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**THE QUESTION OF ADMITTING THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE  
LEAGUE OF NATIONS.**

by

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**Abstract**

This article follows on from the author's contribution to CEER 3 (2009) which discussed debates within the League about turning Armenia into a mandate. When this no longer seemed possible, Armenian politicians applied for full membership of the organisation. The request sparked a series of energetic debates which reflected uncertainty about the extent of (especially defensive) obligations between member states and how to deal with the consequences of the Russian Revolution. Although in the end Armenia was not accepted into the League, the discussions displayed many of the uncertainties experienced by statesmen as they began adjusting to a new way of practicing international relations.

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Article One of the Covenant of the League of Nations established the preconditions for admitting new members to the organisation. It said:

‘Any self-governing State, Dominion or Colony not named in the Annex may become a Member of the League if its admission is agreed to by two-thirds of the Assembly, provided that it shall give effective guarantees of its sincere intention to observe its international obligations, and shall accept such regulations as may be prescribed by the League in regard to its military, naval and air forces and armaments.’<sup>1</sup>

But would the satisfaction of these conditions really be enough to lead to a state’s acceptance by the League of Nations? Or would the entry of a state be prevented for some other reason? Such questions would prove important for the future development of the organisation.

By May 1920, the Armenian National Delegation was convinced that Armenia would not be granted a mandate by the League of Nations, and consequently it changed its approach. On 13 May the President of the Armenian delegation, Avetis Aharonian, sent two telegrams to the Council of the League. The first provided information about clashes between Armenians and Azeris in Zangezur and Karabagh, also about the Turkish invasion of Erzurum. This telegram requested assistance. In the second telegram, the Armenian delegation asked that Armenia be accepted as a full member of the League and stated that the country was prepared to fulfil all of its obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations.<sup>2</sup> The reply of the Secretary-General said simply that consideration of the admission of new members fell to the Assembly of the League, not the Council, and recommended that an official note be sent by the Republic of Armenia which could then be reported to the Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Kolsky *The League of Nations. Its organization and activity*. Moscow, 1934. p. 30 (Russian)

<sup>2</sup> E. Zohrabyan, 1920. *Turkish-Armenian War and the Powers*. Yerevan, 1997, p. 338 (Armenian)

Unfortunately Aharonian only received a note from his government after a lapse of several weeks. It actually took until 8 November for him to receive an official telegram, by which time the Assembly had already begun its first session. Consequently Aharonian was forced to apply in the name of his government for membership at an earlier point, something he did on 25 September. By this time the Treaty of Sèvres had been concluded (20 August 1920) and so the Allied Powers had recognised Armenia as a free and independent state.<sup>3</sup>

The League of Nations' bodies dealing with admission required answers to many different questions, not least concerning the condition of Armenia's army, navy and air force, as well as about its borders and future representatives to Geneva. Although the Armenian delegation delivered the necessary information, it was obvious that the League was seeking the reduction of the state's armed forces, and so the delegation had to explain in detail the need to maintain a substantial military force. This was dictated by the number of enemies surrounding the new state and the fact that the Treaty of Sèvres had yet to be ratified.

On 20 October, the Council of the League discussed the information presented by the Armenian Delegation and Armenia's military commission. The latter's report suggested that the country had about 35,000 men under arms—essentially in the army. Given that the state had no coast, it had no navy; and since it had just five aeroplanes, the air force was similarly under-developed. The report went on to say that it was impossible for the government to outline how its military position would evolve in the future because its 'political and geographical situation' was particularly unsettled.

The Assembly nominated a special committee under the presidency of Antonio Huneus (Chile) to investigate states applying for membership. Its first session was convened on 20 November 1920, during which the committee undertook to consider whether the applications were formulated properly, whether the governments of the states were recognised *de facto* or *de jure*, whether they were freely elected, whether the states and their borders were stable, and whether the governments in question exhibited serious attitudes towards their international obligations and the reduction of armaments. To facilitate deliberations, the committee was sub-divided into three sections and the cases of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia and Costa Rica were referred to the third sub-committee. It was presided over by Fridtjof Nansen (Norway) and had a membership consisting of T. Ionescu

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<sup>3</sup> Armenian State Central Historical Archives, dos. 368, doc. 114.

