

1940.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

REPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DOMINION OF NEW ZEALAND ON THE
TWENTIETH ASSEMBLY AND THE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTH SESSION OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, HELD AT GENEVA IN THE YEAR 1939.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

TWENTIETH ASSEMBLY AND ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

New Zealand Government Offices,
415 Strand, London, W.C. 2, 22nd December, 1939.

SIR,—

On Sunday, the 3rd December, the Secretary-General of the League of Nations addressed a telegram to the Members of the Council and the Members of the League containing the text of a letter he had received that day from the Permanent Delegate of Finland accredited to the League of Nations, calling attention to an attack delivered on the morning of the 30th November by the forces of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics on Finnish frontier positions and on open Finnish towns from the air, and requesting the Secretary-General to summon meetings of the Council and the Assembly of the League in virtue of Articles 11 and 15 of the Covenant. The Secretary-General accordingly requested Members of the Council to meet in Geneva on the 9th December at 12 noon, and the telegram concluded by stating that he was submitting to the President of the Assembly a proposal to convoke the Assembly on the 11th December. A subsequent message from the Secretary-General confirmed the date of meeting of the Assembly.

I left London on Friday, the 8th December, and reached Geneva on the morning of the 9th, having travelled by aeroplane and train. One member of my staff, Mr. C. A. Knowles, was already in Geneva for the purpose of attending the session of the Fourth Committee, whilst two others, Mr. R. M. Campbell and Miss J. R. McKenzie, followed me to Geneva.

The Council and the Assembly were called mainly to consider the Finnish appeal, but advantage was taken to deal with one or two other pressing matters. It will, however, be convenient if instead of writing one report on the proceedings of the Council and another on those of the Assembly I combine in one document an account of the proceedings of the two bodies.

The Council met in private at 12 noon on the 9th December, under the Presidency of Count Carton de Wiart, the Belgian representative. The session was to have opened in September, and there was in existence an agenda of many items for consideration then, but the outbreak of war had prevented the holding of the usual sessions of the Council and the Assembly. Time pressed, and there was a general desire to consider only those items which were of paramount importance. The agenda for the session was therefore limited to the few matters shown on paper numbered C./106th Session, Agenda 2.

The Council at its first meeting formally adopted this amended agenda. The representative of China, after referring to the fact that the Council remained seised of the Chinese appeal, stated that he did not intend to raise it again on this occasion, but would like an opportunity of making a short statement to this effect at a public meeting. Another private meeting was called in the afternoon, but this second meeting was preceded by an exchange of views between members of the Council. No record is

published of these exchanges of views which frequently take place during sessions of the Council, and no account will therefore be given here of what took place. It is sufficient to say that the Council, having been requested by a further communication from the Finnish representative, dated 7th December, to refer to the Assembly the dispute which had arisen between Finland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, felt it had no option but to accede to the request, especially as paragraph 9 of Article 15 of the Covenant had been invoked. This paragraph reads:—

“The Council may in any case under this Article refer the dispute to the Assembly. The dispute shall be so referred at the request of either party to the dispute, provided that such request be made within fourteen days after the submission of the dispute to the Council.”

I should add that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not represented at the exchange of views; indeed, the Soviet Government announced its intention not to take part in meetings of the Council and the Assembly. I therefore raised certain points of procedure, and was informed in reply that the Soviet Government would be advised through its representative then in Geneva (who had been attending meetings of the Fourth Committee) of the proceedings of the Council. The Council then met in private.

ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL.

RENEWAL OF THE APPOINTMENT OF A JUDGE AND REPLACEMENT OF A DEPUTY JUDGE.

The representative of China proposed that M. Eide's appointment as Judge be renewed for three years, and that M. Jason Stavropoulos be appointed Deputy Judge in place of M. Havelka who found himself unable to serve. This latter appointment will take effect on the 1st January next and will be for a period of three years. The Council agreed (Document C. 386, 1939).

CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS AND THE HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

On the request of the 1938 Assembly this question has been examined, a small Committee having been appointed by the Council for the purpose. This Committee considered that the most effective way of promoting co-ordination was by means of liaison officers and by a Committee of Co-ordination formed from the Health and Social Questions Committees of the League. For further information you are referred to the Report (Document C. 203, M. 132, 1939), which was submitted to the Council under cover of a Note from the Secretary-General (Document C. 387, 1939, III). The Council endorsed the conclusions of the Report of the Special Committee appointed to consider co-ordination between the Advisory Committee on Social Questions and the Health Organization.

