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Germany Joins the League

BY SIR HERBERT AMES.*

PRESIDENT GEORGE H. SEDGEWICK: An evening journal discussing certain happenings in Toronto said substantially this, that any excuse for cancelling a League of Nations meeting was good. Well, all I can say is this, that the presence of so many here today after we have heard Mr. Butler and Professor Zimmern and Canon Cody on the same subject indicates that at least you think it is possible the journal may be wrong. But I am sure that whether or not you are tired of hearing about the League of Nations your attendance is evidence that you are interested in the speaker of the day. He has had a long and honorable career in our own political life and afterwards he has had a distinguished career as financial advisor to the League of Nations. I am told that if you go to Geneva and ask who the big men were they would say Sir Herbert Ames, Sir Eric Drummond and perhaps some others. I have much pleasure in introducing Sir Herbert Ames.

SIR HERBERT AMES: Mr. President and members of the Canadian Club of Toronto, I confess that had I known who my predecessors were and the subjects of which they were treating I should have hesitated to speak on the same subject, for as a matter of fact, after my seven years activity in connection with the League of Nations that is the only topic practically on which I felt prepared to speak. But I have so many pleasant recollections of coming to Toronto and addressing Toronto audiences that I feel that even with the subject already well treated I can come before you,

*Canadians have good reason to be proud of the men that have represented the Dominion in Geneva; and of none more than of Sir Herbert Ames.

and so I will make no apology, but will deal with the subject you know is to be discussed today.

On the first Monday of September each year there meets at Geneva in Switzerland a unique gathering of people. It is composed of delegations representing about fifty different nations, who have come together, not as was the case with national gatherings of this kind in past history to plot for the overthrow of their mutual enemies, but to meet together in order that they may work for better understanding and world peace. There have been seven of these gatherings since the Great War. The first was held in December, 1920, and the others have been held in September of each succeeding year.

In my capacity as financial director of the League of Nations, which, by the way, is not an advisory, but an administrative office, I have been present at all of the Assemblies and at the last Assembly, held three months ago I had the high honor of being one of the delegates representing our own Dominion, a capacity quite different from that which I had previously held.

I think I can safely say that although each one of those Assemblies has had a special significance and although each one has accomplished something towards the consolidation of peace, yet the Assembly held in September, 1926, has done more, and is more spectacular, more thrilling, more wonderful in its accomplishment than any of those which have preceded it.

An ordinary Assembly is a businesslike body. It is very much like the parliament to which you are accustomed. When these men gather together their duties fall into three parts. The first part of the Assembly deals with a review of the record of the past year. The Council, which is the board of directors of the Assembly and meets regularly throughout the year, makes its report upon what has happened and this is criticized and discussed and generally approved. The second function the Assembly performs is to admit new members into the Society and electing those who shall serve on the Council for the following term, now three years, three each time. And the third business of the Assembly is to discuss plans for the future and to lay

down broad lines of policy for the year to come.

Now I might speak to very considerable length on the accomplishments of the last Assembly, but even at the risk of describing something you have already heard about on more than one occasion I am going to deal with only one phase, the admission of Germany.

Perhaps briefly to review the history, first from the French point of view and then from the German point of view, of the events which led to the final agreement on admission to the League, and then perhaps to describe that Assembly and see if it is possible for me to impart to you the feeling of enthusiasm that came over me as a delegate and then, finally to give a few observations with reference to what I think is the turning point in our career and what the future may hold for the League with Germany a part of it, is the best way I can deal with the subject.

For the past seven years all those who have loved peace have been earnestly desirous that Germany might enter the League; that it might be possible for France and Germany to work out their mutual problems in the presence of other states friendly to both, in the spirit of the League and the methods laid down in the Covenant. And it has been therefore not only the earnest desire, but the effort of many, in order that this culmination might arrive. The way has been long; the way has been difficult; and in order that you may appreciate it perhaps I might review briefly how it looked to France and how it looked to Germany.