(Romania), E. Millen (Australia), D'Palasius (Spain), N. Politis (Greece), Spalajkovich (Yugoslavia), and Tsjan-Tsaj-Fu (China).<sup>4</sup>

Nansen's report on Armenia received general discussion on 1 December. The Republic of Armenia had been founded in March 1918 and had a government which represented the nation fairly, even though it could not yet be described as properly stable. The republic covered 26,130 square miles, but could expand to about 80,000 if the vilayets of Van, Erzerum and part of Trebizond were ever added to its territories. Although Armenia's frontiers clearly were not fixed definitively, Article 52 of the Treaty of Sèvres provided for their arbitration under the supervision of President Wilson of the USA. The country, as constituted in May 1920, was said to have a population of 2,159,000, although it was also admitted that these statistics might not be accurate as they did not take account of recent losses owing to war and emigration. The report laid special emphasis on the fact that the Armenian government genuinely wanted to respect its international obligations and that it had signed the Treaty of Sèvres. The Armenian delegation argued, of course, that this signature implied *de jure* recognition of the state by all other treaty signatories. Further information was supplied to the Secretariat of the League which suggested that the USA and Argentina both recognized Armenia officially.<sup>5</sup> So, although the sub-committee could not answer absolutely every question about the new Armenian state, the president's report was favourable towards the country and the committee's members supported this position. It made clear that, in the end, the sub-committee believed the state met the main criteria for membership.

The report was presented to the Assembly's special committee in its entirety and was followed by discussion. Mr Octavio (Brazil) spoke first and recalled that his government, as a signatory of the Treaty of Sèvres, recognised Armenia *de jure*. He added that Armenia had also been allowed to sign a convention for the protection of minorities. René Viviani (France) and Nicolas Politis (Greece) also recommended that Armenia be admitted to the League. Alternative views were presented by Robert Cecil (delegate for South Africa), however. He noted that the admission of Armenia would put an end to the proposal that Armenia should be established under the protection of a mandatory state. He went on to note that the League's members had not hitherto pledged to furnish support to Armenia and that admission would entail serious obligations for all member states to defend the country against external

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<sup>4</sup> A.Mandelstam, *La société des nations et les puissances devant le problème Arménien*. Beirut, 1970. pp.95-96.

<sup>5</sup> League of Nations Archives (LNA), 20/4/39, Section 2, dossier 8350, doc. 3421.

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aggression. A similar view was expressed by Mr. Fisher (Great Britain) who wondered if it would not have been better to establish Armenia as a mandate. The meeting was broken up before a final decision was taken on the important difference of opinion.

On 4 December, the Assembly's 5<sup>th</sup> Committee discussed the application for admission made by Luxemburg, Albania and the Baltic States. A report was presented by Mr. Octavio (Brazil) about the latter.<sup>6</sup> The delegate for Czechoslovakia emphasised that instability in the Baltic States was connected with policies pursued by the Soviet Union and said that if these states were accepted into the League at once, then the organisation would face a real danger. More typically, however, member states remained quiet on the topic of how Soviet attitudes might influence the League's position on the Baltic and Caucasian States because their own policies against Moscow were being pursued in secret at the time. But recognising that similarities did exist in the cases of the Baltic and Caucasian States, Robert Cecil offered to investigate them together (since although the application of Azerbaijan was postponed by the sub-committee, the cases of Armenia and Georgia remained actionable). In fact, Cecil decided it would be dangerous to deny the application of these states because their neighbour, Russia, was beyond moral, economic or military influence by the League. Consequently he thought they should be admitted to the organization with the following proviso:

'In view of the fact that these states have on their borders territories occupied by populations in a condition of disorder and not amenable to the influence of the League of Nations, the Assembly declares the discharge of the obligations of Members of the League of Nations under Article 10.'<sup>7</sup>

According to Article 10, League members agreed to preserve each other's territorial integrity and political independence in the face of external aggression; but was Cecil's motion to admit states only on condition of this being suspended acceptable legally? Would it in fact be better if the League allowed these states to participate in its work by allowing them to sit on some of its technical bodies? Such a solution would have provided the benefit of encouraging and supporting the states, as well as satisfying the positive disposition of the committee. In the end, Eduard Beneš presented the following motion:

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<sup>6</sup> Mandelstam, *La Société des Nations*, pp. 98–100

<sup>7</sup> A. Kolsky, *The League of Nations. Its organization and activity*. . Moscow, 1934. p. 32 (Russian)

‘The Committee, without wishing to express a final conclusion on the admission or non-admission of the Baltic States in the present political situation of Eastern Europe, suggests to the Assembly that those States might be invited to take a part in certain technical organizations, so that as soon as general political conditions allow, they might be formally considered as Members *pleno jure* of the League of Nations.’