APPEAL OF THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT.

The President having invited the representative of Finland, M. Holsti, to come to the Council table, called on the Secretary-General to inform the Council of the measures he had taken in connection with the Finnish request. Of these, M. Avenol gave a detailed account, and I refer you to the minutes of the meeting. I would, however, quote here a telegram which the Secretary-General sent to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the 4th December, reading:—

“The Finnish representative accredited to the League of Nations, in his communication of the 3rd instant, which I had the honour to communicate to you yesterday, states that he will forward to me a complete statement of the reasons and circumstances which have led his Government to request the intervention of the League of Nations. The Finnish Government having invoked, in addition to Article 11, Article 15, which provides that the Secretary-General will make all necessary arrangements for a full investigation and consideration of the dispute, I direct your attention to paragraph 2 of the said Article 15, which provides that the parties will communicate to me, as promptly as possible, a statement of their case with all the relevant facts and papers.”

The President then called on M. Holsti, who, after making a brief reference to the appeal which he had made on behalf of his Government, made a formal request to the Council to refer the dispute to the Assembly without delay in order that that body might deal with it immediately, and in this connection he invoked paragraph 9 of Article 15 of the Covenant referred to above. The President stated that in the circumstances it was incumbent on the Council to accede to the request, and his conclusion, framed in the following terms, was agreed to by the Council:—

“The Council requests the Assembly to place the question submitted by the Representative of Finland upon the Agenda of the Assembly and instructs the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures for that purpose.”

The Twentieth Assembly of the League of Nations was opened on the morning of Monday, the 11th December, by Count Carton de Wiart, the representative of Belgium, acting in his capacity as President of the Council. After formally declaring the session open, he referred to the necessity for simplifying as far as possible the procedure to be

followed during the session. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, a Committee of nine to examine the credentials of the delegates was set up. This Committee was composed of members of the following delegations: Australia, Bolivia, Bulgaria, China, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Greece, and Thailand (Siam).

The custom of suspending the sitting until the report of the Credentials Committee was available was discarded on the suggestion of the President, who proposed the setting-up of the Nominations Committee—the Committee entrusted with the duty of nominating the members of the General Committee of the Assembly. The Nominations Committee consisted of delegates from the Union of South Africa, the United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Iraq, Ireland, Lithuania, Mexico, Roumania, Turkey, and Venezuela, and, after a short suspension of the meeting, its Chairman, Mr. F. T. Cremins, of Ireland, mounted the platform and informed delegates of his Committee's recommendations, which were that the General Committee should be limited to the President of the Assembly, eight Vice-Presidents, and the Chairman of the Credentials Committee. Should, however, the Assembly constitute committees to deal with particular questions, the Chairmen of such committees would also be members of the General Committee. The Nominations Committee proposed the first delegates of Belgium, the United Kingdom, Canada, Egypt, France, Greece, Portugal, and Switzerland as Vice-Presidents. The Assembly agreed to these recommendations.

Count Carton de Wiart then stated that the Nominations Committee suggested M. Hambro (Norway) as President of the Assembly. He proposed suspension of the rule governing election, and suggested that the Assembly should regard M. Hambro as elected by acclamation. The Assembly agreed, and, when inviting M. Hambro to occupy the chair, Count Carton de Wiart made a short speech, in which he stressed the unhappy circumstances in which the Assembly was meeting, paid a tribute to M. Hambro's regard for the League, and expressed the hope that when once again peace had been proclaimed the League would revive, becoming stronger and better adapted to international life.

M. Hambro was then installed President. He made a short speech, which, after reviewing the circumstances which had called the Assembly together, terminated with the following:—

“ This is a critical hour for international co-operation; but the spontaneous testimony of solidarity and sympathy which we have received during recent days—sympathy that transcends material distances and differences of race or language—proves that magnanimity among nations is still an incalculable force in the world.

“ We must act in such a way that the expectations of a small nation in distress will not be disappointed. We must act with all necessary caution and foresight so as to make this Assembly a starting-point for new hopes of future international solidarity and help for a suffering world.”

The President then proposed that formal election of the Vice-Presidents should be dispensed with, and that having been agreed to, the first delegate of the eight countries proposed by the Nominations Committee were declared elected.

