A further question affecting the international regulation of maritime transport has just been submitted to the Communications and Transit Organisation at the request of the United Kingdom Government. This is the question of the pollution of the sea by the discharge of oil. The communication received from the United Kingdom Government points out that the pollution of the sea owing to the discharge of oil and oily water is increasing. A draft Convention was adopted by an International Conference held at Washington in 1926, but, since then, no agreement based on the conclusions of that Conference has been reached. It has been represented to the United Kingdom Government that certain evidence has accumulated in the last eight years which might alter the views expressed during that Conference, and which in any case deserves further international consideration. The United Kingdom Government’s letter was laid before the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit, on the understanding that, after an initial enquiry, the Transit Organisation should convene experts belonging to the various countries concerned to study the problem more closely. If, as the outcome of this examination, the Organisation recommends the conclusion of a convention on the matter, it will doubtless submit a memorandum to the Council setting forth the object of such a convention and the advantages which might ensue.

As regards the study of technical problems affecting the national development of the various countries, the experts of the Communications and Transit Organisation have continued to render to Governments services which have been highly appreciated. The Committee on Questions relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment, set up by the Organisation, holds itself at the disposal of the competent technical authorities in the various countries, and is prepared to render them any assistance they may desire. The co-operation between the Organisation and the National Economic Council of China has continued. The Organisation, which is represented in China by two experts, has collaborated more especially in the examination of hydraulic problems and those relating to the development of the road system and the organisation of road traffic. At the request of the Siamese Government, a committee of experts, after an examination on the spot by one of its members, submitted to that Government a detailed report on the question of improvements to the approaches to the port of Bangkok and the installations of that port.

It should also be noted that this year, for the first time, owing to a fortunate initiative of the Committee for Communications and Transit, the Assembly has before it a special report on the working of the wireless station of the League of Nations, the activities of which have been briefly described in the chapter on Communications and Transit of the Secretary-General’s report. This special report, which will in future be published annually, makes it possible to appreciate the importance of the services rendered by the station during the first two years of its activities, and the satisfactory results of its operation.

This survey of the main tasks completed or put in hand by the Communications and Transit Organisation appears to show that the Organisation, which at first devoted its chief attention to the preparation of general conventions laying down certain principles of international law in the matter of communications, has been able to enter more and more fully into the details of the special questions coming within its province, to renew its activities, and to adapt them to the changing needs of international life. The Assembly will doubtless note with satisfaction the work which the Organisation continues to perform, and particularly what it has achieved since the last session of the Assembly.

**DRAFT RESOLUTION.**

“The Assembly approves the report submitted to it by the Second Committee on the Work of the Communications and Transit Organisation.”

**ANNEX 2.**

**Official No. : A.44/1934.**

**CO-OPERATION OF THE PRESS IN THE ORGANISATION OF PEACE.**

**REPORT OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE TO THE ASSEMBLY.**

*Rapporteur*: His Excellency M. Constantin VISOIANU (Roumania).

The question of the co-operation of the Press in the organisation of peace, which has already been discussed by the Assembly at several previous sessions, is now again before us: we are asked to consider the results of the second Conference of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives, which, at the invitation of the Spanish Government, was held at Madrid from November 7th to 11th, 1933. It was the business of the Conference to consider whether concrete proposals could be made with regard to certain of the main recommendations submitted by the Press organisations
in the course of the enquiry conducted by the League into the means of preventing the spread of false information which might threaten to disturb the peace of the world and the good understanding between nations. Hence, this Conference, like the similar Conference held at Copenhagen in January 1932, represented a fresh development in the League's activity in this field.

The number and personal distinction of those present at the Madrid Conference, which was presided over by M. José María Doussainague y Teixidor (Spain), made it an event of indisputable importance from the standpoint of international Press relations. The Conference affirmed its devotion to the principles by which the League has always been guided—respect for the freedom of the Press and anxiety to convey authentic information to those who need it. With these principles in view, it made—as the Council of the League acknowledged at its seventy-eighth session (January 18th, 1934)—a valuable contribution to the study of the question of the co-operation of the Press in the organisation of peace.

Representatives of the Government Press Bureaux of thirty-three countries, representatives of telegraph agencies and delegates of international journalists' organisations or national associations of newspaper publishers jointly examined all the proposals, suggestions and observations submitted by Press organisations on the problem of false news. The cordiality which marked these discussions, at which Press interests of so many different kinds were represented, augurs well for the progressive international organisation of the Press. The meetings and conferences relating to the Press, convened either by the League of Nations (such as the 1927 Conference of Press Experts and the preparatory meetings which preceded it) or by certain Governments with the assistance and support of the League (such as the Copenhagen and Madrid Conferences), have certainly helped to create or to strengthen the ties between the various classes of persons interested in the Press and between nationals of different countries. In this connection, a further step forward was taken by the Madrid Conference.

Various resolutions of the Madrid Conference show either the progress made in international Press relations or the desire to promote those relations. For instance, one resolution notes the creation of an international federation of associations of directors and publishers of newspapers, and expresses the hope that the international organisation of newspapers may soon be completed; another relates to the setting up of Press services in connection with the delegations to international conferences, and other recalls that the periodical holding of international Press conferences and the setting up of a committee (consisting of the representatives of the Government Press Bureaux of Spain, the United States of America, Poland, Sweden and Czechoslovakia) for the organisation of the first future conference; other resolutions deal with various steps taken by the International Federation of Journalists, the international identity card for journalists, the international court of honour for journalists and the important problem of the status of Press correspondents in countries other than their own.

As regards this last-named problem, the Conference expressed the hope "that there may be established a general code of rules of a political, legal and professional character, calculated to ensure security for the work and person of Press correspondents in countries other than their own".

