The League of Nations in retrospect
La Société des Nations: rétrospective

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The League of Nations in retrospect

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La Société des Nations: rétrospective

Actes du Colloque

organisé par la
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et
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Abbreviations
Abréviations

AD	*Archives Diplomatiques* (Paris)
ADAP	*Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik* (Göttingen)
AE	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Paris)
AF	Archives fédérales (Berne)
ASdN	Archives de la Société des Nations – Bibliothèque des Nations Unies (Genève)
BIT	Bureau International du Travail (Genève)
BM	Bundesministerium für Finanzen, Archiv (Wien)
BSI	Bureau socialiste international (Bruxelles)
CIJ	Cour internationale de justice (La Haye)
CL	Comité de liquidation, SdN
CPC	Commission permanente consultative pour les questions militaires, navales et aériennes, SdN
CPD	Commission préparatoire pour la Conférence du Désarmement, SdN
CPM	Commission permanente des mandats, SdN
CPNU	Commission préparatoire des Nations Unies
DBFP	*Documents on British Foreign Policy* (London)
DDF	*Documents diplomatiques francais* (Paris)
DDS	*Documents diplomatiques suisses* (Berne)
DGFP	*Documents on German Foreign Policy* (London/Washington D.C.)
DPF	Département politique fédéral (Berne)
DVP	*Dokumenty Vnešnej Politiki SSSR* (Moskva)
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
FA	Federal Archives (Bern)
FRUS	*Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the Unites States* (Washington, D.C.)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross (Geneva)
IGCR	Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (Geneva)
ILO	International Labour Organization (Geneva)
IRO	International Refugee Organization (Geneva)
JO	*Journal Officiel*, SdN
JOSS	*Journal Officiel, Supplément Spécial*, SdN
LNA	League of Nations Archives – United Nations Library (Geneva)
LNU	League of Nations Union (London)
LoN	League of Nations (Geneva)
MF	Archives du Ministère des finances (Paris)

OIT	Organisation internationale du travail (Genève)
OJ	*Official Journal,* LoN
OJSS	*Official Journal, Special Supplement,* LoN
OMS	Organisation mondiale de la santé (Genève)
ONU	Organisation des Nations Unies (New York)
PMC	Permanent Mandates Commission, LoN
PRO	Public Record Office (London)
RCADI	*Recueils des cours* de l'Académie de droit international (La Haye)
SD	Department of State Archives – National Archives (Washington, D.C.)
SDFP	*Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* (London)
SdN	Sociéte des Nations (Genève)
TSF	Télégraphie Sans Fil
UNCIO	United Nations Conference on International Organization (San Francisco)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Paris)
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (Washington, D.C.)

Preface

Heinz Waldner
Chief Librarian
United Nations Library at Geneva

It is with great pleasure and satisfaction that I see the Proceedings of this first international Symposium on the League of Nations made publicly available in such a convenient form. This once more gives me the opportunity to express my deep appreciation to all those who helped to organise and who participated in the Symposium, in particular Professor Christian Dominicé, Director of the Graduate Institute of International Studies, and his collaborators Professor Marlis Steinert, Jean-Claude Frachebourg, Victor Ghebali, as well as my own colleagues at the Library, Elizabeth Beyerly, Sven Welander, Werner Simon, and all the scholars who contributed the essays published here. I am also most grateful to His Excellency Vladimir Socoline, former Under-Secretary-General of the League of Nations whose charming personality and vivid reminiscences lent an unforgettable touch of oral history to our gathering.

If we look at the League of Nations, what it was and what it might have been in the difficult context of the inter-war situation, it seems to me that the picture has considerably changed compared with the time when the League was regarded as a failure and dissolved. The overall balance of the League's achievements now, after 37 years' experience of the United Nations, appears to me much more favourable than one was led to expect. While fully aware of the reservations which still exist among many contemporaries, I do not hesitate to state that more than respect is due for what the League accomplished.

The League was a great beginning of a global venture which was not only necessary at its time but still continues on a much larger scale. Especially if we approach our subject from the viewpoint of the problems the League had to face, the continuity of so many of them – such as international security, conflict settlement, disarmament and economic co-operation, but also refugees, drug abuse, international organisation of science and education – is striking, and if we compare them with what the United Nations has been able to do up to now, the League clearly can be considered as the first major step towards a goal which will still take a long time to reach. The impressive variety of themes dealt with in the Symposium have revealed not only many interesting new aspects of the League but have certainly also thrown new ligtht on the continuity of problems from the League to the United Nations. Seen from this perspective the United Nations appear much more a revised form of the League than a real new beginning.

The UN Library at Geneva, itself a precious heritage of the League of Nations

and the keeper of its archives, came to organise this Symposium with a particular motivation. Independent of spectacular anniversaries, we felt for some time the need for a League of Nations' bibliography*. As this project progressed, the idea evolved for bringing together experts on the League who would not only evaluate past and current research, but would also suggest avenues for improving further work in this field. Access to many archives is now being extended, thus permitting researchers to examine source materials from the period between the two World Wars. It is in this sense that we at the United Nations Library in Geneva helped to bring about the Symposium and the editing of its papers. We are proud that these valuable contributions to the research on the League now appear in one of our Library series.

* A provisional edition in three volumes of the *Bibliographical Handbook on the League of Nations/Manuel bibliographique sur la Societé des Nations*, Prepared by/Etabli par Victor-Yves Ghebali (Geneva, UN Library, 1980) was distributed to the participants of the Symposium. The revised final version of this Handbook is in preparation.

Avant-propos

CHRISTIAN DOMINICÉ
Directeur de l'Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales, Genève

L'exposition qui, comme le colloque dont les travaux sont publiés dans le présent ouvrage, a été organisée pour commémorer le soixantième anniversaire de la première assemblée de la Société des Nations, à Genève, a permis de faire réapparaître des documents émouvants. Je pense particulièrement aux vieilles photographies montrant la foule enthousiaste, heureuse à l'idée que la Société d'Etats qui venait d'être créée allait marquer le début d'une ère résolument nouvelle.

Le Pacte, on le sait, porta les espoirs de peuples entiers, las de la guerre et des conflits, aspirant à une vie meilleure.

Ces témoignages des espoirs de 1920, vus avec le recul du temps et la connaissance de ce qui allait se passer moins de vingt ans plus tard, ne sont-ils pas cruels? Ne viennent-ils pas souligner avec d'autant plus de vigueur l'ampleur de l'échec?

Convient-il, en définitive, de faire revivre un passé douloureux?

La science a pour mission et pour devoir de ne rien négliger de ce qui peut contribuer à une meilleure connaissance de l'homme et des sociétés. L'époque de la Société des Nations, avec ses lumières et ses ombres, mérite aujourd'hui l'attention. Elle marque l'avènement d'une dimension nouvelle des relations internationales, celle de l'organisation internationale. Elle préfigure de nombreux développements contemporains. Elle appelle aussi à la sagesse, à la mesure, à la raison, si l'on veut bien se rappeler que la folie des hommes a conduit les foules joyeuses de 1920 sur les chemins douloureux de l'exil, des ruines et des cimetières.

Les historiens, parmi lesquels je remercie tous ceux qui ont apporté leur contribution au symposium de 1980 et à cet ouvrage, assument une lourde et belle responsabilité. Il leur appartient d'identifier et mettre à nu les émotions et les passions, sans y céder. De comprendre avant de juger. De distinguer le permanent du contingent, et de permettre en définitive de mieux saisir, dans sa complexité, un présent si largement façonné par le passé.

L'organisation internationale, lieu de convergence des pulsions du monde, des intérêts contradictoires, mais aussi de grandes espérances, offre à l'historien un champ d'investigation prodigieusement riche, complété qu'il est désormais, les années passant, par l'ouverture des archives nationales.

J'exprime la gratitude de l'Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales à tous ceux qui ont permis l'organisation du colloque de 1980, et la publication de ce volume – la Bibliothèque de l'Office des Nations Unies à Genève et

son chef, M. Heinz Waldner, méritent une mention toute particulière – ainsi qu'aux auteurs des études ici réunies.

Je remercie également l'Etat de Genève, plus particulièrement son chef du Protocole, M. Robert Vieux, ainsi que la Ville de Genève, de leur précieux soutien. Je forme le voeu que ces travaux contribuent à une meilleure connaissance d'une époque de l'histoire des peuples qui est importante pour qui veut comprendre le présent et construire l'avenir.

Introductory essay

ZARA STEINER
New Hall, Cambridge University

"The League of Nations is dead; long live the United Nations." Lord Robert Cecil's words, despite their unfortunate historical parentage, might be taken as one of the coordinating themes of our conference. Historians have looked back on the workings of the League to draw conclusions about the nature of the nation state and the international state system both in the inter-war period and today. They look for the lessons which might be learnt and applied in the realm of crisis management, conflict resolution and war termination to use the current verbiage of the political scientist. We also look at the institutions and organizations of the League to see how they functioned in the past, and for the ways in which they were adopted for use by the United Nations and its off-shoots. The latter, and various other multinational organizations – as many of our authors have insisted – owe much to these earlier experiments in international co-operation. Historians and statesmen alike have studied the League not just to learn from the past, but to learn the right lessons from the past so that current efforts at cooperation could benefit from the League's successes without repeating its mistakes. As the model-builders abandoned their theoretical constructions – popular in the 1950's and 1960's: those mathematical analyses of state behaviour which proved so deceptively clear and inaccurate – subsequent analysts reverted to the historical example as a basis for both the study of today's problems and the forecast of tomorrow's events. Moreover, for the historian the urge is always present for exploiting the newest treasure trove of documents. Many of the archives pertaining to the inter-war period have been recently opened or are in the process of being organized for scholarly scrutiny. Recent bibliographic research[1] indicates just how fresh and exciting some of this new material can be. The story of the League of Nations – its organization and its functions – is currently being re-written in a different form and manner than we have inherited from a previous generation of statesmen and commentators.