You will remember that at the time the Treaty of Peace was drawn up, France was not particularly anxious to join the League of Nations. She only did so because it was understood that a strong agreement would be made between the United States, Great Britain and France to defend her against aggression. As you all know the United States did not adhere to that treaty. France turned to Great Britain and asked her if she would adhere and Great Britain said that it was in the agreement that unless all three agreed it would not go into effect and she did not feel she could take the obligation alone. France then adopted another policy and said, "I must look to myself and my own unaided efforts," and maintained her military strength at full size.

And then it was that she adopted the policy of economically ruining Germany and the occupation of the Ruhr, and inaugurated the arming and training and equipping of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia, states on the eastern side of Germany which might be her allies. This was the policy of France until the end of 1923.

Then we find another change, and here is where the League of Nations spirit begins to make itself felt. Here we find at the fifth Assembly a long discussion on the question of arbitration, security, disarmament and, eventually the drawing up, by mutual consent, of a protocol whereby all the states were expected to stand by each other. As you know, the British Government changed some time afterwards. It became a matter of consideration whether Great Britain and the Dominions should sign the protocol and it was finally decided that it was not in the best interest so to do, and the protocol has never been carried to fulfilment.

So France was again grievously disappointed and this led on to Locarno. And Locarno is simply the protocol of Geneva by piecemeal, by instalment.

Now take the position of Germany during the same period. Germany was not included in the annex to the covenant as one of the states that might be automatically admitted to the League. She could only join by election. She made application shortly after the Peace Treaty and application was refused with comparatively little courtesy. It was, of course, France and Belgium who felt they were not prepared to vote for the admission of Germany and I remember very well M. Viviani at the first Assembly, called upon to express the opinion of France on this matter declared, "It is not for us to appeal to Germany. It is for her to make herself worthy to be received." Germany felt she was unworthy and for five years she made no attempt to join the League. But Germany was not altogether unmindful of what was going on at Geneva. The spirit began to change and in the fifth and sixth Assemblies they began to discuss the matter of security and Germany said, "If our former enemies are going to make security guarantees with each other for protection against us, why should not we ourselves endeavor to make security guarantees for

protection against them?" And that led Germany in September, 1924, to make overtures with the view of ultimately joining the League.

The Dawes settlement removed reparations from the sphere of practical politics and made that question for the time being one that did not embarrass the relations between France and Germany. That was followed by Locarno and we had the road paved towards Germany's entrance to the League. You will see how the course of those seven years has shown the greatest modification in the attitude not only towards peace, but in the attitude of the members of the League towards one another.

Now as you know the Locarno agreements are based upon the idea that arbitration shall be resorted to in the case of every international dispute and it goes further and states that unless this arbitration is found in other ways the Council of the League of Nations shall be the ultimate arbitrator. The final treaty adds that this treaty shall not come into effect until Germany becomes a member of the League, and so you can imagine the anxiety with which we all approached the sixth Assembly where we expected to take Germany into the League. Last March we had a terrible disappointment. A special Assembly had been called to admit Germany into the League and yet through the attitude of one of the powers it was impossible for unanimity to be obtained and the German delegation reluctantly returned home. Fortunately they did not withdraw their application. She had made the allotment to her of a permanent seat on the Council as essential condition to her joining the League. Simple admission to the League was not difficult, requiring only a two-thirds vote of the Assembly but to give her a permanent seat required the consent of a unanimous Council. And as I have said that was where the March meeting failed and we had for the time being to abandon hope of Germany's entrance.

You can imagine therefore that when this same question came up in September and we did not know whether all the mutual jealousies and feelings and aspirations had, or had not, been fully satisfied, how anxious we were that the meeting should be a success.