At the second meeting of the Assembly held on the afternoon of the 11th December the Credentials Committee made its report. There is no need to refer to this report at length. It is sufficient to say that due regard was paid to the difficulties which had beset countries in complying with Assembly Rules regarding credentials; indeed, in some cases time had not permitted Governments to do more than telegraph to Geneva the names of their representatives. The Credentials Committee's report was adopted by the Assembly.

The President then gave a short account of the proposals of the General Committee (which had met in the meantime) regarding the agenda of the session. The proposals were that most of the items on the original agenda for the Twentieth Assembly should be postponed to a subsequent session, and that the new agenda should consist of the four following items only:—

- (1) Dispute between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Finland: Appeal of the Finnish Government.
- (2) Election of non-permanent members of the Council.
- (3) Budgetary and Administrative Questions: Report of the Fourth Committee.
- (4) The Development of International Co-operation in Economic and Social Affairs: Report of the Special Committee (Document A. 23, 1939.)

It had been expected that the Assembly and Council in combination would proceed to the election of Judges of the Permanent Court of International Justice. The General Committee, however, felt that circumstances militated against this, and proposed that the present Judges should continue to discharge their duties. There is provision for this in the statute of the Court. The Assembly agreed to this, and also to the revised agenda.

The General Committee also proposed that an *ad hoc* Committee, consisting of a member of each delegation of the Assembly, should be appointed to consider the report of the Special Committee on the Development of International Co-operation in Economic and Social Affairs (Document A. 23, 1939). To this the Assembly agreed.

In view of the simplification of procedure and of the fact that the usual Committees set up to deal with groups of questions such as juridical, budget, social, &c., were not appointed, the form of this report differs from that on most of the previous Assemblies. Each point of the agenda will be dealt with as a whole, account being taken of the work in Committee and of the debate in the Assembly.

Election of Non-permanent Members of the Council.

Actually five countries were due to vacate seats. Of these, two had been elected to seats of a provisional nature created by resolution of the Council in 1936. That resolution provided that these two additional and provisional seats should terminate this year unless renewed. The elections were therefore divided into two parts. The General Committee proposed that in the first instance there should be elections to fill three seats, whilst elections to fill the two further seats could only be held once the Council had decided whether or not the two provisional seats created by that body's resolution of 1936 should be maintained.

As one country and possibly two were about to seek re-election, the operation of the rule governing a vote to test the will of the Assembly on the advisability of re-election was suspended, and the Assembly proceeded to the simple election of three countries to fill the seats to be vacated by Bolivia, New Zealand, and Sweden. The ballot showed that forty-two States voted, but that as four cards were left blank only thirty-eight votes were valid. Thirty-six delegations voted for South Africa, thirty-five for Bolivia, and thirty-four for Finland. These countries were declared by the President to be elected. It will be observed that Bolivia will serve for a further period of three years. This was in accordance with the wishes of many Latin American delegations which had circulated a note on the subject.

The following resolution was then submitted to the Assembly and passed:—

“The Assembly—

“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 1939 and ending with the election of the said non-permanent members in the year 1942, the number of non-permanent seats on the Council should be maintained at eleven; and

“Invites the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of the Council.”

(See Documents A. 38, 1939, A. 41, 1939, and the Proceedings of the Assembly at its meeting on the 13th December, 1939.)

The Council having assented to the maintenance as a provisional measure of the number of non-permanent seats at eleven, the Assembly on the afternoon of the 14th December elected two further Members. Thirty-nine votes were cast; two papers were spoilt; China received thirty-four votes and was thus re-elected, whilst Egypt received thirty-nine votes.

Financial Questions.

The report of the Fourth Committee (Document A. 37, 1939, X), was presented to the Assembly at its meeting on the morning of the 14th December. The Rapporteur, the representative of South Africa, made a short statement by way of introduction, and the Assembly approved the report. An account of the proceedings of the Fourth Committee forms an annex to this report.

Development of International Co-operation in Economic and Social Affairs.