The process of re-writing has revealed central paradoxes which one cannot ignore. Almost all the authors concerned with the functioning of the League, particularly those focusing on collective security and disarmament, have insisted that we must separate myth from reality, illusion from practice. Obviously, when an historian looks back, he attempts to understand yet needs to divorce himself from the vocabulary of the era he is studying. But the problem with regard to the League goes much deeper. The Covenant emerging from the deliberations in Paris in 1919 was not the document either the British or the French

governments had in mind when they came to the Peace Conference. The Wilsonian League, embodying the ideology of 'liberal internationalism' as Professor Egerton[2] has defined it, was a very different structure from that which the British and the French thought appropriate to the international system they believed existed in 1919. Rather than a peace-keeping mechanism based on obligatory international coercion – a concept which had been rejected by the majority of the Phillimore Commission, that war-time body appointed to study the question – the British had in mind an enlarged concert of powers, a voluntary arbitration system and a measure of functional co-operation between states. The French, never very enthusiastic about the whole Anglo-Saxon view of this form of international co-operation, accepted the League grudgingly. They hoped it could become a peacetime alliance system with automatic sanctions; even when convinced of the wisdom of accepting Wilson's offspring, Clemenceau reserved his doubts. It was an ironic beginning for the League for reasons fully understood, and generally accepted, by the leading statesmen in London and Paris. What had been viewed as a means by which the Americans could join a European settlement became one of the reasons why the United States refused to enter the League.

From the beginning the League was an organization dressed in Wilsonian clothes. This idealized structure appealed to large sections of the European public, above all in Britain which, after the American desertion, shared with France the main burden of making the Versailles settlement work. Whatever their doubts – and there were many – about articles X through XVI, the Allied statesmen were forced to accept the core of these articles and they were forced in part, especially in Britain, by the democratic nature of their states and because the Wilsonian image appealed to their electorates which had just emerged from the shock of an unbelievable war. In the eyes of contemporaries, peace-keeping was the League's chief function. The League became synonimous with the idea of collective security well before this term emerged in the 1930's as a description of what could hardly be termed a 'system' in any real sense of that word. After all, the problem of how to resolve conflicts without resorting to war had preoccupied statesmen since the eighteenth century when war began to become too expensive and too destructive to be used as a tool of statecraft. Given a war of unprecedented scope involving all classes of society and producing casualty lists of an entirely new dimension, it was not at all surprising that the prevention of war had become a popular cause, and that statesmen were forced to respond to the expectations of their supporters.

It was natural though tragic that in the long series of crises which punctuated the post-war settlements of the 1920's and 30's, the League should have been called upon to exercise these peace-keeping functions and that the belief in a collective security system, meant to check the actions of any aggressor, should have been exposed to the test of reality. By failing first with regard to Japan and then Italy, the League disappointed not only its articulate defenders but a wider section of the population which looked to it for an alternative to war. By the 1930's, even before Hitler's first attacks on the European *status quo*, the expectations raised by the founders of the League had led to deep disillisionment. At

the height of its popular appeal, the myth of collective security was brutally exposed, and the prestige of the League – despite success in other ways – was irremediably diminished. Statesmen soon resumed traditional ways of resolving inter-state conflicts without more than a glance towards Geneva.

Looking back at the problems of collective security, of peace keeping and of conflict resolution, one can now see what the League might have been expected to accomplish, and why it succeeded or failed within these relatively narrow limits. In the Corfu incident[3], or in the Manchurian crisis, in the Leticia[4] dispute and in the Italian-Ethiopian war, our contributors have exposed the gap between statemen's words and their deeds. We know, for instance, that Corfu was not settled through the League, despite the lip service given to its role, but by a conference of ambassadors. We know with regard to Manchuria that the Japanese could not have been checked by the Council of the League unless the British – and even more important, the Americans, for they had the power – had decided to impose sanctions. And as M. Baer has argued, even when the League was successful, as in the Peru-Columbia crisis in 1934, it did not impose a settlement but held the ring, and by a judicious policy of carrot and stick got the disputants to work out a solution without resorting to war.

The Ethiopian crisis represented the most brutal divorce between expectation and performance. In earlier cases, this gap had been somewhat disguised. But in the case of Italy, both the British and French governments pursued double policies: working with the League to maintain a public image while negotiating with Italy to bring about a resolution of the crisis which would leave the Stresa front intact. The League was brought into action on false pretenses, in the British case as a result of public pressure and the need to find a paper solution when no real solution could be found. But using the League, the two governments increasingly returned to traditional forms of nineteenth century diplomacy. This dual policy not only exposed the differences between Britain and France but very much undermined the authority of the League. The results satisfied none; Italy was left in control of Ethiopia but also alienated from her Stresa front partners. Yet it was the League, rather than the governments of Britain and France that bore the brunt of public disappointment. And the League itself was discarded as a means of keeping the peace and checking aggression.

It has become a commonplace to maintain that the League could only reflect the existing state of international realities. The League had to rely on sovereign states, some of which were more sovereign than others. Any form of collective action could work only if the powerful states – and this meant Britain and France throughout most of this period – would act together and in unison. But the League was seen in public as something more than the sum of its parts. This was the Wilsonian image. The League was expected to enlist the support of all for finding solutions to disputes, as well as to enforce these solutions without involving the nations in a new world war. It must be added that few statesmen attempted to explain to their constituents the dangers of this approach to international politics. On the contrary, they often masked their own actions by using the acceptable vocabulary and thereby encouraged false hopes. When the League failed, or was seen to fail because so much more had been expected from it, the

League itself was discredited and then by-passed not just by the statesmen but by the public as well.

Myth and reality also dogged the history of disarmament. The British believed, rightly or wrongly, that the arms race had, in part, created the conditions for war in 1914. Written into the Covenant was the assumption that after Germany would be disarmed, the rest of the world would follow suit. As M. Vaïsse[5] insists, reality intruded even at this early stage for nations were not to be disarmed but only to reduce their armaments to a level compatible with national security. What this meant was to become the major point of a continuous dispute between Britain and France. The French never accepted the abolition of the distinction between victors and vanquished. Their whole behaviour was patterned on the assumption that Germany would once again be able to make a bid for the hegemony of Europe. With the American withdrawal from Europe – impeding one way of achieving French security – it was only the British who could provide the moral and the military support so deeply craved by the French. But the British, or at least important sections of a large number of British Governments, believed that their continental commitment in 1914 had been a very expensive mistake. They looked to a return to their pre-1914 position, some even to the imperial orientation at the turn of the century. By insisting on disarmament without fully facing the French demand for compensation, repeated British cabinets avoided an unpopular choice.

There is little doubt that in Britain the demand for disarmament was widespread and the need for economic retrenchment encouraged Governments to cut back on both the army and navy. Military men were not in high favour in the twenties; only in Germany had their reputations been refurbished. The myths of the 'merchants of death' balanced the public response to the rising number of unemployed which followed from the closing of shipyards and foundries. The public not only wanted to disarm; they did not want to have to come to the aid of France on the continent. Even the limited British pledge to the French under the Locarno treaties was not translated into military terms. There was no army available for European responsibilities. It was the public assumption that the League could be the wolrd's policeman and that collective security was an alternative to national rearment. The Governments knew that the League could not assume this role unless it was ready to use force which only the Member States could supply. But neither the British nor the French intended to supply it, and the British were exceedingly reluctant to offer even in more traditional ways the underwriting which the French demanded.

It was in this sense that the Disarmament Conference came far too late. The British and French had not really come to acceptable terms despite appearances and Hitler could easily exploit their differences. Unable to keep Germany at the Conference or force Hitler to return, the two Powers turned to settlements outside the competence of the League. M. Vaïsse's[6] conclusion that the collapse of the Disarmament Conference cannot be imputed to the League of Nations is perfectly just. The League could not do more than what its members agreed to do. It could provide the vantage point, it could establish the conditions of discourse, it could bring together the experts, but it could not act independently of

the Member States. It was the shock of depression that caused the States to restrict defense spending but gradually all, slowly but inevitably, began to rearm. The atmosphere was changed by Hitler, however pacific he might have wanted to appear. What was true for the case of collective security was also true in the matter of disarmament. The failure of the Disarmament Conference dealt yet another, and an almost final blow to the core of the League mechanism.

Looking back, it is not surprising that present-day historians condemn the high hopes engendered by the Geneva spokesmen. Illusions that the League could or would do more than what the States willed produced negative results. The States had retained their full sovereign powers; the international structure had not evolved beyond the stage of independent States. Myth operated at many levels, all dangerous. Statesman used the terminology of liberal internationalism and practiced old-fashioned bi-lateral diplomacy. People were encouraged to believe that if only the League had been permitted to act, aggressors would have been checked and war averted. Until recently, most histories were written by the actors; but what now appears to be their realistic or necessary policies were at the time presented as Machievellian plots and the deeds of evil men. Analysing these crises, concentrating on what States and statesmen did now helps us not only to identify the reality of inter-war diplomacy, but also to understand the conditions that determined the outcome of League action in this reality.

