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**THE TURKISH-ARMENIAN WAR OF 1920
AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS**

by

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Abstract

At the same time as the League of Nations was considering whether to admit Armenia to its membership, it was also addressing the invasion of that country by Kemalist troops marking the start of the Turkish-Armenian war. The Armenian Government appealed to the Great Powers and the League, requesting intervention to stop the hostilities. Unfortunately, although the League of Nations discussed the matter extensively, it never took practical steps to deal with it.

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Introduction

In the spring of 1920, a completely new military-political situation developed in the Caucasus. After British military forces departed Transcaucasia, the Red Army entered the region leading to the establishment of a Soviet regime in Azerbaijan. The latter instituted and intensified attacks against Armenia, the aim being to introduce a Soviet regime there as well as to claim for itself some areas which historically could be identified as Armenian (for example, Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhidjevan). If this was not enough, the Kemalist government in Anatolia declared one of its primary aims to be the destruction of Armenia and took steps to improve relations with Soviet Russia to this end. The Kemal-Bolshevik liaison proved devastating for a small country which continued to be oriented towards the West and which was considered an ally by the Entente.

The Turkish army of the Eastern Front was superior to the newly-formed Armenian army both numerically and in terms of military training, and on 24 September 1920 it began its invasion of Armenia.¹ From the first days of the war, that country's government requested the intervention of the Allied Powers. On 6 October 1920 the President of the Armenian National Delegation to Paris, Av. Aharonyan, sent a letter to the President of the Council of the League of Nations informing it that an invasion by the regular Turkish army commanded by Kiazim Karabekir was underway.² The latter had issued an ultimatum demanding that Armenia evacuate the regions of Olti, Kars and Ardahan 'in execution of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk'—which assigned the provinces of Kars and Batumi to Turkey. Karabekir also stated that Turkish forces aimed to join up with Bolshevik troops in the fight. The commander's initiative was,

¹ E. Zohrabyan, *The Turkish-Armenian war of 1920 and the Powers*, Yerevan, 1999 (Armenian).

² League of Nations Archives (LNA), Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 7359. Document du Conseil, Ar. 3, 20/4/328, La situation en Armenie. United Nations Library, Geneva. League of Nations Archive.

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furthermore, an attempt to unite two great factions (Turkey and Bolshevik Russia) in the suppression of Armenia, a state which posed an obstacle to their close co-operation in the Caucasus.

The Government of the Republic of Armenia addressed an urgent appeal to the League of Nations, asking for any kind of intervention with a view to maintaining the Treaty of Sèvres, which foresaw the creation of an independent Armenia out of the ashes of the old Ottoman Empire.³ The Armenian Government thought that the best strategy to frustrate the emerging Turkish-Bolshevik venture would be for the Allies to occupy Trebizond, coupled with possible additional measures by the Principal Allied Powers, such as an advance of the Greek army against Turkish forces. In fact the Armenian side understood well the attitude of the West towards Bolshevism and was prepared to use this to its advantage against the Turks, if possible. On 12 October, the League of Nations received a second letter from the Armenian Delegation stating that Turkish troops had forced the Armenians to evacuate the territories of Kaxzvan and Sarikhamish. It was requested once more that steps be taken to halt the hostilities which clearly posed a threat not only to Armenia, but to the whole international community.⁴

Both letters were discussed by the Council of the League of Nations on 20 October when it met in session in Brussels.⁵ A report on the 'Future Status of Armenia' was presented by Mr. Balfour, the delegate of British Empire, who also took time to dwell on the communications from the Armenian delegation. He pointed out particularly that the League of Nations had no authority to implement any steps with a view to stopping the Turkish army since, he said, the military invasion to Armenia was organized and implemented by irregular troops who did not obey the government. Eventually the Council decided to ask the Great Powers to consider steps to assist Armenia with the process of defining her borders.