This implied that the members of the League would not be obliged to intervene to protect the states in question in all possible circumstances. At the same time, however, some members of the League were concerned that steps to make the application of Article 10 contingent upon specific circumstances might create a precedent with serious consequences. This was pointed out especially by the Canadian delegate during the meeting. He felt the Russian question had to be faced fully and frankly, since it was so important for all of Russia’s neighbours, and for Canada too.<sup>8</sup> Hence he recommended the following resolution:

‘We request the Legal Section of the League of Nations Secretariat to advise us at once if there is any other relation to the League other than full membership to which these States can be admitted under the terms of the Covenant, and that we adjourn the further consideration of the question.’

These details about the discussion of the admission of the Baltic States have been given in order to highlight the real grounds for the failure to admit other states occupying territories which formerly had belonged to the Russian Empire. Colombian delegate Mr. Restrepo emphasized the fear of European states that they would not be able to recover the loans they had made to the former Russian Empire. The British representative offered to refer the whole matter to the sub-committee which might seek out a compromise formula. The committee also considered the proposal of Mr. Pueyrredon, put forward a few days beforehand, according to which non-sovereign states which had yet to be admitted to the League might send representatives to sit in the Assembly as observers (i.e. without the capacity to vote).

After a debate, the committee adopted Mr. Fisher’s proposal, modified according to Viviani’s recommendation that Georgia and Armenia be added to the list of countries which were to form the subject of the report. The committee decided not to present the applications of Azerbaijan and Ukraine to the Assembly owing to negative reports prepared by the sub-committees. In fact, by the time the discussions were being held, Soviet regimes existed in both countries.

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<sup>8</sup> P. E. Briguet, *Les Nations opprimées et la Société des Nations*. Paris, 1938. pp. 19–20

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On 6 December, the Assembly's 5<sup>th</sup> sub-committee held its regular session under the chairmanship of Mr. Poulet. During the session, he, Mr. Fisher and Mr. van Karnebeek presented three alternative possible solutions to the problem of admission. Poulet's proposal was as follows:

'The Committee recommends that, pending the final settlement of the Russian question, the Assembly should admit states such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia, which have been formed as a consequence of the dissolution of the Russian Empire and their borders are recognized by neighboring states.'

Fundamental objections were raised to this, however. On the one hand, there was the difficulty of reconciling the provisional character of these states with the provisions of the Covenant; on the other hand, there were the inconveniences which might result for other member states owing to the fact that the fate of the applicants would depend on future circumstances, the development of which was impossible to foresee. Even so, the committee felt it should still try to find a solution which would provide the states in question with encouragement, and which might strengthen both their international and domestic situations.

Mr. van Karnebeek (The Netherlands) submitted a motion which finally was formulated as follows:

'The Committee recommends that the Assembly should inform the Governments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia:

1. That their requests for admission had been examined with sympathy but that the circumstances were such as to preclude the Assembly from arriving at a definite decision.
2. That, pending the subsequent decision of the Assembly these States might participate in such technical organizations of the League of Nations as were of general interest.'

This resolution was adopted by the sub-committee and submitted for the approval of the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee. During these discussions, the importance of the Soviet Union as a factor in deciding the fate of the Baltic and Caucasian States came much more to the fore. Following a proposal by Fridtjof Nansen, the questions of the Baltic and Caucasian States were actually treated separately. Opening the discussion, Robert Cecil proposed the following formula as the basis for discussion:

'In consideration of the fact that these States have in their immediate neighborhood nations in the state of anarchy, which are not amenable to the influence of the League of Nations, the Assembly hereby declares that the Council, in determining the manner in which the obligations involved under Article 10 shall be carried out in respect of those States, will not

fail to take these circumstances into account. Subject to this reservation the Assembly admits these States as Members.’<sup>9</sup>

Viviani (France), however, disputed whether it would be possible to admit States which could not be offered assistance in case of need.