The search for security in the inter-war period took many forms. The one with which our own generation has become most familiar was the form still in its infant stage during the 1920's. The League played only a partial and secondary role in the economic reconstruction of Europe. Curiously enough, though economic aims were discussed, reparations had not been extensively examined before the Powers met in Paris. There, the technical questions tended to be left to so-called 'experts' while those excluded felt powerless and increasingly alarmed. Warned by Keynes, the men in the Foreign Office delegation to Paris were distressed by the roles of Cunliffe and Sumner, viewing the sums demanded from Germany by the British and the French representatives as unrealistic and dangerous. But neither then nor later were the diplomats sufficiently informed, nor had they the necessary understanding about the international economy to intervene in matters left to central banks and national Governments at one level and to the financiers and industrialists at the other.

Those drawing up the peace treaties with Austria and Hungary condemned particularly the financial and economic settlements for which they were not responsible. Mme Pietri's[7] paper on the Comité financier illustrates one case of the League actually assuming a role in the economic reconstruction of a European nation; Hungary and a failed attempt in Poland were other cases. It is interesting to note the key role played by Montagu Norman, head of the Bank of England, and the role of civil servants trained in economic and financial rather than in diplomatic matters. Of course their actions spilled over into the political arena. The blurring of political and economic affairs, the entrance of new figures into this semi-diplomatic world heralded the extension of the diplomatic canvas and the shrinkage of traditional controls and hierarchies.

Both M. Dubin[8] and M. Halperin[9] indicate how a new form of multinational

diplomacy was being expanded; one which depended less on States, though States were involved, than on bankers, investors and economic specialists, and one far more concerned with the economic health of the international community than its defense and security aspects. In a sense, both with regard to the Economic Conference of 1927 and to the forms of economic and technical assistance described by M. Menzies,[10] the League was extending the dimensions of traditional diplomacy and opening up areas of international co-operation which had only been barely explored in the pre-1914 period. M. Meienberger describes the efforts made by the League to assist in the economic and social reconstruction of China. Successful collaboration in such fields as hygiene, education, transportation and agriculture owed far more to a few officials within the Secretariat than to the political organs of the League. It is important to stress how marginal and tentative much of this work was; the emphasis was on the collection of information and the writing of opinions rather than on the actual interference with the operations of the international economy. The discussion of technical and economic issues defined an area for international co-operation and promoted links between League and non-League agents. But even in China, the League representatives had no executive powers and their roles were necessarily circumscribed by the political realities of the day.

Much was done outside the League. All States were far more sensitive to the pressures from the central banks, bankers, industrialists and even unions than they were in the pre-1914 world. As the war debt-reparations controversy continued, and as the United States began to capitalize on its newly won creditor position, not only were such negotiations carried on outside the League, but by firms which enjoyed a semi-autonomous position. Thus the partners of J. P. Morgan in their role as the main lenders to France could obtain in 1924 French acceptance of the Dawes Plan, and were playing a similar role in 1930. Bankers, like industrialists, crossed national lines, creating conditions which we now associate with the ever-expanding domain of semi-private and even private diplomacy. The resolution of problems relative to the gold standard and the stabilizations of currencies, which also fell outside the jurisdiction of the League, crossed traditional lines between domestic and foreign affairs and eroded traditional distinctions.

M. Halperin[11] has concluded that the Economic Conference of 1927 'marquait l'entrée du facteur économique dans l'orbite des décisions politiques.' He has illustrated the increasing attention specialists focused on economic and commercial problems on an international scale. It was, of course, only the beginning of a new form of international co-operation. M. Dubin[12] goes further and suggests that in 1935 just as the whole political role of the League had been discredited, a decisive change in the character of the League's economic and social programs set in. The nature of the depression and the expanding role of almost all States in the economic and social lives of their citizens, led delegates to place increasing emphasis on the social, economic and technological factors in society and on the need to solve such problems through the collaboration of League and non-League international agencies. The experience of the ILO and Health Organization with extensive and broadly based activities contributed to the revival of the

Economic and Financial Committees of the League. Thus, on the eve of the war, Assembly delegates – in part looking for a way to ensure the League's continued existence – affirmed the League's commitment to social and economic activities and appealed for recommendations from non-League members. It is paradoxical that at a time when most States opted for national solutions to many such problems, the League looked forward to a new international role.

There was yet another way in which the League attempted to re-shape the international environment. Mention should be made of a subject not covered in the contributions to this Symposium, namely the role of the Permanent Court of Justice, the model for the present International Court of Justice. The Court delivered 31 judgments and gave 27 advisory opinions, with 54 States accepting some degree of compulsory arbitration. Although Americans never joined the League, an American jurist sat on the Court throughout this period. The cases heard were of considerable importance and decisions rendered prevented disputes between States from escalating into major crises. Court action (advisory opinion, 1931) with regard to the Austrian attempt to join a customs union with Germany, the resolution in 1932 of the Franco-Swiss dispute over Upper Savoy and, in 1933, the settlement of the conflict between Denmark and Norway over Eastern Greenland, illustrate the ways the Court extended the scope of international law. Interestingly enough, American and British writers of the pre-1919 period saw in an extended arbitration system a practical approach of settling disputes peacefully. Leon Bourgeois brought great pressure on an extremely reluctant Woodrow Wilson in this direction. A student of the Hague Peace Conference has recently argued that a Permanent Court and a periodic conference system would have proved acceptable to the American Senate and that the Wilsonian determination to break with the Hague tradition was a costly error. Convinced though he was of the necessity for including the Court in the Covennant, Wilson never conceded to it a central role; by its very nature the Court could move only slowly in building up an international structure of law with no ultimate sanction except the self-interest of the States.

This brief review of the League's role in international relations illustrates an expansion of the methods for dealing with inter-State problems. But ist must be remembered that the League mechanism was only one such path open to the sovereign States. Even at the height of the so-called Geneva system, States resorted both to the old and the new forms of diplomacy. They entered into bi-lateral agreements, joined regional groupings – e.g. Pan-American Union, Locarno Pact, the Balkan Entente, Baltic Union, etc. – and became Members of the League. As M. Svolopoulos[13] reminds us, contradictions did exist, sometimes in the spirit but more often in the practice, resulting from membership in a regional group and/or in the League. Behind the fights between universalists and regionalists were often conflicting political aims of Governments intent on protecting their security by more limited agreements as well as by League membership. Though the League encompassed more States than any other contemporary multi-national organization, there existed also great Powers outside the League. Within the League structure there were States dissatisfied with the *status quo* the institution had been designed to support. Thus the Powers turned to a variety of

means to protect or advance their interests. The French made their pacts with Poland, the Little Entente and the Soviet Union. They joined the Locarno Pact which though linked with the League can also be seen as an alternative to it, and helped create the Briand-Kellogg Pact, a statement of moral intent; and they used their investments in Germany and in Central Europe to provide an alternative to political forms of diplomatic leverage. A similar list can be made for the British. Britain's interests in the Far East brought her to the Washington Conference settlements, while the concern for her imperial position made her particularly vulnerable to the American absence from the League. One must be careful not to think of the League 'system' as an all embracing one; it was only one form, albeit a new form, of multinational diplomacy. Moreover, it bears stressing that in the thirties when the League had lost much of its political *raison d'être* and States reverted to non-aggression treaties and bi-laterial pacts, old methods did not work any better than new ones. If the presence of the League with its false hopes complicated the tasks of traditional diplomacy, there is little evidence that the latter enjoyed any greater measure of success when unencumbered by League obligations.

What did States think they would achieve by joining the League? Like the Nuremberg trials, the fact that the League was shaped by the victors gave it one meaning to those inside and another to those excluded. In a sense, each Government created its own League not necessarily corresponding either to the structure in 1919, or to that which evolved during the 1920's. The French hoped to use the League to enforce the *status quo*. In Germany, the opposite hope, namely that the League would provide an instrument for change, obtained. As M. Kimmich[14] has shown, the German people expected that League membership would allow them to press for the revision of an unjust treaty. Thus, even under Stresemann, when the Germans behaved as good members of the international community, difficulties arose when disarmament or the minorities issue came to be discussed. Germany was in an ambiguous position from the very time of her joining the League. Not only was she a revisionist Power but her position between the great and small Powers was a difficult one. She sat on the League Council and was a full Member of the Locarno Pact, yet she was not a real equal with regard to Britain and France. After 1929, finding that she was making little progress in revising the Versailles Treaty, her diplomats began to act more aggressively, alienating the small nations without achieving the equality of status Germany sought. In the eyes of successive German Governments, the League had proved far too inflexible an instrument to respond to the shifting power relations on the continent of Europe. For in fact, the League could not go beyond the area of Anglo-French agreement. The Germans were disappointed in their expectations even before Hitler came to power. From their point of view it was a failed form of diplomacy.

The Soviet Union joined the League because of its identification with a collective security system. Faced with a resurgent Japan and Germany, the Soviet Union had everything to gain from any collective effort to check aggression. It is curious that it was articles X and XVI, those very provisions which had alienated the Americans and so worried the British, that most attracted the Soviet Union.

She was far less interested in the technical aspects of the League's works or in the use of the Assembly as a public forum. Soviet policy, as Mme Plettenberg[15] underlines, was thoroughly consistent, whether in terms of paying the next to highest financial contribution to the League, or with regard to Soviet support for collective action against Germany, Italy, and, more debatably, Spain. Like most other statesmen, Litvinov was hardly blind to the reality of the weaknesses inherent in the League structure. The Soviet Union would not act alone but she would associate herself with any collective action that might be taken against a disturber of the peace. Though different theoretical arguments were presented, it was clear that in her own self-interest, the Soviet Union had joined the Powers supporting the *status quo*. Even before it became apparent to the Soviets that the League was a paper tiger, neither Britain nor France (despite a treaty with the Soviet Union) was prepared to treat her as a full partner. Although she remained a League Member until her expulsion over the Russo-Finish war, the Soviet Union had already deserted the League in all but name before Munich. Her diplomatic isolation acted as a catalyst in the re-orientation of Soviet policy away from Britain and France, and towards Berlin and the Soviet-German Pact. The Soviet Union did try to strengthen the League in its role as a bloc against aggression, only to find that the bloc did not exist and that her own intentions roused great suspicion among both great and small Powers. For the Soviets, too, the League failed.

