
Supervisor, Facilitator and Arbitrator:

*a Study of the Involvement of the Minority Section of the League of Nations in
the Forced Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923*

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Summary

In January 1923 in the Swiss town of Lausanne, Turkey and Greece agreed to a forced population exchange involving more than 1.4 million people. According to the agreement, all Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion, and all Greek nationals of the Muslim religion, were supposed to move, resettling in Greece and Turkey respectively. The agreement had come into being as part of the negotiations between the new Turkish republic and the Allied nations after the Greco-Turkish war and it represented a pragmatic attempt to solve the refugee crisis in the region at the time. To ensure that the exchange was executed in accordance with the provisions of the agreement, a Mixed Commission was established consisting of Greek, Turkish and neutral members. The neutral members were appointed by the League of Nations' Council.

This thesis studies the role of the League of Nations in the execution of the Greco-Turkish population exchange. According to the agreement, the role of the League was solely to appoint neutral members to the Mixed Commission, but from the archival material of the Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section, it is clear that the involvement of the League extended far beyond what was laid out in the Lausanne agreement.

There are several explanations to why the League became involved in the execution of the agreement. The tendency of the Greek and Turkish governments to hold it responsible for the work of the Mixed Commission is one reason, a concern for the stability of a region which had been in turmoil for decades is another. The involvement of the Minority Section in particular was also due to both a legal and a moral responsibility for the minorities involved in a time of high political, national and racial tension.

The Minority Section represented a small but rather advanced bureaucratic body, and the findings in this thesis shows the relatively strong autonomy of the Secretariat, its capacity for implementation, and the way in which many individual bureaucrats were part of a network of internationalists believing in the League and international governance.

Acknowledgments

Many years ago, I read the short story *On the Quai at Smyrna* by Ernest Hemingway. At the time, I knew little about Greek or Turkish history, and even less about the Greco-Turkish war. Still, Hemingway`s account of the drama unfolding after the burning of the Greek and Armenian quarters of Smyrna during the Greco-Turkish war made a strong impression on me.

Reading the same story today is a very different experience. Between the lines of Hemingway`s story, I can seem to discern a strongly anti-Turkish sentiment, a lack of faith in the new international system and a stinging critique of the Allied forces` failure to deal with the new Turkish republic. To me, this illustrates how studying history can alter one`s perspectives.

I would very much like to thank my supervisors, Hanne Hagtvedt Vik and Carl Emil Vogt, for guiding me in the right direction. I would also like to thank Karen Gram-Skjoldager at the University of Aarhus for her valuable insights.

Writing this thesis has taken me to archives, universities and historical sites in Greece, Turkey, Switzerland, Denmark and the United States. This would not have been possible without the support of the Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History at the University of Oslo, Fritt Ord and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights and UNIFOR and Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders` Fellowship Fund - much gratitude to them.

Mads Drange

Oslo, March 2017.

Abbreviations

ABA	All British Appeal
BRC	British Red Cross
FG	Friends of Greece.
RSC	Greek Refugee Settlement Commission
ILO	The International Labour Organisation
LON	League of Nations
LONA	League of Nations Archive
LONC	League of Nations Council
LONOJ	League of Nations Official Journal
MC	Mixed Commission
NER	The Near East Relief Organisation
PCIJ	Permanent Court of International Justice
RAC	Rockefeller Archive Centre
SC	Save the Children
UN	United Nations

Key persons

Abraham, M – Canadian diplomat and army Major. Assistant Director of the Political Section in the League of Nations.

Bey, Hamid – Turkish diplomat and member of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Turkish population exchange.

Blinishti, T.E. – Albanian diplomat and delegate to the League of Nations.

Colban, Erik Andreas – Norwegian diplomat. Director of The Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section in the League of Nations Secretariat.

Colocontronis, M.V. – Greek diplomat. Director of the Greek Secretariat in Geneva and delegate to the League of Nations.

De Lara, Don Manuel Manrique – Spanish diplomat and army General. Neutral member of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Turkish population exchange.

de Rivas, Manuel – Chilean diplomat, neutral member of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Turkish population exchange. Replaced Carl Marius Widding in 1928.

Drummond, Eric – British politician and diplomat. The first Secretary General of the League of Nations (1920-1933).

Ekstrand, Erik Einar – Swedish diplomat. Neutral member of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Turkish population exchange.

Eleftherios Venizelos – Greek politician and Prime Minister in different governments between 1910-1933.

Gilchrist, Huntington – American academic and diplomat. Responsible for the Administrative Commissions in the Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section of the League of Nations.

Henry Morgenthau – American diplomat, and former Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Founder of the Near East Relief Foundation and Director of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission (1923-1933).

Holstad, Hans Christian – Norwegian Diplomat. Neutral member of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Turkish population exchange, replaced Ekstrand in 1926.

Ishmet Pasha – Turkish Chief negotiator in during the Mudanya armistice and Lausanne Conference. Later minister of foreign affairs and the second President of the Turkish Republic.

Jaquith, Harold C. – American foreign aid worker and lobbyist. Responsible for the relief work in Turkey and Greece in the Near East Relief.

Metaxas, M.P. – Greek diplomat. Member of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Turkish population exchange.

Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk) – Turkish General and the first President of the Turkish republic.

Nansen, Fridtjof – Norwegian scientist, explorer and diplomat. High Commissioner for refugees in the League of Nations.

Phillip Noel Baker – British politician, academic and diplomat. The principal assistant of the first Secretary General of the League of Nations.

Quiñones de León, Jose Maria – Spanish diplomat. Vice President ex officio of the League of Nations.

Rosting, Hjalmar – Danish Diplomat. Responsible for minority questions in The Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section of the League of Nations.

Viscount Ishii Kikujirō – Japanese diplomat. Vice President of the League of Nations.

Widding, Carl Marius – Danish diplomat. Neutral member of the Mixed Commission for the Greek-Turkish population exchange.

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1.0 Introduction

“I earnestly beg you to lay this matter before your Government[s], to impress upon them the vast humanitarian and political importance of this question”.¹ With these words, Fridtjof Nansen ended his plea for financial support for the refugees of Greece and Turkey; this he did in a letter to all the secretaries of state of the League of Nations on October 11 1922. Estimating them to amount to some three-quarters of a million, Nansen described how most of the refugees were old men, women and children who were “scattered over every part of the coast of the Aegean Sea [...] in camps and in desperate conditions, without sufficient food supplies, largely without shelter, and almost all of them without any clothing to enable them to face the severities of the approaching winter”.²

The Near East was facing a large-scale refugee crisis after decades of war in the Balkans and Asia Minor, and the armistice which ended the Greco-Turkish war of 1922 had yet to be signed. Nansen begged the League of Nations’ Council to take action, and there seemed to be good reasons for the Council to do so; first, the crisis involved Greece, a League member and an important ally from the Great War; second, it also involved the new Turkish republic where the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, part of the Central Powers during the war had recently been stripped of power. Throughout the autumn of 1922, the new Turkish president had chased the Greek troops as well as Greek Orthodox citizens from the west coast of Anatolia, threatening to do the same in Eastern Thrace. He wanted to restore the pre-war borders of the Ottoman Empire in the west, and take back what had been given to Greece as part of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. So far this had resulted in hundreds of thousands of refugees and a number of unsettled territorial disputes between the two countries. Consequently, the humanitarian crisis in and around the Aegean Sea in 1922 needed both an immediate solution for the refugees involved, but perhaps equally importantly a long-term political solution for the two countries.

As a result, the League soon began to involve itself in the relief work in the region and later in the multilateral negotiations for a permanent peace settlement between Greece, Turkey and the Allies. One of the more controversial outcomes of these

¹ Letter from F. Nansen to Secretaries of State at the League of Nations. October 11th, 1922. Kjærheim, Steinar. *Fridtjof Nansens Brev. IV 1919-1925*. Universitetsforlaget, 1966, 155.

² Ibid.

negotiations was a minority agreement that would force almost 1.4 million people to abandon their homes and resettle in a different country. In this thesis, I will argue that despite the fact that the League was not a formal part of this agreement, the newly established Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section ultimately played a vital role as a supervisor, facilitator and arbitrator in the execution of the Population Exchange Agreement between Greece and Turkey, starting in the autumn of 1923. Based on sources from the League of Nations archive, I will show how this small unit of international bureaucrats who constituted the Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section came to play a role that was neither anticipated nor intended by the signatories to the agreement, nor by the League itself. The Section was partly dragged into the process of making important decisions when the parties to the conflict failed to reach an agreement, but it also took the initiative through unofficial channels to keep the process on track. In doing so, the bureaucrats had to manoeuvre without any real mandate for its work in a situation with conflicting national and geopolitical interests, in lieu of minority treaties and the interest of the League of Nations Council as well as the International Court of Justice. This involvement of the Secretariat soon proved to be crucial in a time of great political and ethnical tension, where the only likely alternative to compromise was war.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Treaty of Sèvres and the rise of Atatürk

At the end of 1918, the remains of the Ottoman Empire were in reality under control by the Allied alliance, which had formed around the Triple Entente from 1907. Sultan Mehmet I had dissolved the Parliament and was cooperating with the Allies, hoping to secure independence for his country at the end of the war. With the signing of the Sèvres treaty in 1920 between the principal Allied powers and the Ottoman Empire, however, it became clear that his wish would not be realized. The old Empire under the leadership of the sultan was given only limited autonomy and lost control over vast swathes of territory in the Middle East and Anatolia. Most of Anatolia was divided up between Italy, France and Greece and the foundation of a Kurdish republic was proposed in the south-eastern part of the region. The strategically important Bosphorus Strait was also placed under administration by an Allied commission. This territorial and political marginalization of the former Ottoman Empire marked the beginning of Mustapha

Kemal's (Atatürk) fight for a new Turkish republic, where he would garner the support of various rebel groups against both the sultan and the allied forces.³ Kemal's campaign was an immediate success. In 1921, Italy withdrew its forces from Anatolia, and both France and Russia acknowledged his government. After taking control of what was ostensibly an Armenian state in a combined military campaign with the Soviet Union, Kemal turned eastwards towards the Greek troops. Greece had invaded the west coast of Anatolia in 1919, supported by British, American and French troops, under the pretext of protecting the Christian minority living there. At this point, the Greeks had a significant army stationed in Turkey and in the summer of 1922, Kemal started his most extensive offensive in the Greco-Turkish war. The Greek troops were chased out, fleeing across the Aegean Sea, and Kemal's troops turned northwards to Istanbul.⁴ The strength of Kemal's army worried the Allied powers and in October 1922, Great Britain, France and Italy convened with Turkish and Greek delegates in the town of Mudanya for the official declaration of the end of the Greco-Turkish war with an armistice.⁵ This also implied renegotiating the Sèvres treaty.

The Greco-Turkish war was a brutal one where crimes and atrocities against civilians were committed by both parties. The best-known example was the burning of Smyrna (Izmir) where the Armenian district, with more than 300,000 inhabitants, was immolated by Turkish soldiers. Thousands of Armenians and Greeks living in Turkey were murdered, and even more fled their homes. Tens of thousands of Greek men were also sent to labour camps in the interior of Anatolia.⁶

The war led to a large number of refugees as the Greeks and Armenians, who had previously been protected by Greek soldiers, now had to flee the advancing Turkish army. More than one million refugees ended up in Greece, in addition to the many refugees who were already there after the end of the First World War and Balkan wars.⁷ The refugee question became one of many issues that had to be solved between the Allies, the Greeks and the new Turkish republic as they gathered in Lausanne in the

³ Cleveland, William L. *The History of the Modern Middle East*. Westview Press, 2004, 174-177.

⁴ Ibid, 177-178.

⁵ Yildirim, Onur. *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922-1934*. New York: Routledge, 2016, 31.

⁶ Ross, John F.L. "Fridtjof Nansen and the Aegean population exchange". *Scandinavian Journal of History*. 40, 2, 2015, 133-158, 138.

⁷ Vogt, Carl Emil. *Nestekjærighet som Realpolitikk. Fridtjof Nansens humanitære og internasjonale prosjekt 1920-1930*. Doktorgradsavhandling det humanistiske fakultet, IAKH, Universitetet i Oslo, 2010, 220.

autumn of 1922 to renegotiate the Sèvres treaty. However, which, if any role, the League of Nations was to play in the new peace settlement was unclear.

1.1.2 The foundation of the League of Nations

In January 1919, the 32 Allied nations met in Paris to negotiate the peace terms with the various defeated nations and empires after the Great War. During this conference, the victors signed five different treaties with five different nations, named after suburbs of Paris; the Sèvres Treaty with the Ottoman Empire, the Saint-Germain treaty with Austria, the Neuilly Treaty with Bulgaria, the Trianon treaty with Hungary and the Versailles treaty with Germany.⁸ These treaties would impose blame, sanctions and demands for war compensation, dissolve empires, draw new borders in Europe, Africa and the Middle East and give independence to new nations and peoples.⁹ However, the Versailles treaty also included a paragraph regarding the foundation of a new international organization.

During the Versailles conference, there were various suggestions about the way in which this new organization should be set up and the authority it should possess. The French delegation wanted a “société”, the Swiss an “alliances of states”, whereas the Germans suggested a “world parliament”.¹⁰ The compromise that emerged was an international organization dubbed the League of Nations which consisted of three major institutions. First, there was the General Assembly where all member countries were represented. These were initially meant for the 32 victors and Allies from the war, but the neutral countries were also eligible members, and Norway, Sweden and Denmark were included as early as 1920. After a few years, the Central Powers were also invited, and throughout the 1920s, Hungary, Austria, Germany and Bulgaria all became members. Turkey was the last of the Central Powers to become a member in 1932. In 1935, the organization was at its peak with 63 member states from all over the world.¹¹

The second institution was the League of Nations’ Council. The Council consisted of a few permanent and some ambulatory seats. The permanent seats were originally held by Great Britain, Japan, France and Italy, but both Germany and the Soviet Union

⁸ Steiner, Zara. *The lights that failed. European International History 1919-1933*. Oxford University Press 2007, 80.

⁹ Lauren, Paul Gordon. *The Evolution of International Human rights. Visions seen*. University of Pennsylvania press, 2011, 97-105, 117-118.

¹⁰ Sluga, Glenda. *Internationalism in the age of nationalism*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 47-48.

¹¹ Ibid, 49.

gained permanent seats on the Council when they became members, in 1926 and 1934 respectively. The third institution was the League of Nations' Secretariat, led by the Scottish diplomat Sir Eric Drummond, located in Geneva. The original British sketch for the structure of the Secretariat was intended to facilitate cooperation between the Great Powers, but instead of organizing the Secretariat by nation, Drummond organized it by function.¹²

The Secretariat was given a number of duties associated with the various peace treaties signed in Paris. First, the League was responsible for setting up Governing Commissions in Saar, Danzig and Upper-Silesia.¹³ Second, according to Article 22 in the League of Nations' Covenant, it should play an important role in overseeing and supervising the mandate system set up to "help" the former German colonies and Ottoman provinces to become nation states during a transitional phase involving British, French or Belgian rule.¹⁴

However, other matters described by the various treaties soon also became part of the scope of the League, such as labour conditions, epidemics, prisoners of war and refugees. The administration of the many commissions, agreements and conventions related to these matters ended up on Eric Drummond's desk.¹⁵ This task became the responsibility of a number of administrative sections dealing with legal, financial and mandate issues, and the League of Nations' Secretariat grew into an extensive bureaucracy.¹⁶

The establishment of the League of Nations in 1919 marked a watershed in international politics. For the first time in history, nation states could ostensibly meet within a permanent transnational organization to negotiate peaceful solutions to political or territorial disputes. It was based largely on Woodrow Wilson's ideas about the form of the peace settlement after the war, first presented to the US Congress in 1918.¹⁷ This consisted of ideas about free trade, democracy, national self-determination and morality over national interests, perhaps best described as a form of international

¹² Pedersen, Susan. *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*. Oxford University Press 2015, 46-47.

¹³ Steiner, *The lights that failed*, 350.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 43-44.

¹⁵ Mazower, Mark. *Governing the World. The History of an Idea*. The Penguin Press, 2012, 146.

¹⁶ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 46-47.

¹⁷ Palmer, RR., Colton, Joel., Kramer, Lloyd. *A history of Europe in the Modern World*. McGraw-Hill, 2014, 724.

liberalism.¹⁸ This represented an attempt to balance post-war idealism and realism: securing peace after the victory while attempting to arrive at a new way of managing future interstate relations.¹⁹

The League of Nations did, however, have some important, built-in juridical limits to its scope of action. First, the Council was also bound by a rule of unanimity which limited its manoeuvrability. Second, neither the Council nor the Assembly had the power to make recommendations which contravened a member's jurisdiction. The Permanent Court of International Justice, part of the League system, could hear and determine any dispute of an international character, but only if all parties agreed to it. Therefore, the League had no political or military power to intervene in any state affairs, as national self-determination was given the utmost importance.²⁰

Despite these limitations, the political influence of the League became greater than its formal powers implied, one important reason being that the League had many supporters around the world organized in different League of Nations' associations and unions. Members of these transnational networks were convinced that "state sovereignty could no longer be the core principle of international affairs" and supported the internationalism the League represented.²¹ For these networks, the League, and especially the Secretariat, became an international arena where they could exert their influence. In addition, the international bureaucrats in Geneva also helped strengthen the position of the League as an international government by copying traditional forms of state administration in the running of the League Secretariat.²²

1.1.3 The Minority Treaties

The Paris peace negotiations resulted in the dissolution of the European Empires of Russia, Germany and Austro-Hungary, as well as altered borders in the rest of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. From this process new nation states emerged such as the Baltic countries, Finland, Poland and Yugoslavia. In addition, existing countries such as Albania, Greece and Bulgaria all won or lost territories.²³

The borders drawn up in 1919 reflected a combination of strategic

¹⁸ Steiner, *The lights that failed*, 16.

¹⁹ Ibid, 69.

²⁰ Sluga, *Internationalism in the age of nationalism*, 49.

²¹ Ibid, 75.

²² Ibid, 49-50.

²³ Steiner, *The lights that failed*, 256.

considerations by the Great Powers and rewards for the parties that had fought on “the right side” during the war. It did not, however, unscramble “the ethnic mix of Eastern Europe”.²⁴ The principle of national self-determination proved difficult to enforce when drawing up new borders, and due to a complex ethnographic map, especially in Eastern Europe, the creation of the new nations led to the creation of new national minorities, partly because the ethnic mosaic of the Balkans made it impossible to draw up borders that could separate all nationalities, and partly due to strictly strategic territorial revisions such as the Polish corridor.²⁵

The idea of providing religious or ethnic minorities with some sort of legal protection had been discussed in Europe since the beginning of the modern state system: first in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 where a provision was established that secured the rights of a minority transferred from one state to another; second, during the Congress of Vienna in 1815 where the basic rights of Poles and Jews were guaranteed for. However, the terms of enforcement were deliberately vague and non-punitive in both the cases above.²⁶

Wilson had originally proposed a universal minority protection clause in the League of Nations Covenant to protect the new and old minorities of Europe in 1919, but was unsuccessful. Nonetheless, even though the peacemakers in Paris were not ready to enter into a global commitment to protect minorities, they acknowledged the need to protect certain minorities, resulting in a number of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral minority treaties.²⁷ These were drawn up during the Versailles Peace Conference in the Commission on New States, by amongst others Wilson, the French prime minister, Georges Clemenceau, and the British prime minister, David Lloyd George. The treaties consisted of five parts. The first part was related to the protection of life and liberty and religious freedom. The second provided minorities with the right to a citizenship. The third addressed political, cultural and linguistic rights, while the fourth regulated the handling of complaints and disputes. The fifth part was related to special provisions

²⁴ Pedersen, Susan. «Back to the League of Nations». *The American Historical Review*, 112, 4, 2007, 1091-1117, 1099 .

²⁵ Raitz von Frenzt. *A Lesson Forgotten. Minority Protection under the League of Nations. The Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920-1934*. Lit Verlag, 1999, 38.

²⁶ Fink, Carol. “Minority Rights as an International Question”. *Contemporary European History*. 9, 3, 2000, 385 – 400, 386.

²⁷ Steiner, *The lights that failed*, 85.

dealing with local conditions.²⁸

The first treaty between the Allies and Poland regarding the Jewish minority was signed in June 1919, and in the following months similar agreements were signed between the Allies and Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Some of these agreements were placed under the official protection of the League of Nations, but not all.²⁹ Protection of minorities was also laid out in particular chapters of the peace treaties between the Allies and Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Turkey. Additionally, five special declarations were made to the Council by Finland, Albania and the Baltic countries, expressing their obligation to protect minorities within their borders.³⁰ A few years later, more than 50 different minorities and more than 30 million people were under the protection of these agreements.³¹

The Allies' motives in including the Minority Treaties in the peace settlement were largely due to realpolitik. The First World War had shown that the marginalization of national minorities could lead to great conflicts, and according to the Norwegian diplomat, Erik Colban, who for many years led the Minority Section of the League of Nations, securing the basic rights of national minorities was not only about "making the life of the minorities' populations as bright as possible for the sole sake of these populations themselves. The Peace Conference was concerned with the problem of establishing a stable peace".³² However, for the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) present in Paris and especially the various Jewish organizations, the minority treaties should pertain to political, social and religious rights.³³ For the NGOs, their interests and the interests of the Allied Powers coincided in this regard.

Ensuring the Minority Treaties were respected was thus a matter of great importance for the minorities involved, and the for the attempts by the Allied Powers to create a politically stable Europe after the war. According to the treaties, the minorities were officially under the protection of the Council, but in order to safeguard them, the Council largely depended on the Secretariat of the League of Nations, more specifically

²⁸ Rosting, Helmer. "Protection of Minorities by the League of Nations". *The American Journal of International Law*, 17, 1923, 641-660, 648-649.

²⁹ Ibid, 647-648.

³⁰ Ranshofen-Wertheimer, Egon. *The International Secretariat. A Great Experiment in International Administration*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1945, 109.

³¹ Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human rights*. 97-105, 117-118.

³² Erik Colban. "The Minorities Problem". *The Norseman*, 1944, 5, 309-317, 311.

³³ von Frentz. *A Lesson Forgotten*, 48-49.

the Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section. Under the leadership of Colban, the Section monitored the implementation of the treaties and conveyed complaints of breaches to the Council. Throughout the early 1920s, the number of their tasks and responsibilities related to the minority treaties increased, as information-gathering about the situation on the ground became increasingly important for the Council.³⁴

1.1.4 The Greco-Turkish Population Exchange Agreement

Originally, minority questions and refugees were not on the agenda of the Lausanne Conference in 1923, where the Allies met the new Turkish government to renegotiate the Sèvres treaty. Instead, the Great Powers were most concerned about geopolitical and strategic issues, such as borders and regulating access to the Bosphorus Strait. Minority questions did come up, however, due to the Greek refugee crisis and the awareness of it created by Nansen and several humanitarian organizations operating in the area.³⁵

Refugees as minorities had been an important part of the work of the League since its foundation. During the first meeting of the General Assembly of the League of Nations in 1920, six committees were established to consider matters such as disarmament, constitutional questions, membership and the establishment of an International Court of Justice.³⁶ One important outcome of the work of these committees was the establishment of several permanent commissions such as the High Commission for Refugees. This was led by the Norwegian explorer and diplomat, Fridtjof Nansen, who in the years to come would gain extensive experience and success in his work for prisoners and refugees in Russia and the Near East.³⁷

With an emerging humanitarian crisis around the Aegean Sea in 1922, Nansen asked the League to involve itself in the conflict. He soon succeeded in acquiring financial aid for the refugees, and he was given the acceptance of the League to expand his scope of action to include refugees from Asia Minor as well.³⁸ Nansen was also asked by the League to start working on a more permanent solution to the refugee problem

³⁴ Guterma, Christoph Dr. *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Völkerbundes*. Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1979, 273. Robinson, Jacob., Karbach., Laserson, Max L., Robinson, Nehemiah., Vichniak, Marc. *Were the Minority Treaties a Failure?* Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1943, 77, 125.

