

view a new phase in the protracted question known as the question of the Hungarian optants. It was important because it transferred to the practical field of direct negotiations a problem that had hitherto encountered difficulties and divergences on legal points, which had been defended with the greatest eloquence by the representatives of the two parties.

The President had pointed out in his statement that there was ground for believing that a solution of the dispute became possible as soon as the two parties agreed on the preliminary conditions for opening useful negotiations.

He thought that he would be voicing the unanimous opinion of his colleagues when he said that the Council greeted with the keenest satisfaction this attitude on the part of the two parties and their decision to enter into direct negotiations on the basis of the resolution just adopted.

The Council no doubt hoped that the agreement reached at the present meeting would be the prelude to a further agreement that would put an end to a protracted dispute, in the interests of good relations between two neighbours as well as in the general interest. On behalf of the Council, he urged both parties to do their utmost to ensure that the negotiations should be begun as soon as possible and brought to a successful conclusion.

Count APPONYI wished to thank the President for his kind words concerning the parties which had accepted the proposal.

In order, however, to avoid all ambiguity and misunderstanding, he ventured to make one remark. If he had correctly understood him, the President had pointed out, as though it were an accepted fact, that, as a result of the resolution, the question would be transferred from the legal to the practical field. It could not, however, be so transferred finally and the negotiations would only be opened on the assumption that the question would remain entirely a legal one, should the negotiations fail.

M. ANTONIADE was of opinion that the question was only transferred to the practical field for the moment, in order to endeavour to find a solution by means of direct conversations. If, however, those conversations failed and the question came up again, it would have to be resumed under all its aspects, both legal and political, and M. Antoniadé wished to lay particular stress on the political aspects.

The PRESIDENT took note of the agreement between the two parties on this point, which was not in any way at variance with what he himself had just said. He was referring solely to the form of the proposal which the Council had accepted and which he now regarded as finally adopted.

Count Apponyi withdrew.

(The Council went into private session.)

#### 2287. Free City of Danzig Appointment of the High Commissioner of the League of Nations.

M. VILLEGAS read the following report and draft resolution:<sup>1</sup>

The post of High Commissioner of the League at Danzig is provided for in Article 102 of the Treaty of Versailles, and his attributions are defined by that Treaty by the Polish-Danzig Treaty of November 9th, 1920, by several other agreements since concluded between Danzig and the Polish Government, and by various resolutions of the Council, in particular those adopted on the occasion of the appointment of the preceding High Commissioners on February 11th, 1920, and November 17th, 1920, respectively. These decisions of the Council also contain instructions for the High Commissioner, who is responsible to the Council of the League for the execution of his duties.

"By its resolution of November 17th, 1920, the Council had decided that the High Commissioner should be appointed for a period of three years and that his mandate should be renewable. General Haking, however, was only willing to accept the appointment for a year at a time. He remained two years in Danzig, and when the Council, in 1923, appointed Mr. MacDonnell as his successor, the appointment was again made for a period of one year, an assurance being, however, given to Mr. MacDonnell that, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, his mandate would be renewed at least once. Mr. MacDonnell remained three years in Danzig.

When M. van Hamel was appointed on December 12th, 1925, the Rapporteur stated that experience had shown it to be desirable that, for the best results to be obtained, the same High Commissioner should remain in Danzig several years; and in his opinion the Council should revert to its original decision and decide on the appointment of the High Commissioner for a period of three years.

M. van Hamel assumed duty on February 22nd, 1926; the period of his appointment, therefore, expires on February 21st, 1929. On September 19th, 1928, M. van Hamel forwarded a letter to the President of the Council (Annex 1075) in which he ventured to suggest that, in view of all the interests involved, the Council might consider the advantage of fixing the term of his mandate at a date towards the end of next June.

The draft resolution which I submit to the Council takes account of this suggestion:

1. Dr. van Hamel will continue in office as High Commissioner of the League of Nations at Danzig until June 21st, 1929. The Council requests the Secretary-General to

transmit to Dr. van Hamel its thanks for the services he has rendered the League during his period of duty as High Commissioner at Danzig.