The Council at its session in May last approved of a proposal of the Secretary-General for the appointment of a Committee to study and report to the Assembly on the appropriate measures of organization which would ensure the development and extension of the League's machinery for dealing with technical problems and promote active participation of all nations in the efforts made to solve those problems. The Committee consisted of seven persons, including its Chairman, the Right Honourable S. M. Bruce, the High Commissioner for Australia in London. Its report (Document A. 23, 1939), which was examined by the *ad hoc* Committee of the Assembly referred to above, is of considerable interest. It deals with the need for international economic and social co-operation, the activities of the League in these spheres, and the need for development and extension of such activities. The Committee of the Assembly was, however, more intimately concerned with the proposals which formed part of the Bruce Committee's report and will be found on pages 18 to 21. The proposals, in brief, consist of the appointment by the Assembly of a Central Committee for economic and social questions. This Central Committee will not take the place of the various Committees of the League which are in existence, but will act as a co-ordinating and directing authority with the power of appointing members to the existing League Committees, of modifying their structure, and of appointing new committees within the budgetary provisions set by the Assembly. Indeed, the powers of the new Central Committee will be very wide. As to its composition, the Bruce Committee suggested that it consist of representatives of twenty-four States chosen for a period of one year by the Assembly, on the proposal of the Assembly's Bureau (the General Committee), but that the numerical strength and period of office shall be determined at the end of this period of initiation of one year in the light of experience; that it have the power to co-opt not more than eight members appointed in a personal capacity on the grounds of special competence and authority, and that any member of the League not represented which considers itself specially interested in a particular matter shall be invited to be represented during the consideration of such matter. The Bruce Committee made several other recommendations, but left it to the Central Committee itself to draw up its Rules of Procedure.

The *ad hoc* Committee of the Assembly gave careful consideration to the Bruce report, and many delegates who took part in the discussion made some valuable suggestions, which will be made available to the Central Committee once it is set up. The *ad hoc* Committee drafted a resolution in the following terms, and this was passed by the Assembly on the morning of the 14th December:—

“ The Assembly—

“ 1. Approves the report on the Development of International Co-operation in Economic and Social Affairs submitted by the Special Committee set up by the Council on May 23rd, 1939, and the proposals contained therein, and

“ 2. While agreeing with the report that the proposals must be regarded only as a first step in the adaptation of the existing machinery of international economic and social collaboration to the changing conditions of the world,

“ 3. Considers that the present condition of the world renders it all the more necessary that the economic and social work of the League, as defined in the report,* should continue on as broad a basis as possible, and

“ 4. Requests the Bureau to take the most appropriate steps for setting up the Central Committee proposed in the report to unify the economic and social work of the League and perform the other functions indicated in the above-mentioned report, co-ordinating its work where necessary with that of the International Labour Office, which retains its present autonomy and competence; and

“ 5. Hopes that the Central Committee will proceed as rapidly as possible with the study of the conditions under which all States desiring to do so may participate in the work of the League relating to economic and social questions.†

APPEAL OF THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT.

This, the question which had caused the convocation of the Assembly, was raised at the second meeting on the afternoon of the 11th December. The President, in introducing it, briefly referred to the action of the Council in submitting the appeal to the Assembly, and I will now take up the matter from the point at which I left it at the early stage of this report.

There are a number of documents, including the written statements submitted to the Assembly by representatives of various countries, but here it is necessary to draw your attention to two papers only—A. 32, 1939, VII (the text of the Finnish appeal, telegrams from the Finnish Government to the Secretary-General, a telegram from the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and a statement dated the 7th December made by the Finnish Government); and A. 33, 1939, VII, containing memoranda and correspondence relating to negotiations between the Governments of Finland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which preceded the invasion of Finland on the 30th November. The Finnish case is set forth in the statement dated 7th December and the *aide-memoire* transmitted to the Secretary-General of the League on the 9th December (Documents A. 32 and A. 33 respectively). Under Article 15 of the Covenant, which had been invoked by Finland, the parties to a dispute are required to communicate to the Secretary-General “ a statement of their case, with all the relevant facts and papers.” But from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics no statement was received, and the only information at the disposal of the Assembly regarding the attitude of that country is contained in M. Molotov's telegram of the 5th December. On the surface that attitude appeared to be a simple one—that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not at war with Finland, nor did it threaten the Finnish nation with war, since the Soviet Union had signed on the 2nd December with the Democratic Republic of Finland a Pact of Assistance and Friendship which had settled all questions which the Soviet Government had fruitlessly discussed with the former Finnish Government now divested of its power. Further, the new Kuusinen Government had requested the Soviet Government to lend its assistance in clearing up a situation created in Finland by its former rulers. This process of reasoning resulted not only in no statement of the Russian case, but in a refusal by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to be represented at sessions of the Council and of the Assembly which had been convoked.