³⁵ Tolleshaug, Berit. *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* Pax Forlag 2001, 118.

³⁶ Pedersen, *The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, 50.

³⁷ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som Realpolitikk*, 118.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 223.

following the Greco-Turkish war, and soon after he initiated talks with both governments.³⁹ This resulted in an additional Convention to the Lausanne treaty which pertained solely to Greece and Turkey and which specifically addressed the question of refugees.⁴⁰ The convention had 19 paragraphs, with Article 1 outlining the most important principles of the agreement:

“As from 1st of March, 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Muslim religion established in Greek territory. These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorization of the Turkish Government or of the Greek Government respectively.”⁴¹

According to the agreement, a compulsory population exchange of Christians living in Turkey and Muslims living in Greece was to be carried out between the two countries. This included more than 1.4 million Christian residents of Turkey and more than 400,000 Muslim residents of Greece.⁴² Never before had such a huge number of people been forced to move in order to solve a minority problem.⁴³

The concept of population exchange was not an entirely new phenomenon in the Balkans at this time. In a region with a highly diverse population and constantly shifting borders, similar agreements had been signed many times. The most recent example at the time was the 1919 agreement between Greece and Bulgaria. However, the difference between this and the Greco-Turkish agreement was that the former involved a voluntary exchange.⁴⁴ As the compulsory element was based upon religious affiliation, new disputes and concerns arose that went beyond mere questions of the liquidation of property and the rights of the immigrants in their new home country: what should be done for families that had some Muslim and some Christian family members? What about Muslims with other nationalities living in Greece? And how could religious affiliation be established fairly and safely?

In order to answer these questions and solve potential disputes, national courts

³⁹ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 105.

⁴⁰ Ladas, Stephen P. *The Exchange of Minorities. Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*. The MacMillan Company, 1932, 335.

⁴¹ Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Population, Lausanne January 30th, 1923. Article 1.

⁴² Palmer, Colton, Kramer. *A history of Europe in the Modern World*, 793.

⁴³ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 118.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 124.

were biased, and at this point there was no established and accepted international rule of law to lean on. There was, however, a precedent for establishing temporary juridical tribunals – known as Mixed Commissions - to address similar questions in other regions and countries where people and land had shifted nationality and sovereignty due to various peace agreements. These commissions consisted of independent foreign representatives, appointed by the authorities in the countries in question to rule on matters covered by the agreement.⁴⁵

Setting up a mixed commission also emerged as the solution chosen to oversee the Greek-Turkish agreement from 1923, and according to Article 11 of the agreement, it was to be set up immediately. The Commission was to consist of four Greek and four Turkish representatives in addition to three neutral members appointed by the Council of the League of Nations. Additionally, the neutral members should come from countries that had not been part of the First World War.⁴⁶

According to the agreement, and important to note, is that the involvement and responsibility of the League in the population exchange ended with the appointment of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission. There was, however, a clause in the agreement about the protection of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and in accordance with this clause, the Turkish government had accepted that breaches could be brought to the Permanent Court of International Justice.⁴⁷ This, however, did not imply that the League bore any responsibility for involving itself in the work of the Mixed Commission, nor that it had the mandate to do so. Nonetheless, and as this thesis will argue, the extensive communication between the Minority Section and the neutral members, as well as the Greek and Turkish governments, reveal that the League was in fact involved.

1.2 Existing literature

Over the past three decades or so, a number of scholars have published works on the economic and political repercussions of the population exchange, particularly for Greece. One important work in this regard is *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact on Greece* by Dimitri Pentzopoulos.⁴⁸ In 1989 the social anthropologist, Renee Hirschon, added a new perspective to the literature thanks to a field study conducted

⁴⁵ Re, Edvard D. "The foreign claims settlement commission and international claims". *Syracuse Law Review*, 516, 1961-1962, 729-734.

⁴⁶ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 353-354.

⁴⁷ League of Nations, *Treaty Series*, Vol 28, pp 37.

⁴⁸ Pentzopoulos, Dimitir. *The Balkan exchange of minorities and its impact on Greece*. Hurst 2002.

among the descendants and the few remaining Greek refugees from the Turkish west coast. In *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*, she has written that a Turkish identity remained strong in this group, 59 years after their deportation and flight from Turkey.⁴⁹ Hirschon also arranged a number of conferences at which Greek and Turkish historians and scholars of other nationalities gathered to discuss the population exchange. The discussions led in part to the book *Across the Aegean* where a number of contributors have discussed the financial, social and cultural repercussions of the population exchange.⁵⁰ This also included the consequences for the more than 400,000 Muslims who were deported to Turkey, a part of the history of this events that had drawn little scholarly attention earlier. The fate of the Greek Muslims was also an important part of *Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsion that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* by the journalist, Bruce Clark. He examined extensive archive sources, secondary literature and interviews with descendants, and has described the tragedy afflicting both the Orthodox Greeks and the Muslims who had to leave their homes in 1923.⁵¹ This was also the topic of a book from 2015 by the Turkish historian, Emine Yesim Bedlek, entitled *Imagined Communities in Greece and Turkey*.⁵²

These scholars share a focus on the national consequences of the population exchange, from a political, cultural or financial perspective. However, thanks to the recently published book *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922-1934*, the Turkish historian, Onur Yildirim, has gone beyond this, attempting to address the wider political and diplomatic context of the exchange.⁵³ In his book he has used Turkish and Greek sources, but also several European and American ones. Yildirim has also used League of Nations' sources, primarily documents related to the actions of the Council, such as *The Official Journal of the League of Nations*.

⁴⁹ Hirschon, Renee. *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*. Berghan Books, New York, 1989.

⁵⁰ Hirschon, Rene. *Crossing the Aegean. An appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Grece and Turkey*. Berghan Books, New York, 2003.

⁵¹ Clark, Bruce. *Twice a Stranger. The Mass Expulsion that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey*. Harvard University Press, 2006.

⁵² Yesim Bedlek, Emine. *Imagined Communities in Greece and Turkey. Trauma and the Population Exchanges Under Atatürk*. I.B. Tauris, 2015.

⁵³ Yildirim Onur. *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922-1934*. Routledge New York 2016.

The latest publication on the Greco-Turkish population is the book *Formalizing Displacement: International Law and Population Transfers*, by the Turkish historian Umut Özsu. Here he discusses the legal status of population transfer, and how the population exchange became a model for legally formalized nation-building in the early twentieth century.⁵⁴ As Yildirim, he does however not address the work of the League's Secretariat in the exchange.

The involvement of the Secretariat was neither addressed by those who first wrote about the population exchange in the interwar years. These writers seem primarily interested in describing the events and the immediate consequences, such as in the article "The Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey" from 1925 in the journal *Geographical Review*.⁵⁵ Four years later, Eliot Grinnell Mear published *Greece Today; The Aftermath of the Refugee Impact* which dealt primarily with the consequences of the exchange for the Greek state.⁵⁶ In 1929 the American diplomat, Henry Morgenthau, published *I Was Sent to Athens*, describing his work with the resettlement of Greek refugees as leader of the League of Nations' Greek Refugee Settlement Commission.⁵⁷ Thanks to his professional affiliation with the Secretariat, he may have known a great deal about the involvement of the League in the exchange; however, he wrote mainly about his own experiences. Three years later the lawyer, Stephen P. Ladas, published a book entitled *The Exchange of Minorities. Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*.⁵⁸ This is perhaps the most comprehensive source of information about the population exchange, especially about the Mixed Commission's work. Ladas examined and analyzed the work of the Commission by critically scrutinizing its minutes, protocols and edicts. He focused primarily on the work of the Mixed Commission which he was not very impressed by.

The process leading to the controversial agreement during the Lausanne Conference, and Nansen's specific role, are described in Carl Emil Vogt's doctoral thesis from 2010 about Nansen's work as an international diplomat.⁵⁹ Berit Tolleshaug has

⁵⁴ Özsu, Umut. *Formalizing Displacement: International Law and Population Transfers*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

⁵⁵ Blanchard, Raoul. "The Exchange of populations between Grece and Turkey". *Geographical Review*, 1925, 5, 3, 449-456.

⁵⁶ Grinnell Mear, Eliot. *Greece today; The aftermath of the refugee impact*. Standford University Press, 1929.

⁵⁷ Morgenthau, Henry. *I Was sent to Athens*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, inc, 1929.

⁵⁸ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*.

⁵⁹ Vogt, *Nestekjærighet som Realpolitikk*.

studied even more specifically Nansen's role in the negotiations that resulted in the population exchange - she did so in her Master's thesis from 2000 which was published as a book in 2001.⁶⁰ Jon F.L Ross has added to the literature on the subject thanks to the 2015 article "Fridtjof Nansen and the Aegean Population Exchange" in the *Scandinavian Journal of History*.⁶¹ As these works deal mainly with the events leading up to the exchange more than with the actual implementation of the process, the Secretariat is not given a prominent role as it only became involved at a later stage.

The interwar period, and especially the history of the League of Nations, have drawn increased interest in the past decade. Books such as *The Lights that Failed* by Zara Steiner, first published in 2005, have documented and contextualized the political situation in Europe at the time, the reconstruction of a continent, and the increasing nationalism that was also an important factor behind the Lausanne agreement in 1923.⁶²

This renewed interest in the League has been accompanied to some extent by a "new" way of understanding global history, focusing on transnational networks and connections beyond nation states and traditional state diplomacy. One of the scholars representing this new approach is Patricia Clavin who has emphasized several ways in which a transnational approach can offer better insight into international events than "traditional" global or international history. She points out that if one were to ask a Japanese national when the Second World War began and when it ended, one might be given a different reply than if one were to ask the same question of a Norwegian. Similarly, in Vietnam, the majority might argue that the Cold War was far from "cold", even though this is how it has been interpreted from a European point of view. According to Clavin, transnational history offers a different view of time, place and manner.⁶³ One example of the last of these points is the understanding of international organizations such as the League. From a national perspective, the League may seem easily interpretable as a failure as it did not manage to prevent the establishment of totalitarian regimes and the outbreak of the Second World War. However, when looking at the rights of workers, minorities or the coordination of health care from a global and longer term perspective, the conclusion might not be that damning. This new

⁶⁰ Tolleshaug. *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*

⁶¹ Ross, "Fridtjof Nansen and the Aegean Population Exchange».

⁶² Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*.

⁶³ Clavin, Patricia. "Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts". *European History Quarterly* 40, 4, 2010.

perspective on the League of Nations is very much related to the then burgeoning community of international civil servants who worked for the League in Geneva. In *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Glenda Sluga has described how many of these bureaucrats regarded the League as the “world’s conscience” and as a vehicle to promote civilization and peace. This “cosmopolitan tribe” of young Europeans, Americans and also Japanese internationalists, often trained at the same universities in Europe and North America, represented a strong internationalism, often without much concern for the national interests of their country of origin.⁶⁴

This new way of interpreting the League, focusing on the civil servants of the League and their transnational networks and international mindsets, has sparked off a new wave of literature on the League of Nations and the interwar period. One of the authors who has contributed to this trend is Mark Mazower who, in 2012, wrote specifically about nineteenth-century internationalism and the birth of the League of Nations in *Governing the World: The History of an Idea*.⁶⁵ In this book, Mazower addresses the question of the legacy of the League of Nations in the light of the outbreak of the Second World War. Here, he draws an important distinction between the League as a diplomatic vehicle which failed, and its international bureaucracy as a centre of international cooperation within scientific, technological and humanitarian fields.⁶⁶

There are many examples of international cooperation from the interwar years that outlived the League. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is one where both the cooperation and conventions survived, as well as the actual organization itself. The awareness of this continuity in terms of labour issues begs the question as to whether a similar continuity can be traced within other areas of international cooperation in the interwar years. Might the protection of refugees and minorities by the League of Nations on a practical and ideological level have prepared the ground for the United Nations, human rights and international law?⁶⁷

Another historian who is part of this “school” of history writing, Bruno Cabanes, argues that there are good reasons to believe so. According to him, “post-war humanitarianism can only be truly understood as part of the continuity of World War

⁶⁴ Sluga, *Internationalism in the age of nationalism*, 59-63.

⁶⁵ Mazower, Mark. *Governing the World. The History of an Idea*. The Penguin Press. 2012.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 143.

⁶⁷ Pedersen, Susan. “Back to the League of Nations”. *The American Historical Review* 112, 4, 2007, 1091 – 1117, 1091-1093

I".⁶⁸ In other words, to grasp what took place in the years after the Second World War in terms of general human rights, democracy and humanitarianism, one has to start by looking at the interwar period.

Thanks to a number of articles about the League of Nations written during the last decade, Susan Pedersen is perhaps one of the most influential historians within this field. In her latest book, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* published in 2015, she both documents and discusses the historical backdrop for the establishment of the League, as well as the global network of nationalists, humanitarians, bureaucrats and statesmen and stateswomen who shaped it.⁶⁹

The view of minorities of the Great Powers, and the gradual development of a policy to protect them, are also well described in *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938*.⁷⁰ Another book which also deals with minority questions, but more specifically with the treatment of the refugees of the First World War, is *The Unwanted: European Refugees From the 1st World War* by Michael Marrus. This book describes a number of events, including the establishment of a High Commissioner for Refugees and the way in which the view of refugees changed throughout the twentieth century.⁷¹ *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: the Emergence of a Regime* is an additional book that debates the international response to the great number of refugees within Europe after the Great War.⁷²

Despite this increased interest in refugee and minority protection during the interwar years, there is little literature on the Administrative Commissions and Minorities Section. Some insights are, however, provided in *A Lesson Forgotten* which deals with the protection of the German minority in Poland.⁷³ The Minority Section is also briefly described in *The International Secretariat* from 1945, written by Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, the most extensive work on the section so far has

⁶⁸ Cabanes, Bruno. *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924*. Cambridge University Press 2016, 133.

⁶⁹ Pedersen, *The Guardians*.

⁷⁰ Fink, Carole. *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

⁷¹ Marrus, Micheal. *The Unwanted: European Refugees From 1st World War*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.

⁷² Skran, Claudena, M. *Refugees in inter-war Europe: the emergence of a regime*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

⁷³ Raitz von Frenzt. *A Lesson Forgotten. Minority Protection under the League of Nations. The Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920-1934*. Lit Verlag, 1999.

⁷⁴ Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *The International Secretariat*.

possibly been conducted by the German historian, Christoph Guterman, in his book *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Volkerforbundes* from 1979.⁷⁵

1.3 Research question and limitations

There is thus a significant body of literature on the Greco-Turkish population exchange, but not on the involvement of the League itself. There has also been a focus on the interwar years, and particularly the work and legacy of the League of Nations, but little has been written about the Minority Section. Studying the involvement of the Minority Section in the forced population exchange is relevant as it may shed new light on the implementation and repercussions of the exchange. It may also provide information about a lesser known part of the history of the Minority Section and add to the current literature about the way in which the work of the League shaped twenty-first-century international politics and humanitarianism. In this Master's thesis, I have approached these issues by way of the following research questions:

- 1) *How, why and to what extent did the Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section of the League of Nations become involved in the work of the Mixed Commission in the forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey?*
- 2) *What can such involvement tell us about the League of Nations and particularly about the development of an international bureaucracy?*

Writing a thesis will always involve making choices regarding the scope. The Greco-Turkish population exchange was and remains controversial due to the many consequences for the people who were forced to leave their homes and settle in a foreign country. Their fate, and the short- and long-term financial, political and cultural consequences of the exchange, have drawn increased attention in the last decade, but this is not the main topic of this thesis.

The work of the Mixed Commission started in 1923 and ended more than ten years later. During this time, the Commission had to address thousands of individual enquiries about religious affiliation and the liquidation of land and property. The extent of their work was vast, and the scope and the full extent of their work have not yet been studied thoroughly, but this is not the main topic of this thesis either.

Instead, I have chosen to focus on the involvement of the League of Nations,

⁷⁵ Guterman, *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Volkerforbundes*.

particularly the way in which the Minority Section became involved in the process of making important decisions when the members of the Mixed Commission failed to reach an agreement. Most of these decisions and controversies took place between the agreement's coming into force in August 1923 and the signing of the Angora treaty in the summer of 1925. By then, most of the people to whom the agreement pertained had been exchanged, and what remained for the Mixed Commission to complete in the following years was the liquidation of properties. I have therefore limited the scope of this thesis to this initial time period. This periodization is also in line with the work of scholars, such as Ladas and Yildirim, who both divide the process into stages beginning with the initial phase between 1923-1925.⁷⁶

1.4 Sources and methodology

I have approached the population exchange from a transnational perspective as the agreement and its implementation involved far more actors than just the signatories. Transnational history is not a method, but a way of attempting to understand global history by highlighting “the importance of connections and transfers across boundaries at the sub- or suprastate level”, in other words attempting to interpret international history from a perspective that transcends the nation state.⁷⁷ In the literature, the Greco-Turkish population exchange has so far been dealt with and analyzed from a Turkish, Greek or a Great Power perspective. It has been described as a Great Power interest masquerading as a humanitarian endeavour by some authors, and as an expression of extreme Greek and Turkish nationalism - or even racism - by others. Consequently, the debate has often revolved around the question of the consequences of the exchange and the motives behind it. Was it a pragmatic but necessary way of dealing with an enormous refugee problem, or was it ethnic cleansing of the Aegean Region?

Instead, I have endeavoured to reconstruct how the League of Nations became involved in, as well as influenced, the execution of the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange Agreement. I have done this by using a number of archives, attempting to put together the puzzle pieces of various memos, proceedings, letters and decisions in order to gain a broader picture of international diplomacy, bureaucracy and the interaction of such in the interwar years.

⁷⁶ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 371.

⁷⁷ Clavin, “Time, Manner, Place”, 625.

The most important source of information about the Commission's work and the League's involvement may be found in the League of Nations' archive in Geneva where there are 85 boxes related to the Mixed Commission, mainly containing minutes from the Commission meetings of the Commission's written decisions. However, the total number of original documents was probably much higher, as most of the Mixed Commission's decisions were lost before the archive was moved to the UN archive in Geneva after the Second World War.⁷⁸ As the scope of this thesis is studying the League of Nations' involvement rather than the Commission's work, and the size of the Mixed Commission's archive is so great, I have not looked at these documents. This may have limited this thesis to some extent in that there may be documents within these boxes that could have shed light upon, for instance, the way in which the Commission interpreted the involvement of the League in their work.

The most important primary sources for this thesis have instead been the documents from the Administrative Commission and Minority Section related to the Greco-Turkish population exchange. These can be found under Registry Files and Administrative Commissions. The dossiers are entitled "[The] Exchange of Greek and Turkish population (1923-1927)" and "[The] Exchange of Greco-Turkish populations - General (1928-1932)". They consist of five boxes, containing correspondence between the Mixed Commission, the involved states and the Minority Section, as well as internal memos, discussions and minutes from meetings regarding the population exchange within the section.⁷⁹ There were also documents related to the population exchange in three other dossiers filed under the Administrative Commission, namely "Expulsion of Greeks from Constantinople (1924-1925)", "Exclusion of Albanians from [the] Greco-Turkish Exchange of Populations (1924-1925)", and "Muslims of Albanian Origin in Greece (1924-1927)".⁸⁰ I have examined these documents and refer to several of them in this thesis.

One trait shared by all these documents is that most of them existed in two copies, one in French, one in English. However, there were some exceptions where documents existed only in French, English, Danish or Swedish. As I do not read French,

⁷⁸ According to League of Nations Archive, Mixed Commission for the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Population. <http://biblio-archive.unog.ch/detail.aspx?ID=2495>

⁷⁹ League of Nations Archive, administrative Commissions and Minority Section: <http://biblio-archive.unog.ch/detail.aspx?ID=135324>

⁸⁰ League of Nations Archive plan online. <http://biblio-archive.unog.ch/archivplansuche.aspx>

some information may have been lost while examining these documents. There are also documents related to Greece and Turkey at the actual time of the exchange; these may be found under “Minority Questions (1919-1927)”. Within these dossiers, there may be relevant documents regarding the population exchange, but the sheer number of documents made it impossible to read all of them. This may represent a limitation, as information in these documents may have added to my understanding of the exchange.

An important, additional primary source has been proceedings from the Directors’ meetings in the League of Nations. This was a forum where important matters relating to different sections of the League of Nations’ Secretariat were discussed between its highest-ranking officers, including General Secretary Eric Drummond. I have examined all of the proceedings from the Directors’ meetings between August 1923 and August 1925. These were made available to me electronically by the League of Nations’ archive in Geneva.

However, the work of the Commission was not only discussed by the Secretariat of the League, but also by the Council. The proceedings from the Council meetings published in *The Official Journal of the League of Nations* (now available online) have thus also been an important source of understanding and of documenting the involvement of the League.⁸¹ Some of the issues that sparked the greatest controversies during the years of the work of the Mixed Commission were also brought to the International Court of Justice. Consequently, the relevant decisions from the Court, found in the archive files of the Administrative Commission, have also been used as sources.

To gain a broader perspective of the population exchange, I also visited the Near East Relief Foundation archive at the Rockefeller Archive Center in New York. Near East Relief (NER) was an American humanitarian organization present in both Turkey and Greece in 1923, playing a central role in the transfer of Christian refugees to Greece in 1923. NER was also mentioned in several of the League of Nations’ documents, and using sources from their archives has helped me gain an additional perspective on the early phase of the exchange process in particular. I have primarily used documents from NER archive relating to the way in which the organization carried out its work in the

⁸¹ League of Nations Official Journal online;
<http://www.heinonline.org/HOL/Index?index=journals/leagon&collection=journals>

region, the extent of the refugee crisis and cooperation with the League.

I have also visited the Norwegian National Archives to attempt to find sources about the head of the Minority Section, Erik Colban. However, there was no archive material relating to him in the relevant time period in Norway, and no personal archive in the Norwegian National Archive or in the League of Nations' Archive.

In addition to archival sources, I have also searched through international newspaper articles from the relevant time period at the New York public library. I have used several of these articles as sources in this thesis.

Regarding the documents obtained from the League of Nations' archive in Geneva and the Near East Relief Foundation Archive, I photographed the relevant sources as there was little time to read through and note all the relevant material in situ. Throughout my work at the various archives, I have photocopied more than 500 documents, which I registered electronically and categorized both thematically and chronologically.

1.5 Structure

The first and second chapter is based on secondary literature dealing with the historical context of the thesis - the Greco-Turkish war, the Lausanne Conference, the establishment of the Mixed Commission and the initial involvement of the League.

I have chosen to structure the following empirical chapters thematically, almost following the chronology of events. In these three chapters, I have addressed three most significant controversies in which the League became involved: the initial evacuation of Muslims from Greece and Greek Orthodox from Turkey, the question of Albanian nationals in the exchange and the controversy surrounding the Christian inhabitants of Constantinople.

