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**669. Date on which the question of the Draft Mandate for Palestine should be placed on the Agenda of the Council.**

Lord BALFOUR said that he had hoped that, in the course of the discussions which had taken place during this session of the Council, it would have proved possible to take one step forward in the direction of a final settlement of all mandates connected with the Middle East. He had been disappointed, but his disappointment was not due to the fact that the absence of discussion delayed the final settlement, nor because he was afraid that the general policy endorsed by the Allied and Associated Powers, and by the League of Nations, was in the smallest danger. The final juridical date on which the mandates for the Middle East would become a part of a fixed and authoritative law of nations could only be when the Treaty of Sèvres was finally ratified. This, however, was merely a technical point. The Treaty of Sèvres and its re-modelling had nothing whatever to do with the policy of mandates, either in the Middle East or anywhere else. Those parts of the Treaty which dealt with the general policy of mandates, or with the particular mandates required in the Middle East, had never been, and never would be, the subject of discussion among the Allied and Associated Powers. No one need, therefore, have the least fear, or entertain the least hope, that the broad lines of the policy regarding mandates were going to suffer any alteration.

His regret that the discussion of the Palestine mandate had been postponed was based upon purely administrative considerations. The task thrown upon the Palestine mandatory was one of great delicacy and difficulty, and it was also one requiring the obtaining of large pecuniary resources. Until Great Britain could so develop the economic capacities of Palestine as to enable it to support a much larger population in much greater comfort than was at present possible, her hopes for success were bound to suffer disappointment. Money and productive capital were, therefore, required. The present abnormal condition of the world and the difficulty of obtaining large sums of money for any purpose were well known, and therefore anything which seemed to postpone in any degree the final and definite settlement of this problem discouraged lenders.

The public mind had undoubtedly been puzzled by the delays which had occurred in connection with this mandate. This was natural, because the situation was complicated and the question was not generally understood in all its bearings. Some persons thought the delay to be due to indecision either on the part of the Allied and Associated Powers, or of the Council of the League, or of the Mandatory Powers. The error was a grave if a natural one, and he desired to correct it.

It had always been contemplated that America, which had signed the Treaties of Peace, would also ratify them, and would become, in that sense, a full party to the responsibilities and work of the Allied and Associated Powers. This consummation had not been reached, but America naturally maintained that the fact that she had not ratified the Treaty of Versailles did not interfere with her rights and duties as one of the Allied and Associated Powers in connection with the territories which the victory of those Powers had placed in their hands. America had, therefore, recently claimed a voice in the mandates question, the sort of voice which she would have had if she had been a Member of the League.

This had necessitated a fresh series of discussions on the mandate problem. The British Government and the American Government had discussed the terms of the Palestine mandate, and the American Government had accepted the whole principle of that mandate. This, however, had all to be embodied in a treaty, so that it was only on the very eve of the session of the Council that the British Government had received a final statement from the United States, the general tenour of which he had already explained at a previous meeting. His Government had not, therefore, been able to give notice that it intended to raise the question at the present session, and when he had asked at the first meeting that the question should be put on the agenda, he had found that some, if not all, of the Members of the Council had felt that, while there was probably no objection of substance, they had not had sufficient notice nor had their Governments been able to survey the question, nor to consider whether the proposed method of dealing with one mandate at a time in the Middle East was or was not a convenient method of procedure. The British Government had no complaint to make against the Council's action. The question of the decision was a complicated one, but the delay, the practical effects of which his Government felt very deeply, in no sense touched any of the broad questions of principle in which public opinion was interested.

The public mind, he thought, might have misunderstood the powers of the League of Nations and of its Council regarding mandates. Mandates were not the creation of the League, and they could not in substance be altered by the League. The League's duties were confined to seeing that the specific and detailed terms of the mandates were in accordance with the decisions taken by the Allied and Associated Powers, and that in carrying out these mandates the Mandatory Powers should be under the supervision--not under the control--of the League. The League possessed the necessary organisation for obtaining the fullest information as to the method in which each Mandatory Power was carrying out its duties.

A mandate was a self-imposed limitation by the conquerors on the sovereignty which they exercised over the conquered territory. In the general interests of mankind, the Allied and Associated Powers had imposed this limitation upon themselves, and had asked the League to assist them in seeing that this general policy was carried out, but the League was not the author of it; the duty of the League, which was a most responsible and difficult one, was first to see that the terms of the mandates were in conformity with the principles of the Covenant and, secondly, that these terms would, in fact, regulate the policy of the Mandatory Powers in the mandated territories.

Those who hoped and those who feared that the declaration which he had made previously on the British policy with regard to Palestine was going to suffer any modification were mistaken. The fears were not justified; the hopes were not justified. The general line of policy stood, and must continue to stand.

Some anxiety had been expressed in certain quarters lest the mandatory system as applied to Palestine should have some injurious effects upon the religious interests of any great Christian body. He could express nothing but surprise that any human being could suppose that Christian interests should suffer by the transfer of power in Palestine from a Mohammedan Power to a Christian Power, especially when that Christian Power was Great Britain. He did not think that he would be contradicted when he said that no Power had shown itself more equitable in its treatment of different religious creeds. It would be universally admitted by those who knew Great Britain's practice that the various forms of Christian religion within her own territories had been dealt with with the utmost fairness and generosity. Great Britain was a Protestant country, but he did not believe that there was any country, Protestant or Catholic, in which the Catholic religion had received fairer or more generous treatment than it had within the British Isles. It was not credible, therefore, that places possessing sacred associations with large bodies of Christian believers should in any way suffer by being taken away from Mohammedan authority and put under a Christian mandatory. This was all the more difficult to believe when it was remembered that whatever was done in Palestine at that moment, or in the future, was done in the full light of day. The machinery of the Mandates Commission, of the Council and of the Assembly of the League was so contrived as to make it quite impossible for any transaction of general interest to take place except in the full glare of public opinion. Under these circumstances, there was no chance of deliberate injustice or careless administration being permitted to exist in Palestine. Lord Balfour concluded by saying that he had explained why the delay had occurred in the definition of the Palestine mandate, and why the final juridical settlement of the whole question would still have to be delayed.