Three days later, the Armenian delegations sent a further letter to the League providing information about the latest developments along the Armenian-Turkish military line.⁶ It was said that on 13 October, the Soviet Government had officially asked the Republic of Armenia to ensure the free movement of the Soviet troops across its territory to Turkey. The

³ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 7359.

⁴ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 7507.

⁵ J. Barsexov, *The Armenian Genocide and the Turkish Liability and the Responsibility of International Community; Documents and Comments*. Moscow, 2002, pp. 539–40 (Russian).

⁶ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 7734.

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communication was rejected by the Armenian government, which emphasized the positive attitude of the Armenian political élite towards Europe and their readiness to struggle against Bolshevism. The Armenian side also asked the League of Nations to advise the Allied powers to make use of the Polish issue in order to exert pressure on the Bolsheviks during any negotiations that might be organized. In his reply, the President of the Council of the League of Nations, Paul Hymans, noted that the implementation of the Treaty of Sèvres did not fall to the League of Nations, but to the Great Powers. Consequently he promised to request that the latter offer assistance to Armenia. Still failing to find satisfaction, the Armenian delegation sent a further letter the Prime Ministers of France, Great Britain, Italy and Japan asking that the borders of Armenia be addressed, also reminding all concerned about the consultations between the League of Nations and Supreme Council on the Armenian issue.⁷

The Views of the Member States

What, in the meantime, did the members of the League think about rendering assistance to Armenia? The Council was sure that the military aggression against the country was not being carried out by the legitimate Constantinople government, but by troops loyal to Kemal. Consequently there was no point attempting to pressurize the Turkish government—in fact to do so might even prove counter-productive since Kemal was also locked in a struggle with it. The Council also felt economic sanctions would be useless, since Kemal had no economic relations with any state, except Soviet Russia and some states in the Caucasus. Perhaps it is understandable in this light that the Council felt that Armenia really should look to the Allied Powers for assistance rather than to the League. It was unfortunate, therefore that British Prime Minister Lloyd George only answered Paul Hymans's letter on 10 November stating that the Allied powers would supply an Armenian army with the necessary military equipments and oil. Regarding the Treaty of Sèvres, he implied that the president of the US had agreed to arbitrate the Turkish-Armenian border and nothing could be done until a decision had been taken on this matter.⁸

⁷ Barsexov, p. 545.

⁸ K. Izmirlian, *The destiny of the Armenian People in the Past and Present, analytic theory*. Beirut, 1964, p. 222 (Armenian).

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With potential supporters sitting on their hands, but opponents prepared to be more active, it soon became obvious that the passage of time was no friend to Armenia. When another—we might even say a regular—letter from the Armenian Delegation was received by the League Council on 12 November, it indicated that Armenia had now been invaded by Azerbaijan and—in the light of aggression from two different sources—was now in a very difficult position.⁹ A communication dated five days later stated that the Armenian Government was being forced to sign an armistice with Turkey on very disadvantageous terms. Somewhat ironically, that same day speaking in the League’s Assembly, Lord Robert Cecil (a British peer acting as a delegate for South Africa) raised the Armenian issue, dwelling upon the nation’s history and particularly the massacres of 1915. Cecil maintained that these had been among the greatest crimes in history and proposed that the League of Nations could not claim to be an exponent of public morality unless it did its utmost to secure the Armenian people from a repetition of such horrors. He asked that the Assembly take all necessary steps to free Armenia ‘from the tyranny of the Turk’.¹⁰ Cecil drafted the following resolution:

‘That the Council be requested to take into immediate consideration the situation in Armenia, and to present for the consideration of the Assembly proposals for averting the danger which now threatens the remnant of the Armenian race, and also for establishing a permanent settlement of that country.’¹¹

On the same day, the Secretary General of the League reported on the work of the Council, stating that the Armenian Delegation had applied for assistance against the Turkish invasion. The session of 17 November, however, did not take the matter any further than this; there was little discussion of the matter, for example.¹² Nonetheless, British delegate Barnes raised the question. He implied that the League of Nations and the Allies had done everything possible to help the Armenians and if they proved unsuccessful, it was due to a lack of an effective mechanism to offer meaningful assistance rather than a lack of desire to do so on their part. On the same day, by contrast, Swiss representative Motta added to the position adopted by

⁹ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 8387.