2.0 The League of Nations and the Lausanne Treaty

Before looking further at the sequence of events of the population exchange, some context may be needed to understand how and why the parties involved acted as they did and on which considerations their decisions were based. First, shedding light on the historical background of the two nations and their inhabitants seems relevant, particularly in terms of religious and ethnic minorities. The minorities to whom the population exchange agreement pertained in Asia Minor, the Greek peninsula and all the Aegean islands represent diverse groups of people with a long and complex history. In this respect, the events during the first two decades of the twentieth century when the Ottoman Empire was gradually dissolving seem especially relevant.

Second, it seems relevant to elaborate on the various actors. The negotiations that led to the population exchange agreement as well as its implementation consisted of a complex process, involving many actors with different motives. Not only Greek and Turkish representatives met in Lausanne to discuss the peace settlement after the war, and not only their citizens were affected by it. In addition to the various nations present in Lausanne or those involved through the League of Nations, there was also a growing number of humanitarian organizations in the region, aiming to help and raise awareness of the great humanitarian catastrophe taking place. As a result, the events in and around the Aegean Sea also made newspaper headlines throughout the world.

Third, at this time the League was growing rapidly as more states became members and as the scope of the organization broadened. The League's Secretariat was becoming a rather large organization with several departments, sub-divisions and commissions. To understand its structure and chain of command, an elaboration of its organization may be pertinent.

The final contextual elements crucial to understanding the events consisted of the ideological and political trends of the first part of the interwar period. In this respect, Woodrow Wilson's ideas about democracy, self-determination and nation state autonomy were especially influential and provide an important ideological background for the events in 1923.

2.1 The historical backdrop - Greece and Turkey

Since time immemorial, the people on both sides of the Aegean Sea have been part of great empires. First as part of the Empire of Alexander the Great, starting the Hellenistic

period; then as part of the Roman Empire from the last years of the Republic, until the division of the Empire in 395; then, as part of the Byzantine Empire for almost one thousand years, until the Ottomans invaded its vestiges in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁸² Two world religions with their origins in the Middle East were founded, disseminated and heavily affected the life, culture and politics of the region; first, Christianity during the Byzantine Empire; then, for more than five hundred years, Islam under the rule of the Ottomans.

Even though most of the people living on the Greek peninsula and islands during Ottoman rule were Christians, there were Muslim communities in Thessaloniki, Crete and on other islands in the Aegean Sea. These communities consisted of people with their ethnic roots in Asia Minor, and Greeks who had converted to Islam. In Anatolia on the other side of the sea, there were numerous Christian settlements, especially in the north on the coast of the Black Sea where the Christian minorities could trace their presence back more than one thousand years. There were also many Christians living in the coastal areas in the west, and in the north-west corner of Asia Minor, including Constantinople which had a substantial Christian minority.⁸³

Most religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire, including the Greek-Orthodox minority, enjoyed a large degree of freedom, and besides having to pay higher taxes in order to compensate for them not being able to do military service, they were largely free to go about their business as long as they stayed loyal to the local seigneurs. Many of them also played an important role as mediators and interpreters between the sultan and western merchants.⁸⁴ However, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, and especially during the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, their fate and status, as well as the fate of the Greek Muslims, changed rapidly.

The Ottoman Empire had been on a declining trajectory even before the outbreak of the First World War. Despite economic, political and social reforms during the *Tanzimat* (restructuring) period under the rule of the reformist, Abdel Hamid II, in the late nineteenth century the Empire was losing terrain geographically as well as lagging behind Europe financially, technologically and militarily.⁸⁵

⁸² Hupchick, Dennis P. *The Balkans. From Constantinople to Communism*. Palgrave Macmillan 2002, 19-20.

⁸³ Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe*, 18.

⁸⁴ Clark, *Twice a Stranger*, 5-6.

⁸⁵ Macfie, A.L. *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923*. Longman, 1998, 8-19.

The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 was an attempt by young, secular Turkish Nationalists to reverse the Empire's decline. Many of these revolutionaries had been living in exile during the final and increasingly repressive period of Hamid's rule, and they wanted to prevent any further dissolution of the "sick man of Europe".⁸⁶ They came to power and started new reforms, but the Balkan Wars diminished the Empire additionally, and in 1913 the Ottomans were almost completely excluded from the Balkan peninsula. During this period, Germany's political and financial influence over the Ottoman Empire had been growing, and when the war spread to all of Europe in 1914 and Russia declared war on the Empire, the Young Turks ended up siding with the Central Powers. Throughout the war, the British helped the Arabs extract themselves from the Empire, and by the end of the war, little was left of what had once been a mighty Empire.⁸⁷

For Greece, the situation was almost the opposite. The Kingdom of Greece was proclaimed in 1832 after a ten-year long war of independence with the Ottoman Empire, where France, Britain and Russia finally intervened and secured Greek independence.⁸⁸ The following decades were characterized by strong efforts to consolidate the new state's authority, modernize public institutions and unify territories with a Greek population. Simultaneously, the Megali idea (the Great Idea) - the dream of a greater Greece embracing both sides of the Aegean Sea, inspired by the Byzantine Empire and the heritage of classical Greek society - grew stronger.⁸⁹ When the reformist politician, Eleftherios Venizelos, came to power in 1910, the Megali idea became institutionalized.⁹⁰

During the two Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913, Greece increased its territory and population by 70% and 40% respectively, occupying Macedonia, Crete and Western Thrace, former Ottoman territories.⁹¹ When the First World War broke out a year later, the anglophile Venizelos, with his mind set on additionally expanding Greek territory, was convinced to side with the Allies, even though the Greek king, Constantine, was confident that the Germans would win the war and wanted to remain neutral. This disagreement led to a bitter conflict between the two men, but Venizelos emerged the victor, and Constantine was forced into exile in Switzerland; his son, Alexander, assumed

⁸⁶ Palmer, Colton, Kramer, *A history of Europe in the Modern World*, 656-662.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 793.

⁸⁸ Hupchick, *The Balkans*, 222-224.

⁸⁹ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 59.

⁹⁰ Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean*, 53.

⁹¹ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 72.

the throne.⁹²

Siding with the Allies proved to be a good decision in that the Treaty of Sèvres rewarded Greece with a significant part of the former Ottoman Empire; in addition, the subsequent Greek invasion of the west coast of Anatolia as well as Eastern Thrace meant that the country was at its territorial peak and the Megali idea was closer than ever.⁹³ The change of leadership was a short-lived affair, however; in 1920, King Alexander died from a monkey bite, and a few months later Venizelos was unexpectedly voted out of office. This allowed for the return of King Constantine who now enjoyed significant popular support, and he assumed the throne of a kingdom on the rise. The Allies, however, were not equally enthusiastic, and with the old king back in power, they gradually withdrew their support for the Greek presence in Anatolia. This did not prevent King Constantine continuing military operations on the west coast of Anatolia and Thrace, and in 1922, the new Turkish regime responded to this invasion.⁹⁴

Consequently, when the Greco-Turkish war broke out in 1922 and Mustapha Kemal's army attacked Greek troops on the south-west coast of Anatolia, this was the start of a war between two nations whose history was entangled. This war also broke at a time when nationalistic sentiments were running high in both countries. This was a particular form of nationalism based upon ethnicity and/or religion, and even during the Balkan Wars, the Young Turks had started deporting and expelling Greeks from Anatolia. With the start of the First World War, the ethnic aspect of the conflict between the two nations grew, and between 1914 and 1918, approximately half a million Ottoman Greeks were deported. It is estimated that between 60 and 80 percent of these died during the process.⁹⁵ Simultaneously, the regime started deporting and killing Armenians from the other side of the country in what has later been known as the Armenian genocide.⁹⁶

Just as the Turkish leaders wanted a "Turkey for the Turks", Venizelos envisioned a new Greece with a homogenous population. As a result, Muslims living in the areas seized by Greece during the Balkans wars were discriminated against and deprived of both property and rights, and thousands fled to Anatolia.⁹⁷

The idea of national unity and ethnic and religious homogeneity was, however,

⁹² Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean*, 53.

⁹³ Palmer, Colton, Kramer, *A history of Europe in the Modern World*, 696, 793.

⁹⁴ Hupchick, *The Balkans*, 335-336.

⁹⁵ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 69.

⁹⁶ Palmer, Colton, Kramer, *A history of Europe in the Modern World*, 708.

⁹⁷ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 4-5.

not only a Greco-Turkish phenomenon in the interwar years. First, the war had strengthened European nationalism in general, and the Versailles peace treaty had greatly emphasized national autonomy. Second, social Darwinism and eugenics were often regarded as accepted theories and “scientific” disciplines in Europe at the time. Different groups of people who shared a language or a religion were categorized by “race”, and even though the most ferocious totalitarian versions of social Darwinism had not yet been formed, one of the concerns of British scientists during the war was a “lowering of the general biological level” as a result of the many white Europeans dying in the trenches of France and Belgium.⁹⁸

With the collapse of the two other multi-ethnic empires of Europe (Russia and Austro-Hungary), new nation states such as Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Baltic countries came into being. The peace treaties signed after the war show that the signatories in Paris also believed in greater ethnic homogeneity, and that dividing different ethnic groups into different nation states would reduce the risk of future armed conflicts in Europe.⁹⁹ This was not always possible, hence the minority treaties, but the Population Exchange Agreement seems to dovetail well with the Wilsonian ideal of national self-determination; this was also shared by Fridtjof Nansen who played an important role in the negotiations that led to the Lausanne agreement. He also viewed nations’ inhabitants as a “biological organism”, concluding that it would be advantageous for the inhabitants of a nation to share an ethnicity and religion.¹⁰⁰ The Lausanne negotiations and the final, forced population exchange agreement were therefore not carried out or drawn up in a historical or ideological vacuum, a point made by Stephen Ladas in 1932:

*The exchange of Greek and Turkish populations thus appears to have been a solution adopted at a time when the minds of men were not yet free from the feelings aroused by war, and when racial animosity and the hostility of the majority towards the minority were at a high pitch. Only wise statesmanship and great foresight could have avoided the surgical operation adopted to heal the age-long ills involved in the existence of the national minorities in Greece and Turkey.*¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Crook, Paul. *Darwinism. War and History*. Cambridge University Press 1994, 161.

⁹⁹ Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism*, 133-134.

¹⁰⁰ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 224.

¹⁰¹ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 730.

However, there was another important element in understanding the climate in which the population exchange agreement was written: the pressing issue of more than 1.4 million refugees in war-torn Greece.

2.2 The refugee situation

Greek expansion during the Balkan wars increased its population from about 2.5 million in 1913 to 5.3 million in 1920. Adding to this population was a wave of more than half a million immigrants and refugees from the Caucasus, Romania and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰² The Balkan Wars, as well as the First World War, thus brought a number of refugees to Greece, but this was overshadowed by the outbreak of the Greco-Turkish war, starting with the Greek invasion in 1919, and ending with Kemal's military success in the autumn of 1922.

In September 1922, more than 260,000 Greek refugees were gathered in the city of Smyrna with the advancing Turkish forces on their way. Kemal was winning the war and had in the past few weeks pushed the Greek forces further and further westwards. He decided on a final offensive on August 26, and within days, the Nationalist army had forced the Greek troops out of Smyrna and the rest of Anatolia.¹⁰³ At the time there was increased ethnic tension and even hatred between the Greeks and Turks in Anatolia, as the Greek troops had looted, raped and killed Turkish inhabitants of Smyrna during the invasion in 1919. With the Turkish recapturing of the city, the Greek and Armenian quarters and their inhabitants were subject to similar attacks. These atrocities against the civilian population culminated in the massacre of Greeks and Armenians following the burning of the Christian quarters of Smyrna, most likely immolated by Turkish soldiers. Some were killed in the fire, while others drowned in the harbour trying to flee the flames by swimming out to the Allied warships at anchor outside the city.¹⁰⁴ The Allied forces did little to intervene, however, and the only support for the panicking refugees came from the humanitarian aid workers from Near East Relief. According to the Bishop of Smyrna, this American organization saved the lives of almost 200,000 men, women and children in the days and weeks following the burning of Smyrna; still,

¹⁰² Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 88-89.

¹⁰³ Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, 113.

¹⁰⁴ Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, 110. Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 80-81.

between 40,000-80,000 were killed.¹⁰⁵

In the following months, the Greek population of Eastern Thrace also fled, alarmed by the Turkish army's assault on civilians in Smyrna. Kemal published a decree giving the Greek population 42 days to leave the area, and after the armistice was signed in October 1922, most of the Greeks left within a few days. As most of the refugees left Eastern Thrace after the armistice, their "exodus" was in some senses less dramatic than the flight from Smyrna and the rest of Anatolia. Unlike Greeks further south, the male population in Thrace were also not considered prisoners of war or deported to inner Anatolia, unlike many Greek inhabitants of Smyrna and the surrounding regions in the previous months.¹⁰⁶

As Greece lost all of the territories gained through its post-World War One campaigns and the Treaty of Sèvres, more than 900,000 Greek inhabitants of Anatolia and Eastern Thrace became refugees within a few months in the autumn of 1922. Out of these, more than 70,000 died of disease or malnutrition. Among children, the death rate was as high as 20 percent.¹⁰⁷ The situation for the refugees reaching Greece was chaotic, and in Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki, voluntary relief organizations turned school buildings, railway sheds and public baths into dormitories. Those who escaped to the Aegean islands tried to find shelter with relatives or local inhabitants. The first official census from 1928 reported that the total number of refugees that had arrived in Greece was 1,221,849. However, this number did not take into account the high mortality rate, and the actual number was probably somewhere between 1.25 and 1.5 million people.¹⁰⁸ According to a draft report from Near East Relief in 1923, 1.5 million Greeks escaped Turkey, but only 1,275,000 made it to Greece.¹⁰⁹

The refugee crisis did not unfold without the knowledge of the international community. In Thrace, as well as Smyrna, there were many humanitarian organizations present, such as the Red Cross and Near East Relief. A number of journalists who described the suffering of the Greek refugees were also in the area, including Ernest

¹⁰⁵ Report of the General Secretary of the Near East Relief, January – December 1922. Rockefeller Archive Center, Collection: Laura Spellman RM, NER reports. Record Group FA061, Series 3,S6 series 3_03 Box B-9, Folder 104.

¹⁰⁶ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 83-84.

¹⁰⁷ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 90-91.

¹⁰⁸ Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe*, 36-37.

¹⁰⁹ Refugees in Greece, Chart #6. Rockefeller Archive Center, Collection: Laura Spellman RM, NER reports. Record Group FA061, Series 3,S6 series 3_03 Box B-9.

Hemingway, who reported for the *Toronto Daily Star*.¹¹⁰ One eyewitness account of the refugees' hardship, and especially the awful conditions in the refugee camps, was published in *The Manchester Guardian* in January 1923.

The overloaded sheds have rotting leaky roofs. The rain drips through and collects in puddles on the muddy floor. The cold winds blowing down from the snow-clad hills whistle through the apertures in the dilapidated walls [...] Babies are born on the wet mud or cold stone floors. Infant mortality is terribly high.¹¹¹

Media reports such as this drew increased public attention to the situation, especially in the US that had a significant Greek population. One of the results of this awareness was the initiative by President Warren G. Harding in October 1922 to set up a committee consisting of the largest humanitarian organizations in the US to increase and coordinate aid for the area.¹¹² This resulted in donations from all over the country to organizations such as the Near East Relief from Christian organizations, Greek exile organizations and American philanthropists.¹¹³

Nansen was first made aware of the crisis on September 18, 1922 during the third session of the League of Nations' Council in Geneva. He was then working on the repatriation of Russian prisoners of war when he received a telegram from one of his representatives at the Constantinople office, Colonel James Proctor. Proctor described the military developments and the refugee situation in Asia Minor and Nansen, unprecedentedly, read the telegram aloud to the delegates of the League of Nations' Council in Geneva. Until then, the League had done nothing with regard to the Greco-Turkish war, but the Council now decided to grant 100,000 Swiss francs to Nansen and to extend the mandate of the High Commissioner to also include refugees in Asia Minor. Nansen also wanted the League to intervene in the conflict, but he did not have the support of the majority of the Council on this. 12 nations did decide however to contribute 50,000 pounds sterling each to Nansen's relief work in Greece.¹¹⁴

Shortly afterwards, Nansen travelled to Greece and Constantinople to gain an

¹¹⁰ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 83.

¹¹¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 15.01.1923, Near East Correspondent, "The Refugees in Greece".

¹¹² Telegram from US President Harding, to John D Rockefeller about a US Committee on Near East Aid, October 22, 1922. Rockefeller Archive Center, Collection: Office of Messrs, World Affairs. Record Group FA326, Series Q, Box 41, Folder 3.

¹¹³ Minutes from the Near East Relief Executive Committee, May 16th, 1923. Rockefeller Archive Center, Collection: NER Foundation, Record Group FA406, Series AC2010:002, Box 1.

¹¹⁴ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 221.

impression of the situation. On his way eastwards, Nansen witnessed the flow of refugees from Thrace in October 1922 and the hardship they were living under. In Constantinople, he was joined by Erik Colban who took part in the negotiations with Turkish officials. In his memoirs, Colban described his horror in witnessing the conditions in the harbour of Piraeus. According to his first-hand accounts, there were refugees everywhere, and even though some had been lucky and found shelter in the theatre or the railway station, most people were living under open skies under terrible hardship.¹¹⁵

In the following weeks and months, Nansen worked hard to raise awareness of the situation of the refugees who had already made it to Greece and those still living in Anatolia. He appealed to a number of organizations to raise money as well as clothes and blankets for the refugees, and started cooperating with the Epidemic Commission of the League of Nations to prevent outbreaks of typhus and other epidemics in the refugee camps where the sanitary conditions were poor. In order to avoid starvation on the ground, he also started importing grain to send to the refugee camps of Anatolia, in cooperation with other humanitarian organizations. He also approached the government in Ankara regarding the fate of the more than 100,000 male refugees who had been captured and deported to the interior of Anatolia by Turkish forces. He hoped to find a solution for these men (and children) considered prisoners of war by the Turkish authorities, as well as the 3,500 Turkish prisoners of war in Greece, but he was initially unsuccessful.¹¹⁶

Throughout the winter, the Greek government found itself overwhelmed by the increasing number of refugees, appealing to the Council of the League of Nations for support. The Council forwarded the request to the Financial Committee which sent two representatives to Athens to investigate conditions. Based on their report, the Committee approved a comprehensive plan which included substantial financial support that was to be entrusted to a Refugee Settlement Commission. The Committee was officially established on November 1923 and its first president was the American, Henry Morgenthau.¹¹⁷ Morgenthau was the former US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire; in 1915, he had tried to draw attention to the Armenian genocide, formally asking the US

¹¹⁵ Colban, Erik. *Femti år*. Aschehaug 1952, 91.

¹¹⁶ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 93-98.

¹¹⁷ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 164-166.

government as well as US citizens to help Armenian refugees. It was also this initiative that eventually led to the establishment of the Near East Relief organization.¹¹⁸ He thus knew the area well and had a significant network in the region.

With this burgeoning refugee crisis, there was not only a need for immediate aid, but also for finding a long-term solution to the remaining territorial and political issues in the wake of the war. The League of Nations, however, after pressure from the Great Powers, had decided not to intervene in the conflict itself and leave the negotiations of the peace settlements to a conference between the parties.¹¹⁹ Nansen's role as a High Commissioner for Refugees in Asia Minor was limited to humanitarian questions, but Nansen had his own view about what was and what was not his mandate; as the Lausanne Conference drew closer, it became clear that he would also play a role in developing an agreement with the parties regarding the fate of the minorities of both nations.

2.3 The Lausanne Conference and the Population Exchange Agreement

The Lausanne Conference convened on 20 November 1922 at the hotel Château d'Ouchy by Lake Geneva. Ishmet Pasha, the Turkish minister of foreign affairs, represented Turkey, and Venizelos, who by now had been accepted back into Greek politics, represented Greece. Foreign Minister Lord Curzon represented the UK, and the official list of participants also included representatives from France, Italy, Japan, Bulgaria, Romania, USA, Portugal, Belgium, the Soviet Union and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The high number of participating states underlines the fact that the agenda of the conference was about much more than just settling the territorial and political disputes between Greece and Turkey; it was first and foremost a renegotiation of the Sèvres treaty between Turkey on one hand, and the Allies (the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania and the Serb, Croat and Slovene kingdom) on the other.¹²⁰ Adding to the complexity, other countries present had their own agendas regarding questions such as access to the Bosphorus Strait, control of the oil fields of Mosul or sovereignty over the Aegean islands. Still, for the Allies the conference was largely an attempt to find a permanent solution for a region that had been in turmoil since the

¹¹⁸ Article on the website of the Near East Relief foundation "Henry Morgenthau's Urgent Telegrams". <http://neareastmuseum.com/chapters/taking-action/>

¹¹⁹ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 116.

¹²⁰ League of Nations - Treaty Series 16. "Treaty of Peace with Turkey", 1923, 11.

collapse of the Ottoman Empire.¹²¹

With the Greco-Turkish war still in recent memory, tensions remained high and the distrust between Turkey and the Allies was stronger than ever. The conference came close to collapsing on a number of occasions, and the negotiations were suspended for almost three months between February 4 and April 23 due to deadlock on financial matters. During this period, the threat of war seemed imminent, and the Turkish army started blowing up bridges in Eastern Thrace as a preventive measure to stop a Greek army from advancing.¹²²

The final agreement reflected the risk of entering into a new war due to the large number of unsettled issues and distrust between the parties. It therefore comprised more than 200 Articles on territorial, military, financial and juridical issues. This included the massive public debt of the Ottoman Empire, prisoners of war, the demilitarization of the Bosphorus strait and the Thracian border and a number of territorial adjustments that, with some exceptions, form current Turkish borders.¹²³

The agreement also contained a section consisting of eight Articles on the protection of minorities in Turkey. Here, it was clearly stated that non-Muslim minorities should have the same legal, civil and political rights as the Muslims. It even went as far as almost re-establishing the Milles system which had secured relative autonomy for religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire: “The Turkish Government undertakes to take, as regards non-Muslim minorities, in so far as concerns their family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of those minorities”. To ensure that these provisions were respected, Article 44 placed the protection of the non-Muslim minorities under the guarantee of the League of Nations. Turkey also accepted that any “infraction or danger of infraction of any of these obligations” could be brought to the attention of the Council of the League of Nations by any member, and that any dispute that arose due to this matter could be brought to the Permanent Court of International Justice and that its ruling should be final.¹²⁴

The final agreement was coloured by American influence, and the footprint of Wilson’s 14 points can clearly be seen in the Articles on armaments, free trade and the

¹²¹ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 35-36.

¹²² *Los Angeles Times*, 23.5.1923. Fendrick, Raymond. “Warfare in the Near East expected within a week”.