I remember the meeting of the eighth of September when the vote was taken for the admission of Germany. I wish I could describe to you that Assembly. The hall is a long, severe, Calvinistic building. On the ground floor are seated the delegates, four members in each delegation, and then in a sort of semi-circle about the rostrum are the speakers to speak from the forum and above them is the president of the Assembly. On both sides of the floor that is devoted to the delegates are to be found the attachés and secretaries and the various diplomatic corps. There are two galleries of horseshoe shape. The first is devoted mainly to the press. Immediately opposite is the gallery devoted to the diplomatic corps. The upper gallery is devoted to the public, but it is very inadequate and cannot begin to hold the number of people who desire to be there.

It is a picturesque gathering because many of the delegates wear native costume. There are Ethiopians, black as coal, Persians with Astrakhan caps, Indian princes with jewels and turbans. It is a very interesting gathering indeed as you look at it from the platform.

They were all gathered on the eighth of September and the usual process of election was followed. Every state was in alphabetical order, commencing with "Afrique du Sud," Albania, Australia and so on. As one after another answered "Yes" or "Oui" and we gradually realised there had been no negative, we all caught our breath to know whether all the forty-eight states would respond affirmatively and a great sigh of relief went up when Venezuela uttered the forty-eighth "Oui." That made Germany's admission unanimous.

The German delegates this time had been cautious. They had not come to Geneva, but had remained in Berlin until they were sure they were elected. It took them forty-eight hours to arrive and they were present on the tenth of September ready to be admitted. That was a wonderful occasion, something I shall certainly never forget. Just think of it: On the twelfth anniversary of the Battle of the Marne to a day, Germany was taken into the League and the chairman of that Assembly was Momtchilo Nintchitch—the Foreign Minister of Serbia—the country that

stood the first shock of war. This Serbian chairman opened the ceremonies with a short address of welcome in which he told how happy all were that Germany had been unanimously elected and asked permission for the German delegation to come in and they entered the room amid great applause. There were Streseman, Von Schubert and Dr. Gans, who took their seats assigned to Allemagne between Albania and Australia, with about thirty others who occupied the diplomatic benches behind.

Streseman is a typical German, about five feet ten inches in height with a thickset German figure. He has a short, bristling mustache and close cropped hair and bears himself with a sort of military bearing which Germans who have had military training in their youth always carry. He was invited to come to the platform and speak. He made his speech in German. In some respects that was a disadvantage because not all the audience could understand it, but they were impressed with the straightforwardness, honesty and earnestness with which Streseman presented his case. I have taken the liberty of abstracting briefly what Streseman said:

"Germany realizes that she is now entering a society in which are to be found both old friends and former enemies. All of us have suffered from the Great War. We Germans are convinced that recovery from its effect is possible only through economic co-operation. To secure this a moral obligation rests upon us all. The German delegation knows that it is speaking the mind of the great majority of the German race when it declares Germany's determination to wholeheartedly devote itself to promoting the work of the League of Nations."

Later on in his speech he hinted that Germany, instead of looking to force would look to the revision of the Treaty of Peace, through the machinery provided by the Covenant of the League of Nations and expressed the hope that the time might come, and that shortly, when the League of Nations would be universal in its membership. It took a little time for the interpreters, because it is necessary in the League that all speeches should be interpreted into French and English, and, therefore the audience had a breathing spell.

Then followed M. Briand. I wish I could impart to you

the feelings that came over most of us when we heard Briand deliver his speech. When we realised what France had gone through and the change of view that had taken place we knew what it meant to him to say what he did.

Taking the two men side by side each represents his race remarkably well. They are as different as it is possible for two men to be. Briand is a heavily built thickset man with a large head and a great mop of unruly hair which he throws back from time to time. That gives him a somewhat dishevelled appearance. He has a beautifully modulated voice. When he speaks in a whisper you can hear and then there are times when he fairly rocks the room. He had the advantage over Stresemann of speaking in French which nearly all his audience understood.

"How incredible," began M. Briand when the tumult of applause which greeted him had subsided, "How incredible that twelve years ago today we were engaged in bloody battle—while today we meet to collaborate for co-operation with peace. Only the League of Nations could have brought about this transformation. Many times in the past have French and Germans met in war. As honors go each nation has had its share. So has been the suffering. Let it stand at that."