In 1919 for their part, the Americans felt that they could provide for their own security by using economic rather than political means to underwrite their Great Power status. Thus, although the USA shunned a political connection with the League, American investors moved into Germany, France and Central Europe while the American Government insisted on the re-payment of war debts owed it. In sharp contrast to the Soviets, while Americans disassociated themselves from the collective security aspect of the Leagues activities, they were soon drawn into its technical and humanitarian efforts. Nonetheless, when faced with challenges which demanded more active responses than those shaped at the Washington Conference, a more complex relationship with the League began to evolve. The Manchurian crisis presented the first real test. The vacillations about the proper response to Japanese aggression stemmed not only from domestic pressures but from fears that any association with the League would result in the latter's 'passing the buck' to the United States. M. Ostrower[16] illustrates the vacillating role Secretary of State Stimson played in his relations with the League during the mounting crisis. At some point Stimson must have realised that collective security would become meaningful only if the United States and the British supplied the muscle power. Under such conditions, co-operation with the League was far less attractive. Because the United States was not a Member of the League, she could not hide behind it when forced to decide whether to impose sanctions or let the Japanese action go unchecked. Stimson had never really accepted sanctions and at a given moment retreated; the non-recognition doctrine was but a moral and legalistic statement of the American position with a long and honourable past history in American diplomatic non-action. Under Roosevelt, it was again only when faced with the realities of aggression that the President

looked to Geneva – three thousand miles of sea gave the Americans more protection than that enjoyed by the Soviet Union. Mr. Ostrower argues that Roosevelt and Hull were genuinely worried in 1935 and in subsequent years tried to see how the Neutrality Acts could be used to complement League action. It was the weakness of the League response over Ethiopia which led Roosevelt to shift American policy towards London and Paris rather than towards Geneva. The League was no longer of primary interest; it could not perform any function for the United States which would relieve her of the necessity for acting on her own.

It was obvious that nations join an international organization because they hope to be strengthened by that association. Given the League's accomplishment in the realm of peace keeping, neither the Soviets nor the United States could have taken a very sanguine stand. Still, this preoccupation with the collective security aspects of the League should not obscure the fact that many States within the League structure saw other positive features in the various Geneva institutions, making them a center of world diplomacy. An international institutional framework was developing where none had previously existed and this structure, or its off-shoots, was becoming operational in domains not previously subject to any international body or any expression of international public opinion. Most of the daily work of the League did not revolve about either collective security or disarmament or the revision of the Covenant- a subject little discussed by the contributors to our Symposium though of central concern to a first generation of writers. Geneva was becoming a place where statesmen from different countries, large and small, could congregate and talk; where problems of all kinds – political, social, economic, technical – could be discussed and where, through daily contact, numerous ways of adjusting the international scene could be evolved. M. Siotis[17] looks at the institutions of the League from a vantage point to which I hope to return at the end of this paper. He underlines the important difference between the Executive Council and the Assembly tracing the latter's evolution from a Conference or Board of Delegates to a new form of national representation. From the start, even Wilsonian internationalists wavered on the subject of using public opinion rather than sanctions as a means of checking aggression. It was through the Assembly that the former was being mobilised and given a world arena. It was neither desired nor expected that the Assembly should assume executive powers. However, as the Council became paralysed by quarrels among its members, the Assembly did try to expand its own jurisdiction under Artile XI to XVII. The same experiment was later tried under Dag Hammarskjöld; both attempts proved unsuccessful and in each case the Assembly was forced to return to its primary purpose of public discussion. It may well be that this Assembly function is better performed by today's Third World powers than it used to be by the small nations at Geneva.

M. Siotis[18] and M. Barros[19] focus on the powers of the Secretary General; discussions about his role have reflected different views about the state system and the stage at which the international community had arrived. Cecil's politically powerful chancellor with extensive executive powers emanated from the British statesman's hope that the League would become something more than a

reinforced Concert of Powers. Once this image was rejected a far weaker secretarial type was sought. Obviously, administrative power can mask political influence; the study of Hankey's role in the British government is a case in point and parallel examples can be found in France and Germany. But political power must be adroitly handled in an international context where one must balance the claims of one's country against those of the international organization, and where one is asked to preserve political neutrality in disputes between States. Sir Eric Drummond's reputation is a very mixed one; for many he was Britain's agent though his battles with the Foreign Office suggest that the flow was not all one way. But there seems little doubt that under his rule the Secretariat of the League served the interests of the great powers dominating it. We also have a study of Avenol whose papers are now available for public scrutiny at the Quai d'Orsay.[20] Whatever the roles of these two Secretaries-General, M. Siotis is surely right when he stresses the attempt of this first generation of international civil servants to create something more than a purely national civil service and in trying to develop an international ideology going beyond narrow national interests. These problems still exist though we have moved from Great Power Secretaries-General to men recruited from the small, non-committed, or neutral States.

Apart from the Council, Assembly and Secretariat, the Symposium papers make only passing references to a wide range of functional institutions. It would have been useful to have examined the work of one of these (e. g. the Health Organisation, ILO, etc.) under the highly centralised League system. The kind of technical institutions, now so numerous and often completely autonomous, have become a permanent part of the multinational scene. The problems are no longer those of development but of co-ordination, duplication and even competition in a constantly proliferating series of private, state and multinational organizations. But the contributors to the Symposium have looked at three areas of League activities, i. e. mandates (M. Collart[21]), refugees (M. Grahl-Madsen[22]) and minorities (M. Veatch[23]) not previously subject to any form of international scrutiny.

The functioning of the Permanent Mandates Commission provided an interesting lesson in the use of expert and international pressure to monitor the behaviour of even Great Powers. Though the Commission was dominated by the Mandate Powers and certain questions, e. g. progress to self-government were carefully avoided, reports were demanded and made, forthright questions were asked about the economic state of the territories under supervision, and both Britain and France were prodded when the experts felt all was not well. William Rappard played the critical key role on the Commission making it a considerable force in colonial matters. M. Veatch suggests that in minority matters the use of private pressure and careful negotiation carried out behind the scenes enabled the Minorities Committee of the Council and the Minorities Section of the Secretariat to influence the behaviour of some of the offending States. Here, too, the threat of publication – also used with regard to colonial questions – and the possibility of public criticism could be mobilized if States proved recalcitrant. The vitality of this system was also sapped as the League lost its political prestige. In the past the Germans had brought many cases before the Committee; but they

refused to include the protection of the Jews within the minority clauses; this along with the Polish rejection of League jurisdiction brought the system to a practical halt.

Neither of these spheres of action were of major concern in the post-1945 world. Though the trusteeship system owed a great deal to the mandate structure, the dependent territories soon gained their independence and became full Members of the United Nations. Moreover, today, the focus is rather more on human than on national rights, international organizations reflecting the special needs – necessarily changing – of their own time. On the other hand, the refugee problem reflects the continuities of our age. Neither in the inter-war period nor at present has either the League or the United Nations provided the funds or support needed to deal with a problem the magnitude of which was not anticipated in 1919. The early work of the League regarding the repatriation of prisoners of war as well the problems of Russian, Greek, Armenian and Bulgarian refugees was primarily due to the energy and devotion of one man, Fritjof Nansen. But the unwillingness of the League of Nations to face the political questions raised by Nazi persecutions almost entirely impeded the effectiveness of already limited efforts. The onset of the war found the League in no position to respond. What little had been done depended on outside financing and activity; individuals rather than institutions carried the brunt of the burden. Political and humanitarian considerations did not necessarily coincide.

Where the goals were modest and the political limits fully understood, some measure of success was achieved. Individuals and even groups of specialists did look after the interests of those who found it difficult, if not impossible, to speak for themselves. Often the efforts were far greater than the results – and that there were results must be attributed to such men as Rappard and Nansen rather than to the Member States represented in the League. Still, it might be argued that the League's intervening at all in such questions was a mark of progress in the internationalist approach to humanitarian questions.

With the time at our disposal no Symposium on the League of Nations could possibly handle all the issues raised by recent research and writing. Yet there are certain lacunae worth underlining if only to stimulate further discussion and investigation. In the absence of published material, it is not surprising though disconcerting that we lack a contribution on the French conception of the League and its functions, on the French efforts made to strengthen the League, or France's virtual abandonment of the League for political purposes. This should not be construed as a criticism of our Swiss hosts but a commentary on the present state of publication, if not research, in France today. Though there are scattered throughout contributions to our Symposium many references to the French role, particularly in the Franco-British antagonism so central to the collapse of collective efforts, far more needs to be understood about French attitudes and behaviour. Resulting in part from the secondary role played by the French government, the current tendency is to concentrate on London. But it should not be forgotten that in the twenties and well into the thirties France was a Great Power, strong enough to have ambitions outside Europe and prosperous enough to extend her financial interests into Germany and Central Europe. France stood

at the very centre of European politics and her central role affected the strengths and weaknesses of the League structure. To study the League without analysing the role of France is like playing Hamlet without the Prince.