To appreciate the meaning of these discussions, we have to understand the full significance of Article 10 of the Covenant. This did not specify concrete action, for instance military intervention, on the part of the League of Nations. In fact, it was a controversial element of organisation’s constitution and elicited different interpretations even in the legal branches of the League. Generally it was regarded as strengthening the League’s provisions on the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of its members.

Elsewhere, in Article 11, the Covenant declared that every war (or threat of war) had to be matters for League concern, whether or not they affected member states directly, and that the organisation should co-ordinate appropriate and efficient initiatives to maintain world peace irrespective of the imminent threat of conflict. For instance, the Council should meet in special session if there was any threat to peace. It was also the right of any given League member to call to the attention of the Assembly any comparable circumstances. Unfortunately, as events in the history of the League would prove, Article 10 and Article 11 only had limited influence when it came to dealing with actual events.

Article 16 of the Covenant encompassed commercial, economic, financial and diplomatic sanctions against any state violating international peace. It stated that the Council should ‘advise’ states of military, naval and air interventions in order to protect the terms of the Covenant. Article 17 extended the provisions to non-member states, and so it was, in theory, possible for the League to take practical steps (whether financial, commercial, economic or otherwise) to protect new members. Unfortunately the League was afraid of the obligations that would result from these provisions once the Baltic and Caucasian States became members. But there were other, even deeper, motives at work, militating against the speedy admission of these states.

The other motives can be traced in the discussions held in the meeting of 9 December. Here, the representative of Persia, Emir Zoka-ed-Dowleh. Spoke in support of the Georgian nation, a people he regarded as absolutely independent of Russia both in terms of nationality and custom. He went on to say that Azerbaijan did not possess a stable government, since it had a Soviet regime—a situation which also applied to Armenia since,

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<sup>9</sup> L. Ivanov, *The League of Nations*. Moscow, 1929. pp. 49–50 (Russian)

on 2 December, the Dashnak Republic of Armenia had been transformed into a Soviet Republic.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Van Karnebeek (The Netherlands) suggested an alternative approach. He recommended that the following text be added to the sub-committee's resolutions:

'The Committee suggests to the Assembly that the International Labor Conference should be requested to devote favorable consideration to any application for admission made by these states.'

This proposal reflected the opinion of several members that admission to the ILO actually constituted membership of the League of Nations, although it might not entail the obligation to apply Articles 10, 11 and 16 on behalf of the states in question. Mr. Restrepo expressed his views very openly. He pointed out that admitting Russia's border states would facilitate the fight against Bolshevism and said his country, Columbia, was ready to send troops to participate in the struggle. Meanwhile, the representatives of several European states tried to deny any relationship between discussions of admitting the Baltic and Caucasian States and the existence of Bolshevism.

After the debate, the committee had to vote on three proposals: the text prepared by the sub-committee, Cecil's motion and the Karnebeek text. In the end, the sub-committee's draft was accepted by 17 votes to 5 (with three abstentions), specifically concerning Latvia and Estonia. Karnebeek's motion was accepted too. While discussing Georgia, Dr. Nansen pointed out that it was an ancient state accustomed to independence, separated from Russia by mountains, and did not block Russia's maritime communications. He also stressed the importance of admitting Georgia as a means to assisting Armenia in its fight for survival. Consequently the sub-committee's report for Georgia was adopted by 9 votes to 6, while for Armenia it was adopted by 9 votes to 2. Since Georgia was still, at the time, struggling against Bolshevism, there was some hope that support for that state would promote more anti-Bolshevism in general.

The attention of the world's press was now concentrated on Armenia, together with the policy of European states and the League of Nations towards it. Small states maintained that the question of admission had to be decided in Geneva, not Paris or London. This attitude was connected with a letter sent from London on 3 December written by British, French and Italian representatives.<sup>11</sup> The letter drew the League's attention to the fact that the Treaty of

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<sup>10</sup> R. Darbinyan, *Bolshevism and Armenia*. Izmir, 1922. p.55. (Armenian)

<sup>11</sup> K. Izmirlian, *The political destiny of Armenians in the past and present*. Beirut, 1964. p. 224 (Armenian)

Sèvres had not been ratified and suggested that the territories which President Wilson had recommended for attachment to Armenia (i.e. in his work of defining the Turkish-Armenian border) were too large.<sup>12</sup> Speaking in favour of Armenia, Nansen noted that the sub-committee had recommended the admission of Armenia to the League but had not actually proposed the step since the appointment of a mandatory was actually regarded as more appropriate.