And then he added in a voice trembling with emotion:

"Mais tout cela est fini, fini,"

and we felt that a great period in history, a turning point, had come.

"We have both accepted arbitration," he said, "on every possible point of difference that can arise between us and we provide for peace. To arrive at this result has not been easy. As the crow flies the distance is not great from Locarno to Geneva. But the way is difficult and mighty mountains intervene. So it has been in reaching the accords of Locarno, but today the conditions of ratification are fulfilled, the agreements become a reality.

Difficulties in adjustment there no doubt will be but with good will we shall surmount them. In the council we shall meet, not as the champions each of the claims of his own country, but as seekers after agreement in a spirit of friendship and impartiality. In arbitration and in the acceptance of the reign-of-law lies the hope for the peace of the world."

And that speech which we all heard we will never forget. It is worth while to think of it for just a moment. Here

was the Prime Minister of Germany and the Prime Minister of France each of them speaking in the presence of the representatives of forty-eight nations of the world as witnesses, each speaking in the spirit of the League, endorsing the League and working in and through the League. No wonder then that those of us who had been with it from the beginning and seen the early difficulties were filled with hope for the future.

September 10, 1926, is a day that should be set apart for remembrance wherever the love of peace is in the hearts of men.

Before I sit down I have one or two observations I wish to make with reference to what we consider the results we may expect out of the great reconciliation of the ancient enemies under the spirit of the League of Nations.

In the first place we welcome to the League the added strength of the large German delegation. Already a number of important men have been taken into the secretariat so that we may have the benefit of their knowledge. The fact that Germany will co-operate economically is a great advantage. In Stresemann's speech it was that point he stressed. Probably along these lines Germany's co-operation will be most active, for next year the League is bringing about the great economic conference in order that the states may discuss among other things how it may be possible to remove such barriers as hitherto have made trade between them difficult and dangerous, and in this respect, doubtless, there will be success.

The second great step we expect is in the way of reduction of armaments. The menace to France has been removed and France already informs us that she will reduce her army from 678,000 to 400,000 men and in conversation with the President of the Czecho-Slovakia Republic last summer I was given to understand that Czecho-Slovakia was intending greatly to reduce the term of military service. And along those lines every country will undoubtedly act. Germany will be a powerful influence on the Assembly to secure the disarmament of others. It is also important to realise that when France and Germany and all who signed the Locarno agreements did so they once and for all de-

clared that they would never again resort to war or force to alter existing treaties. We have always been afraid lest enemy states would break out because the Treaty of Paris and other treaties might be considered unjust by them. It is not for me to discuss. The fact is established that hereafter if they move they will move by mutual consent and in a peaceful way under the aegis of the League.

And, finally, Germany's entrance is a long step to the universality of the League which will some day come; but there is no need of hurrying. I think Turkey will join in a short time. As for Russia the fact that Germany is in will undoubtedly go a long way to securing Russian co-operation. So that we may feel that the path to universality is very much improved by the fact that Germany has joined the League.

I had seven years in Geneva, in many ways the most interesting years of my life. I remember the early days when we spoke of the League in a whisper when we discussed with one another whether it would succeed or fail. Those days are past. Seven years have seen the League become the great centre of exchange in Europe. It has become the guardian of peace and the means through which co-operation will universally take place in Europe. It is strong today. And one of the features that I shall look back to with pleasure is that during my incumbency of the financial directorate we were able to save enough money to erect on the shores of Lake Geneva a suitable home for the League of Nations. We have bought a beautiful piece of property, with a magnificent view of Mont Blanc, and we are now conducting an architectural competition among all the members of the League, and expect to erect there next year a home for the council and Assembly and Secretariat, that will not only be in accordance with the principles and objects of the League, but will be of the same permanent character that we hope will be attached to everything achieved by that body.