Also essential to our understanding of the Geneva experiment is another missing link, namely the absence of a paper on the contribution of the Small Powers within the League. The three discussions of Switzerland reveal the complex attitudes of a neutral power – drawn into the League's orbit by her very neutrality and by the internationalism of some of her leading citizens. Without scrutinizing the attitudes and actions of the Small Powers in the League it is impossible to understand the attraction of Geneva for the statesmen of so many nations. The concentration on the realities of power politics has obscured the reason why the Small Powers looked often with hope and always with interest to the meetings of the Assembly. The Assembly was a public arena making it possible to hear the voice of the weaker States. Individuals counted; there was not only Beneš but Joseph Beck of Luxembourg. Interestingly, almost every Foreign Ministry of Europe created whithin its Ministry a League of Nations department/section; these departments/sections, instead of being mere backwaters were often staffed by the most daring and amibitious of civil servants. Jostled out of traditional attitudes by World War I, countries like Belgium, Holland and those of Scandinavia, were forced to re-think their former aloofness from Great Power politics, gradually abandoning inherited views on neutrality and isolation. Moreover, the economic realities of the post-war world created economic and social problems for all States drawing them to Geneva to listen and to be heard.

This ist not to claim too important a role for the smaller States. The differences between Great and Small Powers were writ large in the heart of the Covenant and later even more prominently in the Charter of the United Nations. But the Small Powers were not heard at all at the Congress of Vienna and their influence in post-Bismarkian Europe was exceedingly limited. The break-down of the Hapsburg Empire not only led to the creation of a number of new States, but increased the room for manoeuvre in the corridors of power. Clearly, the influence of the smaller States was limited but individuals and Governments could make their mark at Geneva and derive benefits from their membership in the League. It is not without significance that today's new prestige of the UN General Assembly is derived from the ability of the smaller Powers to present their case to world opinion. The small countries have learnt to use both the UN and other international organizations to further their own interests, often against the very Powers which had been instrumental in the creation of the United Nations.

A third ommission for this Symposium deserves a final comment. Placing the League in its historical framework, the League represents one of those significant turning points in the history of the international state system. The ability of international organizations to achieve lasting peace is as doubtful today as it was in any earlier period of our history. But this should not lead one to minimize the steps taken, or to dismiss the theories – the myths, if you wish – which created such organizations. Today it is fashionable to stress the key changes which occurred in the international system in 1815 – i. e. when the Great Powers found in the balance of power a method by which joint consultation could be substituted

for war. "The settlement marked the first recognition of it by governments, not merely by theorists and critics of government, and by all the European governments not merely by one or another of them. States had duties as well as rights; and this was especially true of the great states".[24]

For Professor F. H. Hinsley the creation of the concert system helped consolidate new views about the functioning of the European state system which had emerged during the previous century. The new system worked because the States were prepared to make it work. It was successful because it was in the interest of each of the participating States to make it successful. The system corresponded to the realities of State power.

In 1919 a stable international order required far greater changes in the behaviour and attitudes of States than the concert system had ever demanded, in fact, a change for which the States were not ready.

The League was launched at a difficult moment, and its expectations were naïve. The participants never could accept the fact that there was a contradiction between their own reluctance to go to war, and the need to rely on force to uphold both their own interests and the stability of the new international order they had created. In a very fundamental way and for very basic reasons the League failed and was doomed to fail. Yet the ideals of the liberal internationalists, muddled, unclear, even dangerous as some of our contributors have insisted, have an importance of their own.

These ideals have become part both of our intellectual and institutional inheritance. The Charter of the United Nations reflects a good ideal of the League experience; other institutions have taken up, refined and adopted principles and procedures developed at Geneva. Given their many offspring, one cannot dismiss these conceptions at the origin of the League; ideas which men like William Rappard continued to believe in even when the superstructure itself had been destroyed. Such ideas cannot be confined to the international scrap-heap. The break with the past in 1919 was far more radical than what happened in 1815. Ideas always outrun institutions. Metternich and Alexander I were far removed indeed from the theories of Kant and Rousseau. But the ideas, however limited their practical results, have become part of our thinking about the international environment and continue to shape that environment. They cannot be eradicated.

I would go further. The ideas of collective security are not dead. There are still people – not confined to Western Europe – who believe in the corrective power of international public opinion. There are still those who believe that arms lead to war and that even in questions of nuclear weapons, Small Powers can affect the behaviour of the Great. There are idealists today who would go beyond the Wilsonian internationalists. Some of the paths followed by the League proved to be dead ends, and dangerous dead ends at that. Even the study of dead ends has its utility. The failures of history often are the most instructive. But it is not popular among historians to argue in favour of the study of lost causes. "History is not merely what happened; it is what happened in the context of what might have happened. Therefore it must incorporate the alternatives, the might-have-beens. They may, as a necessary element be in the dustbin now, but so, after all,

are those who put them there and who is to say with assurance, which is the 'dead-end'?«[25]

It is often said that the Palais des Nations is the home of lost causes; fortunately there are always new tenants.

Notes

1 Cf. Heinz Waldner, p. IX/note* in the *Proceedings.*
2 Cf. George Egerton, p. 95 in the *Proceedings.*
3 Cf. James Barros, p. 31 in the *Proceedings.*
4 Cf. George Baer, p. 282 in the *Proceedings.*
5 Cf. M. Maurice Vaïsse, p. 245 in the *Proceedings.*
6 Cf. Maurice Vaïsse, p. 245 in the *Proceedings.*
7 Cf. Nicole Pietri, p. 319 in the *Proceedings.*
8 Cf. Martin Dubin, p. 42 in the *Proceedings.*
9 Cf. Jean Halperin, p. 343 in the *Proceedings.*
10 Cf. Alexander Menzies, p. 295 in the *Proceedings.*
11 Cf. Halperin, p. 343 in the *Proceedings.*
12 Cf. Martin Dubin, p. 42.
13 Cf. Constantin Svolopoulos, p. 266 in the *Proceedings;* cf. C. A. Davis, *The United States and the Second Hague Peace Conference.* Durham, N. C., Duke University Press, 1975.
14 Cf. Christoph Kimmich, p. 118 in the *Proceedings.*
15 Cf. Ingeborg Plettenberg, p. 144 in the *Proceedings.*
16 Cf. Gary Ostrower, p. 128 *in the Proceedings.*
17 Cf. Siotis, p. 19 in the *Proceedings.*
18 Cf. M. Jean Siotis, p. 19 in the *Proceedings.*
19 M. James Barros, p. 31 in the *Proceedings;*
20 M. James Barros, *Betrayal From Within. Joseph Avenol, Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1933–1940.* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969.
21 Cf. M. Yves Collart, p. 384 in the *Proceedings.*
22 Cf. M. Atle Grahl-Madsen, p. 358 in the *Proceedings.*
23 Cf. M. Richard Veatch, p. 369 in the *Proceedings.*
24 F. H. Hinsley, *Nationalism and the International System* (London Hodder and Stoughton 1973) p. 84.
25 H. Trevor-Roper (Lord Dacre of Glanton) "History and Imagination" reprinted in the *Times Literary Supplement* 25 July 1980.

Chapter/Chapitre I

The League of Nations: Institutional aspects

Les institutions de la Société des Nations

The institutions of the League of Nations

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I. Introduction

The League of Nations was the first institutionalized sub-system, born as a result of the explicit expression of the political will of a group of States. The League's composition was intended to be universal and its functional orientation global. In the course of this paper, I shall analyse the League experience in terms of a critical transition from the early institutionalized forms of multilateral organization in the 19th century to the global world institution established after the Second World War.

With few exceptions, scholarly works on the inter-war period in general and on the League of Nations in particular have tended to minimize or to misjudge the League's contribution towards building up the contemporary system of international organization. The false and exaggerated expectations placed in the League and its 'inability' to change the course of events leading to the Second World War to a large extent explain the distorted views found in the literature. At the same time, the belief that an institutionalized system for the maintenance of peace can have a decisive effect on a given environment – itself marked by the growing hostility among its actors of whom many followed aggressive policies – has led many authors to attribute the outbreak of World War II to a 'failure' of League institutions. Such views, however, reflect a basic fallacy about the nature of international institutions, for their characteristics as superstructures of a given international system are not properly taken into account. Institutions facilitate the conduct of multilateral relations and they provide the necessary framework, for the elaboration and implementation of co-operative programmes; but, left to themselves, in an environment characterized by growing heterogeneity, hostility and polarisation, they are of little avail as effective instruments for the maintenance of peace.

The League institutions – and their effectiveness – must therefore be judged in their systemic context. The institutions were established in the wake of the First World War which differed qualitatively from all previous international conflicts, and these institutions whithered away on the eve of the Second World War which was the first global armed conflict.

In the interval, i.e. during the 'twenty years crisis', the very systemic foundation an which the League institutions had originally rested was gradually eroded. The international system which gave birth to the League was dominated by the French cabinet, was submitted on 3 February 1919 to the Commission of the

was dominated by two opposed coalitions: the Axis Powers united in their aggressive designs and, the loose – and for much too long – ineffective and heterogeneous alignment of States opposed to German, Italian or Japanese expansionism. Given the collapse of the international system which had given birth to the League it is, therefore, not surprising that the institutions became but the shadow of what the Covenant had set out to establish.

These opening remarks should allow us to place the discusison of the League institutions in a proper perspective. Moreover, the historical perspective should extend beyond the twenty-odd years of the League's active life, and should include references to its antecedents, as well as to the United Nations system. In an attempt to evaluate the League's contribution to the development of contemporary international organization, I propose to examine some of the League's institutional characteristics, relating them to those of the Concert of Europe, on the one hand, and to those of the United Nations, on the other. In particular, I shall touch upon the following aspects of the League's institutional structure: its instruments of multilateral diplomacy, its Secretariat and its functional agencies. While placing the structural and practical changes of the institutions in their sytemic setting, it should be constantly kept in mind that the behavioural autonomy of the institutional sub-systems is determinded and limited by the institutional environment.