During the session of 10 December, the sub-committee proposed setting up a drafting committee in order to provide a formula for the protection of minorities in the countries which had requested admission to the League. The following was adopted:

‘The Assembly recommends the Baltic and Caucasian States, in the eventuality of their admission to the League of Nations, take adequate measures to assure in their countries that respect should be paid to the principles which are at the basis of the Minority Treaties, and requests them to be good enough to arrive at an agreement with the Council as to the details of application.’

This measure was supposed to give the impression that the League’s existing members had positive attitudes towards the Baltic and Caucasian States, suggesting that their admission was just a question of time; but it was also supposed to gain time and keep the states in question favourably inclined towards the western Powers.

When the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee finished its work, it prepared reports for the Assembly’s approval. The First Assembly began dealing with the admission of new members on 15 December.<sup>13</sup> That day, Eduard Beneš commented as follows about the Baltic and Caucasian States: ‘...the admission of several small states is a delicate issue, as many of them are in a poor condition. And we have no guarantees that tomorrow we will not face new difficulties and problems, which will involve these states in calamities.’ Time and again it was possible to trace the Russian question in the backs of delegates’ minds. The Persian delegate, Emir Zoka-ed Douleh, observed that Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine all lacked definite borders and stable governments and so did not meet criteria for admission. He thought the only thing connecting the three states was the existence of soviet power in each. Swiss and French delegates also addressed the Russian question, the latter opposing admission of the Baltic and

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<sup>12</sup> G. Lazian, *Armenia and the Armenian question at the searchlight of Armenian-Russian relations*. Yerevan, 1991. p.213 (Armenian)

<sup>13</sup> League of Nations 20/29/6 *Procès-Verbal of the First Assembly of the League of Nations held in Geneva 1920*, 27/34/49/2758/.

Caucasian States not so much because of Article 10, but because they were only one part of a Russian problem which really required treatment as a whole.

The admission of the Baltic and Caucasian States was considered more fully on 16 December. Having decided to admit Finland, Luxemburg and Costa-Rica, the Assembly continued to discuss the reports of the committee about the five states whose admission was not recommended, and for whom it was proposed to grant only representation in the League's technical organisations. Armenia was discussed first, and Nansen acted as reporter, presenting the committee's conclusions and adding a few comments of his own. He mentioned that the committee favoured admitting Armenia to the League, but said there were problems with this. Not least, Armenia was in a difficult situation. A considerable part of her territory had been taken by her enemies and her government was not stable. Nor had her frontiers been determined finally. Although Nansen pointed out that Armenia had signed the Treaty of Sèvres, he also noted that it not yet been ratified. Consequently Nansen was left to conclude that it was impossible to admit Armenia to the League at that time, but it was desirable to admit her as soon as possible.

The Canadian representative (Rowell) recalled the Assembly's resolution on Armenia, concerning the Turkish-Armenian war.<sup>14</sup> The Armenian Delegation had already requested League intervention to help settle this conflict after it was begun by Turkey on 23 September 1920. The Assembly had accepted a resolution which was quoted by Rowell:

'The Assembly earnestly hopes that the efforts of the President of the United States, energetically supported by the Governments of Spain and Brazil and by the Council of the League of Nations, will result in the preservation of the Armenian race, and in securing for Armenia a stable Government exercising authority throughout the whole of the Armenian State as the boundaries thereof may be finally settled under the Treaty of Sevres, so that the Assembly may be able to admit Armenia into full membership of the League at its next Session.'