¹⁰ LNA, Records of the First Assembly Plenary Meetings, p. 96.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² LNA, Records of the First Assembly Plenary Meetings, pp. 148–60.

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Robert Cecil, pointing out that his country had called on the Allied Powers to consider more deeply the Armenian question. He said it was crucially important that the League of Nations find a solution.¹³ In actual fact, discussions on the Armenian question were eliciting considerable public attention and debate. This was happening not only among Armenians, but across the whole international community. Armenian communities in Belgium, London, India, Germany, Egypt and Romania, different Phil-Armenian associations and unions, affiliated bodies of Armenian political parties abroad, not to say many other organisations and institutions called on the President of the League of Nations to permit a vote on Cecil's resolution.

The position of Armenia was addressed again by Mr. Lafontaine, the representative of Belgium, who blamed the League and its 41 members for doing nothing on behalf of the troubled nation. He pointed out that the members of the League had armies numbering millions of men as well as a navy in Constantinople which was not so far from the scene of the emerging disaster. Lafontaine felt that Armenian demands were very realistic and failure to offer the required assistance could only reflect absence of good will or else lack of interest in the fate of the nation in question. He proposed the creation of a special committee with six members to discuss how best to overcome the hostility which existed between Armenian and Turk. The same day, and in a rather less measured manner, Italian delegate Tittoni announced that if the League had the power of Hercules it could kill the monster which had disturbed world peace by engaging in war. If it did this, he felt, the League would be better placed to carry out its mission in the future.¹⁴

Discussion of Cecil's resolution, together with Lafontaine's amendment, began on 22 November. The representative of the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, Mr. Spalaikovich, re-stated the distressing picture of the Turkish-Armenian war as outlined by Cecil. He emphasizes that he was able to understand the full significance of Cecil's words concerning Armenia's suffering because they recalled all too familiar scenes of misery from his own country as once had been caused by the Ottoman Empire. He proposed that an abominable system of methodical, premeditated extermination was being enacted upon an entire Christian people by means of a constant series of persecutions, summary executions and wholesale massacres. Spalaikovich

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Barsexov, pp. 554–55.

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suggested there was a recognizable way of working here, with Turkish authorities typically assigning the role of executioner to certain Islamic national elements. So, for instance, Kurds were being used against the Armenians in Asia Minor, while formerly Albanians were used against the Greeks and the Serbs in the Balkans. The delegate argued that, under the dreadful circumstances, it was of utmost importance to take immediate action to affirm the indignation of the Assembly over the grave case they had before them, since the very physical existence of a people was threatened. He proposed that a telegram should be sent at once to the Principal Powers outlining the unanimous desire of the Assembly to see prompt steps to save the Armenian people.¹⁵ The delegate from Sweden, Mr. Branting, also supported Cecil's resolution as amended by Lafontaine. He emphasized that recent news from Armenia demonstrated that massacres were continuing, which in turn demonstrated the inability of the Great Powers to intervene effectively on the stricken population's behalf.

By contrast to these impassioned statements, the British representative to the Assembly, Mr. Balfour, tried to take a more pragmatic line and cast doubt on the possibility of offering effective assistance to the Armenian nation. He said that good intentions were useless they were backed up with practical means for their realization. Furthermore, he suggested that the Covenant of the League of Nations had not been drawn up with situations such as that facing Armenia in mind. Rather, the authors of the Covenant had been thinking about situations facing organised states with clearly delimited frontiers and subject to the pressure of public opinion, indeed, ultimately subject to the possible influence of economic pressure. As things stood, the President of the USA was still engaged in the task of drawing Armenia's borders; the job was incomplete. But it was not just Armenia that was suffering from a condition of incomplete statehood which complicated intervention by the Great Powers; so was Turkey. As Balfour put it:

‘What does Mustapha Kemal care about the opinion of the League of Nations, or the whole civilized world, or the fact that before any tribunal of humane people his action will be condemned? He is not responsible for the finances of an organized State; he is not responsible for the commerce of Turkey-in-Asia; he is the leader of disorganized bands of brigands who are utterly insensible to all the

¹⁵ LNA, The Ninth Plenary Meeting of the Assembly, p. 186.