¹²³ League of Nations - Treaty Series 16. “Treaty of Peace with Turkey”, 1923. I-IV, 35, 77, 121

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 32-33.

freedom of navigation upon the seas. Some of the paragraphs were even almost copied directly from Wilson's speech to Congress in 1918, such as the one on access to the Bosphorus Strait, the national sovereignty of the Turkish part of the Ottoman Empire and the security and independent development of Turkish minorities.¹²⁵ The future and the rights of the Muslim minority in Greece or the many Greek-Orthodox Turkish inhabitants who had become refugees within the last months were not, however, addressed in the section on minorities or territorial issues. Interestingly, the refugee question was first broached by a Bulgarian representative concerned about the many refugees on both sides of the Thracian border, and this became a topic for the Sub-Commission of Minorities and the Sub-Committee of the Exchange of Prisoners of War and Populations. The sub-commissions then brought the result of their work to the Territorial and Military Commission on December 14.¹²⁶

Nansen, however, had been trying to find a solution to the refugee problem by arranging a Greco-Turkish exchange of populations, far ahead of the Lausanne Conference. He saw this as one possible and pragmatic solution to the enormous refugee crisis facing Greece - with more than one million refugees living in camps in northern Greece with little food and funding, swapping populations seemed like the lesser of two evils to Nansen. Accordingly, the Greek Muslims could take over the farms of the Turkish Christians on the west coast of Turkey, and vice versa.¹²⁷ Furthermore, on October 13, Venizelos told Nansen that the Turkish government would never again accept Greeks on Turkish soil and that the Turkish government would propose a population exchange at the forthcoming peace conference in Lausanne.¹²⁸ Two days later, Venizelos and the high commissioners from France, Great Britain, Italy and Japan in Constantinople asked Nansen to negotiate an agreement between the two governments as soon as possible, independently of the Lausanne Conference.¹²⁹ He accepted this task without consulting the League, but got a subsequent approval by Eric Drummond to proceed. With Erik Colban and the Belgian Colonel de Rover, who had administered the Greco-Bulgarian population exchange, he started negotiating with the parties and drafting an

¹²⁵ Treaty of Peace with Turkey, and other Instruments. Signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923. Treaty Series No. 16, 1923.

¹²⁶ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 37.

¹²⁷ Tolleshaug. *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 124.

¹²⁸ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 225-26.

¹²⁹ League of Nations – Official Journal, January 1923, 129.

agreement.¹³⁰

The idea of a population exchange was not new in the Balkans. In 1913 the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria had agreed upon a population exchange between border villages involving more than 100,000 inhabitants. Similarly, the Treaty of Neuilly from 1919 between the Allies and Bulgaria also included a Convention on the Reciprocal and Voluntary Emigration of Minorities between Greece and Bulgaria. The question of a Greco-Turkish population exchange had also arisen via unilateral expulsion and resettlement in the years prior to the outbreak of the First World War, and in 1913 and 1914, the two governments signed agreements involving the exchange of Muslims in Macedonia for Greeks in Smyrna. Due to the war, however, these agreements were not implemented.¹³¹

Bearing in mind these agreements, as well as the strongly nationalistic sentiments on both sides of the Aegean Sea, one might have expected it to be easy to come to an agreement on a population exchange between the two countries. Nansen's problem was, however, that the Turkish government did not recognize his official status, nor the League of Nations for that matter.¹³² Nansen wanted to discuss the matter with Atatürk himself, but instead the government in Ankara sent the diplomat, Hamid Bey. Bey's only mandate was to discuss a population exchange without any exemptions, based on forced migration. These were the terms for discussions which Nansen refused to accept, asking the government in Ankara to negotiate an exchange based on voluntary emigration.¹³³ The government in Ankara failed to reply to his request, and Nansen was therefore not able to bring the parties to an agreement ahead of the Lausanne Conference. He was, however, invited to take part in the sub-committee dealing with the issue, and his and Erik Colban's draft became the basis for the discussion.¹³⁴

Even though there was a consensus on the general idea of a population exchange, there were two especially controversial issues regarding the population exchange that would have to be solved. First, should the exchange be voluntarily? Second, should it include all Muslims in Greece and all the Greek-Orthodox in Turkey? For a number of reasons, the Greek minority in Constantinople sparked off discussions: first, even though

¹³⁰ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 225-26.

¹³¹ Ross, «Fridtjof Nansen and the Aegean population exchange», 140.

¹³² Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 228.

¹³³ League of Nations. Official Journal, January 1923, 126-135.

¹³⁴ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 228.

the Allies had accepted the general idea of a population exchange, they feared that removing the Greek population from the former capital would have profound effects on the economy and also weaken their political and financial influence in the city.¹³⁵ The Turkish government for its part, was concerned about the political and symbolic repercussions of the Greeks remaining. During the last part of the Ottoman Empire, the Greek-Orthodox minority had enjoyed considerable legal and political autonomy under the rule of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This was called the Millet system, implying that the religious leaders in Constantinople could rule in religious and civil matters concerning only the Christian minority.¹³⁶ This gave the Christian leaders a great deal of power which was unacceptable in the new, secular Turkish republic and the Young Turks had already started dissolving the Millet system.¹³⁷

The final compromise therefore came after a great deal of pressure from the Allies, and the agreement stated that the Greeks could stay in Constantinople as well as their religious leaders, but the Patriarchate would have to renounce its political authority. It also included a clause that exempted the Muslim population of Western Thrace from the agreement. Altogether, this meant that about 100,000 people were exempt from the population exchange.¹³⁸

Regarding the compulsory nature of the agreement, it appears to be a conclusion that fell naturally during the course of events. First, it was clear at an early stage in the Lausanne negotiations that the repatriation of Greek refugees was off the table; Ishemet Pasha wanted to remove all threats to national and ethnic unity.¹³⁹ This was also a position shared by Venizelos, though not explicitly. For him and Greece, the expulsion of the approximately 400,000 Muslims would also ameliorate the desperate situation of the country in terms of food and housing for the many refugees. This was also important to Nansen, who despite his mixed feelings about forcing people to leave their homes, regarded this as the best of only bad options.¹⁴⁰ Internationally, however, the idea of a compulsory population exchange met great resistance. Many Europeans and Americans viewed it as a violation of the basic principles of human freedom and justice, fearing that it could represent a dangerous precedent for future conflicts. In an article in *The New*

¹³⁵ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 121.

¹³⁶ Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe*, 19

¹³⁷ Kritikos, «Motives for Compulsory Population Exchange in the Aftermath of the Greek-Turkish War, 218.

¹³⁸ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 228.

¹³⁹ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 121.

¹⁴⁰ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 229-230.

York Times, a Near East Relief representative was referred to, describing the cruelty of the displacement. "Greeks from Asia Minor who could trace their ancestors there for generations have been obliged to leave and start a new life in the Greek Islands or mainland, and the contended Moslems whose grandfathers grew olives in Crete or tobacco in Macedonia, are forced to leave for the vast plains of Anatolia."¹⁴¹ There were also other minorities involved, such as Armenians, Bulgarians and Albanians, who belonged to Christian and Muslim communities. Their fate was not settled by the agreement. Even Lord Curzon was concerned about the idea of a forced population exchange, fearing the world would have to "pay a heavy price for [it] in the future".¹⁴² There was also strong resistance within Greece. Muslims and Christians had been living side by side in relatively peaceful coexistence for centuries, and the idea of Muslims having to leave their homes and move to a foreign country with a foreign language was not only difficult to accept for the Muslims of Greece, but also for their Christian neighbours.¹⁴³ For the Greek refugees now living in refugee camps, it was equally difficult to accept that they would be perpetually excluded from towns and villages that they had been living in for generations in Asia Minor.¹⁴⁴

After weeks of negotiations, the sub-commission finalized its work, and on January 30 1923, Venizelos and Ishmet Pasha signed the Convention concerning the Exchange of the Greek and Turkish Population. The Conventions had 19 paragraphs and the most controversial part of it, namely that religious affiliation was the basis for the exchange and that it was compulsory, was described in the Article 1. After the scope of the agreement, there followed the exceptions agreed upon under Article 2 regarding the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople and the Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace. The agreement also included a clause stipulating that Greek men and adolescent boys detained in inner Anatolia should be sent to Greece, and that any person under the scope of the agreement who was undergoing trial or in prison should be transferred to his/her new country and sent to trial or prison there.¹⁴⁵

Regarding the property rights of the people who had to leave their homes, Article 8 stated that "Emigrants shall be free to take away with them or to arrange for the

¹⁴¹ *New York Times*, 24.5.1924. «Near East Misery due to Migration».

¹⁴² Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?* 122.

¹⁴³ Clark, *Twice a Stranger*, 21.

¹⁴⁴ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som realpolitikk*, 229.

¹⁴⁵ League of Nations. Official Journal, November 1923, 1468.

transport of their movable property of every kind, without being liable on this account to the payment of any export or import duty or any other tax". Immovable property or property left behind by the refugees who had left in a hurry during the war was to be dealt with by a liquidation process. To ensure this process was fair and safeguard the rights of the two minorities during the population exchange, Article 11 stated that a Mixed Commission should be set up within one month after the convention had come into force. According to Article 12, "the duties of the Mixed Commission shall be to supervise and facilitate the emigration provided for in the present Convention, and to carry out the liquidation of the movable and immovable property for which provision is made in articles nine and ten".¹⁴⁶

The Commission was to consist of four representatives from each country, and three independent members "chosen by the Council of the League of Nations". The neutral members were all supposed to come from countries not part of the First World War, and the presidency of the Mixed Commission should rotate between the neutral members. The Mixed Commission was given full autonomy and possessed the "full power to take the measures necessitated by the execution of the present Convention and to decide all questions to which this Convention may give rise." It was also given the opportunity to establish its own sub-commissions if needed.¹⁴⁷ Even though the liquidation of property was the most complex and comprehensive part of the task in terms of administration, the Mixed Commission should also be involved in evacuating people. Article 16 stated that the Mixed Commission should come to an agreement with the two governments about the notification of the people subject to the exchange and information about which ports to go to for deportation.¹⁴⁸

2.4 The Mixed Commission

As the convention on population exchange was only a minor part of the extensive peace treaty between Turkey and the Allies, it was not scheduled to come into force until the final ratification of the full agreement. This was supposed to occur on May 1 1923, but due to the suspension of negotiations between February 4 and April 23, the final agreement was not signed until July 24 and ratified by Turkey and Greece one month

¹⁴⁶ League of Nations. Official Journal, November 1923, 1468.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 1469.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 1470.

later.¹⁴⁹ It was not until September 17 1923 that the League of Nations' Council appointed the neutral members to the Mixed Commission.¹⁵⁰

This took place during a secret session after Viscount Ishii of Japan had provided the Council with a report on the matter. In his report, Ishii laid out the historical and political background for the request and offered several suggestions. First, he stressed the importance of having highly qualified members serving as Commission members. He also suggested that, for practical reasons, the neutral members should rotate their presidency every four months, and that substitute members should be appointed who could act in the absence of the neutral members so that the work of the Mixed Commission would not depend too greatly on individuals. On a more political note, he clarified to whom the neutral members should answer: "It must be clearly understood that these members will draw their authority from the Convention and always act in strict accordance with the views of the two High-Contracting Powers as therein laid down."¹⁵¹

The Council adopted Ishii's report and appointed the neutral members to the Commission in accordance with his suggestion: Eric Einar Ekstrand, a high functionary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sweden, Don Manuel Manrique de Lara, a Spanish General and Karl Marius Widding, a Danish diplomat. These were to serve on the commission together with four representatives from Greece and Turkey, and among these were the Turkish diplomat involved in the negotiations with Nansen ahead of the Lausanne Conference, Hamid Bey.¹⁵² The Commission was formally constituted on September 17 and had its first official meeting in Athens on October 8.¹⁵³

During the eleven years of its functioning, several changes were made to its composition. Ekstrand resigned on February 3 1926, having been appointed Swedish ambassador to Chile. He was then replaced by the Norwegian army Captain, lawyer and businessman, Hans Christian Holstad. Widding resigned from his position on March 13 1928 and was replaced by the Chilean, Manuel de Rivas. De Lara died in 1929 and was succeeded by the Dane, Holger Andersen. The Greek and Turkish members of the Commission changed frequently and in 1927 the two governments decided to have only

¹⁴⁹ Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean*, 105.

¹⁵⁰ League of Nations. Official Journal, November 1923, 1312-1313.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 1467.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 1312-1313.

¹⁵³ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 354.

two representatives each.¹⁵⁴

To fulfil its tasks, the Commission quickly realized it needed more administrative personnel, establishing its own secretariat in the autumn of 1923. The first secretary-general was the Dane, Carl Bratli, who was later replaced by a Swiss man, M. Haller.¹⁵⁵ The seat of the Commission, Ishii suggested, should be in Salonika. This was supported by the Turkish government, but with the exception of a few weeks in February 1924, it was located in Athens for its first year. It then moved to Constantinople where it remained until it was shut down in 1934.¹⁵⁶

2.5 The Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section

The signatories to the Lausanne treaty had given the League the mandate to ensure that the provisions of the agreement regarding the non-Muslim minority in Turkey were respected. As with all other minority matters, this became the responsibility of the Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions Section, led by Erik Colban. However, as time went by, the Section became involved in much more than just protecting the Christian minority of Turkey.

From the outset, Eric Drummond had considered Colban his first choice for running the Section. He wanted a Scandinavian for the job, and the 43-year-old career diplomat had the relevant background and experience.¹⁵⁷ Colban had been working with Drummond prior to this in preparing the first General Assembly of the League of Nations and he knew the Norwegian quite well. Colban was formally given the task of running the Section during the establishment of the Secretariat in 1920. He organized his section into two units where the first one, led by the American, Huntington Gilchrist, dealt with Administrative Commissions such as the Saar and Danzig commissions, as well as the various population exchange commissions. The second unit run by the Danish diplomat, Hjalmar Rosting, was responsible for minority questions.¹⁵⁸

Gilchrist was an American prodigy who, by the age of 28, had doctorates from both Colombia and Harvard University. He had served as a Captain during the First World War, later becoming the personal assistant to the US under-secretary general of the League of Nations. After being responsible for the Administrative Commissions, he

¹⁵⁴ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 356- 357.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 366.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 357.

¹⁵⁷ Guterman, *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Volkerforbundes*, 273.

¹⁵⁸ Colban, *Femti år*, 70-71.

later went on to head the Mandate Section.¹⁵⁹ Rosting's background was from diplomatic work for the Danish Red Cross where he had been working on the repatriation of prisoners of war in France after the First World War. The third Scandinavian in the Section was Ms Gunhild Lippestad, who worked as secretary. With the other members of the Secretariat, they formed a young group of international bureaucrats where the average age was as low as 34.¹⁶⁰ In 1920, the Section consisted of only four people, but as their portfolio increased during the first five years, the number of employees grew accordingly; in 1926, 12 people were working full time at the Minority Section. At this time, the budget was also at its highest, amounting to approximately 300,000 Swiss francs.¹⁶¹

The minority treaties consisted of five parts. The first regarded the protection of life and liberty and religious freedom. The second pertained to the right to acquire a formal nationality in a new country. The third dealt with political rights such as freedom of speech, the right of association and the right to use one's mother tongue. The fourth concerned the legal obligation towards these minorities by the State, and the fifth part consisted of special provisions dealing with local conditions and the particular minorities in each country, such as the Jews of Poland.¹⁶²

The way in which the minority system of the League worked was that minority petitions were sent to the League by anyone who saw or experienced breaches of the treaties. The only requirements were that such had to relate to the treaty in question, that it should not come from an anonymous source and that it could not contain violent language.¹⁶³ The League Council was formally responsible for the minority treaties, and when a petition was received, an ad-hoc panel was set up consisting of three Council representatives responsible for investigating whether the complaint had merit or not. However, prior to this, the Minority Section carried out a preliminary review of the complaints. Between 1921 and 1939, Colban and his colleagues examined more than 950 petitions but only 550 of these were considered valid and presented to the ad-hoc panel for evaluation. The petition files prepared for the ad-hoc committee included extensive information gathered by the Minority Section, including information about the

¹⁵⁹ Gilchrist, Huntington. *Imperialism and The Mandate System*. The League of Nations, New York, 1927, 1-2.

¹⁶⁰ Guterman, *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Volkerforbundes*, 274.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 348-349.

¹⁶² Rosting, Helmer. "Protection of Minorities by the League of Nations." *The American Journal of International Law*, 17, 1923, 641-660, 648-649.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 655.

petitioners, correspondence with the governments involved and minority leaders and often reports from visits by Colban himself.¹⁶⁴ This provided Colban with a great deal of influence over the process, and in reality, few petitions were brought to the Council. Instead, most complaints led to a private, secret discussion between Colban and his Section and the parties involved. According to Colban, the success in safeguarding the rights of the minorities during this period was “due not so much to the official action by the Council of the League of Nations as to unofficial negotiations with the Governments concerned on the one hand and the leaders of the minorities on the other.”¹⁶⁵ This approach made it possible to find a solution without drawing too much attention to the complaint or the result, and these “benevolent negotiations became the heart of the League system” to ensure the rights of minorities.¹⁶⁶

This system required a great deal of work and much travelling by members of the Section, especially the director. In 1924 alone, Colban travelled once to Bucharest, Athens, Budapest, Vienna and Prague, twice to different locations in Bulgaria, and three times to Belgrade.¹⁶⁷ As he was frequently absent from Geneva, much responsibility fell on his deputies, Gilchrist and Rosting. Colban had no problem delegating responsibility, but he also expected hard work and results in return. He was therefore described as hard-working and persistent by his colleagues, but also as unpleasant and demanding by some.¹⁶⁸

To Colban’s mind, the Section had several primary tasks: first to build, restore and maintain good relations with nations covered by the minority treaties; second, to gather information systematically about compliance with the treaties and report back to the League of Nations’ Council; third, it should investigate and attempt to develop the more general aspects of the minority policy of the League; fourth, it should inform the public about its work.¹⁶⁹ To Colban, information was critical, and he had the Political Section of the League, which had Greek- and Turkish speaking personnel, read and translate Turkish and Greek newspapers regularly. Additionally, one of Lippestadt’s daily assignments was to make a list of articles from 14 international newspapers

¹⁶⁴ von Frenzt. *A Lesson Forgotten*, 96-116.

¹⁶⁵ Erik Colban, “The Minorities Problem”, 313.

¹⁶⁶ Fink, Carol. “Minority Rights as an International Question”. *Contemporary European History*. 9:3, 2000, 385 – 400, 390-391.

¹⁶⁷ Guterman, *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Volkerforbundes*, 322.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 283.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 294.

containing information relevant to the department.¹⁷⁰ This thoroughness, discretion and persistence featured in the work of the Section in matters pertaining to the Administrative Commissions and the minority treaties they were supposed to supervise. It would also characterize how Colban and his team approached the Greco-Turkish population exchange.

2.6 The League and the Population Exchange Agreement.

Less than one year after the armistice ending the Greco-Turkish war was agreed upon, the Allies and the Turkish government signed the final peace agreement in Lausanne. For Kemal Atatürk, this was an agreement which embedded the new Turkish republic in Asia Minor, and compared to the territories left to the Ottoman Empire after the Treaty of Sèvres, the Lausanne treaty was a success and a reparation. For Greece, on the other hand, the war was often referred to as the Asia Minor Catastrophe had been just that. The Lausanne treaty had officially deprived Greece of the territories gained after the First World War and, in many ways, also of enthusiasm and faith in the Megali idea. Additionally, Greece now had to deal with over 1.4 million refugees on its territory.

The Lausanne Agreement shows that, for the Allies, establishing a robust Turkish state in the heart of the former Ottoman Empire was important, especially to stabilize the region after decades of war. That this was done at the expense of the Greeks was a result of *realpolitik* and not due to a particularly favourable attitude towards the Turks. In fact, establishing the Greek Resettlement Commission, as well as the substantial loans given to Greece in the aftermath of the war, show that European as well as American sympathy was more with the Greeks.

The Population Exchange Agreement was not a central part of the Lausanne Agreement, though it was important for the two governments directly involved. It was not without historical precedent, but there was a fundamental difference between the voluntary exchange agreements agreed upon earlier and this one: the 1923 agreement involved not only refugees fleeing from a new regime, but also approximately 400,000 Greek Muslims living far from the centre of the conflict who were deported by force, based solely on their religious affiliation. Therefore, this was an agreement that, with the benefit of hindsight, neither of the parties wanted to take responsibility for, even though they all half- or full-heartedly supported it. This also included the League of Nations

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 297.

which took care to emphasize in its official communications, minutes and reports that it had nothing to do with the execution of the agreement, apart from appointing members to the Mixed Commission.

The Population Exchange Agreement clearly contradicted the section on the protection of minorities in the Lausanne agreement, stating that the non-Muslim inhabitants of Turkey should enjoy the same rights as Muslim ones. It was also heavily criticized by many different organizations and individuals, and it seemed in obvious conflict with the liberal ideas upon which the League of Nations was built. Why was it nonetheless passed? There is more than one answer to this question, but for the Allies, the convention was a solution to an unsolvable problem; for Venizelos and Ishmet Pasha, it was something they both wanted even though they both denied being the origin of the idea; for Nansen, it was probably the lesser of two evils.¹⁷¹

The position of the League of Nations vis-à-vis the Population Exchange Agreement is more difficult to assess. The Council had decided in 1922 not to take part in the peace negotiations during the Lausanne conference. Nansen, however, had managed to increase his mandate as League of Nations' high commissioner for Russian refugees to also include the refugees of Asia Minor, and then to act as negotiator between Greece and Turkey in the question of minorities - the former with the approval of the Council, the latter without, but with the subsequent acceptance of Eric Drummond. This, and the fact that Erik Colban was part of the process of writing the first draft of the convention before the conference, imply that the Secretariat at least was in favour of the idea of a voluntary exchange. This early involvement also indicates the much more extensive role the League and especially the Minority Section would come to play in the execution of the convention. According to the convention, the only role of the League was to appoint neutral members to the Commission. In the draft prepared by Nansen and Colban before the Lausanne conference, presented to the Council in November 1922, the League is not mentioned at all.¹⁷² Therefore, it seems as though it was not the intention of any of the parties (Colbane, Drummond or Nansen) that the League should play a formal role in the execution of the agreement. However, as time passed it became clear that this would become a difficult position as the League was already heavily involved in the conflict and the region: it had already accepted

¹⁷¹ Vogt, *Nestekjærlighet som Realpolitikk*, 228-230.

¹⁷² League of Nations – Official Journal, January 1923, 131.

responsibility for safeguarding the rights of the Christian minorities in Asia Minor through the Lausanne peace treaty, it had extended the mandate for the high commissioner for Refugees to also include Asia Minor refugees and it had established and financed a Commission which was set up to help Greek refugees in Greece. It would thus become difficult to stay uninvolved in the work of the Mixed Commission and the execution of the Population Exchange Agreement. During the following months, it would become clear that the appointment of the neutral members to the Committee would not mark the end of the involvement of the League in the forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey - it would in fact mark the beginning.

3.0 A chaotic start - the first months of the population exchange

Due to the delay in the Lausanne negotiations during the spring of 1923, the Mixed Commission was neither appointed nor ready to start its work until late September. A year earlier, Nansen had warned about the predicament of the Greek refugees in northern Greece and on the shores of Anatolia, and with a new winter approaching, there was a pressing need to start the exchange.

However, establishing a system supposed to organize the transport of Greek refugees and Muslim deportees, and secure their rights in the process, was no easy task, especially logistically. For the refugees, there were several humanitarian organizations present in the area, endeavouring to keep them alive while waiting for a final decision on their future home. When the evacuation started, the many international actors also posed an organizational challenge - who was really in charge? The Lausanne Agreement stated that the Mixed Commission should oversee the process, but should they be responsible for running it overall as well? Many of the humanitarian organizations present, such as Near East Relief, possessed significant resources, experience and political backing from various actors. Should they wait for the Commission to be set up, or start transporting people, possibly thereby finishing by the start of the winter?