The representative of Finland was M. Holsti, and on the invitation of the President he addressed the Assembly. His statement was largely a *résumé* of the documents already submitted by the Finnish Government.

At the conclusion of M. Holsti's speech the President announced that the General Committee of the Assembly proposed adjournment of the discussion and the creation of a special committee to consider the Finnish appeal, and suggested that the special Committee consist of the following: Bolivia, United Kingdom, Canada, Egypt, France, India, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Thailand, Uruguay, and Venezuela. It was, however, to be understood that any other delegations which wished to take part in the Committee's discussions would be free to come to the Committee and to do so. The Assembly agreed.

* See particularly page 6 of the Report on the Development of International Co-operation in Economic and Social Affairs (Doc. A. 23, 1939).

† Document A. 47, 1939.

The Special Committee immediately got to work. It elected as Chairman M. José Caeiro da Matta (Portugal), and at the conclusion of its first meeting sent a telegram to Moscow. This message, the text of which, together with that of the Soviet Government's reply, are reproduced below, should dispose of any criticism that the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not officially notified of the action which the League was taking in considering the Finnish appeal.

" Geneva, December 11th, 1939.

" Narcomindel, Moscow.

" The Committee set up by the Assembly, which is seized in virtue of Article 15 of the Covenant, addresses an urgent appeal to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Finnish Government to cease hostilities and open immediate negotiations under the mediation of the Assembly with a view to restoring peace. Finland, which is present, accepts. Should be grateful if you would inform me before to-morrow (Tuesday) evening if the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is prepared to accept this appeal and cease hostilities forthwith.—JOSÉ CAEIRO DA MATTA, Chairman of the Committee."

" Moscow, December 12th, 1939.

" José Caeiro da Matta, President Assembly Committee, Nations, Geneva.

" The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics thanks you, Monsieur le Président, for kind invitation take part discussion Finnish question. At the same time the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics begs to inform you that it is not able to accept this invitation for the reasons set out in the telegram of December 4th from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs sent in reply to M. Avenol's communication.—MOLOTOV."

Pending the receipt of the Soviet Government's reply, the Committee turned its attention to the facts as disclosed in the papers submitted by the Finnish Government and in the official documents published as communiques by the Tass (Soviet) Agency, and only when that reply had come to hand did it proceed to the judging of the issues.

The Special Committee's report was ready for consideration by the Assembly on Thursday, the 14th December. It is Document A. 46, 1939, VII, and is divided into three parts—Part I deals historically with the period between the initiation of the negotiations between Finland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in October and the setting-up of the Kuusinen Government of Finland two days after the invasion of Finland by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; Part II covers the legal position. In Part III, which completes the report, will be found the summing-up of the Special Committee. It concludes with the following words:—

" It follows from these findings that the Soviet Government has violated, not only its special political agreements with Finland, but also Article 12 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Pact of Paris."

Then follows the draft Resolution in two parts:—

" The Assembly

" I.

" Whereas, by the aggression which it has committed against Finland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has failed to observe not only its special political agreements with Finland, but also Article 12 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Pact of Paris;

" And whereas, immediately before committing that aggression, it denounced, without legal justification, the Treaty of Non-aggression which it had concluded with Finland in 1932, and which was to remain in force until the end of 1945;

" Solemnly condemns the action taken by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics against the State of Finland;

" Urgently appeals to every Member of the League to provide Finland with such material and humanitarian assistance as may be in its power and to refrain from any action which might weaken Finland's power of resistance;

" Authorizes the Secretary-General to lend the aid of his technical services in the organization of the aforesaid assistance to Finland;

" And likewise authorizes the Secretary-General, in virtue of the Assembly resolution of October 4th, 1937, to consult non-member States with a view to possible co-operation.

" II.

" Whereas, notwithstanding an invitation extended to it on two occasions, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has refused to be present at the examination of its dispute with Finland before the Council and the Assembly;

" And whereas, by thus refusing to recognize the duty of the Council and the Assembly as regards the execution of Article 15 of the Covenant, it has failed to observe one of the League's most essential covenants for the safeguarding of peace and the security of nations;

“And whereas it has vainly attempted to justify its refusal on the ground of the relations which it has established with an alleged Government which is neither *de jure* nor *de facto* the Government recognized by the people of Finland in accordance with the free working of their institutions;

“And whereas the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has not merely violated a covenant of the League, but has by its own action placed itself outside the Covenant;

“And whereas the Council is competent under Article 16 of the Covenant to consider what consequences should follow from this situation:

“Recommends the Council to pronounce upon the question.”