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motives to which the League of Nations most naturally appeals, and to which it looks in the first instance.¹⁶

The British delegate maintained that the only possible way to deal with the Armenian question was to identify a mandatory state which would assume all responsibilities for the territory based on its own resources.

Such a proposal, of course, was asking a very great deal indeed given the sheer crisis of the time. Hence it is hard to judge Balfour's intervention as anything other than largely irrelevant. At most it was a tactic designed to change the direction of the discussion. French delegate Viviani commented that Balfour's intervention, 'if taken literally' would be 'singularly discouraging'. Adopting an objective, factual position, he noted that if the Armenian mandate had been refused 'at the time when there was no unknown quality to the Oriental problem, it would be a delicate matter to request that it should be accepted to-day.'¹⁷ Mr. Viviani also criticized the members of the League, who had failed to follow Leon Bourgeois's proposal to constitute an international armed force for the League of Nations with all the means for action. The French delegate also doubted whether it was reasonable to nominate a committee of six members which was unlikely to succeed in a task which had not been mastered by the Council. Consequently, in the name of French Delegation, Mr. Viviani moved the following resolution:

'The Assembly, anxious to cooperate, with the Council in order to put the end, in the shortest time possible, to the horrors of the Armenian tragedy, requests the Council to arrive at an understanding with the Governments with a view to entrusting a Power with the task of tackling the necessary measures to stop the hostilities between Armenia and the Kemalists.'¹⁸

Norwegian representative Dr. Nansen delivered another speech on the same day expressing support for Cecil, although this one emphasized the technical aspects of assisting the Armenians. Nansen maintained that sending approximately 60,000 soldiers at a cost of about £20 million would provide the salvation so badly required. He also discussed the position of the

¹⁶ LNA, The Ninth Plenary Meeting of the Assembly, pp. 187–88.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 189–92

¹⁸ LNA, The Ninth Plenary Meeting of the Assembly, p. 191.

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United States, which had refused to accept a mandate for Armenia, although it had not refused to assist in saving the people from destruction. Nansen concluded his speech as follows:

‘It is true that it is a risk for the League of Nations to take up a question which it cannot solve, but as far as I can see it is a much greater risk to do absolutely nothing, and to say it is such a difficult and dangerous question that we dare not touch it.’¹⁹

By contrast, Romanian delegate Mr. Ionnesco felt the League could offer only moral support to Armenia. Still, time after time speeches were given full of sympathy and expressing the desire to help the Armenians. Hence the Canadian representative pointed out in a very sincere speech that the invoking of a mandate was not the only way for the League to deal with the matter. It was quite clear that the Armenian question could be considered by the League as an event falling under the terms of Article 11 of the Covenant. The League certainly was faced with the threat of war or, indeed, an actual war (since ‘the brutal massacre of a helpless people can be distinguished as a war’), and hence the organization should have been duty-bound to address what was happening not just on the grounds of humanity, but also as a real threat to world peace.²⁰ Additional discussions revolved around the two motions presented to the Assembly: the one by Robert Cecil and amended by Lafontaine, proposing a committee to deal with the Armenian question; the other by R.Viviani, appealing for governments to mediate between Armenia and the Kemalists. The British delegate, Mr. Balfour, spoke against Viviani’s proposal, raising difficulties with the very idea of the proposed negotiations.