II. League Institutions as Conduits for Multilateral Diplomacy

Diplomatic historians have exhaustively studied the Congress of Vienna, but only few – notably Golo Mann, Charles Webster and Maurice Bourquin – have paid any attention to its significance as the first major manifestation of 'modern' multilateral diplomacy. The Congress itself, particularly during its second phase, was organized, along proposals submitted by its President, Prince Metternich. Functionally, specific committees and working groups were established and, in preparing and presiding over its sessions, Metternich was assisted by his private secretary Friedrich von Gentz, who rapidly acquired the status of Secretary of the Congress. The plenipotenitaries representing the Powers, subsequently forming the *Directoire*, served as members of a *de facto* Bureau or Steering Committee – with extensive prerogatives – compared to the delegates representing more than a hundred sovereign States. In short, the Congress of Vienna set a number of precedents, which later served as models for the organization of 19th century multilateral diplomatic meetings.

The structure of the Congress reflected both the hierarchy among participating States, and the concern of the leading actors to exert a firm control over its proceedings. Given the number of delegations and the complexities of the issues facing Europe at the end of the Napoleonic wars, the leaders of the victorious alliance organized the proceedings according to an agenda, set, and periodically revised, by the President in consultation with selected plenipotentiaries. What above all enabled the Congress to proceed rapidly towards the objectives set by the leading Powers was the establishment of bodies with a limited composition.

The lessons as to the most effective ways to organize and conduct multilateral

diplomatic meetings learnt in Vienna subsequently served as guidelines for the organization of intergovernmental meetings held within the framework of the Concert of Europe. Although the Concert did not have a formal constitutional foundation, the Final Act of 1815, as well as many other multilateral treaties and declarations laid the cornerstones for the first multi-functional system of international organization. Its structure was flexible and it was continuously adapted to the changing needs and to changes in the systemic context.

The next stages in this direction were the Congress of Paris (1857), the Berlin Congress (1878), and the two Hague Conferences (1899 and 1907). We should note, however, that during the lifetime of the Concert of Europe (1815–1914) more than 60 multilateral meetings were held. They were entitled Congresses, Conferences, or Conferences of Ambassadors; and although there was no fixed periodicity, meetings of limited, or all-European composition were held at an average of every two years. The Conferences of Ambassadors were always of a limited composition and they were convened normally to deal with issues relating to the Ottoman Empire or other extra-European problems. Finally, the Hague Conferences were the first meetings with participating States outside of Europe. The presence of the United States, several Latin American countries, China and Japan were evidence of the expansion in the direction of universalism of the Concert's structure and functions.

The basic rules for the conduct of multilateral diplomatic relations were progressively codified in the course of the nineteenth century; at least in this respect the League of Nations once in existence did little to innovate. As examples of the continuity between the Concert and the League the rules of procedure of the Hague Conferences and those of the League Assembly may be cited. The only major change was the publicity of debates in implementing Wilson's principles of 'open diplomacy'. Despite the rule of confidentiality prevailing before the First World War, the latter part of the Concert's existence was also to some extent influenced by public opinion, which along with the media directly influenced the multilateral diplomacy of the League.

The early plans for a League of Nations – the later Phillimore Plan, the Draft of Colonel House and Wilson's First Draft – referred to the 'Conference', the 'Delegates' or still to the 'Body of Delegates' in order to designate the sole multilateral organ entrusted with various functions relative to the settlement of disputes among Member States. In all three cases, this organ was no more than the periodic meeting of plenipotentiaries, with its own rules of procedure and presided over by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the host country. In all respects, this was the continuation of the Concert of Europe practice of periodic conferences and congresses. Moreover, most private individuals and various peace groups writing during the war proposed an organization using the classical methods of 19th century multilateral diplomacy for the settlement of disputes and, ultimately, with recourse to a judicial body.

The earliest form of institutionalized multilateral machinery may be found in the report (dated 18 June 1918) of the Committee appointed by the French Government and presided over by Léon Bourgeois. This report, adopted by the French cabinet, was submitted on 3 February 1919 to the Commission of the

League of Nations of the Peace Conference. Specifically, the report contained provisions for the establishment of an 'International Council', composed of the Heads of Government of all Member States or by their duly authorized representatives. The Council was to meet at least once a year and it was empowered to take binding decisions. In the intervals, a 'Permanent Delegation', composed of fifteen Member States designated by the Council was to prepare sessions, receive communications addressed to the Council and, if need arose, propose a meeting of the Council. The proposed 'Delegation' was certainly more than a Secretariat, but it certainly did not have any powers of its own. No headquarters were assigned to the two bodies and the Council remained master of its procedures.

The Smuts Plan – dated 18 December 1918 – went a step further, suggesting the establishment of a "general conference or congress of all the constitent states, which will partake of the character of a Parliament, in which public debates of general international interest will take place." General Smuts also spelled out the functions of the general conference as follows: the adoption of "general resolutions," the adoption of "general measures or codes of an international character dealing with questions like disarmament or world peace or rules of international law," as well as the "discussion of the reports of the various administrative committees or commissions." In addition to the conference, however, Smuts proposed the creation of "a small body called the Council of the League which will have to be the executive and carry on the ordinary administration of the League." Contrary to the French plan, Smuts proposed a functional differentiation between the two organs, the conference being "viewed largely from the point of view of favorably influencing and educating public opinion in all constituent countries," while "the real work . . . will be done by its Council, whose constitution and powers ought therefore to be very carefully considered." The permanent members of the Council were to have been the Great Powers – the British Empire, France, Italy, the United States and Japan – and four additional members to have had rotating membership. Two of these members were to be designated from a panel comprising the "important intermediate Powers below the rank of Great Powers and the other two from a panel comprising the 'minor states'." The Smuts Plan also made detailed provision for the operations of the Council, in relation to the Conference, the Secretariat and the international administrative bodies.

At least in terms of the institutional arrangements President Wilson's Second Draft (or First Paris Draft), dated 10 January 1919, was largely inspired by the Smuts Plan. Wilson's draft provided for a plenary 'Body of Delegates' and for an 'Executive Council', the latter comprising five permanent and four rotating members. The draft also contained detailed provisions for the functional differentiation between the Delegates and the Council. Wilson's Third Draft repeated the same proposals while the British Draft Convention of 20 January 1919 referred not only to a General Conference and to a Council but to a 'capital' of the League as well. The Cecil-Miller Draft of 23 January 1919 confirmed the tenor of the previous plans, also true for Wilson's Fourth Draft.

The Draft Covenant submitted to the League Commission on 26 March 1919

and the Hurst-Miller Draft of 31 March 1919 still referred to the 'Body of Delegates' and to the 'Executive Council'. The first mention of the term 'Assembly' was to be found in the British proposals of 1 April 1919. All subsequent drafts followed the same line; the only change concerned membership in the Council, to the extent that the Assembly was empowered to approve, by a simple majority, the addition of new members to the Council. Moreover, the Assembly was granted the power to elect non-permanent members of the Council, without any reference to the 'panels' provided for in the previous drafts. We should note, however, that the Drafting Committee's text of 5 april 1919, is practically the same as that of the Covenant and does not functionally differentiate between the two organs. Both texts contain the same provision concerning their powers, i.e. "the Assembly (the Council) may deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world." The former hierarchic relation between the Council and the Body of Delegates was thus abandoned and the Council was no longer the organ *preparing* the work of the plenary body but assuming administrative responsibilities.

The parallel autority granted to the Assembly and the Council to deal with any subject within the field of competence of the League, as well as the change from 'Conference' or 'Body of Delegates' to 'Assembly' reflected a change in the overall conception of League institutions. First, the term 'Assembly' contained a symbolic element of popular representation which was absent from the earlier proposals about a 'Body of Delegates'. It is interesting to note that the terminological change took place, at least chronologically, following the meeting in Bern of the International Labor and Socialist Conference which asked that "representation in the central organ of the League shall be not by delegates of the executive branches of the Governments . . ., but by delegates from the Parliaments representing all parties therein, ensuring thus, not an alliance of cabinets or Governments, but an union of peoples." The term designating the body proposed by the Bern Conference was 'Representative Assembly.' This proposal was supported by General Smuts, acting in his personal capacity, while the delegations of the Great Powers rejected it outright, with David Hunter Miller qualifying it a "wildly impossible proposal." Nonetheless, 'Assembly' became part of the Conference vocabulary and, although nothing was changed in substance, the term finally replaced that of 'Body of Delegates', with its narrower diplomatic connotation. Secondly, the elimination of the hierarchically structured relations between the two multilateral bodies may also be explained by the introduction of provisions for the Secretariat, designated to prepare the work of the multilateral bodies. In the last analysis, the only explanation for the establishment of two multilateral bodies with practically identical functions, may be traced partly to the recognition of the need for public debate on issues of general concern, and partly to the need for greater efficiency in settling specific disputes and other matters requiring action via a body of limited composition – in which the Great Powers would have had a more decisive voice. Although articles 11–17 of the Covenant referred specifically to the Council, matters related to the maintenance of peace and the settlement of given disputes could, at any time, be referred to the Assembly; and this was done on all occasions of major import to the League.