2. Count Manfredi Gravina (Italian) is appointed High Commissioner at Danzig for a period of three years as from June 22nd, 1929. The question whether his term of office should be renewed will be examined by the Council a year before it expires.

3. The annual salary of the High Commissioner will be 80,000 gold francs. Arrangements for other expenditure relating to the post of High Commissioner, including the salaries of his office staff, travelling expenses, etc., shall be made by the High Commissioner after consultation, and in agreement with, the Secretary-General.

4. The funds allocated for the maintenance of this post shall, as in the past, be advanced to the High Commissioner by the Treasury of the League of Nations. The High Commissioner shall submit a monthly report to the Treasury on the use made of these funds, which shall, as far as possible, be employed in accordance with the general rules applied by the League in such cases. The advances thus made to the High Commissioner shall be repaid in equal parts by the Governments of Danzig and Poland in accordance with the agreement concluded on that question. The accounts of the High Commissioner shall be audited every six months by the Treasury of the League of Nations.

*The draft resolution was adopted.*

#### 2288. Question of the Proposed Reduction in the Annual Number of Sessions of the Council.

The PRESIDENT read the following statement:<sup>1</sup>

This question stands on our agenda in consequence of the conclusion at which we arrived during our session of March last to postpone any final decision until the close of this session of the Assembly. In the meantime we instructed the Secretary-General to communicate the documents relating to the question to the Members of the League and they will be found in the printed document C.150.M.40.1928, which was circulated to all Members of the League on March 22nd last.

I do not think that any new facts or considerations have arisen since our March session which change the problem in any way. I would, therefore, ask the Council whether it is now prepared to take a definite decision on the question.

The President asked permission to make a few modest observations on his own account, although he desired to excuse himself for not having had time to give them the shape he would have liked.

In connection with the question of a possible reduction in the annual number of Council sessions, arguments could be presented both for and against the proposal. There were certain practical reasons in favour of reducing the number of sessions from four to three — or, in point of fact, from five to four although the practice adopted in all the documents was to refer to four or three sessions annually.

The President did not wish to mention the personal reasons which, to his mind, might be urged in support of a reduction in the number of sessions. He himself had to allow for four days' travel to reach Geneva. This meant that, for each session of the Council, he had to be absent from Finland for a fortnight.

He would point out that the proposed reduction offered great advantages, since it was sometimes difficult for the representatives of the Members of the Council to come to Geneva four times a year. True, Geneva was a charming town, and it was pleasant to be able to pass a few weeks there each year. But it was equally true that the representatives of the Members of the Council had other urgent duties to perform in their own countries or in the countries to which they were accredited, and this sometimes made it inconvenient for them to come to Geneva. This was an argument which must be given full consideration.

As had been frequently pointed out, however, in the course of the discussions, it was of the highest importance that the responsible leaders of the policy of the Great Powers should be able to attend the Council sessions. That point had been made by Sir Austen Chamberlain at the December session in 1927 when he had said that for the conduct of the foreign policies of their own countries as well as for the authority and practical working of the League, it was desirable for as large a number as possible of Foreign Ministers to come either to the Council or the Assembly. Sir Austen Chamberlain also said that the attendance of those Ministers had to be reconciled with their duties in their respective countries.

In addition to these practical reasons in favour of reducing the number of sessions, there were a number of practical reasons against reduction.

In his note of June 13th, 1927 the Secretary-General had presented a table showing the number of sessions of the Council which had been held in the previous years; that table showed that, since 1923, there had been five or six sessions of the Council each year. Furthermore, in a note dated March 7th, 1927 the Secretary-General had pointed out that, at any rate in recent years, there had been no session of the Council with an agenda that did not include a number of questions which presented difficulties or which were of sufficient importance to justify the attendance of the usual representatives of the Council Members. These considerations appeared