‘What can you offer to him that he will take? You can offer only two things: you can offer him money, or you can offer him territory. After all what is negotiation? Negotiation is the discussion between two civilized Powers in which one offers something to the other with a mutual accommodation of interests. But can we treat Kemal as a civilized power?’²¹

On balance, therefore, although many delegates clearly were moved deeply by the plight of Armenia, and a few such as Nansen made clear practical proposals for assistance,

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 192–93.

²⁰ A. Kolsky, *The League of Nations*. Moscow 1934, p. 32 (Russian).

²¹ LNA, The Ninth Plenary Meeting of the Assembly, p. 199.

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there remained a sense that too many delegates considered the problem insoluble. Their sentiment, of course, left the League itself unable to handle the Armenian question, since what is an organization if not the sum of its members? It is hard not to conclude that for too many influential delegates, the actual destiny of the Armenian people was of less significance than maintaining the prestige of the League: for example, how to ensure they did not put themselves in a position where the provisions of the Covenant might be violated while, at the same time, playing the role of a concerned party.

For the motions to be passed by the Assembly there had to be a unanimous vote of agreement by all delegates present. In the event—and notwithstanding the mixed sentiments displayed by the Assembly's delegates—this did indeed happen. Consequently the President of the Assembly requested that six members be appointed to a Committee on Armenian Affairs. These were Lord Robert Cecil (South Africa), Mr. Lafontaine (Belgium), Dr. Nansen (Norway), Mr. Pueyrredon (Argentina), Mr. Schanzer (Italy), and Mr. Rene Viviani (France). It was also decided to call a meeting of the Council of the League of Nations to consider immediately making an appeal to the Governments of the member-states. On 24 November, the 11th session of the Council of the League was held in Geneva and it duly resolved to appeal to the Governments of all the member states and to the President of the United States.²² The telegrams, prepared by the Secretary General, were sent out on 25 November and referred to the resolution of the Assembly, as well as the proposal of the Council to mediate between Armenia and the Kemalists in order to stop the hostilities.²³

During this period, unfortunately, the situation in Armenia was worsening every hour as Turkish troops make significant progress along the whole front. Armenia attempted to stage a counter-attack but its forces were far too few in number, barely half those available to their opponents, which counted among their ranks units from the regular army as well as Kurdish bands and Turkish irregulars.²⁴ Fierce battles raged until 18 November, when an armistice was signed in Alexandropol (Gyumri). Nonetheless, hostilities were recommenced when Kemal, now certain that the Great Powers would not intervene on behalf of Armenia, presented increasingly severe terms for peace.

²² Barsexov, p. 557.

²³ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 10064.

²⁴ E. Zohrabyan, *The Turkish-Armenian War of 1920 and Great Powers*. Yerevan 1997, pp.166–71 (Armenian).

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Meanwhile, the member states of the League were responding rapidly to the appeal of the Council of the League of Nations. On 30 November, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Spain, Azevedo Marques, sent a telegram to the Council of the League stating that the Government of the King of Spain, although not directly concerned with Armenia's tragic situation, felt the deepest sympathy for that unfortunate nation. It was suffering such cruelty that the government expressed willingness to co-operate in any moral or diplomatic steps to achieve peace.²⁵ Brazil also stated its readiness to assist in ending Armenia's desperate position.²⁶ On 1 December, the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, sent the following communication:

‘.... I am without authorization to offer or employ military forces of the United States in any project for the relief of Armenia and any material contribution would require the authorization of the Congress, which is not in session. I am willing, however, upon assurances of the moral and diplomatic support of the principal Powers and in a spirit of sympathetic response to the request of the Council of the League of Nations, to use my good offices and to proffer my personal mediation through a representative, whom I may designate to end the hostilities now being waged against the Armenian people and to bring peace and accord to the contending parties, relying upon the Council of the League to suggest to me the avenues through which my proffer should be conveyed and the parties to whom it should be addressed.’²⁷

Although some further League of Nations documents suggest that these were the only three states to respond positively to the appeal, a closer inspection of the record proves otherwise. Perhaps their communications were overlooked because they arrived late in the day, but on 30 November the Peruvian government agreed, acting in accordance with other states, to ‘do everything possible to carry out the resolution of 22 November and stop the existing situation in Armenia’;²⁸ on 4 December, Panama agreed the resolution of 22 November and said it would, in proportion to its population size, participate in any common action organized by the

²⁵ Armenian National Archive (ANA) dossier 430, doc. 1225.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ LNA, League of Nations Situation in Armenia. Telegrams received and dispatched by the Council. Document de l'Assemblée 155.

