

to which, under present conditions and the practice followed during the last years, the system of sanctions has acquired a non-obligatory character. They are of the opinion that this non-obligatory character of the sanctions applies not only to a particular group of States, but to all Members of the League. They are convinced that it is in the interests of the League itself that this liberty of decision is expressly acknowledged. In this spirit they prepare for the discussion of the report put before the Assembly by the Committee of Twenty-eight."

In accordance with this declaration, Mr. Sandler set forth the view that the policy of neutrality—which certain countries, including his own, reserved the right to pursue—should be deemed entirely consistent with a loyal interpretation of the duties of the States Members of the League.

The delegates of the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania generally associated themselves with this view. They held that the distinction which formerly existed between obligations regarding military sanctions and those regarding economic and financial sanctions had disappeared, all having now acquired a purely optional character, and that this also applied to the grant of the right of passage through a territory to the forces of any Member of the League participating in joint action against an aggressor. While generally expressing their continued belief in the fundamental principles of the League, they reserved for their Governments the right to decide in each particular case whether and to what extent, they would apply sanctions against an aggressor.

Speaking on behalf of the United Kingdom, Earl de la Warr agreed that the time had come to re-examine the principles by which the League should be guided in the present stage of its development. He said that, in the opinion of his Government, an honest avowal of the limitations of the League would have the effect of putting it on a sounder basis and of increasing its usefulness as an instrument of peace. To this end the United Kingdom delegation would put forward definite proposals in the appropriate Committee.

On the other side of the question the representatives of Spain, China, Mexico and the Soviet Union, while freely admitting the vacillation and failures of the League, were strongly opposed to any interpretation that would weaken the provisions of Article XVI, and urged that the League should persevere in applying the system of collective security and in endeavouring to make it more effective. The delegate of the Soviet Union, M. Litvinoff, was particularly vigorous in his opposition. Hitherto, he said, the aggressor had had to reckon with the possible action of the League; but now they were being asked to reassure him beforehand that he need fear nothing at the hands of the League. It might be objected that all that was proposed was to eliminate the obligatory and automatic character of sanctions. It was obvious, however, that the whole value of Article XVI lay in its obligatory character, which enabled every Member of the League to rely on universal aid if it were subjected to attack. If such aid were to depend on a separate decision in each individual case, if assistance were to be granted to some member-states and not to others, there could be no feeling of security and the world would be thrown back on the pre-war system of blocs and alliances.

Turning to the situation in Central Europe, M. Litvinoff stated that his Government had abstained from all advice to the Czechoslovak Government, considering it quite inadmissible that it should be asked to make concessions to the detriment of its interests as a state, in order that the U.S.S.R. should be set free from the necessity of fulfilling its obligations under the Treaty bearing its signature. When consulted by the French Government as to its attitude in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia, the U.S.S.R. Government had given the perfectly clear and unambiguous reply that, in accordance with the Soviet-Czech Treaty, it was prepared to render Czechoslovakia immediate and effective