A second challenge for the Mixed Commission was the highly precarious political situation. The idea of having a Mixed Commission running the exchange process relied heavily on the ability of the two nations involved to cooperate. Representatives of the two governments, under the guidance of the neutral members, were supposed to coordinate the execution of the exchange together as well as solve any disputes that arose. At a time of great tension and distrust, this soon proved to be highly dependent on the diplomatic skills of the neutral members.

For the Mixed Commission, the beginning of the exchange process represented a struggle to establish its own authority vis-à-vis the many international actors, and its level of credibility and trust with the Greek and Turkish authorities. For the refugees and the deportees, the first chaotic months of the exchange process would represent a struggle to secure their basic rights in accordance with the Population Exchange Agreement. It also soon became a struggle to survive. Nansen's idea was that by exchanging populations, the Greeks and the Muslims could take over each other's farms and continue farming, thus surviving without aid. The problem was that this was something that was impossible to do simultaneously. With most of the Greek refugees

already on Greek territory, Greeks and Turks subject to the exchange therefore found themselves in the same area, fighting over the same resources. Due to an exchange process that would require a minimum of administration in order to ensure the rights of the minorities, a question therefore arose: which concern should prevail - the rights of the Muslims of Greece to a fair exchange process or humanitarian concerns for the many Greek refugees with no place to stay?

The League also faced a constitutional dilemma. It had not assumed any responsibility for the Mixed Commission or the execution of the agreement. However, in addition to its responsibility for the Greek and Muslim minorities, the League had a general interest in avoiding instability in the region. It desired a robust Turkish Republic, but feared that the process of executing the Lausanne Agreement could lead to an armed conflict between Turkey and Greece. However, with the three neutral representatives in daily dialogue with the two states, it had a way of indirectly influencing policy in the region. But was it possible or even desirable to use this channel to secure its own interests? And if so, how could this be done without jeopardizing its own officially neutral position?

3.1 The first meeting

On September 24 1923, seven days after the Council had officially appointed the three neutral members to the Mixed Commission, Erik Colban invited the three chosen members to an unofficial meeting in his office in Geneva. Also attending the meeting was Huntington Gilchrist, the head of the Administrative Commission at Colban's Section.

Colban wanted to prepare the members for the challenges they would face, as well as provide them with some guidance on their obligations towards the League. The latter was broached early on in the meeting where he emphasized that "The Commissioners were not to receive any instructions from the League of Nations or from the Secretariat, and that the relations between the Commission and the Secretariat would not be in any sense of [an] obligatory character".¹⁷³ However, he added that the League would be glad to hear about the work of the Commission via reports and updates, clarifying that the Council was still concerned about the welfare of the

¹⁷³ Greco-Turk Exchange of Population Commission. Notes taken at meeting in Mr. Colban's room on September 24th 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31412, Dossier 31152, page 1. League of Nations Archive (LONA).

members, and that the Secretariat was ready to provide assistance on personal matters whenever necessary.¹⁷⁴

Even though the three neutral members were all experienced diplomats, Colban took the liberty to present some clear recommendations about how to act regarding the Greek and Turkish governments' representatives. First, he advised them to "present a united front", especially at the first meetings of the Mixed Commission where important operational decisions would be settled. He also emphasized that "In relations with the Greek and Turkish Delegations, it would be necessary to remember that the Turks were somewhat different from Europeans and looked with suspicion upon everything that came from Western Europe at the present time, that it might be best first to present provisional proposals rather than give decided opinions, and let the two Delegations take the initiative".¹⁷⁵

Colban then provided the neutral members with some more insights as to the general operation of the League with regard to negotiations between former enemies such as the Greeks and Turks. He then made a final recommendation about contacting the Greek Settlement Commission (even though the Settlement Commission was not to interfere with the work of the Mixed Commission) as it might be beneficial for both parties to cooperate.¹⁷⁶

From the minutes, it seems as though the meeting took the form of a briefing more than an actual meeting. Colban and Gilchrist had prepared a number of talking points they wanted the three neutral members to be aware of, and little communication took place the other way.¹⁷⁷ The only comments by the Commission members mentioned in the minutes were a concern expressed by Ekstrand about the Albanian population - he had received a report from the Swedish authorities in Constantinople that the Albanian Muslims might protest against the removal of the Muslims of Western Thrace, as this would cut off their contact with the Turkish Muslims. Swedish authorities were also generally concerned about the feasibility of forcing the Muslims of Thrace away from the area in a short time, and suggested a gradual approach. However, this question was not addressed or discussed any further and the meeting was adjourned

¹⁷⁴ Greco-Turk Exchange of Population Commission. Notes taken at meeting in Mr. Colban's room on September 24th 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31412, Dossier 31152, page 1, LONA.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 1-3.

shortly afterwards with the members drawing lots for the first round of the presidency.¹⁷⁸

Only a few days after the appointment of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission, a constitutional paradox regarding the League's relation to the Commission and the way in which they conducted their work emerged. However, it seems clear from the contradictory message about the independence of the Commission, in tandem with precise recommendations about what to do and how to act, that Colban had already decided to involve himself in the exchange. But how far would he go to exert his and the League's influence over the process? And how would he do this without running the risk of potentially tying the League to an uncertain result of a controversial agreement that in the worst-case scenario could end up impairing the League and delegitimize its role as an independent international organization?

3.1 Near East Relief takes the lead

As a result of the international attention on the humanitarian catastrophe following the Greco-Turkish war, as well as the Armenian genocide some years earlier, several international foreign aid organizations were present in and around the Aegean Sea in the autumn of 1923, such as the All British Appeal, the British Red Cross, Save the Children and Friends of Greece.¹⁷⁹ One of the biggest and most influential was the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, often just referred to as Near East Relief (NER). NER was founded in 1915 as a response to the Armenian genocide and the famine in the Levant, and its first efforts were related to the purchasing and distribution of food through resident missionaries and staff at the American University in Beirut. At its peak, the organization fed hundreds of thousands of refugees in the region after raising 110 million dollars.¹⁸⁰

Only two days after the first informal meeting of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission in Erik Colban's office, Widding met with Harold C. Jaquith, a representative from NER, in Geneva. Jaquith had travelled in the area as a humanitarian worker and had several recommendations about the way in which the population exchange should proceed which he wanted to share with the Mixed Commission before

¹⁷⁸ Greco-Turk Exchange of Population Commission. Notes taken at meeting in mr. Colban's room on September 24th 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31412, Dossier 31152, page 3, LONA.

¹⁷⁹ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 133.

¹⁸⁰ Watenpaugh, Keith David. *Bread from Stones. The middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism*. University of California Press, 2015, 92.

they commenced their work. First, he stressed the importance of starting the population exchange as soon as possible. He argued that the Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace had just harvested their crops, and if the properties could be transferred to the incoming Greek refugees immediately, cultivation could continue without disturbing the agricultural cycle. If not, he feared that the Muslim farmers might neglect their land as they knew that they would have to leave it sooner or later, and this would make it difficult for the Greek refugees when they took over. Jaquith also argued that this would be the case in Turkey as well, and estimated the financial loss on both sides to be at least 100 US dollars per person if the land were left uncultivated for a year.¹⁸¹

The grave situation for the 30,000 Greeks by the Black Sea waiting for the exchange was the second factor that made this urgent. According to Jaquith, NER had “fed and provided” for the refugees during the summer, but with the agreement coming into force, they were now government responsibility. Current conditions would not suffice for the coming winter and he feared epidemics and thousands of deaths.¹⁸² Due to prolonged uncertainty and delays, increased tension in Crete and Macedonia was his third concern. Jaquith also warned Widding that the Commission would “meet with many seemingly plausible excuses for delays, from one source or another. Such is the way of the Near East. Few things are ever quite ready at the appointed time.”¹⁸³ He then advised the Commission to push for the execution of the exchange regardless of protests, as “the experiences of both countries have shown during the past year - Greeks in Western Thrace, Turks in Smyrna - that the way to settle refugees is to put them on the land before all things are fully ready, and to let the people themselves participate in the final stages of housing and preparing the land”.¹⁸⁴

Harold C. Jaquith did not only advise the Mixed Commission on proceeding with the execution of the population exchange - he and NER also took the lead in getting the exchange off the ground in the absence of an operational Mixed Commission. On October 8, he reported to NER representative, Gordon Barry, in Geneva that the Turkish government had agreed to accept 8,000 Muslims from Mitylene and that the Greek government was providing them with transportation to Turkey. With regard to the

¹⁸¹ Copy of Memorandum from Mr. Jaquith (N.E.R) to Mr. Widding of the Commission for Exchange of Populations. 26. September 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31457, Dossier 31152, p1, LONA.

¹⁸² Ibid, 3.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 4.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

Greek refugees, the ships busy with the Muslims of the Aegean islands would proceed to Samsoun immediately after transporting about 6,000 Greek refugees to Greece. According to Jaquith, "The exchange of populations is being done under the supervision of the Near East Relief entirely [...] Crutcher, Davidson and two other workers are already in Mitylene completing arrangements. We expect that actual transportation will begin within two or three days, and I am proceeding personally to Mitylene - probably today".¹⁸⁵

Since the meeting in Geneva, NER had thus entered into negotiations with both governments, and had already found a way of transporting almost 16,000 refugees. One week later, Berry received a new update from Jaquith who reported that he had personally accompanied the first Muslims from the Aegean islands to the Turkish mainland and that the transfer of about 7,500 Muslims would be complete within a week. He then added: "I am hoping that the exchange commission, with whom I shall meet shortly, will understand the value of completing the exchange of 35,000 people before winter and thus relieve tension on both Turkish and Greek sides."¹⁸⁶

Jaquith personally took part in the evacuation of the Muslims of Mitylene to the Turkish mainland. This was an operation that, according to his final report dated October 23, involved 7024 individuals with all their moveable properties. It also included the transportation of 602 mules and horses, 74 cattle, 87 donkeys, 921 sheep and 136 goats. "The evacuation was completed without disorder or disagreeable feature of any consequences. The American Near East Relief representatives were given splendid cooperation in this work by the Greek Government in Athens and the Greek officials on the Island of Mytilene, and the Turkish officials at Aivelik and Ali-Bey".¹⁸⁷

According to Ladas, before the Mixed Commission was constituted the two governments had entered into an agreement concerning the immediate exchange of 8,000 Greeks gathered in Samsun for equal numbers of Muslims in Lesbos.¹⁸⁸ This is probably what Jaquith was referring to, but what was the formal role of NER, and how did it tie in with the mandate of the Commission? According to the Turkish newspaper *Vatan* that had spoken to Jaquith, NER, represented by Jaquith himself, had been in

¹⁸⁵ Copy of letter from H.C Jaquith to G.L Barry. October 8th 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31870, Dossier 31152. 1, LONA.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Report from the NER to the League on the evacuation of Mytilene. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32237, Dossier 31152, LONA.

¹⁸⁸ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 420.

Geneva before the start of the execution to inform the League about the importance of the exchange and “provide information about this question and thus stimulate the League to appoint her neutral members to the Exchange Committee”.¹⁸⁹

According to an American newspaper, Jaquith was invited by the Mixed Commission to act as its adviser and travelled with the neutral members of the commission.¹⁹⁰ It therefore seems as though NER assumed responsibility for commencing the operation in the absence of an alternative. It also seems as though this initiative was taken by Jaquith himself, not something he was instructed to do. According to the minutes of NER’s Executive Committee in October 1923, Jaquith and his colleagues were acting as “neutral agents, directors and arbiters” in the population exchange. The Executive Commission very much supported the initiative, hoping that it would help solve the problem with the Black Sea refugee camps.¹⁹¹ From the Mixed Commission documents, it seems as though the Commission accepted and even welcomed NER’s initiative, probably because they were not able to provide any alternative at the time, and it seems as though the two institutions cooperated well.

This understanding between Widding and Jaquith may not be that surprising given that NER had much experience in this area as well as contacts within the two governments, whereas Widding had little of either. NER had been working in Turkey since the First World War, and just a year before the population exchange, it had signed an agreement with the Turkish minister of the interior on performing aid work within the republic.¹⁹² Initially, NER had primarily been concerned with the predicament of the Armenian minority in Turkey and the many orphans resulting from the Great War. However, due to the refugee crisis in Smyrna and Constantinople in 1922, the organization had restructured its resources and was now very much involved in the refugees’ predicament after the Greco-Turkish war.¹⁹³

The Mixed Commission had been given full responsibility for conducting the transfer of the refugees, but no preparatory work was completed in advance and the

¹⁸⁹ Extracts from “Vatan” of October 4th. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31870, Dossier 31152.1

¹⁹⁰ Clip from American newspaper «Firts Moslems to Leave Mitylene for Aivalik. Plans to Safeguard Moving Populations”. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31656, Dossier 31152, 3, LONA.

¹⁹¹ Minutes NER Executive Committee, October 25th, 1923. Rockefeller Archive Center, NER Foundation, Record Group FA406, Series AC2010:002, Box 1, page 346.

¹⁹² Barton, James L. *Story of the Near East Relief (1915-1930). An Interpretation*. New York: The MacMillian Company, 1930, 149-150.

¹⁹³ Barton, *Story of the Near East Relief (1915-1930)*, 156-157.

Commission essentially started its work from scratch.¹⁹⁴ By October 1923, the Commission had not even had its first meeting and Widding was probably glad for all the help he could drum up. According to the memoirs of NER's president, James L. Barton, the two governments also asked NER to take the lead in commencing the exchange instead of waiting for the Mixed Commission to be formed.¹⁹⁵

The League of Nations' Secretariat, however, was not aware of this arrangement and turned to the Commission for more information. In a letter dated October 25, Huntington Gilchrist told Widding that he had received reports from NER in Geneva about their work and that he had also received media reports on "the exchange of Turkish and Greek populations, which is now, it appears, being carried out under the supervision of the Near East Relief. It was most interesting to get this information, and I hope everything is going satisfactorily from your standpoint."¹⁹⁶ He also informed Widding that he had heard from Greek sources that the Commission was inclined to go ahead with the evaluation of property first and deal with the actual exchange itself later. This had made the Greeks "not very well pleased" and the Secretariat concerned.¹⁹⁷

As far as the latter body is concerned, Gilchrist was probably referring to a conversation during the Directors' meeting in the League where a private letter from the Greek prime minister had been discussed. The prime minister feared that if the liquidation process were completed before the Turks left (he estimated this would take at least two years), then it would be too late for the Greek refugees to receive compensation for their properties in Turkey, and it might be difficult to get the Turks to leave.¹⁹⁸ Finally, Gilchrist asked about statements allegedly supplied to the Greek and Turkish press by the Mixed Commission and asked the Commission to share these with the Secretariat in future so that they could keep updated on the work and communications from the Commission.¹⁹⁹

Even before the Mixed Commission had held their first meeting in Athens, the complexity of the task they were embarking upon became clear. The task itself would be

¹⁹⁴ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 159.

¹⁹⁵ Barton, *Story of the Near East Relief (1915-1930)*, 166.

¹⁹⁶ Letter to Widding from Gilchrist on October 25. 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 311870, Dossier 31152, 1-2, LONA.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Minutes of the Directors Meeting 17th October. Meeting nr 96, 1923, 1-2, LONA.

¹⁹⁹ Letter to Widding from Gilchrist on October 25. 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 311870, Dossier 31152, 1-2, LONA.

challenging enough, but importantly there were also multiple actors with their own agendas with whom they would have to deal in the coming months and years: the two governments, humanitarian organizations, the press and the League of Nations' Secretariat. Remaining independent and true to their mandate would become challenging as these agendas did not always coincide, nor were they always clear-cut. The relief work and the evacuation of the Greeks from Turkey led by NER is one example of an initiative which seems to have been done in good faith, but it was criticized at the time for its implementation under the influence of panic fostered by prejudice against the Turks, as well as religious and personal agendas.²⁰⁰ The same applies to the extremely swift evacuation of Muslims from the Aegean islands. Why were NER and the Greek authorities in such a rush to empty the islands of Muslims?

In *Twice a Stranger* by Bruce Clark, he quotes one of the Muslim inhabitants of Mytilene who had to leave in October 1923: "The Greek Governor of the Island told us, the Turks of Mytilene, that we must gather up our possessions and leave. The Greeks in our village cried when we left; we had been working very well with them, they had done us no harm." He then recounts how his father managed to get 300 sheep across to Turkey despite the attempts of a Greek official to stop him - this was thanks to an intervention by an American observer.²⁰¹ Perhaps what seemed at the time to be the Greek authorities working with a Christian humanitarian organization to make room for Greek refugees was, in reality, more complex. Perhaps NER was simply trying to safeguard the rights of the Muslim migrants in the absence of the Mixed Commission.

Nonetheless, a warning about bonding too closely with NER can perhaps be read between the lines of the letter from Gilchrist, or perhaps the Secretariat was simply unaware of the situation on the ground and unaware of the cooperation and dialogue between Widding and Jaquith. In any case, the letter can hardly be interpreted as anything but a confirmation of the intention by the League Secretariat to keep a hand on the wheel. It also bears witness to the network of the Secretariat as well as the flow of information available to them in a relatively short period of time. Concerns about the evacuation plans, and fears of a slow and time-consuming process, would soon prove to be highly pertinent.

²⁰⁰ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 133.

²⁰¹ Clark, *Twice a Stranger*, 39.

3.2 Chaos and tragedy in Salonika

In October 1923, the transfer of refugees had already been taking place for several weeks, and the Commission needed to gain control of the exchange process. They also needed to build relations with the two governments and their representatives on the Commission, with whom they would work closely for many years. One important task was thus to have the parties agree upon a long-term plan for the implementation of the exchange of Greek and Muslim refugees. Thanks to good diplomacy, Widding managed to settle this question in a short matter of time. Judging by the tone of a telegram sent to Helmer Rosting, the man responsible for minority questions in Colban's department, Widding seems both satisfied with and rather surprised by the turn of events: "I was therefore quite proud of myself the other day when the two Powers looked like coming to a standstill with regard to the very delicate but extremely important question as to how to set about the removal of refugees: I was lucky enough to suggest a formula which was accepted by both parties."²⁰²

The agreement defined the timeframe according to which the different regions should be evacuated and which ports the refugees should gather at to be transported to their new homes. However, the fact that the Turkish and Greek governments had decided on a plan for evacuation did not dispel all of Widding's concerns about the process. To him, it seemed as though the Turkish government was prepared to carry out the convention in a "gradual and humane manner".²⁰³ The Greeks, on the other hand, were also starting to realize that it would be in their best interests to repatriate the Muslim Greeks as soon as possible, but due to the treatment of the Christians in Turkey, Widding feared for the Muslims' legal rights. According to Widding, the Greeks were inclined to want to subject the Muslims of Thrace to the same legal persecution that many of the Greek refugees had experienced in Turkey. For this reason, the neutral members had an important role to play in safeguarding the Muslim minority by "putting the brake on".²⁰⁴ In Widding's opinion, this could be done "by referring the matter to the League of Nations, the champion of humanitarian rights, rather than by merely referring to the Convention".²⁰⁵

²⁰² Telegram from Widding to Rosting on October 20th 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31412, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

With war atrocities committed on both sides still fresh in mind, there was high political tension even though the two governments had agreed on the population exchange. From these documents, it seems as though Widding had realized from his initial encounters with the parties that the protection of the rights of the minorities subject to the agreement would perhaps be the most important task. It is also interesting to see how Widding clearly believed that he and the other neutral members drew their authority from affiliation with the League, even though the League stressed in its official communications that there was no such link.

The initial agreement between the two parties regarding the planning of the evacuation was still only a first step. The next, far more comprehensive step was to gain control of and continue the actual transportation of refugees across the Aegean, with all the legal and practical implications of that. In order to do so, sub-commissions under the leadership of the Mixed Commission were set up to oversee the actual process in different locations. Each of these sub-commissions would have both Greek and Turkish members, and would be led by a neutral member, also appointed by the League.²⁰⁶ Initially, ten sub-commissions were set up in port cities of both Greece and Turkey, such as Salonika, Constantinople, Samsoun and Kozani, led by diplomats from Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Holland and Sweden.²⁰⁷

According to the Lausanne agreement, the refugees were supposed to fill in a declaration about the property they had left behind on reaching their designated port of exit, which was to be liquidated by the sub-commissions in each port. The sub-commissions were also responsible for providing passports for the refugees and permits to those who wanted to travel at their own expense. They were also responsible for distributing clothes and food, aided by the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent. The transportation itself, however, was to be provided by the two governments that should contract private ship-owners for this task.²⁰⁸

It was during the first meetings in October 1923 that it was decided that the Muslim inhabitants of Eastern Macedonia, Crete and Salonika should constitute the first group of refugees leaving Greece (after the initial evacuation of Muslim and Greeks in the weeks and months before the establishment of the Commission). This amounted to

²⁰⁶ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 421-422

²⁰⁷ List of members of the Mixed Commission and sub-commissions in 1924. R83 1923-1924, file 2, Document 33914, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁰⁸ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 421-422.

approximately 150,000 Muslims who were to be transported no later than May 1 1924. The problem, however, was that at the same time, the Greek authorities were trying to settle more than one million refugees, a group which, as a result of evacuation led by NER, was increasing by the day. The Greek refugees, who often landed in Salonika, sought shelter in Macedonia, and they were in many cases placed under the roofs of both Greek and Muslim families.²⁰⁹

They were eventually supposed to take over the Muslims' farms, but as the Muslims had not left yet, conflict was created. According to Ladas, more than 8,000 rooms in the countryside and 5,000 rooms in different cities were occupied by Greek refugees. Additionally, 127 Mosques and 667 schools were occupied for the same purposes.²¹⁰ There were also accounts of Greek refugees breaking into mosques to steal carpets, confiscating farm animals and commanding Muslim farmers to fetch and carry water and firewood for them. Many Muslims were also evicted from their homes, and as winter approached, conditions on the Macedonian plateau were worsening by the day. Many of the Muslim families thus left their homes for Salonika, awaiting transportation to Turkey.²¹¹

Salonika, located in northern Greece, had been a metropolis of different ethnicities and religions for centuries. The ethnic tension as a result of the wars in the first two decades of the twentieth century, however, had increased tensions and mistrust between inhabitants. After the victory of Atatürk in Asia Minor, many feared that Salonika would come under Turkish rule as well and that a Kemalist underground movement existed in the city. However, due to the Lausanne agreement, the weight had shifted, and Muslim citizens were being harassed both in and around the city. With tens of thousands of Muslim refugees from Macedonia pouring into the city, the situation was becoming challenging in terms of both security and humanitarian needs.²¹²

News of the problems facing the Muslim refugees in Macedonia and Salonika reached Geneva in a short time. On the morning of November 8, Gilchrist and the leader of the Greek Settlement Commission, Henry Morgenthau, met in Colban's office to discuss the work of the Settlement Commission with regard to the Mixed Commission.

²⁰⁹ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 425.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 478.

²¹¹ Mazower, Mark. *Salonica. City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews. 1430-1950*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004, 323.

