

certain rights to racial, religious and linguistic minorities included within its territories. In the intervening years, it frequently expressed a desire to have these guarantees of minority rights made general in their application. It also placed upon the Agenda of the Assembly a proposal for the conclusion of a General Convention on the Protection of Minorities. M. Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, took advantage of the general discussion on the work of the League to make the following statement:—

“ Pending the introduction of a general and uniform system for the protection of minorities, my Government is compelled to refuse, as from to-day, all co-operation with the international organizations in the matter of the supervision of the application by Poland of the system of minority protection.”

The United Kingdom, France and Italy, signatories with Poland of the Treaty of June 28th, 1919, felt called upon to express their views on the position assumed by Poland.

Sir John Simon (United Kingdom) declared that the proposal that minority treaties which applied to Poland, and to certain other countries, be generalized in their application could be made the subject of a decision when the proposal came before the Sixth Committee. He took the position, however, that treaty obligations already entered into by any particular State could not be regarded as depending upon a decision which might be reached later upon more general proposals. Poland, he went on, had accepted certain treaty obligations with regard to minorities which included the guarantee of the League of Nations. It had further accepted a certain procedure, which is laid down in resolutions of the Council, concerning the manner in which this guarantee should be exercised—a procedure which clearly implied the co-operation of Poland. These resolutions became binding on Poland by reason of its acceptance of them, and it was clear that it would not be possible for any State to release itself from obligations of this kind, thus entered into, by unilateral action.

M. Barthou (France) associated himself unreservedly with Sir John Simon's conclusions. France, examining the problem exclusively from the point of view of respect for treaties, did not intend to preclude any possibility of modifications, the principle of which was accepted in the minority treaties themselves, but could not agree that it was open to a single Power to proceed unilaterally to these modifications—still less to a denunciation—outside the procedure provided for, or without negotiating with the other contracting parties.

Baron Aloisi (Italy) took the position that, if the object of M. Beck's statement was to lead up to new regulations better adapted to existing circumstances, the question reduced itself to a problem of revision. Italy was the first country to put forward the general principle that treaties should be adapted to changing circumstances. But, at the same time, Italy had always asserted that existing treaty obligations must be respected until replaced by new provisions.

It should, perhaps, be noted also that in the course of the general discussion the Austrian Foreign Minister, M. Berger-Waldenegg, after outlining briefly the difficulties experienced by his country in the fight to maintain its national integrity, requested the Assembly to accord Austria the support necessary to ensure the maintenance of its security, and to facilitate the economic consolidation which is the essential condition of that security. No action, however, was taken on the matter by the Assembly. Concurrently with the close of the Assembly, however, the representatives of the United Kingdom, France and Italy reaffirmed the separate, though identical, Declarations of the Powers of February 17th, 1934, regarding the necessity of maintaining the independence and integrity of Austria, in accordance with the treaties in force.