II. The Assembly.

Regarding the danger of the spread of epidemics and the loss of life as a result of the terrible disaster in the Yangtse valley, both as a humanitarian problem of the first magnitude and a matter of international concern,

Recalling the assistance rendered in similar circumstances by the Health Organisation through its Epidemic Commission in Poland and Greece in 1921 and 1923;

Convinced of the need to show clearly and concretely the sympathy of humanity for the victims of this appalling catastrophe;

Invites all the States Members and non-Members of the League of Nations, and particularly those in close contact with the Far East, to respond, so far as is in their power, to any request that may be made to take all possible measures for relief in the flooded areas of China, in co-operation with the League of Nations;

Requests the Council to take the necessary steps to render the international co-operation effective.

The President:

Translation: As no one has asked to speak, I shall consider the report and the accompanying draft resolutions adopted.

The draft resolutions were adopted.


The President:

Translation: The next item on the agenda is the discussion of the report of the Third Committee on the co-operation of women and of the Press in the organisation of peace (document A.73.1931.IX).

On the invitation of the President, M. Munich, Chairman of the Third Committee, and M. Buero, Rapporteur, took their places on the platform.

The President:

Translation: The Rapporteur will address the Assembly.

M. Buero (Uruguay), Rapporteur:

Translation: I do not think it is necessary to read the report, as it has been distributed to all the delegations.

The Spanish proposal, in which the Assembly showed particular interest, included two questions, one relating to the Press and the other to the co-operation of women. In the Committee, with the Spanish delegation’s approval, we framed two separate proposals, which are reproduced in the document before you.

The Spanish proposal concerning the co-operation of women reached us at a particularly opportune moment. Now, when the League is undertaking what may perhaps be decisive work in the organisation of peace, the co-operation of women may be indispensable or, at all events, of very great value in creating an atmosphere favourable to the proceedings of the forthcoming Disarmament Conference and to the pacification of those Chauvinist passions which subsist practically everywhere—a dark inheritance of the past.

As M. de Madariaga, delegate of Spain, pointed out during the discussion in the Third Committee, the influence of women in the training of young people is decisive at the age when young minds receive their first impressions, which may perhaps play a large part in the mentality of the future citizen, and, as I mention in the report, what is suggested is not official co-operation but simply the non-official co-operation of women in the organisation of peace and the maintenance of good understanding between peoples.

If these considerations are approved by the Assembly, the Committee proposes that you should accept the draft resolution included in Part I of the report.

The other part of the report and the second draft resolution concern the co-operation of the Press in the organisation of peace. It is so explicit in itself that there is no need for me to go into details. I therefore propose the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

I. The Assembly,

Convinced of the great value of the contribution of women to the work of peace and the good understanding between the nations, which is the principal aim of the League of Nations,

Requests the Council to examine the possibility of women co-operating more fully in the work of the League.

II. The Assembly,

Considering that the organisation of peace demands an international spirit freed from all prejudices and misconceptions,

Convinced of the necessity of ensuring that Press information shall be as impartial and complete as possible,

Requests the Council to consider the possibility of studying, with the help of the Press, the difficult problem of the spread of false information which may threaten to disturb the peace or the good understanding between nations.

The President:

Translation: M. de Madariaga will address the Assembly.

M. de Madariaga (Spain):

Translation: The Spanish delegation desires to thank M. Buero for the excellent report which he has presented on its two proposals.

As regards the first of those proposals, the Spanish Government has shown by the composition of its delegation that it is in full sympathy with the tendency which has been displayed, in connection with this motion, to suggest that women should form part of the delegations. The Spanish delegation feels, however, that that question was not really the starting-point of its motion and that it might perhaps betray a lack of tact to suggest to Governments what they ought to do when forming their delegations.

The same applies with perhaps even greater force to the other question submitted to the Committee concerning the composition—whether more or less feminine—of the big international meetings and in particular of the Disarmament Conference. The Spanish delegation deems it necessary to adhere strictly to the feeling which inspired its motion, a feeling certainly shared by the majority of the Third Committee—namely, that the co-operation of women should be restricted, for the time being at all events, to the specific functions of women in their own countries and in their own homes—namely, that they should concern themselves with creating the moral atmosphere indispensable to the League’s success.
Naturally, the other questions raised by delegates who are in favour of a greater extension of feminine participation in public life are not affected. My Government and my delegation reserve full liberty with reference to any decision in the future.

In this regard, the Press, we wish to say quite plainly that it would be truly surprising if a Government formed as the result of a violent reaction in the country — violent, that is, in substance, for the reaction was peaceful in form— against a long period of censorship should submit to the Assembly, which owes its existence to liberty of conscience, any suggestion for limiting the freedom of the Press. The Spanish delegation desires to state categorically that such a thought has always been and always will be remote from its intentions. My delegation will never accept any restriction of liberty, even if it be necessary to bow before the evils of liberty.

There is, however, one very definite point beyond which the Spanish motion on the Press is not intended to go — that is, the moment when the news has become known and has been published. What happens prior to that moment does not concern the censorship. The latter can operate only after the Press has published its news. Then only can there be any right to criticise or perhaps to ascertain whether the news is false, to discover the source of the news and to decide with whom the responsibility rests. But we do not think this constitutes a field of research which it is legitimate or perhaps even necessary for the League to explore.

I wish to revert, however, to my first point, to the necessity of maintaining intact freedom of thought and opinion, and I have no hesitation in affirming, on behalf of my delegation and my Government, that we should even be prepared to abandon all idea of remedying the evils resulting from false news, if that meant jeopardising liberty, which we prize above all else.

The President:

Translation: As no one has asked to speak, I shall consider the Third Committee’s report approved.

The Assembly approved the report of the Third Committee.


The President:

Translation: At its meeting this morning, I directed the attention of the General Committee to the desirability of extending the mandate of the Special Committee of Five which had been instructed to consider, in the interval between two sessions of the Assembly, what improvements might be made in the organisation of the conditions of work of the Assembly.

The Special Committee of Five has done some very useful work. Several of its suggestions have been adopted by the Assembly and have been found to be extremely valuable — for example, that of simultaneous translation. It would be expedient accordingly to enable the Committee, between the twelfth and thirteenth sessions, to ascertain once again, on the basis of the experience obtained, whether further improvements could be recommended.

The General Committee decided accordingly to propose to the Assembly that it should extend the term of office of the Special Committee, and requested me in consequence to submit to the Assembly the following draft resolution:

The Assembly,

Congratulates the Special Committee of Five for the organisation of sessions of the Assembly on the results of its work and thanks it for the most valuable advice which it has hitherto given the Assembly;

Decides to extend for one year the term of office of the Special Committee of Five and requests it to submit new suggestions to the Assembly at its next plenary session.

The draft resolution was adopted.

70. — PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF STATES NOT REPRESENTED IN THE ASSEMBLY: COMMUNICATION BY THE PRESIDENT.

The President:

Translation: Following on the information which I gave the Assembly yesterday morning concerning the invitation which it addressed to various States not represented in the Assembly to take part, in an advisory capacity, in the proceedings of the Third Committee relating to the proposed armaments truce, I have the honour to state that another reply has been received from one of the Governments — Brazil — invited in these circumstances: that Government informs me that it will send an observer to represent it at the proceedings of the Third Committee.

The Assembly rose at 1.15 p.m.