In the event, Armenia's request for admission was rejected by 21 votes to 8, those voting for admission being Canada, Peru, Portugal, Romania, El Salvador, Switzerland, Uruguay and Venezuela.<sup>15</sup>

Discussions about Armenia participating in the League's technical organizations also caused difficulties. Mr. Bernes (British Empire) was a member of the committee dealing with technical organizations. Rather in contrast to the views deployed in the debates about

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<sup>14</sup> G. Avtandilian, *Armenia. Vision of Republic (1918-1927)*. Boston, 1981. pp. 43-45

<sup>15</sup> A. Esayan, *Armenian question and international diplomacy*. Yerevan, 1965. pp. 145-64. (Armenian)

Armenia's possible membership of the League, he noted that since it was a recognized, self-governing state, it could attend any of the League's conferences simply by signing the various relevant conventions. Somewhat less positively, he added that the admission of a small state would add to the organisation's expenses and might even look like a kind of dishonest window-dressing. He wound up his speech by saying: 'You are going to salve your conscience by first of all denying a state admission and then passing a resolution which means absolutely nothing.' Although Britain had played an important part in formulating the League's policy towards Armenia, the delegate's words presented the reality of the situation.

Robert Cecil expressed the opposite point of view. He mentioned the benefits Article 10 would confer on Armenia and offered to propose a resolution permitting the state to attend sittings of the Assembly, even to address the body on special occasions. This would have conferred a real benefit on the country and would have enabled it to struggle all the better against the terrible conditions facing it at the time. The delegate from Australia then raised a question about information which had appeared in the press. This said that in the days since the application had been submitted, the Armenian government had been deposed and a Soviet government established. Press reports also said this had been recognized by Moscow, there had been general rejoicing and bonfires had been lit to celebrate peace with those countries with which Armenia previously had been at war.<sup>16</sup>

It transpired that the Assembly, Council and Secretariat all lacked official information about these events, but it was clear that they changed fundamentally the relationship between Armenia and the League. Consequently it was decided that nothing could be done until the reports were confirmed or denied. Mr. Viviani (France) emphasized the sympathy of the Assembly for Armenia, but accepted that there was a lack of information about the possible absorption of the state into the Soviet system. Under the circumstances, it was decided to avoid a vote and to refer the Armenian question back to the committee, even though the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee was scheduled to finish its business two days later (i.e. at the same time as the Assembly was to end). The Assembly also referred back to the committee the proposal of Mr. Rowell which stated the hope that the efforts of the President of the USA, supported by the governments of Spain, Brazil and the Council of the League, would result in the preservation of the Armenian nation, the securing of a stable government exercising authority across the whole of the Armenian state, and that the borders might finally be settled under the terms of

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<sup>16</sup> *Eastern Press*, newspaper 1920 December. (Armenian)

the Treaty of Sèvres so that the Assembly could admit the state to full League membership at its next meeting.

Georgia and the Baltic States were admitted to participate in the work of League technical organizations. Georgian politician Zurab Avalov wrote, 'On May 7, 1920, Russia recognized the independence of the Republic of Georgia, that's why the League was of an opinion that Russia would not invade Georgia...' Nonetheless, at the beginning of 1921, Georgia also became a Soviet Republic and so the Second Assembly was not able ultimately to agree to Georgia's accession.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, the Baltic States were not absorbed into the Soviet Empire and so joined the League of Nations during the course of the Second Assembly.<sup>18</sup>

So the question of the admission of Armenia to the League of Nations leads to the following conclusions:

1. It was evident that in applying for membership, Armenia basically met the conditions of the League Covenant. This point was recognised by the 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-committee which was favourably inclined to the admission of Armenia to the League. Unfortunately the telegram from London signed by the three ministers changed the direction of events. It emphasised that the Treaty of Sèvres had not been ratified, but ignored that fact that in Article 88 of the Treaty Turkey recognised Armenia as an independent and free state 'as the Allied powers had already done.'<sup>19</sup> So, the fact of Armenia's independence was not really connected to the Treaty, which in the end was just a peace settlement concluded with Turkey. Besides, on 10 August 1920 Armenia had already signed an international agreement on minorities, the preamble of which said that 'the Allied Powers have recognized Armenia as an independent and sovereign state'.

To this can be added the words of Paul Mantoux (chief of the League's Political Section), after the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres: 'There is no doubt, that now the Republic of Armenia is a state, *de facto* and *de jure* recognized by the states who have let the latter sign the Treaty of Sèvres.'<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Armenia signed the Covenant of the League, but was not on the list of provisional members, as were Poland and Czechoslovakia. This omission, however, only reflected the fact that Armenia was being considered for a mandate and so

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<sup>17</sup> P. E. Briguet *Les Nations opprimées et la Société des Nations*. Paris, 1938. p. 10

<sup>18</sup> Z. Avalov, *The Independence of Georgia in international policy*. Paris, 1924. pp 60-64 (Russian)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> LNA, Section II, dossier 3421, doc.3963

could not be included on a list of independent states. Thereafter Armenia was reduced in status from being an allied state to being on a par with states which had not signed the Covenant, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Costa Rica and Ukraine.

