THIRD MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held on Tuesday September 27th, 1932, at 10.15 a.m.

The Members of the Council were represented as follows:

Irish Free State
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
China
France
Germany
Guatemala
Italy
Japan
Norway
Panama
Poland
Spain
Yugoslavia

M. DE VALERA (President)
Mr. Anthony Eden, M.C., M.P
Dr. W W Yen
Dr. Paul-Boncour,
Baron von Neurath
M. Jose Matos
Baron Aloisi
M. Nagaoka,
M. Birger Braadland
Dr. Narciso Garay
M. Auguste Zaleski,
M. de Madariaga,
M. B. Yevtitch.


M. DE MADARIAGA presented the following report: 1

"In its resolution of September 29th, 1931 2 the Council expressed its intention of having a report prepared for the 1932 Assembly on the question of inaccurate news which may disturb the maintenance of peace and good understanding between the peoples. It was stipulated that this report should deal both with the discussions in regard to this problem at the Conference of Directors of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives convened at Copenhagen for January 1932, and with the results of the enquiries which the Council had requested the Secretary-General to make among Press Associations concerning this same problem.

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"At its January session, 3 the Council took note of the results of the Copenhagen Conference and congratulated the Danish Government on its happy initiative in convening this meeting.

"It will be remembered that this Conference submitted the question of inaccurate news to three committees, consisting respectively of directors of Government Press Bureaux, representatives of news agencies and representatives of three international journalists’ organisations participating in the Conference. The unanimity of the conclusions reached by these three committees should be noted. They all considered that the rapid distribution of correct and detailed reports was one of the most effective means of preventing the spread of inaccurate information. These three committees separately adopted carefully-considered resolutions concerning the importance of giving a wide circulation to accurate news; the advisability of close co-operation between Press Bureaux and the accredited representatives of the international Press, who should be treated on a footing of complete equality; the rights and duties of the journalist, whose responsibility is a necessary corollary of the freedom of the Press; and, lastly, the advantages which certain groups considered there would be in extending to all Press Associations the jurisdiction of the Journalists’ Court of Honour instituted at The Hague in 1931 by the International Federation of Journalists.

"I have merely mentioned the chief results of the Copenhagen discussions on the question with which we are now concerned. Members of the Council who wish to have fuller particulars will remember that after this Conference the Danish Government sent us a booklet containing all the texts adopted at this meeting and the reservations made by certain individual members.

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1 Document C.675.1932.
"The second part of the enquiry contemplated in the Council resolution of September 29th consisted of a consultation of the Press groups which had already been approached during the preparations for the 1932 Press Conference and of the Press organisations which might regard themselves as concerned. The members of the Council have received the document in which the Secretariat has collected the replies received by it on this matter. This document will have enabled them to realise the extent and importance of this consultation.

I feel sure that the members of the Council, after perusing this document, will have been glad to see the very keen interest aroused by the enquiry among the Press Associations. Important international groups and the national groups of sixteen countries have replied to the circular letter sent by the Secretariat. The journalists of distant countries, such as Australia, Honduras and New Zealand, have thought it worth while to communicate their views. Certain of these replies show that the question raised was examined with the greatest care and gave rise to lengthy discussion. The reply of the International Federation of Journalists, which contains some pertinent observations, voices the opinion of some thirty large national Press Associations and thus constitutes very important evidence. The memorandum communicated by the International Association of Journalists accredited to the League is a carefully considered and exceptionally bold study of the problem with which we are concerned. I feel sure that my colleagues will have appreciated the independence of judgment which this document reveals, and I wish to express, on behalf of the Council, our thanks to all the journalists who, notwithstanding their heavy daily work, agreed to assist us in these delicate investigations.

I do not propose to examine in detail the replies of these Press groups. The twelfth Assembly had asked the Council to consider, in co-operation with the Press, the problem of the dissemination of inaccurate news. We are going to submit to the thirteenth Assembly the resolutions of the Copenhagen Conference and the documentary material collected by the Secretariat in regard to the enquiry among the Press groups. Would be transmitted to the Assembly. The Council will doubtless consider that this constitutes an appreciable volume of material. It will be for the Assembly to decide what further action should be taken in the matter.

These are the observations I wish to submit to my colleagues on the Council.

In conclusion, I should simply like to propose that the resolutions of the Copenhagen Conference and the documentary material collected by the Secretariat in regard to the enquiry among the Press groups would be transmitted to the Assembly.

I would add that I feel certain that I am interpreting the unanimous sentiments of the Members of the Council in reaffirming that in this case, as in all matters affecting the enlightenment of public opinion, all measures, all reforms and all new institutions should be based on the principle of the respect for freedom.

The conclusions of the report were adopted.


M. Grünebaum, representative of Austria, came to the Council table.

M. Zaleski presented the following report and draft resolution.

The Council will remember that, at the first meeting of its sixty-sixth session, held on January 25th, 1932, it asked the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit to submit to it at an early date a report which would enable it to take a decision concerning the petition submitted under Article 320 of the Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye by the Zeltweg-Wolfsberg and Unterdrauburg-Woellan Railway Company of Vienna.

The Chairman of the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit asked three experts to study the question and report to the Committee. The latter, having examined the experts' report at its seventeenth session, held in June 1932, did not feel able to pronounce on the question of the applicability of Article 320, but nevertheless associated itself with the practical proposals of the experts to the effect that the parties concerned should be given a period of six months for the purpose of arriving at a friendly agreement, the conclusion of which at the present time neither the experts nor the Committee thought to be impossible.

In these circumstances, the Council will no doubt be prepared to accept the suggestions made by the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit and to postpone the examination of the question for six months. I therefore venture to propose to the Council the adoption of the following resolution.

The Council,

Having noted the resolution adopted by the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit at its seventeenth session and the report of the Committee of