

LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

[August 9, 1926.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1.

[W 7022/223/98]

No. 1.

*Sir Austen Chamberlain to M. de Fleuriau.*

My dear Ambassador,

*Foreign Office, August 9, 1926.*

I MUST apologise for my delay in answering the enquiries which you made of me on the 29th July on instructions received from M. Briand. The delay is due in part to the pressure of business which always accompanies the close of the session, and in part to the time taken in communication with colleagues who had already left town before I was able to place my views before them.

In our conversation you were good enough to give me some account of the proposals for the future composition of the Council of the League which had been made to M. Briand by the Polish Government, and of the attitude which M. Briand felt disposed to take upon them. You further put to me three specific questions upon which M. Briand desired to know whether the French and British Governments were in agreement. Before dealing with these matters in detail, it is perhaps well to consider the question in its broadest aspect. M. Briand will agree that our first and paramount object in September must be to secure the entry of Germany into the League with the attribution to her of a permanent seat on the Council. To this all other objects must be subordinated. It would be a disaster of the first magnitude if there were any repetition of the deadlock of last March. The work of pacification in which the French and British Governments have been engaged ever since M. Briand became Foreign Minister would be destroyed and the existence of the League itself would be endangered if international rivalries and particular pretensions again interfered with the realisation of this supreme purpose. The last thing that I should wish is to make any reproaches in respect of what happened in March; but it is a fact that the pretensions of Poland at that time gave the signal for that outburst of rivalries which brought about the final failure, and I cannot conceal from your Excellency that I am somewhat disturbed to see the Polish Government again endeavouring to make conditions which may create trouble for us all. I think I may fairly claim to have shown a real and effective sympathy with Poland. The attitude of my Government at Locarno, limited as it was by clearly defined principles of British policy, was yet most friendly to Poland, and not unhelpful to her; indeed, it may be doubted whether any country stands to gain more than Poland by the series of treaties initialled at Locarno and signed in London. In these circumstances, I feel that it is unreasonable for the Polish Government to renew, in a different form, it is true, but still with little disguise, the claim to a permanent seat on the Council, which was the principal stumbling-block last March. I repeat that, as far as we are concerned and while anxious to do whatever we properly can to satisfy Poland, our first purpose must be to secure the entry of Germany, and we cannot support any proposals which by their effect on Germany or on other Powers might be found to impede the realisation of this purpose.

Subject to these preliminary observations, I will endeavour to answer the enquiries which your Excellency put to me.

1. We are of opinion that nothing ought to prevent the election of Germany at the first possible moment. We agree that it is desirable to settle other questions relating to the composition of the Council as quickly as possible, but in seeking such an early decision we must be careful not to offend the Assembly or to give them the impression that certain members of the Council are attempting to settle this question over their heads and without allowing them time for consideration. We hope, however, that it may be possible so to arrange the business of both the Council and the Assembly that, after Germany's entry into the Council, no meeting of the Council for business shall take place until after the Assembly has decided the composition of the Council and elected the new non-permanent members.

2. M. Briand enquires whether we are agreed in thinking that without bringing into question the proposal for the reorganisation of the Council drawn up by the Committee of the Council we must find means of introducing amendments which will give some further concessions to the Powers concerned. His Majesty's Government are not opposed to such concessions, provided that they do not raise issues which destroy

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