Both the final text of the Covenant and the League practice, set aside the distinction which originally entrusted the Council with the role of a preparatory organ for the Assembly (or the Conference, in earlier drafts); thus the two organs acquired concurrent functions and, more importantly, they acted accordingly. The fact that the Convenant did set forth the principle of concurrent responsibility was the result of a compromise between the Great Powers, the medium and small States, but articles 11–17 clearly gave the Council the key role relative to the settlement of disputes and the collective security matter. However, from the very beginning of the League the failure of the Council to act in many critical situations led the small States to refer to the Assembly disputes or matters threatening the peace. During the League's early years, the Assembly was viewed as an organ which could act when the Council was paralysed owing to the policies of one or more Great Powers; but as the years went by and the sky of world peace increasingly clouded over, recourse to the Assembly simply meant drawing the attention of public opinion to the issue.

One of the practical consequences of this situation was that politically sensitive issues, as well as other matters of the League were debated in the same fora. Progress in the direction of functional co-operation was slowed down, because of political stalemates on questions related to collective security, and because cooperation with non-Member States was particularly difficult. In 1939, the Bruce Committee was entrusted with the task of proposing reforms of the League's institutional structure in the field of economic and social co-operation; as the Committee submitted its report an the eve of the Second World War it was too late to take any action. The Bruce Report did, however, represent a valuable input in the preparatory work towards the Charter of the United Nations.

The principal recommendation of the Bruce Report [1] focused, both in the interest of economic and social co-operation and in that of collective security, on the need for institutionally separating the various functions performed by the Organization. The separation of functions was meant to improve the Organization's effectiveness but, it was aimed above all at facilitating the participation of non-Member States – in particular of the United States – in some of the League's activities. The lessons drawn by the Bruce Committee guided the authors in their proposals for a United Nations Charter. In this respect, the League experience served as yardstick by which various subsequent proposals could be evaluated.

Although the United Nations Charter established six principal organs, the General Assembly was clearly the *primus inter pares* – except for matters relative to the maintenance of peace and the settlement of disputes. The recognition of the need in this field to concentrate responsibility in the Security Council stemmed from the determination of the Great Powers to keep firm control over such matters; but it was also argued that vesting concurrent responsibilities in the League Assembly and Council was one of the reasons for stalemates on collective security matters. Notwithstanding the Charter provisions when, as a result of the Korean War and the frequent recourse by the Soviet Union to its veto powers, the Security Council became paralised, the United Nations like previously the League, faced the same problems of institutional overlapping.

In all other fields, the functional decentralization of the United Nations has led the system far beyond the expectations of those who drafted the Charter. I shall discuss some questions relative to the institutions for socio-economic co-operation at the end of this paper; but, at this point, I should simply state that the institutionalized multilateralism in the UN system was largely influenced by the lessons drawn from the League experience. In particular, the central role of the Security Council drawn up in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter represents an attempt to set the limits between public debate and effective action in the field of collective security. In spite of the departures from the Charter provisions after 1950, the principle of functional differentiation was never seriously questioned. Moreover, the expansion of membership no longer allowed for any illusions about the possibilities for using the General Assembly as an action-oriented body.

III. The League Secretariat

In my earlier reference to the Congress of Vienna, I mentioned the name of Friedrick von Gentz. No doubt his activities established some precedents later used in the conduct of multilateral meetings. For more than six decades the tasks of the Congress or Conference Secretariat were carried out by members of the diplomatic service of the host country, which also provided the president of such meetings. The Congress of Berlin, in 1878 marked an important step in the development of international Secretariats for two reasons: a) for the first time, the German Secretary appointed by Bismarck was assisted by a non-host country diplomat, and b) the long-standing practice for delegations to keep their own minutes was abandoned in favour of a single record produced by the Congress Secretariat under the President's responsibility. The Hague Conference progresses still further, their Secretariats, with wide-ranging responsibilities for the preparation of Conference documents, comprised officials from most participating States and whenever necessary assisted the delegations.

Beyond these essentially technical Secretariats, the Concert of Europe gave rise to international administrations carrying out executive functions. The Secretariats of the river commissions – particularly the European Danube Commission; the civilian components of certain territorial operations such as the international administration of Crete, etc. – and the international Bureaux established in the framework of various administrative unions were forerunners of the League Secretariat. The practice of entrusting a group of internationally appointed officials with the responsibility of administering small international bodies established by international treaties, and assuming certain public functions within a given territory, served as precedents for the League Secretariat.

At about the same time, 10 January and 20 January 1919 respectively, Wilson's Second Draft and the British Draft Convention contained references to a League Secretariat. The former simply stated that the "Executive Council shall appoint a permanent secretariat and staff," while the latter proposed specifically that the Secretariat be placed "under the general control and direction of the Chancellor of the League, who shall hold office during the pleasure of the Council." The term 'Chancellor' used in the British Draft implied that its authors envisaged

extensive powers for the Head of the Secretariat, powers well beyond the administrative functions of Secretariats during the period of the Concert of Europe. The British representatives in Paris, to some extent supported by the French, initiated steps first with Eleftherios Venizelos and, later, with Thomas Masaryk for having one of the leading statesmen from the smaller powers accept the responsibility of becoming the first League Chancellor. Clearly, such approach implied that the authors of the draft intended to have at the helm of the League a political figure rather than simply a chief administrator.

The two subsequent drafts, prepared by Cecil and Miller and revised by Hurst, also referred to the appointment of a Chancellor, but in Wilson's Fourth Draft, of 2 February 1919, the term was replaced by that of Secretary-General. In the interval, both Venizelos and Masaryk had indicated that they were not prepared to accept such an appointment. These refusals, along with second thoughts on the part of the British and the French about the wisdom of granting the Secretariat extensive powers, led the members of the Council of Four to conclude that the administration of the League should be in a more 'traditional' vein. As a result, the title of Chancellor was changed and a senior British civil servant, Sir Eric Drummond was apponted first Secretary-General of the League. If during late January 1919 the appointment of a statesman from a small or medium country and wielding some measure of political power was envisaged, subsequently a national of a Great Power was selected and his functions were to be essentially administrative.

The League Secretariat was the first international administration with a wide range of functions and serving a quasi-universal organization. Although the Concert of Europe precedents were undoubtedly useful during the League's early days, the small group which formed the nucleus of the Secretariat in London faced indeed formidable challenges. First of all, it was essential to recruit and organize an international staff whose loyalty to the League could not be questioned, and secondly these men and women had to gain and keep the confidence of the Governments they were serving.

The first of these challenges was met with usccess, at least for the first ten years. Not only were the senior League officials men of great talents and competence, but they were also guided in their work by their conviction of being pioneers in the realm of a new international system. Among those who formed the nucleus of the Secretariat, Jean Monnet, Dionisio Anzilotti, Raymond Fosdick, Arthur Salter, Thanassis Aghnides and Paul Mantoux should be mentioned in particular; soon thereafter they were joined or replaced by Salvador de Madariaga, Pablo de Azcarate and Frank Walters. It was indeed a unique list not only of distinguished individuals but also of men representing the hightest form of internationalist ideology. Even though some left the Secretariat after a short period, they all left their mark on the institution.

A distinction should be made between those Powers representing the political mainstays of the organization, e.g. France and the United Kingdom with their European friends and allies, and other Member States, outside the 'inner circle' of League decision-makers. Although the Secretariat was dominated by nationals from the first group of countries, there was no contradiction in its commitment

to defend the general interests of the League. The new international system established by the Peace Treaties and their institutional expression, the League, coincided with the interests of the group of victorious Powers. In the minds of those responsible for the Secretariat, the confidence of the Governments meant essentially the confidence of the British and French Governments and also of some of their closest European associates. Given this perception of League interests, it was inevitable for the Secretariat to lose confidence of those Member States beginning to challenge the 'Versailles order'. The tension between Mussolini's Government and the Secretariat was the first example of such a crisis involving a major Power, but during the ensuing years many more involved smaller States. Notwithstanding these crisis of confidence, I would conclude that given the League's power structure, as well as its political function of institutionally guaranteeing the 'Verseiilles order', the Secretariat did act in accordance with the principal actors' expectations.

During the Second World War, the experience gained by the League Secretariat was taken into account when plans for the United Nations Charter were elaborated. Not only did a number of private groups and individual authors study the League's experience and publish significant works on the subject, but the British and US governments sought the advice of former League officials when it came to drafting the relevant Charter provisions. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former League officials – Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer, Alexander Loveday and Pablo de Azcarate – analysed the experience of the League Secretariat and their views influenced the authors of the Charter. The basic principles on which an international civil service should be founded were codified in the Charter, whose article 99 embodied the right of initiative by the Secretary-General. There is no doubt that the formulation of article 99 was primarily influenced by the experience gained in the inter-war period, and by the firm belief expressed by many former League officials that the Secretary-General be given greater powers both to act as a third party and as the spokesman for United Nations interests.

IV. Functional Cooperation in the League

By the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of the industrial revolution and at least in Europe following the spectacular development of technology and communications the States participating in the Concert of Europe established a vast network of functionally specific international agencies. Organizations such as the Universal Postal Union, the International Telegraphic Union, the International Bureau of Standards, the Bureaux established by the Bern and Paris Conventions on Intellectual and Industrial Property were functionally specific; others, such as the River Commissions also had a territorial sphere of action. This experience in international co-operation was studied during the wartime by Leonard Woolf, whose work *International Government* (New York, 1916) was known to the delegates in Paris. The provisions of the Covenant's article 24 represented an attempt to promote functional co-operation, by placing under the League auspices "all international bureaux already established by general treaties if the parties to such treaties consent." But, above all, the establishment as a distinct

institution of the International Labour Organisation was a further indication of the importance accorded by the Peace Conference to the promotion of socio-economic activities, under the authority or relative to the League.

