

The Foreign Minister of Latvia, Mr. Munters, acted as Chairman of the sub-committee; and the representative of the United States of America, Mr. Leland Harrison, attended its meetings in the same role as he attended meetings of the Advisory Committee.

To the proceedings of the sub-committee I may not, of course, refer. It first met on 1st October immediately following the adjournment of the Advisory Committee, and completed its reports, after being almost continuously in session, on 5th October. The first report gives a summary of events since the beginning of July, 1937, with textual references to authoritative Japanese and Chinese comment. It concludes:—

“It is clear that the two countries take very different views as to the underlying grounds of the dispute and as to the incident which led to the first outbreak of hostilities.

“It cannot, however, be challenged that powerful Japanese armies have invaded Chinese territory and are in military control of large areas, including Peiping itself; that the Japanese Government has taken naval measures to close the coast of China to Chinese shipping; and that Japanese aircraft are carrying out bombardments over widely separated regions of the country.

“After examination of the facts laid before it, the Committee is bound to take the view that the military operations carried on by Japan against China by land, sea, and air are out of all proportion to the incident that occasioned the conflict; that such action cannot possibly facilitate or promote the friendly co-operation between the two nations that Japanese statesmen have affirmed to be the aim of their policy; that it can be justified neither on the basis of existing legal instruments nor on that of the right of self-defence, and that it is in contravention of Japan's obligations under the ‘Nine Power’ Treaty of February 6th, 1922, and under the Pact of Paris of August 27th, 1928.”

The second report affirmed the interest that all States have in the restoration and maintenance of peace as “the fundamental purpose for which the League exists”; “it [the League] has the duty as well as the right to attempt to bring about a speedy restoration of peace in the Far East, in accordance with existing obligations under the Covenant and the treaties.” The report then recommended the Assembly to invite its members who are parties to the “Nine Power” Treaty to initiate a meeting of the parties to that treaty together with other Powers with special interests in the Far East. It concluded with the recommendation that:—

“Pending the results of the action proposed, the Advisory Committee should invite the Assembly to express its moral support for China and to recommend that members of the League should refrain from taking any action which might have the effect of weakening China's power of resistance and thus of increasing her difficulties in the present conflict, and should also consider how far they can individually extend aid to China.”

The reports were adopted by the advisory Committee on the day (5th October) of their approval by the sub-committee, and on the same day they came before the Assembly, now nearing the end of its session. In the Assembly the representatives of Siam and Poland—the former on the ground that his Government had not been able to study the draft resolution, the latter dissenting from the suggested convening of a separate conference of the powers particularly concerned—said that they would abstain from voting. Certain other delegates stressing that consultation with their Governments had not been possible since the drafts were circulated, discussion was adjourned until the evening of the following day.

In due chronological order it is to be mentioned that at this point the President of the United States of America, in his widely noticed speech at Chicago, dealt in some degree with the problems that were then engaging attention at Geneva. He deplored the unjustified interference in the internal affairs of other nations in violation of treaties. “The peace-loving nations,” he is reported as saying, “must make a concerted effort in opposition to those violations of treaties and those ignoring of humane instincts which to-day are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality . . . There must be positive endeavours to preserve peace.”

Resuming on 6th October, the Assembly, almost without discussion, adopted the reports and the resolution submitted by the Advisory Committee.

The text of the resolution is:—

“The Assembly—

“Adopts as its own the reports submitted to it by its Advisory Committee on the subject of the conflict between China and Japan;

“Approves the proposals contained in the second of the said reports (document A.80, 1937, VII) and requests its president to take the necessary action with regard to the proposed meeting of the members of the League which are parties to the Nine-power Treaty signed at Washington on February 6th, 1922;

“Expresses its moral support for China, and recommends that members of the League should refrain from taking any action which might have the effect of weakening China's power of resistance and thus of increasing her difficulties in the present conflict, and should also consider how far they can individually extend aid to China;

“Decides to adjourn its present session and to authorize the President to summon a further meeting if the Advisory Committee so requests.”

In accordance with the concluding words of this resolution the plenary session of the League Assembly was then adjourned, not closed.

A month, marked by continued hostilities in China, elapsed before the “Nine-power” Conference met in Brussels on 3rd November.