Other resolutions refer to the study of special points raised in certain of the recommendations made by the Press organisations consulted in regard to the problem of the spread of false news or deal with measures for the application of some of those recommendations.

In this connection, special mention should be made of the resolution recommending the establishment of a committee of experts to report on technical and financial methods of preventing the spread of false news, studying more particularly the interesting memorandum submitted by the International Association of Journalists accredited to the League of Nations, to which the Assembly's attention has already been drawn. The report in question would be submitted to the Council, to be followed by an appeal to the Press to communicate copies of authentic information. Should the Council have already pointed out, it would appear that one of the most important tasks of the Organising Committee of this future conference is to nominate and convene the body which is to draw up this report.

Another resolution of the Madrid Conference proposes the examination of the question of correcting false Press reports in the international field. The Polish Association of Publishers of Newspapers and Periodicals has submitted a document on this matter, which has been communicated to the Press organisations concerned. However, the study of this problem, both from the legal and from the political point of view, is by no means completed. It should be pursued cautiously and systematically, and the Council might perhaps request the Organising Committee of the future conference to take the necessary steps in this respect. However, the Madrid Conference was of opinion that, pending a comprehensive solution of the problem, some possibilities of correcting reports might be provided by the application of bilateral and multilateral Press agreements. A first step was taken in this direction at the Conference by the conclusion of an agreement between certain national associations of newspaper publishers (Swiss, Dutch and Polish). The Assembly can only hope that such agreements may be multiplied and extended and that they may prove effective, where necessary.

The Madrid Conference also endorsed a proposal for a detailed historical study of the effects of Press news on national feeling during past crises and of the influence that news would appear to have exercised on the development of such crises. The report adopted by the Council expresses the opinion that any action that may have the effect of concentrating attention to the damage that may be caused by false news is valuable, because it helps to educate public opinion. The Assembly will doubtless agree with this view and will request the Council to refer this question
for examination to the Intellectual Co-operation Organisation, by which it might be investigated in conjunction with certain aspects of the problem of moral disarmament.

The Assembly will also note, as the Council has already done, the complimentary remarks made by the Madrid Conference on the report of the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation concerning the intellectual rôle of the Press. Another report by that Institute gave rise to a discussion, as a result of which the Conference stated that it was desirable that the broadcasting services in the various countries should be maintained in such a way as not to affect good understanding between the nations.

The Conferences of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives are tending to become periodical. By providing for future sessions, and to that end adopting measures calling for the assistance of the Secretariat of the League of Nations, the Madrid Conference has presented us with a problem on which the Council considers it important that the Assembly should express its views. Representatives of the Secretary-General provided the secretariat for the Conferences at Copenhagen and Madrid and co-operated with the Press Bureaux of the inviting Governments in their preparation and organisation. But those were merely isolated conferences, the value of which the Assembly had expressly recognised in advance and the essential purpose of which was to examine a problem submitted to the League of Nations, on the basis of documents with which the Assembly was familiar. The question which now has to be decided is whether the activities of the Information Section shall continue to include the provision of a secretariat for conferences summoned in the same circumstances and in the same spirit as those previously held at Copenhagen and Madrid and designed to assist the Press in maintaining such systematic international relations as it considers desirable.

That is a somewhat special form of co-operation which, according to the report adopted by the Council, no doubt represents “the most economic means whereby the League can make an effective contribution to the efforts undertaken in this field”.

By authorising the Secretary-General to allow his Services to co-operate in such cases, we should, at the same time, be carrying on the work begun by the Danish and Spanish Governments. In this way, we should give still further proof of the high value which the Assembly attaches to the influence of the Press, the powerful assistance of which will help the League’s principles to prevail.

When considering the question of future sessions, the Conference of Madrid expressed the desire that “such meetings should be periodical and that a Committee appointed for the purpose for each conference should be responsible for preparing the organisation of the new conference in agreement with the Government of the inviting country and with the co-operation of the Information Section of the Secretariat of the League of Nations, after previous consultation with the Press groups concerned”.

As such is to be the procedure, we can be certain that future conferences will only be summoned after adequate preparation has been made. We can furthermore be certain that the Secretary-General will only offer the assistance of his Services to the extent desired by the inviting Government and the organisers of the conference and only on condition that the purposes of the conference are in harmony with the views of the Assembly, which should, moreover, be kept regularly informed of what is being done in this sphere. Such assistance would in any case only be afforded after authorisation by the Council.

I therefore believe that it will be the general desire of the Assembly to request the Secretary-General to take such steps as may be necessary in order that the Secretariat of all future conferences of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives should be provided by the competent League Services.

**Draft Resolution.**

“The Assembly,

“Having noted the results of the second Conference of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives, which sat at Madrid from November 7th to 11th, 1933, at the invitation of the Government of the Spanish Republic;

“In view of the valuable contribution made by the Conference to the problem of the spread of false news which might endanger the maintenance of peace and a good understanding among the nations;

“Hoping that the proposed enquiries into the technical and financial means of putting an end to the spread of false news and in regard to the correction of false news appearing in the Press many prove successful;

“Believing it to be desirable, that whenever it is thought expedient, Governments should convene conferences of Directors of Press Bureaux and representatives of the Press in the conditions contemplated by the Madrid Conference:

“Requests the Council to authorise the Secretary-General to facilitate, by such means as are at his disposal, the preparation for and organisation of the next Conference of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives by lending the services of the appropriate sections of the League to perform the secretarial work of the conference, if such services are desired by the Government convening the conference, after consultation with the Organising Committee and the Press organisations concerned.”