²¹² Mazower, *Salonica*, 318-323

During the meeting with Gilchrist, Morgenthau informed his principal at the League that he had learned that the Mixed Commission was “moving very, very slowly and was inclined to adopt a very complicated procedure for the evaluation and liquidation of property, postponing the actual exchange for a long period of time”.²¹³ This was something Gilchrist had already heard from other sources, but neither of them could verify it or pinpoint the original source of the information.²¹⁴

Nonetheless, the source of Morgenthau’s information was most likely Venizelos himself, who was then living in exile in Paris after his political setback in 1920. He had been central in the Lausanne negotiations but had as yet no formal position in the Greek government. On his way from Washington to Geneva, Morgenthau had first stopped over in London to meet up with one of the architects of the League, Lord Robert Cecil, before staying a few days in Paris. Here, he and his wife met with Venizelos and his wife. During their suppers and discussions, Venizelos urged the future League official to expel the Turkish landlords from Macedonia and Thrace to make room for the Greek families starving in Salonika. Morgenthau had very much appreciated this information, and according to his own account, he now felt better equipped to deal with the challenges in Greece.²¹⁵

Why Morgenthau did not reveal his close ties to the former and future Greek prime minister can only be speculated upon. Perhaps he had gained the impression during his day in Geneva that the League, and especially the Minority Department, were not the right locations for strict impartiality. Nevertheless, he told Gilchrist that he was “persona non-grata” in Turkey, and for humanitarian purposes he wanted to speed up the process of transporting Muslims out of Macedonia to make room for the Greek refugees.²¹⁶ He was, however, reminded by Gilchrist of the impartiality of their mandate:

“I outlined the enormous responsibility of the League with reference to the protection of minorities, both in Greece and in Turkey, and the necessity that League officials must show themselves impartial and must recognize the larger issues at stake. Mr Morgenthau repeated

²¹³ Minutes from meeting between Gilchrist and Morgenthau in Geneva on November 8th. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32019, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Morgenthau, Henry. *I Was sent to Athens*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, inc., 1929, 86-89.

²¹⁶ Minutes from meeting between Gilchrist and Morgenthau in Geneva on November 8th. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32019, Dossier 31152, LONA.

again that he realized that he was a persona non-grata to the Turks, and that he would always bear this in mind".²¹⁷

It was particularly important for Gilchrist to point out the importance of Greece fulfilling its responsibilities vis-à-vis the minorities, as this would help reduce Turkish scepticism of the West. In this respect, officials such as Morgenthau were extremely important, because this process could become crucial for the future inclusion of Turkey in the League, which would be of great geopolitical importance.²¹⁸ From the minutes, however, it seems as though Gilchrist was not convinced that Morgenthau, who had experienced the horrific treatment of the Turkish Armenian minority, would be able to act as impartially as should be expected by a League official. From his memoirs published about a decade later, it seems as though Gilchrist was correct in his assumptions. In the introduction to *I Was Sent to Athens*, Morgenthau drew a line from Philip of Macedonia's battle against the enemy in the east to "the frightful catastrophe at Smyrna in 1922, when the victorious Turks killed Greeks by the uncounted tens of thousands". To him, the current representatives of Greek irredentism were the contemporary heroes and he portrayed Venizelos as a "modern Pericles" and his colleague, Karamanos, and the famous industrialist, Chariolos, as Achilles and Hector.²¹⁹

Anti-Turkish sentiments and pro-Greek sympathies were not rare traits in Western diplomats. Nansen had shared a similar scepticism of the Turks, and Robert Cecil, according to Morgenthau, had explained that as well as increasing stability in the region, the reason for the British government's engagement in and financial support for Greece was its duty to "repay the debt to classical Greece".²²⁰ It was thus perhaps surprising that NER, an organization established by Morgenthau, took on the task of investigating the conditions that faced the Muslims of Salonika after a request by the Turkish members of the Mixed Commission. The Commission was concerned about the current status of the stateless Muslims in northern Greece, and Jaquith and NER took on the task, travelling in Macedonia to gain an impression of the situation. Returning to Athens, Jaquith could report on the deteriorating conditions for the Muslim refugees. He recommended that "embarkation centres" should be set up in Salonika where the

²¹⁷ Minutes from meeting between Gilchrist and Morgenthau in Geneva on November 8th. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32019, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Morgenthau, *I Was sent to Athens*, 1-2.

²²⁰ Ibid, 82.

refugees could be given medical treatment and food and be prepared for departure. Jaquith also urged the Commission to speed up the process of transporting the refugees to Turkey.²²¹

The untenable conditions for the Muslim deportees also reached the world press, just as the conditions for the Greek refugees had done a year earlier. *The Globe* reported in January 1924 on the increasing death tolls in Salonica and Macedonia. It also printed a story about 100 Muslims freezing to death in a refugee camp in Salonica, and that 50 people had died of the cold even after embarking on a ship to Turkey.²²² With more information forthcoming, NER was not the only humanitarian organization concerned about the conditions in Greece. Phillip Noel Baker, the principal assistant of the secretary general of the League at the time, forwarded several reports he had received from different sources, including the Near and Middle East Association, to Erik Colban. He hoped that Colban could bring to the attention of the Mixed Commission: “the interest which is taken by public opinion in this country, and by the British Government”.²²³ The reports described that the Greek government’s rapid transfer of refugees to the Macedonian plateau, and the subsequent eviction of the Muslim inhabitants, had left more than 40,000 Muslims without shelter in a region normally covered in snow in November. The Near and Middle East Association also criticized the Mixed Commission for evacuating the Muslims on Crete and the Aegean islands before Macedonia, as these were regions with a far warmer climate.²²⁴

Colban forwarded the letter and reports from Noel-Baker to Gilchrist, underlining that he saw no harm in passing the information to the Commission. He added that “In view of the circumstances, I believe the letter should be signed by the Secretary-General himself”.²²⁵ He did, however, reflect upon the signals it might send if the Secretariat involved itself in the work of the Commission, but emphasized that neither he nor the Secretariat were in a position to instruct the Commission, “but I quite appreciate the natural view that as we have appointed 3 of its members, we should have a standing for

²²¹ Letter to General de Lara from Jaquith in the NER, reporting on the conditions in Salonica and Macedonia. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32206, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²²² *The Globe*, 28.1.1924. Special Cable to The Globe. “Thousands perish from cold in Greece”.

²²³ Letter from PN. Baker on November 17th, to Eric Colban with reports on the conditions in Macedonia. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31908, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

communicating with them on any question which is referred to us and which comes under the competence of the Commission.”²²⁶

3.3 Turkish protests and Greek responses

Not only the humanitarian organizations turned to the League regarding the treatment of the Muslim population in Greece; the Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Ishmet Pasha, also did so. In a letter to Eric Drummond which included a report from Adnan Bey, the minister accused the Greek government of violating the Lausanne agreement and asked Drummond to bring this breach to the League of Nations’ Council. Since the League selected the Commission’s neutral members, he and his government “felt that the League of Nations was particularly interested in the strict observance of the Turco-Greek Convention”.²²⁷ In the five-page report by Adnan Bey, the Turkish government accused the Greek authorities of violating a number of the Articles. First, he accused the Greeks of pressuring the Muslims in Macedonia to leave their homes before the fixed date of transfer, without the time to sell or collect or take their property with them. Since the Greek army had destroyed more than 160,000 buildings in Eastern Thrace as troops retreated from Turkish territory, the refugees had nowhere to go and were stuck in awful conditions in Salonika. Adnan Bey also complained about the conditions in Crete, where farmers had been given until the end of September to leave, and where their livestock and property had been taken away from them. According to him, the evacuation of Muslims had taken place outside of the control of the Mixed Commission, and most of the people arriving in Turkey had been dispatched without authorization. He acknowledged that the Mixed Commission had tried to gain control over the situation, but that it had “not been able, in spite of their efforts and protests, to obtain the execution of the clauses of the Convention signed in Lausanne”.²²⁸ Adnan Bey also clarified that the Turkish government held the League of Nations responsible for the work of the Commission: “The impotence to which this organization [the Mixed Commission] is being reduced by Greece is unquestionably likely to impair the prestige enjoyed by the League of Nations in the eyes of the world, and to put confidence in the

²²⁶ Letter from Colban to Gilchrist on November 18th, regarding the reports on the conditions in Macedonia. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31908, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²²⁷ Letter from Ishmet Pasha to Drummond on November 8th, regarding Greek Violations of the Lausanne Treaty. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32150, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²²⁸ Protest from Adnan Bay to the League of Nations Council on Greek violation of the Lausanne Treaty. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32150, Dossier 31152, LONA.

League to a severe test".²²⁹

After sending the formal protest to the League, the Turkish *chargé d'affaires*, Ruchdy Bey, called Colban personally to ask how soon he could travel to the Near East. Colban replied that he was not planning on going until next spring, as he wanted to wait until the treaty had come into force properly before going. Bey insisted, however, that he should go immediately as "the Exchange of Population Commission was seriously hampered in its work by the attitude of the Greeks".²³⁰ Colban then replied to Bey that the Greek members had also told Gilchrist about problems within the Commission, but that this was due to the behaviour of the Turks.²³¹

Turkey's formal protest was first brought up at the next directors' meeting. Drummond reported that he had discussed the matter with the president of the Council of the League who believed that the matter should be brought to the Council, as the Turkish Government had "spoken about the threat to peace".²³² The best way of doing this would be to ask one of the Council members to broach the matter on their own initiative. The directors agreed that this was the natural way ahead, and the Minority Section was given the responsibility for following this up.²³³

Shortly afterwards, Colban's Section met to discuss how to proceed with the Turkish protest. The memo from the meeting signed by Gilchrist does not include the names of the participants, but from the text it seems clear that Drummond and Colban at least were present. Taking into account the clear message from the Turkish foreign minister and the diplomatic level from which the protest came, the presence of the secretary-general is hardly surprising. During the meeting, the Secretariat discussed whether they should ask the Commission to provide a report to the Council ahead of their meeting. This was dropped, however, as the Council itself might want to ask the Commission for a report, and if this were done in advance, "one method of action would already have been exhausted".²³⁴

The group then discussed whether Colban should travel to the Near East as

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Memo from Colban to Drummond about conversation with Bay about travelling to the Near East. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32587, Dossier 31152. LONA

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Minutes of the Directors Meeting 12st November. Meeting nr 99, 1923, 1-2, LONA.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Memo from a Secretariat meeting regarding the Turkish protest to the Council. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32150, Dossier 31152, LONA.

requested by the Turkish government, and whether they should provide General de Lara with advice about the appropriate response to the Turkish accusations. The secretary general was crystal clear in his view that the League should not accept the increasing responsibility the two parties were placing on the League with respect to the Population Exchange Agreement, and the reason was simple: the League was not formally part of the Lausanne Agreement, and even more importantly, “We do not know to what extent the plan is really practicable, and I do not think we should do anything to make the League the scapegoat of a possible failure for the whole thing. At least we should keep the League outside of any such position until the Council meets”.²³⁵

The leadership of the Secretariat was set on “avoiding shifting the scene of action from Athens to Geneva”.²³⁶ The great challenge thus lay in the League keeping its distance from the execution of an agreement it was not responsible for and which it was not even sure was feasible, while still showing the Turkish government that it was not incapable of dealing with the challenge. The memo shows that there was a real fear of the consequences if the Turkish government lost faith in the vigour of the League: “The Turks may want ‘results’ from the Council Meeting. We certainly do not want to give them the impression that the League is useless and that, therefore, in order to secure what they believe to be their rights, recourse to direct action, perhaps of a military kind, is necessary.”²³⁷ Ultimately, the Secretariat decided to emphasize the importance of the Mixed Commission and strengthen its position, while not interfering in its work. To achieve this, it was decided that Colban should write an informal letter to General de Lara underlining the unofficial support of the Secretariat. They would also suggest that the Council should appoint one member of the Council who could enter into talks with both parties and endeavour to arrive at a solution.²³⁸

Colban informed de Lara about the complaint by the Turkish government, saying that it would be the topic of the next Council meeting. He also expressed his appreciation of the fact that “It is naturally impossible for us here to understand in any complete way the situation which confronts you in the Near East”, offering the Commission the possibility to inform the Secretariat about the situation before the Council meeting. If de Lara did not want to do this officially, “it could be sent in private to me and would be

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

used simply for the purpose of studying the question and of putting it in more satisfactory shape for consideration by the Council.”²³⁹

However, it did not take the Greeks many days to respond to the Turkish protest. In a six-page document sent to the Great Powers, and forwarded to Eric Drummond, the director of the Greek Secretariat in Geneva, Mr Colocontronis rejected all the accusations by the Turkish foreign minister. According to Colocontronis, the Greek government had given clear instructions that there should be no seizure of Muslim properties and that the migrants should be given time to liquidate their property and take their belongings with them as they wished. In the process of doing so, he emphasized that they were cooperating with the Mixed Commission. Colocontronis acknowledged that this was a demanding process overall, but that the Council should bear in mind that there were more than one million Greek refugees in Macedonia who needed to be settled before the winter. Referring to the conditions under which the Muslim refugees were living in different Greek port cities, he dismissed the picture painted by Adnan Bey; there was no proof of maltreatment of Muslim migrants, and the Greek government had even obliged Greek citizens to open their homes to refugees or pay for housing elsewhere if they refused to do so. According to Colocontronis, the conditions on the other side of the Aegean Sea were considerably worse: “Thousands of Greek refugees who are concentrated at Mersina are in terrible distress: 30,000 refugees are herded together in similar conditions on the shores of the Black Sea”.²⁴⁰ In addition to violating the rights of the Greek refugees at the Aegean and Black Sea harbours, the Turkish government was still holding several thousand able-bodied men in labour camps in the interior of Anatolia. They were supposed to be freed according to the Lausanne agreement, but remained in captivity in awful conditions.²⁴¹

Shortly afterwards, Gilchrist met with Colocontronis in Geneva. The Greek diplomat was satisfied that the Council would take the matter into consideration, but was surprised that the Secretariat was not updated to a greater degree on the work of the Commission. Even though Gilchrist explained to him that the Commission did not report to the League; “he took very much the same attitude as is indicated in the Turkish

²³⁹ Draft letter from Colban to de Lara about the Turkish protest and the Council meeting. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32150, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁴⁰ Letter to Eric Drummond from Colocontronis in response to the Turkish Complaint. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32336, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

Note, i.e. that at least the three neutral members of the Commission are considered League members, whether we admit it or not.” They shared the view that it was important to have a strong Commission on the ground so that “not every controversy would have to be solved in Geneva”.²⁴²

This episode shows that the Greek and Turkish governments held the League responsible for the work of the Mixed Commission, as well as the execution of the agreement, from the outset. For Drummond, who ideally wanted the parties to work out their differences in Athens, “shifting the scene to Geneva” was not a desirable development. Still, at a time of high political tension, he feared the consequences if the process were derailed, and accepted the Minority Section’s involvement in the process through formal and informal actions.

Interestingly, despite the harsh language and accusations by the two governments with regard to the execution of the population exchange, cooperation within the Mixed Commission was going surprisingly well. After ten days with no official meetings after the two governments had filed their complaints, the Commission reconvened on November 17. Here, according to a memo from Gilchrist to Drummond, a telegram written by the Greek members of the Commission to the Greek government stated that “good relations had been established between the two delegations and that the neutral members of the Mixed Commission had used their best efforts to make it possible to carry on work without any obstacles and in order to create a more friendly atmosphere”.²⁴³ At the meeting, the Turkish member had also ostensibly stated that he had no complaints about the treatment of the Muslim inhabitants of Macedonia. The Commission had decided upon the establishment of the ten sub-commissions and had also decided to go to Smyrna to deal with the issue of the able-bodied men detained in Anatolia.²⁴⁴

Even though it now seemed as if the major issues had been solved, Drummond still wanted the issue to be treated by the Council, and he wanted the parties themselves to inform the Council that they did not “need to bother the Council with the question”, provided that “everything was as rosy as represented by the Greek message”.²⁴⁵ At the

²⁴² Note to Secretary-General from Gilchrist after discussion with Colocontronis in Geneva. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32336, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁴³ Memo to the Secretary-General from Gilchrist regarding the status of the work of the Mixed Commission according to Greek sources. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 32286, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

time, however, Drummond was unaware that on the very same day, the Mixed Commission had decided to send the Council a telegram, including a statement by the Turkish delegates reiterating their trust in the Commission, declaring that the Turkish government “is convinced that thanks to the spirit of equity which has so far characterized its decisions, the Mixed Commission will overcome all difficulties inherent in its important work.”²⁴⁶ In a memo from the Secretariat to the secretary-general shortly after informing him about the telegram from the Mixed Commission, Gilchrist added to this notification: “This is one of many recent indications that the Mixed Commission generally seems to consider itself responsible to the League of Nations, despite our many efforts to tell them the opposite”.²⁴⁷

3.4 The initial involvement of the League Council

On December 10, the Greek and Turkish complaints were brought to the Council. Acting president of the council, Viscount Ishii, had prepared the case and written a statement which was adopted by the Council; it was then decided to share it with the two governments, as well as the Mixed Commission. The Council first pointed out the paradox of dealing with the matter in the first place, as Greece had not asked for the Council to address it, and Turkey was not even a member of the League. It also emphasized the independence of the Mixed Commission, saying that “in accepting responsibility for appointing three members of the Mixed Commission, it has assumed no responsibility for the execution of the Convention regarding the exchange of populations.”²⁴⁸ Viscount Ishii had considered the matter because the conflict could represent a threat to peace, but after receiving the minutes from the latest Mixed Commission meeting, the conflict seemed resolved, thus requiring neither action nor statements by the Council. The president therefore expressed his faith in the Commission and the important work that lay ahead.²⁴⁹

Widding had once again proved himself to be an able diplomat, persuading the parties to solve their differences within the Commission, although he added that “The waves have certainly been very high at times, and most everyone amongst us has taken

²⁴⁶ Telegram to the League of Nation Council from the Mixed Commission on its current status. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32303, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁴⁷ Memo from Gilchrist to Drummond about the telegram from the Mixed Commission to the Council. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32303, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁴⁸ League of Nations – Official Journal, December 1923, 324.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

down his trunks more than once. But even the harshest storm ceases; and a couple of days later we all go on".²⁵⁰ The transfer of refugees was also improving gradually, the sub-commissions were working well and the refugees were filling in the inventories of property left behind, in accordance with the Lausanne Agreement. The Turkish government had also started releasing the men captive since the war, and the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and NER were working to free prisoners from Turkey.²⁵¹

After a hectic and difficult start, the transfer of populations was now running more smoothly, and the sub-commissions were becoming more effective. An additional challenge was emerging, however; a large number of Serbian Muslims were migrating towards the new Turkish republic through Greece. They were hoping to come into possession of the land left by the Greek refugees, and the number of Serbian Muslims was growing rapidly, especially in Salonika.²⁵² General de Lara was concerned that this new group of migrants might interfere with the increasingly more smoothly running operation of the Commission. He therefore wrote to Eric Drummond on December 14, asking him to bring this problem to the attention of the Council and stop migration from Serbia and Bosnia immediately. Drummond replied to de Lara a week later, telling him that he had informally contacted the Yugoslavian minister and shared the concerns of the Mixed Commission, but that this was all he could do constitutionally. Gilchrist was less diplomatic in his response to the Commission, plainly explaining that "The Commission itself is not in the position to seize the Council directly of a question".²⁵³ The Mixed Commission did not represent the League as it did in the Saar Basin Commission, and "In the case of a direct appeal from the Commission, all the Secretary General can do is to circulate it to the Council and perhaps also to the members of the League."²⁵⁴ He added that as Greece was both a member of the Commission and the League, Greece was always in a position to bring a case to the League. Gilchrist later suggested to Drummond that they should approach the Commission, and particularly de Lara's lack of understanding of constitutional issues: "As the Mixed Commission does not understand very much about League procedures, Mr Colban agreed that it would be advisable to

²⁵⁰ Letter to Gilchrist from Widding on December 11th on the status of the work of the Commission. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31412, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 428.

²⁵³ Letter to Widding from Gilchrist about the request from the Lara to bring the question of Serbian migrants to the Council. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32303, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

send General de Lara privately a line, from time to time, which would help him to understand such points as might arise in this connection".²⁵⁵

By the end of January 1924, about one-third of the 150,000 Muslims that were to leave Greece prior to May 1 had indeed left. The initial problem regarding the administration of the evacuation was now less of a problem than transportation itself, and by February, the Mixed Commission started transporting Muslims of Western Thrace eastwards by train. Even though it had been decided not to start removing the remaining Greeks of Turkey until later, the situation at the ports of the west coast of Anatolia was so pressing that the Commission decided to expedite the process.²⁵⁶ The result of these two decisions was that by May 1, 180,000 Muslims had been transported to Turkey, and about 15,000 of the remaining Greeks had left for Greece. On May 9, the Commission adopted the final plan for the departure of the remaining exchangeable Greeks and Muslims.²⁵⁷

By the spring, thousands of Greek refugees from the west coast of Anatolia and the shores of the Black Sea had been given new homes in Macedonia. At the same time, Greek Muslims had been forced to migrate in their thousands from Western Thrace and the Aegean islands to their new homes in Anatolia. Initially, this process was carried out by NER, but throughout the autumn of 1923, the Mixed Commission took control of the population exchange, as they were supposed to in accordance with the Lausanne agreement.

The first phase of the exchange was characterized by the conflict that arose when thousands of Greek refugees poured into the Macedonian countryside before the Muslim farmers had been transported east. This took place in the winter of 1923-1924. Greek refugees were eager to find safety in Greece after months of war and persecution, but the rapid speed of the transfer was largely due to the fact that the Greek government, aided by humanitarian organizations, had facilitated the flight instead of waiting for the Mixed Commission to be set up and organize the exchange in a more orderly manner. However, it is important to remember that it was in the interests of both nations to have the exchange completed as soon as possible so farms could remain operational and the

²⁵⁵ Memo from Gilchrist to Drummond about de Lara's request. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32303, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁵⁶ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 427-428.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 430.

government could avoid having to care for refugees on their own territory. For the Muslims of Western Thrace who ended up in and around Salonika, Greek impatience made their lives very difficult.

Their fate also caused the first conflict related to the work of the Mixed Commission. On the one hand, the Commission was obliged to guarantee the rights of the forced Muslim migrants with regard to their property and belongings. This required the setting up of a system for the liquidation of properties, which again took time; on the other hand, due to a deteriorating situation in Salonika and Macedonia in general, they felt pressure to speed up the process. The international attention focused on the situation of the Muslim migrants in Salonika also demonstrated that the Commission had the eyes of the world on it and its work, and what cross-pressure they would have to get used to be subject to as new conflict arose around their work. But how should this pressure be dealt with? To whom should they answer and whence could they draw their legitimacy when and if it was questioned – from the signatories to the Lausanne agreement, Turkey or Greece, or the League of Nations?

To the president of the Mixed Commission, Gilchrist emphasized the Mixed Commission's independent status. Its authority stemmed from the agreement between Greece and Turkey, he pointed out, adding that "We have no intention of interfering in the least, and wish you all success in carrying on [with] your difficult task, but, as you may well understand, such information as we may receive from you makes your position clearer to those who may come to us in one way or another".²⁵⁸

A mixed message seems to emerge from this letter, as well as from the minutes of the first meeting in Colban's office after the appointment of the neutral members. The League's Secretariat emphasized that the Commission did not answer to the League and that the League was not responsible either for the work of the Commission or for the execution of the agreement. However, they also asked to be kept informed, and several times offered direct advice about how to act and what to do. Why not keep out of the business of the Commission altogether if they did not want to become hostage to an agreement they were not part of and which internal memos clearly show they did not necessarily believe in?

