

legislation, embodied in the Consolidated Labour Laws of 1943, was introduced. After his removal both contestants in the 1945 presidential election favoured a progressive labour policy, but, as organised labour has divided its political support between Dr. Vargas and the Communists, the present régime has never been on particularly intimate terms with the syndicates. When the Ministry of Labour held a national congress last November, the result was merely an open split between the Communist-controlled Confederation of Brazilian Workers (C.T.B.) and the Unions favourable to the Ministry. The latter erected themselves into a National Confederation; but, failing to make any progress against their rivals or to obtain official backing, this Confederation was wound up in the middle of February. The Communists at once claimed that the C.T.B. was the officially recognized organisation, since it had complied with the law in publishing its statutes in the official *Gazette*. The Minister of Labour replied that only confederations approved by his Ministry could legally represent organised labour. This implies that the Government does not recognise the right of any movement to represent Brazilian labour in international organisations, such as the Confederation of Latin American Workers (C.T.A.L.).

Colombia

Shortly after the congressional elections held in the middle of March the Colombian cabinet again resigned (see *Summary* No. 387). President Ospina Pérez has now announced a new ministry, composed of six members of his own Conservative party, four Liberals who support Dr. Gaitán and

two orthodox Liberals. As the elections did not give the Conservatives a clear majority, the President has adhered to his policy of preserving the coalition, but the composition of his new cabinet reflects the decline of the official liberals and the rise of the Gaitánistas. The eclipse of the official liberals is emphasised by the departure of Dr. Alberto Lleras Camargo to become Director-General of the Pan American Union and that of Dr. Alfonso López, who is to represent Colombia on the Security Council. Dr. Gabriel Turbay left politics after his defeat in the presidential election, and the present leader Dr. Eduardo Santos, has planned a long visit to Europe. Whether the orthodox liberal party can survive without its giants remains to be seen.

Venezuela

Rumours of impending disturbances (see *Summary* No. 380) have again been rife. In the middle of April the Government sought powers from the Constituent Assembly for the detention of those suspected of sedition. Most of the potential insurgents were accordingly arrested, and confidence in the Government's power to control the situation was restored. In the course of the debate, the danger of civil war was discussed, and when one of the two Communist deputies declared that ex-President López Contreras was supported by United States imperialism, the United States Ambassador, who was in the diplomatic box, shouted: "That is a lie," and left the building. The incident attracted considerable attention in the press, even papers of the right appealing to Venezuelan "national dignity."

UNITED NATIONS

The General Assembly

The first Special Session of the Assembly met on the 28th April to study the question of Palestine. Dr. Aranha (Brazil) was elected President. Seven Vice-Presidents were elected from the following countries: France and U.S., 49 votes each, U.K., 47, China, 45, U.S.S.R., 44, Ecuador, 43, India, 37. The Chairmen of the six committees were chosen from Canada, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Sweden, Poland and Honduras. The President, the seven Vice-Presidents and the six Chairmen form the Steering Committee which will discuss the agenda, and whether it shall be limited to the U.K. request for a Preparatory Committee on Palestine or shall include the Arab proposal for the end of the mandate

and the recognition of an independent Palestine. Jewish requests for non-voting seats at the Assembly will also be discussed. (See also under "Middle East.")

International Wheat Conference

The final plenary session of this Conference (see *Summary* No. 385) was held on the 23rd April, five weeks after the draft agreement had been put before the delegates. In the meantime considerable changes had been made in the draft, largely because one of the chief wheat exporters (Argentina) declared they were unable to participate in an agreement. The result of these changes was to transform the original draft from a commodity agreement on the old pattern to what was

in effect a multilateral long-term contract. Agreement was reached on the main principles of the new Draft. The U.K. was ready to approve the general plan of the draft, in the preparation of which it had played a major part and regarded it as a model for future international commodity schemes. A workable plan for the chief importing and exporting countries (excepting Argentina) was indeed in sight, but no agreement could be reached on the fundamental question of the prices that were to prevail under the agreement.

Under the plan as it now stands each signatory should adhere to this agreement as either an importing or an exporting country and should guarantee to import or export a specific quantity of wheat in each year of the agreement within a determined price range. The importers would guarantee to import their guaranteed quantities when the price was at the bottom of the range and the exporters to supply their guaranteed quantities when the price was at the ceiling. Member countries would undertake to maintain stocks as instructed by the International Wheat Council.

The draft agreement allows for freedom of trade within the price range, but the variation of prices is to be kept within bounds by agreed maximum and minimum prices intended to protect the consumer against overcharge and the producer against under-payment, while at the same time guaranteeing the consumer supplies in time of scarcity and the producer a sure market in times of surplus. The British delegation was able to agree to this system of "wheat points" (so called on the analogy of "gold points") but could not admit that the present spot and futures wheat prices on particular markets (*i.e.*, Chicago) could be taken as the measure of a "reasonable" world price. The prices ruling on the world market before the war were, indeed, too low; but those being asked now are, in many instances, far too high. The world must face international wheat

prices far lower than at present, and the U.K. desires that these may be reached soon. The price proposals in the draft agreement as it now stands, which were originally made by the U.S. delegation, did not, in the opinion of the British delegation, allow for a quick enough or big enough fall in prices. The U.K. could not afford to pay excessive sums for any of its imports, particularly for essential imports such as bread grains; but this draft would require excessive prices to be paid in future years. The U.K. was, therefore, unable to sign the draft as it stood. Canada was unwilling to sign if the U.K. did not, since an agreement without the U.K., the world's largest wheat importer, could hardly be expected to work. It was therefore proposed, as the Conference could get no further, that the draft be referred to the International Wheat Council for further consideration at a later date. It is possible that discussions may shortly be resumed in Washington.

The difference between the price offers of the prospective sellers and buyers does not seem great at first sight. The U.K. agreed very reluctantly to a ceiling price of 1.80 dollars a bushel for the term of the agreement and to a duration of 5 years. Its original proposals were a ceiling of 1.55 dollars and 4 years. The U.S. proposals, however, would not allow wheat prices to fall to 1 dollar until the fifth year of the agreement. To this the U.K. could not agree. It must be possible for prices by 1949-50 to come down to 1 dollar a bushel if there are plentiful supplies of wheat in the world by then. If prices like those in the Anglo-Canadian agreement could have been obtained (*e.g.*, from 1.55 dollars a bushel in 1946-47 to not less than 1 dollar a bushel in 1949-50) it is probable that the draft might have been accepted; but, in view of the importance of a long-term wheat agreement for the British balance of payments, and of the probability that prices will soon be falling, the terms proposed were unacceptable.

THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

The Foreign Ministers concluded their "Fourth Plenary Session," as the Moscow Conference is known officially, on Thursday the 24th April. It was the forty-third meeting. They will meet again in November in London, and may hold a brief unofficial meeting in September, if all four Ministers attend the Assembly of the United Nations in New York. The

Deputies will continue their work probably in London, possibly in Berlin.

No important agreements were made, and yet the Conference was not a complete failure. By removing obscurities in the policy of Russia and of Great Britain, France and the United States, it made it easier for the Ministers to see the road to peace. Mr. Bevin and Mr. Marshall each