²⁸ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 9078.

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League;²⁹ Guatemala also consented to any decision the Council found necessary in the matter of Armenia.³⁰

But while small countries far removed from Armenia expressed their support for her cause, the Great Powers responded one after another negatively. They expressed their desire to assist the nation, but said they were incapable of doing so. The results of the correspondence were announced during the Assembly session of 2 December. On the same day, however, the Treaty of Alexandropol was signed between Armenia and Turkey ending the military conflict.³¹ The treaty imposed harsh conditions on Armenia which not only had lost many people and resources as a result of war, but now also almost half of its territory, including the region of Kars, as well as the provinces of Surmalu and Sharur-Nakhidjevan. Armenia was also forced to renounce the Treaty of Sèvres. On the same day, a further agreement was signed between the Soviet Union and Armenia which proclaimed a Soviet regime in Yerevan.

Despite these fateful developments, discussions inside the League of Nations about how to save Armenia from invasion continued with such vigour that it almost appeared as if the member states were unaware of what had happened. Facts, however, prove the opposite. For example, the American consul in Tbilisi informed the US State Secretary about developments in Armenia. The situation was re-stated by the President of the Democratic Party of Armenia, Levon Meghridchian. He said that ‘the recent political events in Armenia have altered the behaviour of the League, where there appears some confusion over how to help Armenia if a Soviet regime is declared there.’³² Under the circumstances, the members of the League could not fail to be aware of what was happening. With this said, it remains likely that the Great Powers and the League both believed the changes in Armenia would be temporary and so adopted a policy of waiting to see what would happen next. In any event, the situation was summarized on December 16 when the Assembly of the League adopted the following resolution:

‘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

²⁹ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 10048.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ S. Vratsian, *The Republic of Armenia*. Yerevan 1993, pp. 536–37 (Armenian).

³² LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 10050.

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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.³³

Discussions continued the next day, 17 December, when a very strange and unrealistic proposal was made by the representative of the Romanian government, M. Ionnesco. He had been instructed as follows by his government:

‘In order to give speedy and real assistance to the Armenian people, who are apparently on the point of perishing, Romania proposes to the Nations assembled at Geneva that an international expeditionary force should be formed, charged with the duty of establishing order and peace in Armenia. This international force should be placed under the command of an inter-allied general staff, and might comprise a force of 40,000 men made up of detachments of all the countries belonging to the League of Nations according to their proportionate populations. Romania declares readiness at this moment to assist in this work with men, material and money.’³⁴

The proposal was so odd because the war between Armenia and the Kemalists was finished and a peace treaty had been concluded; so against whom were these international troops to fight? They can only have been supposed to combat Bolshevism. The demand in fact becomes all the more comprehensible in the light of Romania’s position bordering the Soviet Ukraine and her fear that efforts would be made to spread Bolshevism across her borders too.

Although the members of the Assembly applauded to the Romanian proposal, their reactions were careful. The Assembly paid a tribute to the ‘generous and humanitarian motives’ behind the suggestion, but the President of the Assembly pointed out that it would be difficult for the gathering (which was about to dissolve) to examine the question during its present session since it would have to be considered from political, practical and technical points of views. The President offered to submit the proposal to the Council. However, as a result of Robert Cecil’s intervention, it was submitted to the special committee which had been set up by the Assembly to deal with the Armenian question during the first session. Mr. Ionnesco was to be included in this committee.