First, Drummond and Colban may have felt they had no choice. The first four

²⁵⁸ Letter from Gilchrist to Widding on November 16th. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31412, Dossier 31152, LONA.

months of the Commission's work confirmed what Colban may have anticipated in advance, namely that all parties would hold the League of Nations responsible for the work of the Commission and the implementation of the population exchange. Therefore, this became a test of the credibility and legitimacy of the League, even though this made little sense constitutionally or legally. This view was explicitly stated in the Turkish complaint about the treatment of the Muslim migrants in Salonika; Turkey held the League responsible for the execution of the agreement, and if the League failed, this would imply a serious loss of legitimacy for the organization. Perhaps it was because Nansen and other League officials had been heavily involved in negotiating and drafting the agreement; perhaps it was because the League had assumed responsibility for the part of the agreement pertaining to minorities, or perhaps it was because Turkey regarded the Great Powers they had negotiated with in Lausanne and within the League of Nations as two sides of the same coin. In any case, the result remained the same: the Population Exchange Agreement and the Mixed Commission bore the stamp of the League on it, whether Erik Colban and Eric Drummond liked it or not.

Second, the League also had a formal responsibility for safeguarding the rights of the minorities. Despite protests from both Greek and Turkish government officials about the treatment of the forced migrants/refugees, the actions of the two governments show that their primary concern was of a national and political character, which was not always in line with the interests of their minorities. Therefore, it was important for the Secretariat, and especially Colban's Section, to oversee to some extent the work of the Mixed Commission. Protecting minorities as a task which linked the Commission to the League can also be read in the statement by Widding where he described their task as involving "putting the brakes on" the interests of the two nations when such conflicted with the rights of the minorities and conflicted with the League's role as "the champion of humanitarian rights."²⁵⁹

The League was also concerned with safety and stability in the region. When Viscount Ishii decided to bring the complaint from Turkey to the Council, it was partly due to a fear that the parties might choose military means to secure the rights of their (future) citizens if diplomatic ones were unsuccessful. From the conversation between Morgenthau and Gilchrist, it also seems that the League was hoping to include Turkey in

²⁵⁹ Telegram from Widding to Rosting on October 20th 1923. Box R82, 1923, File 2, Document 31412, Dossier 31152, LONA.

the League in the future in order to avoid new conflicts such as those along the axis of the First World War. It was therefore in their interests to keep the level of conflict as low as possible. The involvement of the secretary-general in what may seem to be minor issues underlines this important aspect of the agreement.

The League of Nations therefore found itself in a difficult situation; if it kept out of the implementation of the agreement, it risked being held responsible for the result, with no possibility to influence the outcome. If it became officially involved, it would have a better chance to influence the outcome positively, but as the League had not approved the premises for the agreement in the first place, it would also legitimize an agreement it did not necessarily support or believe in.

Therefore, the communication from the Secretariat to the Commission does not necessarily constitute a mixed message - it can also be read as one consistent but complex instruction: Colban wanted it to appear as though the League was keeping out of the work of the Commission, while maintaining a close, informal dialogue with the Commission to secure the interests of the League, though without formally tying it more closely to the Lausanne agreement. If this was the message, it seems clear that the Commission had great difficulty understanding it. The internal memos from Colban's Section show frustration, especially with de Lara who did not seem to understand the constitutional ground rules. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that he did not pick up on the subtle instructions from the Secretariat.

Even though the communication between the League and the Commission seems to demonstrate start-up problems, the actual work of the Commission appeared to be going well. It had managed to set up sub-commissions within a couple of weeks, and had in general managed to gain control over a chaotic situation in a relatively short time. The neutral members also seemed to have good diplomatic skills, in that they managed to get two governments to cooperate that had been at war only a year earlier. They had also managed to alter the highly sceptical attitude towards the League of the Turkish government, and had proven that the League was not just a tool for the Allies and the Greeks. At a directors' meeting in the early spring of 1924, Gilchrist shared the latest results from these developments. He had recently met with the Turkish chargé d'affaires in Bern and was struck by his positive attitude towards the League, and more

importantly, he had also expressed a desire for Turkey to become a League member.²⁶⁰

The positive Turkish attitude towards the League, despite the challenges which had faced the Mixed Commission in the initial months of the population exchange, shows that Colban had succeeded in his rather complex strategy to influence the execution of the agreement. However, even more complex juridical, practical and ethical challenges of the population exchange remained ahead.

²⁶⁰ Minutes of the Directors Meeting 2nd April. Meeting nr 109, 1924, 4, LONA.

4.0 The Albanian question

The first paragraph of the Population Exchange Agreement stated that the criterion for the exchange was religious affiliation: all Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion and all Greek nationals of the Muslim religion were covered by the agreement, regardless of language, ethnicity or national background.

Both Christianity and Islam consist of a number of different religious movements, and in the Lausanne agreement, it was specified that only the Turkish Christians who were part of the Greek Orthodox Church were covered by it. The reason for this important differentiation was that the new, secular Turkish Republic primarily wanted to expel representatives of Greek irredentism, not all Christians in general. There were millions of Christian Arabs, Russians, Romanians and Serbs with no attachment to Greek nationalism and the Megali idea, and as they posed little threat to the Turkish regime, they were not included in the exchange.²⁶¹ However, for the Muslim inhabitants of Greece, no distinction was drawn between different groups of Muslims with regard to religious movement or geographical background. In a region which had witnessed constantly shifting borders for decades, this created obvious controversies as not all Greek Muslims considered themselves Greek nationals.

In the autumn of 1923, the question of the fate of the many Albanian Muslims living on Greek territory was broached. Should they also be part of the agreement, even though their origins were in a neighbouring country not part of or signatory to the agreement? This question soon reached the table of the Mixed Commission but it would also reach Geneva. For the League, this issue additionally complicated its relations with the Mixed Commission and the exchange agreement, most of all because it threw another actor, the Albanian Government, into the mix. Albania was also a League of Nations member and had its own territorial interests which were very much related to the Albanian population just across the border with Greece. For the government in Tirana, it was unacceptable that fellow Albanians' fate, and the government's territorial ambitions, should be dictated by an agreement to which it was not a signatory. It also had little respect for a Mixed Commission of which it was not a part and soon addressed the Council of the League with its complaints. Due to this, it became impossible for the Council not to address the population exchange. The involvement of the Council became

²⁶¹ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 380.

even more pressing when it was reminded of the fact that it had taken on the responsibility to protect the Albanian minority four years earlier in one of the minority treaties.

Ekstrand had warned the Secretariat about this potential problem with the Albanian minority during their first informal meeting in Geneva in September 1923. There was little response from Colban and Gilchrist, but throughout the winter of 1924, the Secretariat as well as the Council were forced to deal with it and again redefine the formal and informal relationship with the Mixed Commission and the population exchange in general.

4.1 What is an Albanian?

Albania had emerged from the Great War in a poor state after having being occupied by no fewer than six foreign armies in four years. The ensuing years had been characterized by political chaos and a new armed conflict after Italy had laid claim to Albania as a protectorate in 1917. However, in 1920, a new nationalist government drove out the Italians and gained international recognition as an independent Albania based upon pre-war borders. It also became a member of the League of Nations the same year as the only European state with a Muslim majority.²⁶²

Before the Balkan wars, the Epirus region south of Albania had been part of Albania (then as an Ottoman province) but it had become Greek territory by 1923. During the Lausanne negotiations, the head of the Greek delegation, Mr Caclamano, had declared that the Albanians of Epirus were not part of the population exchange but this was not included in the final agreement.²⁶³ It was, however, reiterated in a letter to Eric Drummond from Venizelos in August 1923 where it was stated that Greece had no intention of forcing Albanian Muslims to leave the country.²⁶⁴

Nonetheless, when the evacuation of the Muslim inhabitants of Macedonia and Epirus commenced in 1923, the promise of the Venizelos government was not honoured. According to Albanian government representatives, the Albanian Muslims of Epirus were forced to leave their homes in favour of Greek refugees from Asia Minor, and forced to hand over half their crops to the newly arrived refugees. In a letter addressed to the secretary general of the League, the Albanian delegate to the League, Midhat

²⁶² Hupchick, Dennis P. *The Balkans. From Constantinople to Communism*. Palgrave Macmillan 2002, 350.

²⁶³ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 384.

²⁶⁴ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 160.

Frasheri, blamed the Lausanne agreement and the use of the word “Mussulman” without differentiating between different nationalities for the current situation. He then asked for the League that “always pursues humanitarian ideals” to take steps to ensure that the Albanians of Greece did not end up in the same predicament as the Greeks of Asia Minor. To ensure this, he asked for the League to instruct the Mixed Commission to exclude the Albanians of Greece from the population exchange.²⁶⁵

For the Albanian government, the League seemed to be the correct recipient of a complaint about the Greek government’s treatment of fellow Albanians in the south. Whether they regarded the League as responsible for the population exchange agreement is unclear from the letter, but it is apparent that they viewed the Mixed Commission as a League Commission. For Drummond, there was only one appropriate response to this complaint; to explain to the Albanian delegate that the League was simply not the correct recipient. In his response, he emphasized that the Commission drew its authority from the Population Exchange Agreement and the two contractual parties, suggesting that the Albanian government address the Greeks and Turks on this matter.²⁶⁶

In the following months, the Albanian government was given confirmation by the Greek government that the Albanians would be excluded from the exchange. However, on the ground, expulsion and suppression continued, according to Albanian sources.²⁶⁷ In the cities of Paramithis, Preveza and Margariti, public notices had been plastered on walls declaring that all Muslims were to leave for Asia Minor. The Muslims had also lost their right to vote, and 75 percent of Muslim households had been forced to house refugees, whereas no Christian households were subject to similar demands. In a desperate letter to the Mixed Commission in October 1923, a representative of the Albanian residents of the Epirus region begged in the “name of humanity and justice to intervene in order that our civil rights may be respected like the rights of all other Greek citizens”.²⁶⁸

The lack of distinction between different groups of Muslims was the reason for

²⁶⁵ Letter to Eric Drummond from the Albanian delegate Midhat Frasheri, about the treatment of Greek Albanians, on September 23d, 1923. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32587, Dossier 31152, page 1-2, LONA.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Letter from Albanian citizen of Epirus to the Mixed Commission about the conditions of Albanian Greeks. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32587, Dossier 31152, LONA.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

the controversy surrounding the Albanian Muslims in the first place. With the complaints from the Albanian government about the Greeks not respecting their own promises, the Greek government tried to redefine what it meant to be an Albanian. According to the Greeks rather narrow definition, Albanians had to be born in Albania (within its current borders) to be defined as such. The result of this, for example, was that in the district of Chameria where 200 families considered themselves Albanian, only nine families were recognized as such and exempt from the forced exchange. On this development, the Albanian government turned once again to the League, and this time they did not accept the secretary general's rejection of their complaint. In a letter dated December 6 1923, the Albanian Consular general to Switzerland and the League of Nations representative, T.E. Blinishti, demanded that the issue be brought to the Council in the forthcoming session, referring to Article 11 in the League Covenant.²⁶⁹

Article 11 was a paragraph entitling all member states to "bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatsoever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international peace".²⁷⁰ This was thus a request Eric Drummond was not in a position to decline, and on December 17 1923, the Council discussed the Albanian protest. During the discussions, the Greek representative assured the Council that the Greek government would honour the Agreement and the promises made with regard to the Albanian Greeks. The Council was satisfied with this declaration but decided that the best procedure would be to "draw the attention of the Mixed Commission for the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Population to the facts, requesting it to hear any evidence which the Albanian Government might wish to put before it".²⁷¹

From the minutes of the meeting, it seems as though the Council shared the general secretary's reluctance to become involved in the conflict. It then decided to send the resolution and the relevant documents to the Mixed Commission, requesting the Commission keep the Council informed of the progress in solving this controversy.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Letter from the Albanian Secretariat demanding that question of Albanian Greeks was brought to the Council. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 32587, Dossier 31152, page 1, LONA.

²⁷⁰ League of Nations, Covenant of the League of Nations, 28 April 1919, Article 11.

²⁷¹ Resolution on "Mussulman of Albanian race in Greece". December 17th, 1923. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152, 1, LONA.

²⁷² Ibid.

For the Mixed Commission, the Albanians in Greece represented a difficult question. The Albanian representatives on the League's Council believed that all Muslims of "Albanian race" should be exempt from the exchange, whereas the Greeks acknowledged only people born in Albania as Albanians. The neutral Mixed Commission president, Ekstrand, was unsure what to do and sent a private letter in Swedish to Erik Colban on January 25 1924, seeking advice as to the correct interpretation of the Lausanne agreement and the differing definitions of "being an Albanian". He assumed that "the League of Nations had extensive experience in how to interpret terms such as these" and could help him with the "correct interpretation".²⁷³

Whether Colban responded to Ekstrand's request is not known, but on March 14, the Mixed Commission gave their ruling, deciding that the "Greek nationals of Muslim religion who were of Albanian origin and had settled in Epirus were to be exempted from the exchange".²⁷⁴ However, it did not define what being of "Albanian origin" meant, but decided that if necessary, "it would appoint a special body to obtain on the spot the information necessary to determine which persons should be so exempted". If controversies arose, the relevant sub-commission should postpone the departure of all Muslims claiming to be Albanians until the final decision of the Mixed Commission.²⁷⁵

The Population Exchange Agreement was replete with paradoxes, inaccuracies and national interests masquerading as humanitarianism. The case of the Greek Muslims with an Albanian background exemplifies this. Albania had, like the Epirus region, been part of the Ottoman Empire since the late fifteenth century and had a large Muslim population. In Northern Albania, many of the tribal chieftains in the mountain areas had converted to Islam to reinforce their position and gain support from their independence from the Catholic and Orthodox neighbours, while in the south, the Ottomans' presence had been more direct and continuous and led to most people converting to Islam early on.²⁷⁶ After the second Balkan war in 1913, the Epirus region became Greek territory after four centuries of Ottoman rule. Defining Albanian Greeks as people born within the 1923 borders of Albania thus made little sense only ten years after the region had

²⁷³ Letter to Eric Colban from Erik Ekstrand on how to deal with the question of the Greek Albanians, January 17th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 33969, Dossier 31152, 1-2, LONA. Translated from Swedish to English by the author.

²⁷⁴ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 385.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*.

²⁷⁶ Hupchick, *The Balkans*, 154.

become Greek territory. For the Greek government, however, it was not about nationality, but probably more about whom they regarded as potential fifth columnists. To them, Muslims who, ten years earlier, had been the loyal subjects of the sultan probably fell under this definition.

The Albanian government's appeal to the League to intervene in this matter posed a challenge for the Council and the Secretariat. Previously, the two parties as well as the Mixed Commission had turned to the League for help, but assistance in interpreting the Lausanne agreement could easily be refused as this was not a League responsibility per se. With the complaints from a member state victim to the same agreement, it was different. Especially since it regarded the protection of a religious minority which in many other areas of Europe were under the official protection of the League. Nonetheless, the Council decided to refer the matter to the Mixed Commission, but as this conflict involved so many unsolved principle issues and humanitarian dilemmas, it was apparent that this would not be the end of the controversy or the end of the League's involvement.

4.2 The Mixed Commission's Investigation

It soon became clear that the Mixed Commission would have to go to Epirus and conduct its own investigation. The Albanian representatives of the League had initially asked for the League to set up a separate Commission, but the Council had pointed at the Mixed Commission during their meeting in December. Therefore, Ekstrand and the Greek and Turkish commission members, Hamid Bey and M.P Metaxas, headed for Epirus in April 1924.²⁷⁷ Ekstrand and his colleagues stayed in the region for four weeks to collect data and take statements from the local population. In their final report, they concluded that all the people they had spoken to had done so voluntarily and had been free to express their opinions without any kind of pressure. The enquiry dealt with two categories of persons, "Moslems who had long inhabited certain regions in Greece, more especially Northern Epirus" and "persons scattered sporadically throughout certain centres, particularly in Macedonia, whose establishment in the Country is of relatively recent date".²⁷⁸

The Commission started evaluating which criteria should be used to determine

²⁷⁷ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 386.

²⁷⁸ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1601.

nationality, and looked at place of birth, language, customs, national consciousness and the desire to be part of the exchange. Language, customs and habits were ultimately considered to be secondary criteria, whereas national consciousness and place of birth were more important.²⁷⁹ Still, the Commission was not able to decide on a “general and immutable criterion”, concluding that each case would have to be dealt with individually. However, they also realized “that the vast majority of Muslim-Greek subjects inhabiting Epirus and Macedonia state without hesitation that they are of Turkish origin and consequently desire to be included in the exchange”.²⁸⁰ This must have surprised the Commission, which landed on the conclusion that those who actually wanted to be part of the exchange should be allowed to do so. Regarding the few Muslims who claimed to be Albanians, the exemption from the exchange should in general apply to all persons who “are of Albanian origin and who wish to be considered as such”.²⁸¹

During a directors’ meeting, Major Abraham of the Political Section of the League Secretariat reported on the investigation carried out by Ekstrand and his team. He emphasized their thorough work and explained the conclusion that most Muslims wanted to be part of the transfer due to “the growing prestige of Turkey” which might have changed since the Albanians first raised the question.²⁸² The reason why the Political Section had become involved in the fate of the Albanian Greeks was most likely because it was this Section that was responsible for preparing cases for the Council and the Assembly. It had a particular responsibility for matters regarding disputes between League members, and as Albania had become part of the population exchange, it seemed logical to involve staff from this Section too.²⁸³ The involvement of the Political Section which was part of the general organization of the Secretariat, and not the “Special Organization of the League” like the Minority Section, also shows that for Drummond, this was a question of great importance.

To ensure that all Greek Albanians were given fair and individual treatment, the Mixed Commission decided to set up an Epirus sub-commission, and instructed it on the manner in which it should investigate and determine nationality. After the sub-

²⁷⁹ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 386.

²⁸⁰ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1601.

²⁸¹ Ibid..

²⁸² Minutes of the Directors Meeting 2nd July. Meeting nr 120, 1924, 2, LONA.

²⁸³ Ranshofen-Wertheimer, Egon. *The International Secretariat. A Great Experiment in International Administration*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1945,102.

commission had concluded its work, it was to provide a list of names of people excluded from the exchange to the local authorities. The final report of the Mixed Commission, as well as the instructions to the sub-commission, were also communicated to the League.²⁸⁴

However, the Albanian government was not impressed by the work of the Mixed Commission and did not believe it was especially impartial as the “Turkish member does not afford the necessary guarantee of impartiality because Turkey requires to restore her depleted population and Greece desires to be rid once and for all of Albanian minorities”.²⁸⁵ The government agreed to the conclusion regarding the desire of the Albanians in Macedonia to be part of the exchange but did not believe that the inhabitants of Epirus could speak freely. They rejected taking “seriously a desire expressed by a population bewildered by the violent measures adopted by the Greek authorities”.²⁸⁶

The Albanian League of Nations’ representative, Blinishti, therefore approached Abraham, requesting once again that the matter be considered by the Council. Blinishti wanted to present documentation to the Council about the situation and then wanted the Council to present the documentation to the Mixed Commission “for such action that might be possible”.²⁸⁷ Before the meeting, Blinishti had also written a letter to Drummond, claiming that the Greek government was not acting in accordance with its own assurances about excluding the Albanians from the exchange and was not respecting the Mixed Commission’s decisions to grant individual investigations to those claiming to be of Albanian nationality. He also demanded that all houses, fields and gardens already confiscated by the Greek government and given to the refugees from Anatolia should be returned to the Albanians.²⁸⁸

As the Council had already decided that the Albanian government should present the Mixed Commission with any documentation it might possess, Abraham explained to Blinishti that the Commission was the proper recipient.²⁸⁹ Drummond, however,

²⁸⁴ League of Nations Official Journal, August 1924, 1066-1067.

²⁸⁵ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1602.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Note about conversation between Major Abraham and Blinishti regarding the Albanians of Epirus, April 30th 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152,1, LONA.

²⁸⁸ Internal memo from Major Abraham to Gilchrist regarding the Albanian protest. May 3th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152, 2, LONA.

²⁸⁹ Note about conversation between Major Abraham and Blinishti regarding the Albanians of Epirus, April 30th 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152,1, LONA.

forwarded the letter to Widding, adding that he would be grateful if the Mixed Commission could report back on any action it might choose to take on the matter.²⁹⁰ Simultaneously, Abraham sent Gilchrist an internal memo elaborating on the intention of the secretary general beyond what was in the official letter to Widding, asking the Minority Section to communicate this to the Mixed Commission unofficially. According to Abraham, Drummond did not want to get involved in the work of the Mixed Commission, but did want any more information from the Commission in case the matter were addressed by the Council. From the memo, it seems as though Drummond hoped that the Mixed Commission's members would solve the matter themselves, but if not, "and if they can only give information, that will also be useful".²⁹¹

For Drummond, it was all about providing the Council with as many options as possible the next time the Albanians brought the matter to the Council; to do this, he needed reliable information about the situation on the ground. The Political Section of the Secretariat therefore reached out to the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission, which unlike the Mixed Commission, was a League Commission and was also working in the area. After a short conversation in Geneva with its leader, Henry Morgenthau, Abraham wrote a letter to one of its senior officials in Greece, John Campbell, asking him for his opinion of the Albanian complaints. Were they true? And if so, did the Settlement Commission possess any means of sanction with which the League could indirectly intervene?²⁹² The Settlement Commission had been given land by the Greek government on which to settle the refugees, but if the land given to the refugees were taken illegally from the Albanian inhabitants of Epirus, could the League indirectly intervene by having the Settlement Commission refuse to accept the land? Abraham did not have the answer to this question, but according to the letter, the majority of his colleagues in the Secretariat did not think the Settlement Commission could intervene officially as it was there to distribute land and "not to question its provenance". Morgenthau had recommended that Abraham reach out to the Settlement Commission on-site, asking Campbell if it "could take up the matter should the Mixed Commission be unable to

²⁹⁰ Letter from Drummond to Widding regarding the Albanian protest, May 3d, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152,1, LONA.

²⁹¹ Internal memo from Major Abraham to Gilchrist regarding the Albanian protest. May 3th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152, 2, LONA.

²⁹² Letter from Abraham to Campbell about the Albanian complaints, May 5th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152, 1-2, LONA.

act”.²⁹³

If Drummond wanted to increase the number of potential actions that could be taken by the Council, this response from Campbell must have been discouraging. First, he replied that he had heard no complaints about discrimination against Albanians in Epirus, adding that the Settlement Commission had not yet received any “abandoned Turkish land” from the Greek government. Campbell acknowledged that the Greeks could in theory have settled Greek refugees on the land of the Albanian Greeks without the support of the Settlement Commission, but he considered this very unlikely as the Greek government “had no money for the settlement of refugees”.²⁹⁴ According to Campbell, the complaints about having to share dwellings and land with the refugees from Asia Minor were real enough, but they were not exclusive to Greeks of Albanian background. Greeks of a purely Greek background had also had their land commandeered and “everyone is honestly convinced he is being unfairly treated”.²⁹⁵ He also added that accepting the demands of the Albanian government would imply giving the Albanians better treatment than the “Greek nationals of Greek race”.²⁹⁶

On the matter of the possibility of the Settlement Commission intervening in any way, if the Albanian complaints proved to be accurate, Campbell was reluctant. He did not consider this to be the task of the Settlement Commission, as it only took the land it had been given by the Greek government and tried to make the best of it. Instead, he referred to the Mixed Commission as the best body to deal with this matter under current circumstances, as both parties would eventually have to agree to any solution.²⁹⁷

While the Secretariat was conducting its internal inquiries and communicating with both the Settlement Commission and the Mixed Commission, Blinishti was urging the Secretariat to pressure the Mixed Commission to ensure the rights of his fellow Albanians in Epirus. On May 27, he came to see the acting secretary general, Nitobe Inazō, asking him to send a telegram to the Mixed Commission to instruct it to take an Albanian interpreter during their work in the Epirus region. According to an internal memo, Nitobe, who had temporarily been promoted from under-secretary general in the

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Letters from Campbell to Abraham about the Albanian complaints, May 14th and May 30th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 35768, Dossier 31152, 1, LONA.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

absence of Drummond, acknowledged he was not up to date on the matter, and with Colban, Gilchrist and Abraham out of the office, he was unsure what to do. However, he did decide that “as this is a formal request from a Member of the League [...] I do not see that we can very well do otherwise than act on it”.²⁹⁸

Addressing the Mixed Commission directly on behalf of the Albanian government would neither be in line with Drummond’s approach, nor technically in line with the League’s resolution asking the Albanians to address the Commission directly. Still, this was the intention of Nitobe, but before his telegram to the Mixed Commission was sent, Abraham saw it and managed to add an important sentence to it²⁹⁹ The telegram therefore ended thus: “This message is transmitted at formal request of Government and the Secretariat has of course no responsibility for its contents”.³⁰⁰ Accordingly, he managed to ensure continuity in the official communication by the secretary general regarding the relationship between the Mixed Commission and the Secretariat.