He proposed that the question of the Palestine mandate should come up before the Council anew, and that the meeting at which it was to be discussed should take place within six weeks.

M. ADATCI said that Lord Balfour's explanations had been most clear and lucid, and that he desired to support the proposal. The League had been in existence for nearly three years, during which time it had had under its protection the Free City of Danzig, the territory of the Saar Basin and the Minorities throughout the world. The administration of these three most important branches of its work was proceeding regularly and smoothly.

The League's duties, however, with regard to the mandatory system had not yet begun. He believed that only two reports, besides the Japanese Government's report on C mandates, had as yet been sent to the League.

The world awaited anxiously the final definition of all mandates, and the Council should endeavour to effect this as soon as possible. The Council must take account, however, of local conditions and extraneous political considerations. As regards the Palestine mandate, there was nothing which need delay its examination. As Lord Balfour had said, the questions concerned were administrative. There was no reason, therefore, why the Council might not examine them at the earliest opportunity at the beginning of the next session.

M. Léon BOURGEOIS desired, in the name of the French Government, to support Lord Balfour's conclusions. An impartial study of the question, carried out in the full light of day, would undoubtedly hasten a final solution. He entirely agreed with Lord Balfour as regards the essential point that the policy which the Allied and Associated Powers had pursued since the Treaty of Peace was not changed, and never would be. Despite certain passing incidents, the profound union which existed between the Allies would never be broken, and no problem of general policy regarding this present question would cause a division among them.

France, like Great Britain, had experienced difficulties of an administrative character concerning the mandates which she held, especially concerning the Syrian mandate.

The Council unanimously desired to see this grave question of mandates settled justly and fairly and with as little delay as possible.

Lord Balfour was right when he said that the question of mandates had been complicated hitherto, and their definition delayed by the fact that America, though not being a Member of the League, and not having ratified the Treaty of Versailles, had yet claimed her right to express her opinion regarding mandates.

At a meeting last year, the Council had been most careful to pay regard to the intervention of America, and had behaved with the utmost courtesy towards her. It had, in fact, refrained from deciding on certain mandates which seemed at that time to be ready, in order not to anticipate America's adhesion.

Lord Balfour had now informed the Council that America had consented to the definition of a certain mandate, and he considered, and Lord Balfour would agree with him, that the Council would require to know America's opinion regarding the other mandates. It was important for the Council that its members should be on a footing of equality. When any one of them desired to have a particular point of a problem solved which was of interest to other members of the Council, he should wait until the others were in a position to discuss the question. The Governments would do all that they could to obtain a reply from America to the questions which had been submitted regarding mandates. This concerned not only Eastern mandates, but also B mandates.

All the members of the Council paid a tribute to the spirit of tolerance shown by Great Britain on religious questions, but it would not seem necessary for the Council to discuss such questions.

M. Léon Bourgeois thanked Lord Balfour for having recognised that discussion on the Palestine mandate should be postponed until next session. The period of six weeks, however, which Lord Balfour had proposed should elapse before the Council met again, seemed to him too short. He agreed that the Council should discuss the question before the Assembly met, but the preliminary discussions should first be completed.

The Marquis IMPERIALI said that he agreed in principle with M. Léon Bourgeois' remarks. There was no need to pay a tribute to the liberal and tolerant spirit of the British Government in dealing with religious matters. Lord Balfour's remarks on this point could almost be described as superfluous. He naturally agreed with Lord Balfour on the general principles already adopted as regards mandates by the Allied and Associated Powers.

He recognised the necessity, in the general interest, of a settlement by the Council at as early a date as possible of the Mandates question. He

hoped that the necessary preliminary agreement between the interested Powers on certain points in the terms of the Mandates would soon be reached and that the Council would be able to give its final approval without any further delay.

He wished to join with M. Léon Bourgeois in asking Lord Balfour to agree to a longer period before the next Council session than the one which he had proposed. He hoped that the conversations which would take place between the various Governments would soon lead to satisfactory results, and for this reason he ventured to ask Lord Balfour to agree to a greater elasticity concerning the date of the next session.

Lord BALFOUR said that he was most gratified at the support which he had received from those Members of the Council who had spoken, and he hoped that he might interpret the silence of the remainder as meaning consent. He had proposed that the Council should meet again to discuss this question in six weeks' time, but he agreed with M. Léon Bourgeois and the Marquis Imperiali that rigid dates might have a certain danger attached to them, and that it might be impossible to deal with all the questions during the period which he had proposed. He therefore suggested that the next session of the Council should be held not later than July 15th.

M. Léon BOURGEOIS and the Marquis IMPERIALI agreed to this suggestion.

M. HYMANS, M. TANG TSAI-FOU and M. CLARK supported Lord Balfour.

*The President expressed the same view, and, on his proposal, the Council agreed that the question should be postponed until its next session, which should take place not later than July 15th. At this meeting, all outstanding Mandates would, if possible, be dealt with.*

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