³³ A. Esayan, *The Armenian Question and the Great Powers*. Yerevan 1967, pp.209–10 (Armenian).

³⁴ LNA, Records of the First Assembly, Twenty-ninth Plenary Meeting of the Assembly, pp. 672–73.

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On 18 December the Assembly of the League heard the report of the special committee.³⁵ Unfortunately there are no surviving documents about the work of this body apart from its final report. Here, the committee outlined the circumstances in the military zone, stating the number of Armenian and Turkish troops present, their organization and the political situation, before going on to maintain that there was no need to send any expedition to Armenia, merely to provide the means of self-defence. The committee felt it would be possible to have good results with only small amounts of money, if the issue was tackled by the right man. It was noted with satisfaction that efforts had been made in the USA to raise funds for such a purpose and that they were to be given to a person who would enjoy the trust of the donors. Given that the First Assembly was about to terminate its session without a definitive decision being made over Armenia, the committee also requested that a special body be created to keep addressing the topic. The report was presented by the Belgian delegate Mr. Lafontaine, who discussed \$25 million which had been voted for Armenia by the US Senate. He also emphasized that the League would only consider military intervention once all peaceful means of resolving the problem had been exhausted.

Clearly, then, there was a distinct lack of realism in the League of Nations, since as late as 18 December there was still talk of applying peaceful means to solve the Armenian situation, even though on 2 December the Turkish-Armenian conflict had ended and a peace treaty had been concluded. Under the circumstances it can only be concluded that the committee dealing with Armenian affairs achieved nothing at all. It even made a number of mistakes, for example over-estimating the number of Armenian troops available.³⁶

The Assembly duly rejected the proposal to set up a further committee to deal with Armenia. It was felt that such a course would set a precedent and perhaps would subvert the Council's authority. The main argument was that the Council itself would act as just such a special committee. On the same day the French delegate Mr. Viviani made the following proposal, which was adopted by the Assembly:

‘The Assembly, recalling its decision of November 22, 1920, will continue to cooperate with the Council, which is entrusted with the duty of safeguarding the future of Armenia, referring for advice, if it should be necessary, to the Members

³⁵ LNA, Class. II, dossier 3421, doc. 10065.

³⁶ E. Zohrabyan, pp. 166–76.

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of the League. The Assembly notes that in response to the initiative taken by the League, universal sympathy has already been shown for Armenia, and that Armenia has received offers of mediation on her behalf from President Wilson, Spain and Brazil.³⁷

In other words, Armenia was once again returned to the Council, from whence it had begun ‘its journey’. According to the passed resolution the President of the United States, Governments of Spain and Brazil would now take charge of the required mediations.

Conclusion

On the evening of 18 December, the Assembly held the closing ceremony of its first session. In his speech President Hymans referred to the Armenian question, saying:

‘The Powers considered the Armenian question for a long period of time, but nevertheless could not solve it. Politicians are not always led just by emotions, it is necessary for them to take into consideration means and methods. We were unable to find a state to accept a mandate for Armenia; but we were lucky to identify mediators. The President of the United States Woodrow Wilson has agreed to mediate, with the assistance of Spain and Brazil. Armenia is busying our minds greatly and troubling our consciousness, and frankly we want to help her. Our duty is to work towards that goal. The Council will work very hard, utilizing all our capabilities and means. We are absolutely unanimous in trying to save this suffering nation from its enemies—the nation, to whom charity has always been denied.’³⁸

With such a humanitarian and altruistic attitude, the Assembly turned the page of the Armenian question. It is beyond doubt that the League was very generous in the words it uttered. Every speech concerning Armenia was filled with sympathy, charity and calls for assistance. But as the President of the Assembly Paul Hymans emphasized in his closing speech, politicians are not always led by their feelings. Maybe in this case they were never really led by their feelings at all.

³⁷ LNA, Records of the First Assembly Plenary Meetings, pp. 730–31.

³⁸ Ibid.