In practice, the League activities in this field followed a different course from that envisaged by the authors of the Covenant. On the one hand, the provisions of article 24 were never implemented, and practically all existing international agencies remained independent-essentially, because the United States was a Member in most of these agencies and Washington did not consent to have them placed under League auspices. On the other hand, the League went far beyond what had originally been planned. The League established specialized bodies with responsibilities in matters related to education, health, housing, taxation, emigration, nutrition, cultural and scientific activities and, naturally, related to the whole range of economic and financial aspects of international co-operation. In this respect mention should be made of the *Economic and Social Organisation,* with its two Committees, the *Communications and Transit Organisation,* the *Health Organisation,* the *Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Women and Children,* the *Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and Dangerous Drugs,* the *Refugee Organisation,* the *Committee on Intellectual Co-operation* (which closely cooperated with the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation in Paris, the International Institute of Cinematography in Rome and the International Bureau of Education in Geneva) and other temporary or permanent institutions active in various sub-fields of socio-economic co-operation. The League also engaged in Technical Assistance activities – particularly in China – of a type very similar to the United Naitons programmes.

This multiplicity of functionally specific bodies, all placed under the authority of the League Council and Assembly was bound to lead to serious difficulties, since it was materially impossible for the two organs to guide and coordinate activities of such different nature. Appointed in May 1939, the task of the Bruce Committee was to study and draw institutionally-weighted conclusions from the League's experience of almost twenty years.

The Report of the Bruce Committee was submitted to the Assembly at the end of August 1939 but, obviously, could never really be examined within the League's framework. The Report did, however, have a great influence on the elaboration of the U.N. Charter.

The Bruce Committee Report principally recommended the establishment of a Central Committee for Economic and Social Questions, which would have exercised effective power over all League bodies engaged in socio-economic activities. Although the Committee's composition was to have been determined by the Assembly, the Committee, once established, would have been granted the same authority in its field as the Council had in the field of political and collective security. Beyond any consideration of organizational efficiency, the creation of such an organ would have facilitated – at least according to the authors of the Report – the participation of non-Member States, particularly the United States, in the League's non-political activities.

The overall structure of the United Nations system and the UN Economic and Social Council, have largely been inspired by the recommendations of the Bruce

Committee Report and, more generally, by the lessons drawn from the League experience. The functional differentiation among the principal organs of the Organization has clearly been established in the Charter, but the UN system remains much more decentralized than the one envisaged in the Bruce Committee Report. If the original model for the UN system was 'confederal' or loosely 'federal', the U.N. now rather tends to resemble a feudal system in that the UN Organisation itself is unable to exercise any real authority over its constituent parts.

V. Conclusion

In the course of this paper, I tried to highlight the principal institutional characteristics of the League of Nations. I viewed the League as the successor to the Concert of Europe and as the predecessor of the United Nations. In some respects, the League's institutional structure differed qualitatively from those both of its predecessor and of its successor; on the whole, however, the first conclusion one may draw is that the changes were of a quantitative nature. When, in 1938, William Rappard wrote that the "League of Nations is as different from the ententes, alliances and confederations of which history tells us, as an aeroplane, for example, is from a litter, a sedan-chair, a coach, a train or a motor car",[2] he undoubtedly neglected – unwittingly or not – the experience of the Concert. Similiarly when during the Second World War North-American – and a few other – statesmen and scholars heralded the coming of a world organization which owed nothing to its prececessors, they, too – unwittingly or not – neglected to take into account the impact of the League experience on the United Nations. Both attitudes may be explained in terms of the need for impressing the novelty of a given institution upon public opinion in order to enlist its support. However, scholars who now know much more about the League than did their colleagues of a generation ago, should shy away from such evaluations and should attempt to place this remarkable institutional experiment in its proper historical setting.

A second conclusion to be drawn points to the need for viewing the functional differentiation among the various organs and institutions, and written into the United Nations Charter, as a principal lesson derived from the League experience. In more than one respect, the Bruce Committee Report represented not only a thorough analysis of the League practice but also served as a blueprint for the structure of the intrnational organization in the post-war period. At least on paper, the UN Charter conforms to the prescriptions – implicit or explicit – of the Bruce Committee Report. However, in practice the centrifugal forces inherent in any large functional decentralization have transformed the UN system into a loosely bound union of institutions – institutions, moreover, without the kind of leadership which could have been provided by the Central Committee proposed by the Bruce Committee, or by the ECOSOC. In discussing the overall institutional structure of the League or of the United Nations, structural dislocation, frequently the consequence of functional decentralization, must always be kept in mind.

Finally, this cursory view of League institutions should show that a careful

study of the League's history could yield valuable lessons which in turn could improve our understanding of present-day international organization. The various institutional crises which have shaken the United Nations since it's inception should remind us that, given certain changes in the systemic setting of the Organization, a crisis becomes inevitable if the institution fails do adapt. Students of the history of the League can draw the same conclusion from the first quasi-universal experiment in multi-functional international organization. Globalism in the composition and the functions of the Organization were not attained by the League; the United Nations have come much closer to this objective. However, had it not been for the League and for those dedicated to its ideals, the United Nations would again have been – at best – a short-lived alliance of the victorious Great Powers.

Notes

1 cf. Martin Dubin p. 42–72 in the *Proceedings.*

2 RAPPARD, William, "What is the League of Nations" *In:* The World Crisis, by the Professors of the Graduate Institute of International Studies. – London, Longmans Green & Co., 1938. – p. 58.

The role of Sir Eric Drummond

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I. The Political Chancellor

In order better to understand the role Sir Eric Drummond played during his fourteen years as Secretary-General of the League of Nations it might be useful to stop for a moment and examine the political role that was initially envisaged for the holder of this high international office.

Though the conventional wisdom is that the League's Covenant was largely a product of Woodrow Wilson's imagination, it would not be unfair to say that much of the detailed work of molding and shaping the Covenant owed more to British than American endeavors.[1] This was especially true on the question of the powers and responsibilities to be given to the administrative director of the world organization. Thoughts on this matter appear to have been largely British and restricted to Lord Robert Cecil, head of the League of Nations section of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, and Philip Noël-Baker, Cecil's young assistant.

Indeed, as early as Christmas Eve of 1918 Cecil explained to the Imperial War Cabinet that the future world organization would be headed by a person of the highest ability.[2] He was to be called the 'Chancellor' and would direct the League's multinational secretariat. In addition, he was to be the League's representative to the world community, the "mouthpiece – and the suggester, if not the director" of the League's policy. The person appointed was to be an eminent political figure, influential politically, and thus more than a permanent civil servant.[3] In fact, one of the powers that would have been given to the Chancellor under the Covenant would habe been the right unilaterally to summon meetings of the League Council, and maybe even meetings of the League Assembly.[4] It was hoped that the Chancellor's "relations to the members of the Council should be that of an equal among equals and that his international authority would be a factor of great importance in establishing the practical utility and the moral authority of the League."[5]

Cecil, however, had to offer some explanation to justify the extensive powers that would be bestowed upon the Chancellor. Not only would this have represented a sharp break with prior tradition – keeping in mind that the powers of heads of pre-World War I international organizations were largely administrative in nature – but even more important, neither Prime Minister Clemenceau

nor Prime Minister Orlando were "particularly enthusiastic" about Cecil's notion of a Chancellor possessing tangible executive powers.[6]

Cecil defended the proposal of a politically powerful Chancellor on the grounds that one of the League's great dangers would be that Member States of the world organization, especially the small States, would be wary of assuming political initiatives and would lack political courage. This void would be filled, Cecil hoped, by the Chancellor who would not only take the necessary political steps, but would be a person unafraid to expose himself to international criticism.[7]

The explanation left unanswered what would occur should the Chancellor publicly use his powers against a Member State of the world organization. The obvious answer was that he would be at odds with that State. It would not be unfair to say that his subsequent relations with that State would be less than cordial and that his ability to tender advice or restrain the actions of this State in world affairs would be undercut. In addition, there was no guarantee under the powers proposed for the Chancellor that the Council or Assembly of the League would either respond to his summons or act on his complaint should they convene.

On the surface Cecil's proposal of a politically powerful Chancellor appears idealistic. It appears to be founded on the assumption that an international official acting on his own initiative and without control over any armed forces could, merely through the force of his personality and the influence and prestige of his office, affect the course of inter-state relations.

In contrast to Clemenceau and Orlando, Lloyd George appears to have been favorably disposed to Cecil's notion of the Chancellor.[8] In view of the fact that Lloyd George was, like his French and Italien counterparts, less than altruistic when it came to sharing political power, whether in domestic politics or in international politics, suspicions were naturally raised whether Cecil's explanantion of the intended political role of the Chancellor in world politics was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In actual fact, it was not.

What Cecil never admitted in public and indeed what can only be discerned between the lines of the available documentation was that the notion of the Chancellor was inextricably tied to the idea that anyone appointed as Chancellor would have to be someone whose attributes, orientation, and activities would dovetail with or complement British foreign policy desires.

This becomes obvious in an examination of what occurred just prior to Cecil's comments to the Imperial War Cabinet on Christmas Eve of 1918. On December 18 Captain Gerald Talbot, the naval attaché in Athens, wrote to the Director of Naval Intelligence, Admiral Sir Reginald Hall. Talbot had been assigned as aide-de-camp to the Greek Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, during his stay in London. In his letter to Hall, Talbot raised the possibility of using Venizelos as a conduit to inspire some of Britain's allies to assume a stance – where there might be disagreement – more in line with London's desires. Specifically, Talbot had the United States and President Wilson in mind. Opportunities, he thought, might often occur where unofficially Venizelos could be made to follow a particular approach or expound a particular idea or theory. Few men, he noted, were endowed with Venizelos' talent for argument and persuasion. Indeed, he