2. Much was said about the importance of Article 10 in the denial of League membership to Armenia; but this article was not without controversy. In 1920, during discussions about the admission of Austria to the League, the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee explained that Article 10 was intended to preserve the territorial integrity of member states. It was supposed to condemn international aggression directed against a state's territorial integrity and political independence. Any state so affected could apply to the Council of the League to take relevant measures. During discussion, the President of the Swiss Confederation said that Article 10 simply defended states from external aggression and nothing more. It was not supposed to fulfill a defensive function for states. Rather it was to guarantee freedom and help ensure peaceful development in the world.<sup>21</sup> By a decision of the Assembly, a committee was constituted to make changes to Article 10. The committee maintained that in the future the civilized world could not accept aggression as a means either to changing the territorial composition of states or to challenging their political independence.

None of this, however, provided a reason for Article 10 to represent grounds to deny Armenia's admission to the League. There was no reason for the League to balk at taking diplomatic or economic action against any state committing aggression against Armenia.

3. Although the delegates of the League's member states did not say that Soviet Russia was a crucial factor in the Armenian question, the facts of the matter spoke otherwise. Discussion on the admission of both the Baltic and Caucasian States to the League could not escape the shadow of the Soviet Union. US President Wilson pointed out that their destiny should be dealt with as a component part of the 'Russian question'. The League agreed both that the Russian situation had to be taken into account and that steps should be taken to prevent the spread of Bolshevism.

So from the outset the 5<sup>th</sup> committee refused admission to Azerbaijan and Ukraine because their borders had not been decided definitively, they had not be recognized *de jure* and, most important of all, Soviet regimes had been established in both republics.<sup>22</sup> Initially

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<sup>21</sup> Mandelstam, *La Société des Nations*, pp. 113-118

<sup>22</sup> P.E. Briguët. *Les Nations opprimées et la Société des Nations*. Paris, 1938. p.11.

the position of the Baltic States, Armenia and Georgia was more promising, but following the installation of a Soviet regime in Armenia, the prospect of it even being accepted as a participant in the League's technical committees (as became possible for the Baltic States and Georgia) also fell away. To the mind of Columbia's delegate Restrepo, Armenia lacked definite borders, lacked a legal basis for recognition, had been invaded by Turkey, had been invaded by Bolsheviks, lacked stable government and was not governed freely. Hence he could not vote for admission. The Persian delegate recognized that much was to be said in favour of Armenia, but nonetheless the state was not stable and, arguably, there was no *de facto* Armenia actually in existence. By contrast, Georgia was a stable state with a government and army able to take a stand against invading forces. The League also laid store by the fact that Soviet Russia had recognized Georgia's borders on 17 May.<sup>23</sup>

4. It seems that the Turkish-Armenian war was not actually such a serious issue in determining Armenia's admission to the League. Discussions of the war in the Council and Assembly went ahead irrespective of discussions about admission. For example, on 22 October, when Turkey was enjoying substantial military success, during an official dinner attended by all the main national delegations, the Ambassador of Greece, the Secretary General of the League and the Deputy Secretary General all indicated that Armenia would be accepted as a member of the League without any objections.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that Armenia was allowed to participate in the Financial Conference in Brussels also suggested that the League was intending to accept Armenia as a member.<sup>25</sup> The Armenians themselves felt sure this would happen too. The Armenian delegation's telegrams to the Government were mainly focused on the fact that Armenia was going to become a League member and even asked for the appointment of representatives on the grounds that 'our question has already been solved'.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, of course, their confidence proved misplaced.

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<sup>23</sup> V. Papazian, *My memories*. p. 119.

<sup>24</sup> Av. Aharonian, *From Sardarapat till Sevres and Lusann*. pp. 130-132

<sup>25</sup> International Financial Conference in Brussels, LNA, Report of the conference

<sup>26</sup> LNA, Section II, dossier3421, doc. 8502

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