armed force; but a mere academic discussion was of no avail, and a dispassionate observer could not help thinking that the question before the Council was a *chosé jugée* long before it reached the Council. Of course, those members of the Council who on this occasion were ready to abandon the collective system made out the best case possible for their respective Governments, and it is only right to say that, in some instances, countries had been faced with a situation of difficulty and delicacy which would have been rendered more difficult and delicate by an adherence to rigid forms of procedure.

No formal motion was before the Council, but the observations of the various delegates gave a fair indication of what their vote would have been had one been taken.

Bearing in mind your instructions and also New Zealand's League policy, I spoke as follows:—

"It is a sign of some progress that a Monarch of an aggrieved country can state his case and be listened to by representatives of more fortunate nations. This was not always so. We trust that this spirit will grow until all matters of international relationship will be discussed at a table and settled without recourse to the mutual killing of men who bear each other no ill will, men who, in fact, as fathers and husbands, have common interests, and, instead of fighting each other, should meet together, irrespective of colour, language, or creed, to consider their mutual welfare and plan for their advancement in conditions and culture. We appear to be a long way from that state of civilization at present, and may sometimes seem to be but little distance from the brute. Disappointments and seeming failures will be encountered, but if we realize our responsibilities and opportunities, and work accordingly in this generation, that is all we can do.

"The statements made by the representative of Ethiopia are sufficient to arouse passion in all who are mindful of their duty towards each other, and surely a civilized nation will make amends for any action taken by its people in the hysteria and madness of war in its future dealings with the victims of that action. We have been appealed to to listen with understanding, but it is difficult to understand such actions as are depicted, and we hope that if such actions were committed the guilt is upon irresponsible persons and not upon authority.

"We are here to consider a specific matter concerning Ethiopia. May I remind the Council that on March 11th, 1932, the Assembly declared by a resolution unanimously adopted that 'it is incumbent upon the members of the League not to recognize any situation, treaty, or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations or the Pact of Paris.'