The President invited discussion, and the representatives of several States mounted the platform and made statements of varying length. Amongst them representatives of Latin American Republics were prominent; indeed, the representative of the Argentine had already addressed the Assembly on the previous day.

The President had asked those who intended to speak to limit their observations to the political question inserted in the agenda. Some of the orators not only condemned the Soviet Union for its aggression against Finland, but seized the opportunity afforded of showing dislike to the political character of the Government of the Soviet Union. An illustration of this attitude will be found in the speech of the Chairman of the Special Committee, who, however, made it clear in the Assembly that he was speaking on behalf of his country, Portugal, which had voted against the admission of the Soviet Union to the League. A perusal of the record of the speeches shows a general detestation of the Soviet Union aggression, and it also shows the attitude of caution which representatives of certain countries thought it advisable to adopt. The representatives of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania had taken no part in the discussion, and they abstained from voting. The representatives of Bulgaria, China, and Switzerland likewise abstained, the last mentioned invoking the neutrality of his country. The representatives of the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway made reservations in regard to the imposition of sanctions, some even stressing that the lending by the Secretary-General of technical assistance to Finland should in no way be interpreted as collective action on the part of the League. With these abstentions the report was approved and the resolution unanimously adopted. The proceedings in the Assembly on this question of the agenda terminated with a speech by the Finnish representative, who expressed his country's gratitude.

This brief account of action in Geneva on the Finnish question would not be complete without a reference to the meeting of the Council which immediately followed the adjournment of the Assembly. The Council was required to give a decision based on the concluding paragraph of Article 16 of the Covenant. New Zealand, being no longer a member of the Council, was merely a witness of the proceedings, which lasted an hour. The Council had before it the following draft resolution, which was read by the President, the representative of Bolivia, who also quoted the concluding paragraph of Article 16 of the Covenant:—

“The Council—

“Having taken cognizance of the resolution adopted by the Assembly on December 14, 1939, regarding the appeal of the Finnish Government,

“I.

“Associates itself with the condemnation by the Assembly of the action of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics against the Finnish State, and

“II.

“For the reasons set forth in the resolution of the Assembly, in virtue of Article 16, paragraph 4, of the Covenant, finds that, by its act, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has placed itself outside the League of Nations. It follows that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is no longer a member of the League.”

The atmosphere can best be gauged from the following quotation from a speech by M. Paul Boncour, the representative of France:—

“He would not be fulfilling his duty completely unless he added that the condemnation would not have its full meaning or scope unless it was taken in connection with all the preceding violations with which it was closely bound. He could not condemn Russia if he did not know that there was another condemnation which his country had undertaken by the use of armed force. He could not salute Finland and promise her the help of his country within the limits of necessity without saluting the other victims—Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland—whose voice had been heard in the Assembly where her absence would not have been understood.”

The motion was put to the vote, and the resolution was passed unanimously, Finland as a party to the dispute abstaining. Thus was the Soviet Union, which had held one of the three permanent seats on the Council, expelled from the League by an action which has been described as without parallel in political history.

On the 18th December the Secretary-General sent the following telegram to all States Members of the League:—

“ With reference resolution adopted Assembly December 14th as result Finnish appeal beg draw your Government's attention particularly to last three paragraphs first part resolution namely quote Assembly urgently appeals to every Member of the League to provide Finland with such material and humanitarian assistance as may be in its power and to refrain from any action which might weaken Finland's power of resistance; Authorises the Secretary-General to lend the aid of his technical services in the organization of the aforesaid assistance to Finland; And likewise authorises the Secretary-General in virtue of the Assembly resolution of October 4th, 1937 to consult non-Member States with a view to possible co-operation unquote Should be grateful for information regarding your Government's intentions.

“ AVENOL, Secretary-General.”

I should add that the Assembly was not closed, but adjourned. It agreed that until its next session the Secretary-General should be able to convene the General Committee, which would have the power to decide any question which the Supervisory Commission and the Secretary-General might submit to it.

Yours sincerely,

W. J. JORDAN,
High Commissioner.

The Right Honourable M. J. Savage, P.C., M.P.,
Prime Minister of New Zealand,
Wellington, New Zealand.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (470 copies), £10.

By Authority: E. V. PAUL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1940.

Price 6d.]