Throughout the spring of 1924, it had become clear that the Albanian situation would most likely reappear before the Council. The two governments had profoundly different perceptions of the situation on the ground, and although Greek representatives offered assurances that they were not forcing any Albanians to leave before their individual cases had been settled by the Mixed Commission, the Albanians claimed that their nationals in Greece were being unrightly forced to leave and give up their land.

Both the Mixed Commission and the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission tended to side with the Greeks on this matter. They acknowledged that it was difficult for the people of Epirus to have to give up and share their houses and land with refugees from Asia Minor, but they also emphasized that this was equally bothersome for all inhabitants, regardless of their religion or nationality. The claims by the Albanian government that the Albanians of Greece were not free to express their real opinions were also rejected by Ekstrand and his colleagues.

For the Secretariat, it was difficult to stay out of the matter officially, even though

²⁹⁸ Internal memo from Nitobe about request from Blinishti to contact the Mixed Commission about Albanian interpreter, May 27th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 36267, Dossier 31152, 1, LONA.

²⁹⁹ A handwritten message on the Internal memo from Nitobe about request from Blinishti to contact the Mixed Commission about Albanian interpreter, May 27th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 36267, Dossier 31152, LONA.

³⁰⁰ Telegram from acting Secretary General Nitobe to the Mixed Commission, May 20th, 1924. Internal memo from Nitobe about request from Blinishti to contact the Mixed Commission about Albanian interpreter, May 27th, 1924. Box R83, 1923-1924, File 2, Document 36267, Dossier 31152, 1, LONA.

the League technically had nothing to do with the conflict; the Exchange Agreement was not the responsibility of the League, and unlike the Greeks of Anatolia, the Albanian minority was under the protection of the League. The problem, however, was that Albania was a member of the League and had every right to bring any issue regarding peace and stability to the Council.

As the Albanians went to Drummond to have him enforce their views upon the Commission, it is obvious that they regarded Ekstrand, Widding and de Lara as being under the command of the League. Even though this was not the case, it seems clear that the Secretariat wanted to keep updated on events, especially so it could prepare the Council for an official complaint from Albania. With more people and departments involved in the official and unofficial lines of communication with the Commission, it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep a hand on the wheel without being affiliated officially with the Commission and the execution of the exchange. This would soon become apparent to both the Commission and the Secretariat.

4.3 The Albanian government brings its complaints to the Council

As predicted by Drummond, the Albanian government used paragraph 11 in the League covenant to raise the question of the Albanians of Greece at the next Council meeting in September 1924. With the complex situation on the ground, the Secretariat wanted a member of the Mixed Commission to be present at the meeting to answer questions and provide accounts of the situation. This was a view shared by Ekstrand personally, but in a private letter to Gilchrist, he explained that on “account of the attitude taken up in certain quarters with reference to the contact between the Commission and the League”, it would not be possible for the Commission to be represented.³⁰¹

By “certain quarters” is not impossible that he was referring to the Albanian Government, but he could just as easily be referring to either Turkish or Greek officials. Both Greek and Turkish authorities had access to the official communication between the Secretariat and the Commission, and the parties may have picked up on the close tone between the neutral members and the Secretariat, even though much communication was private and inaccessible to the Greeks or Turks. Especially for Turkey, the involvement of an organization the Turks themselves were not part of and

³⁰¹ Memo written by Gilchrist about a personal letter from Ekstrand regarding taking part in Council meeting. August 8th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 37094, Dossier 31152, 1, LONA.

which consisted of the Great War's victors seemed provocative.

For the Albanians, however, the problem was not the involvement of the League in the work of the Mixed Commission, but the lack thereof. After Ekstrand's and his colleagues' investigations in Epirus, it seems as if the Albanian government had lost its faith in the Commission. With no-one representing Albanian interests on the Commission, and the Greek and Turkish members sharing an interest in including as many Albanians as possible in the exchange, this is perhaps not a surprising outcome. The Albanian government therefore continued to address the Secretariat, not dealing only with the Commission, despite the Council's instructions.

In a memo to Drummond, Colban reflected on the way in which the Secretariat was becoming a "post office between the Albanian Government and the Mixed Commission".³⁰² Colban interpreted this as both a sign of a lack of trust by the Albanian government in the Mixed Commission, and a belief that the Secretariat could instruct the Commission to change its position. He also considered that forwarding the telegrams and documents from the Albanians, even without comment by the Secretariat, might be viewed by the Commission as "undue interference".³⁰³ In other words, forwarding documents from the Albanians to the Commission was not a good idea if Secretariat wanted to strengthen the Commission's position. On the other hand, the Minority Section had been acting as a buffer between Albania and the Commission for a while, and it seems as though Colban still hoped that they could resolve the matter without having to involve the Council.

The relationship between the three governments was already complex and problematic in the summer of 1924, and this was exacerbated when Blinishti brought up a new complaint by his government. This complaint was related to the Christian Orthodox Albanians living in Turkey, who were allegedly being included in the population exchange from Turkey to Greece even though they were not of Greek origin. For the Secretariat, this sounded strange for several reasons. First, the Secretariat did not believe that the neutral members of the Commission would make such an error as it was obvious that the few Orthodox Albanians did not fall under the scope of the agreement. Second, it saw no reason why the Turkish members would want to include

³⁰² Memo to Drummond from Colban on the Albanian issue, August 14th, 1924. Box R89, 1924, File 2, Document 3726, Dossier 37926, 2, LONA.

³⁰³ Ibid.

the Albanians in the exchange, as they were already depleted of people on the Aegean coast and would probably welcome any non-Greeks who could fill the gap after the Greek refugees had left. Third, the Greeks were facing a nationalistic Albanian neighbour with whom they were already in conflict over the Greek Albanians, and the Greeks would certainly not want to admit more Albanians into Greece.³⁰⁴

In a number of conversations with Blinishti, Colban discussed the predicament of the Orthodox Albanians in Turkey and how one might proceed. The Albanian representative wanted to bring this matter to the Council, and even though Colban emphasized that this was a possibility and right Albania undoubtedly possessed, he recommended the Albanians speak directly to the Greek and Turkish governments through the Mixed Commission. He also promised that “the neutral members would never allow anything to happen which could be considered as encroaching upon the rights of a third country.”³⁰⁵

Blinishti forwarded this advice to his superiors, whose Consul in Constantinople contacted the Commission to discuss the matter. The Commission's response was however not very accommodating, and surprised the Secretariat. According to a telegram presented to Colban, the Commission had stated that it had no instructions from the League to discuss the matter of the Orthodox Albanians with a third state, and unless such instructions were forthcoming, the Commission would not enter into talks with the Albanian representatives. This response may seem a little strict and undiplomatic, but legally it was the only correct response; the Mixed Commission drew its authority from the Population Exchange Agreement, and as Albania was not a signatory to the agreement, there was little the Mixed Commission could do.

From an Albanian point of view, this was difficult to accept, and in a subsequent discussion with Colban, Blinishti pointed out that this was unacceptable to Albania, as the League last December had “invited Albania to present her claims to the Mixed Commission”.³⁰⁶ He also added that he had asked several times for the question to be put on the agenda of the next Council meeting, and unless the Secretariat could “put the matter right” by the next morning, “he would be obliged to ask for the question to be included in the agenda under reference to Article 11 of the Covenant”.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*.

The question of the Orthodox Albanians of Turkey did not reach the agenda of the next Council meeting, but that of the Greek Albanians did. In a memorandum to the Council, Drummond summed up the conflict and the current status. According to the Albanian government that was receiving daily complaints from the Albanian inhabitants of the Tchameria region in the northern part of Epirus, the Albanians were still being included in the exchange and were considered Turks. The secretary general also described to the Council that, according to the Albanian sources, "Albanian public opinion has been considerably aroused by the persecution[s] of every kind which have been inflicted on Albanians in Greece".³⁰⁸ The Greeks, however, rejected the accusations, and the Epirus sub-commission (of the Mixed Commission) reported that the complaints were due to misunderstandings. According to the sub-commission, the population had good relations with the local authorities and "no pressure had been brought to bear upon them".³⁰⁹

What was the realities? Were the Albanian accusations unwarranted, or was the Greek government actively trying to cleanse the region of Albanians? If so, how could this be taking place without the neutral members, at least, of the sub-commission protesting? A year later in 1925, a new investigation carried out by the Mixed Commission would prove the Albanians right in the question of the people of the Tchameria region: the Greek government was actually trying to exchange as many as 4,000 Albanians for the same number of Greek refugees from Constantinople. In 1928, the Mixed Commission would also stop the Turkish government deporting Orthodox Albanians from Turkey.³¹⁰ However, during the Council Meeting of September 30 1924, the matter of the rights of the Albanian Greeks would take an unexpected turn after a report by the Spanish Council member, Jose Maria Quiñones de León.

4.4 Albanian Muslims become a Greek national minority

As part of the Sèvres Treaty of 1920, the Greeks had agreed to a minority treaty ensuring the rights of "racial, religious and linguistic minorities". The Greeks had also agreed to Greece having its national minorities placed under the protection of the League, and that any dispute related to the minority treaty could be settled by the International Court of

³⁰⁸ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1602.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 1603.

³¹⁰ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 160.

Justice.³¹¹ The treaty did not come into force immediately, however, and it seems to have been forgotten to some extent until Quiñones de León explained to the Council that “The juridical situation with regard to the Council of the League of Nations has recently changed owing to the entry into force, on August 6 last, of the minority treaty signed by the Greek Government at Sèvres on August 10, 1920”.³¹² Accordingly, the Greeks were obliged to provide their Albanian citizens with the same rights as those for Greeks, and it was the responsibility of the League and the Minority Section to ensure this.

Addressing the Council, Quiñones de León described that the League now faced “two international instruments [...] and that the minority treaty cannot be set in opposition to the carrying into effect of the Convention on the Exchange of Populations”.³¹³ As the League now had a formal responsibility for protecting the Albanian Greeks, the premise for the Council’s involvement changed. It had prior pointed at the two parties and the Mixed Commission in response to the Albanian Complaints. Now, however, it had to deal with the matter itself. Quiñones de León thus proposed keeping the matter on the agenda, but treating it as a minorities’ question. He also asked for a comprehensive report and that the Greek government avoid “creating any *fait accompli* which might prejudice the final solution of this matter”.³¹⁴ Both governments endorsed this solution and the Greek representative offered assurances of the willingness of the Greek government to establish a peaceful relationship with the Albanians. He also added that the two countries were closely related and that even the president of the Greek Republic was of Albanian origin. The Council adopted the proposed resolution, and the president of the Council added that he hoped this would end what he referred to as a “family quarrel”.³¹⁵

As agreed in September, the Albanian question was once again brought to the Council in December 1924. The League now had the time to gather more information on the situation in Epirus, and the Greeks had so far respected the September resolution. At the meeting, Quiñones de León suggested that since “The Mixed Commission and the League thus have duties to fulfil in regard to two matters which are closely akin, it would be most desirable that the closest possible co-operation should be established between

³¹¹ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1343.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 1367.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the Commission and the organs of the League”.³¹⁶

He therefore proposed that the neutral members of the Mixed Commission should “act as the mandatories of the Council for the protection of this minority in Greece”. This would obviously depend on the acceptance of the Greek and Turkish governments as the Commission was already responsible for the interests of the two countries with regard to the Population Exchange Agreement - both governments did accept and the resolution was indeed adopted.³¹⁷ Due to this decision, the Albanians had officially become the responsibility of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission. This also meant that any future attempt to argue that the Commission was not affiliated with the League would make little sense.

In the summer of 1925, the Muslim population of Epirus amounted to some 20,000 inhabitants distributed across more than 60 villages. About 3,000 people had so far been declared exchangeable, and when Albanian origin was claimed by an individual or family, the sub-commission examined the origin of the party in question, provisionally excluding them from the exchange. The exchange process thus appeared to be taking place in an orderly fashion on the whole. However, over the next two years, the Albanian government constantly sent protests and reports to the League, claiming that the rights of the Albanian Greeks were not being respected, and that the Mixed Commission was governed by Greek and Turkish interests at the expense of Albanians.³¹⁸

Nonetheless, Widding and the other neutral members of the Mixed Commission, now also acting as mandatories for the League of Nations, continued working to finalize the population exchange in Epirus, as well as the rest of Greece. In a letter to the secretary general in May 1926, Widding reported that the population exchange in Greece would soon come to an end, and in the Epirus region, only a few unresolved cases remained outstanding. In his response, Drummond thanked the mandatories for their efforts, requesting a final report which would end their responsibilities vis-à-vis the League.³¹⁹ The report was issued a few months later, and the appointment of the neutral members as mandatories was officially terminated.³²⁰

³¹⁶ League of Nations Official Journal, February 1925, 235.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 387-390.

³¹⁹ League of Nations Official Journal, July 1926, 947-948

³²⁰ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1926, 1405.

4.5 The Albanian question compels the league to act

The start of the population exchange and the work of the Mixed Commission had been characterized by the many organizations involved and pressing humanitarian concerns. Large numbers of Greek refugees needed food and shelter, and making space for the new arrivals was crucial. The Mixed Commission's first challenge was thus how this could be done quickly enough to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe, but without violating the rights of the Muslims of Greece who had been forced to leave.

As the exchange entered a new phase in the spring of 1924, new actors and tasks added to the complexity of the Mixed Commission's tasks. The initial challenges had primarily been related to logistics and time constraints, but after the first winter, the question of exchangeability became the challenge prioritized by the Mixed Commission. The Lausanne agreement had not been very specific in its description of the minorities to whom it pertained, as the first paragraph read that "all Greek nationals of Muslim religion established in Greek Territory" were part of the exchange. But what did "established" really mean in this respect? Did it apply only to Turkish or Ottoman citizens who had recently settled in Greek territory? Or did it also apply to the many Greek families in Crete who had converted to Islam hundreds of years ago? What about Muslims who had converted to Christianity to avoid exchange? The first major controversy in terms of "exchangeability" emerged due to the question of the Albanian Greeks. Unlike other Muslims contesting the exchange, they had a sovereign state backing their claims, which was even a League member.

With a third state becoming indirectly involved in the exchange and in the controversy as to whom should and should not be part of the agreement, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the League to keep its distance from the exchange, also in official terms. Both the Secretariat and the Council tried to point towards the Mixed Commission several times, but as Albania was not a signatory to the population exchange agreement, nor was it represented on the Commission, and the Greek and Turkish governments had a shared agenda with respect to the Albanian Greeks, it was becoming difficult to remain uninvolved. The Albanian government was also pushing the League to act by involving not only the Minority Section and the Political Section in the Secretariat, but also by utilizing its right under paragraph 11 of the League Covenant to raise a matter of peace and security at the League Council, thereby underlining the importance of the issue.

Ultimately, what changed the degree of involvement of the League in the population exchange was the coming into force of the minorities clause of the Sèvres treaty from 1920. The League now had no choice but to take measures to secure the rights of the Greek Albanians. The solution was to make use of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission and appoint them as League representatives to ensure the rights of the Greek minorities. The rather strange result of this decision was that the neutral Commission members now had to organize and facilitate the population exchange in accordance with the Lausanne agreement as Mixed Commission presidents, while monitoring the work of the Mixed Commission for the League to ensure that the minorities treaties were respected - in other words, monitoring itself and its own work.

For the Greek and Turkish governments, this dual role was not problematic, but the Albanian government was highly critical, reporting up until the cessation of the evacuation of Epirus that the Albanians were being unfairly treated. It is difficult, however, to know exactly what happened with regard to the treatment of the Albanian Greeks. According to the initial investigations of the Commission, most of the Albanians wanted to be part of the exchange. This was not necessarily due to pressure or a fear of speaking out, as the Albanian government claimed. The Albanians who had lived under Ottoman rule for decades might have felt safer and more welcome in Asia Minor than in a Greece that wanted as much ethnic and religious homogeneity as possible. Also, with the west coast of Turkey emptied of people, starting afresh in a new country might not seem impossible for the Albanian Greeks. This was after all the wish of thousands of Muslims who had migrated to Turkey from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes during the last year.

For the Albanian government, the wish to retain the Albanians living in the Epirus region could also be because of territorial issues. Simultaneously, with the controversy surrounding the population exchange, the Greek and Albanian governments were fighting over several villages just south of the Albanian border, and keeping the population as homogenous as possible would probably strengthen the chances of Albania prevailing in its demands.³²¹

The Albanian question represented a definitive shift with regard to the involvement of the League in the execution of the population exchange. From now on, it

³²¹ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1635.

was not a question of whether the League was involved, more which role it should play. Drummond had long tried to keep the League officially out of the execution of the agreement to avoid becoming a scapegoat if it failed. This was a strategy that could have continued even though the Albanian minority of Greece came under the official protection of the League. After all, the Orthodox minority of Turkey had been under League protection since the start of the exchange, and the League had managed to retain its role as a protector of the Christian minority, without becoming officially involved in the exchange itself. However, when the Council chose to ask the Mixed Commission's members to act as representatives for the League, the distinction between the Commission and the League was erased.

For Ekstrand, Widding and de Lara, this may have been a relief. For almost two years, the Secretariat had actively involved itself in the work of the Commission by communicating with the neutral members, often without the knowledge of the Greek and Turkish representatives. The Commission's refusal to come into direct dialogue with the Albanian government without the instruction of the League exemplifies this rather complex relationship, and that it felt that it was under the de-facto command of the League. Ekstrand's reluctance to come to Geneva as this might provoke those "quarters" who were sceptical of the close contact between the League and the Commission is another example of how this already complex relationship was becoming increasingly so. Being officially associated with the League might therefore have made things easier for the neutral members.

It is not unlikely that this was also the case for the Minority Section. Its engagement for minorities in both Turkey and Greece seemed strong, and having the Mixed Commission's members officially working for the Section might have facilitated Colban's attempts to enforce his agenda. For the two governments, the increased involvement of the League was unproblematic as long as it related to the Albanians; after all, they represented a rather minor problem in terms of their numbers and political and symbolic significance. There were, however, other minorities of significantly greater importance to both countries and the battle over the definition of "exchangeables" was far from over.

5.0 The Greeks of Constantinople

Even though the Population Exchange Agreement used religious affiliation as the criterion for exchange, there were exemptions. According to Article 2, the Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace and the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople should not be exchanged. They were excluded from the agreement because, for different reasons, they were problematic for their respective governments; as a result, they became subject to a political trade-off during the Lausanne negotiations. However, as with many of the Articles of the Lausanne treaty, these exemptions would trigger disputes and disagreements about the interpretation of the agreement. This was especially the case regarding the Greeks of Constantinople. Compared to earlier disagreements the Mixed Commission had had to handle, this conflict soon proved to be highly explosive due to several factors: first, there was a significant religious element; second, it related to a politically and strategically important city; third, Constantinople was of great historical importance to both parties - at various times throughout history it had been the centre of both a Greek and an Ottoman empire.

By this time, the League of Nations was already heavily involved in the execution of the Agreement; the Minority Section was in constant formal and informal dialogue with the Mixed Commission as well as the two governments; and, the Council had had to deal with controversies regarding the agreement on a number of occasions. The authority of the Mixed Commission had been challenged several times, but largely due to the diplomatic skills of the neutral members, the Commission had so far survived and even strengthened its position. This time, however, the attack on the Commission was stronger than any earlier attempt and the involvement of the Council would not suffice to settle the disputes between the parties. The question of the Greeks of Constantinople remained the last significant threat to the execution of the population exchange agreement, and with much political prestige at stake, there were few peaceful alternatives to compromise between the parties. The first signs of future problems reached the Minority Section in the autumn of 1924.

5.1 Disputed territory: Western Thrace and Constantinople

Western Thrace, which became Greek territory as part of the Sèvres treaty, had in 1920 a majority Muslim population of about 84,000 people, accounting for little less than half

of the total population.³²² On entering into the Lausanne negotiations, the Turkish chief negotiator, Ishmet Pasha, laid claim to all of Western Thrace during the first session of the Territorial and Military Commission. This was a position very much in line with Turkish foreign policy, the National Pact of 1920, but the pact also stated that this should be done via a free plebiscite.³²³ The Turkish government therefore suggested holding a referendum among the inhabitants of Western Thrace, not to include the region in Turkey, but to establish an autonomous administration there. For the Greek government, this was out of the question. It was not interested in having a Turkish-dominated autonomous region within its national borders, especially as the Greek “exodus” from Eastern Thrace during the last part of the Greco-Turkish war had left most of the refugees in Western Thrace.³²⁴

Just as the Muslim majority in Western Thrace represented a problem for the Greek government, the Greek population in Constantinople represented a problem for the Turkish government; not because they outnumbered the Turkish inhabitants, but because of their important religious and political status. The Greek Patriarchate in Constantinople represented at least a symbolic challenge to the nationalist idea of national sovereignty; this was unacceptable to Atatürk.³²⁵ The Greek inhabitants of Constantinople were also a concern for the Allies, fearing for the financial and economic consequences if all Greeks, many of whom held key financial positions, were to leave the city.³²⁶

The compromise that led to Article 2 of the Population Exchange Agreement was presented by Lord Curzon who suggested that the Greeks would “leave the Muslims of Western Thrace alone, if the Turks did the same for the Greeks of Constantinople”.³²⁷ This was accepted by both parties after a debate about the status of the Greek Orthodox religious authorities of Constantinople, where the end result was that the Patriarchate got to keep its religious duties, but not its legal and political status.³²⁸ There were some limitations to Article 2, however, for the Greeks of Constantinople, it was related to when they had settled in the city, while for the Muslims of Western Thrace it was about

³²² Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 129-130.

³²³ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 33.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 48.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 81.

³²⁶ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 121.

³²⁷ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 57.

³²⁸ Tolleshaug, *Fridtjof Nansen. En norsk helt i en Gresk tragedie?*, 121.

where they had settled. Article 2 pertained only to Greeks established in Constantinople before October 30 1918 and Muslims settled within the 1913 borders of Western Thrace.³²⁹

5.2 The meaning of “established”

The compromise that led to the exemption of the Greeks of Constantinople from the exchange had not been easy for the Turkish government. The Turkish authorities thus tried to interpret Article 2 as narrowly and conservatively as possible. Similarly, the Greeks, already “swamped” with refugees, wanted the exemption to cover as many people as possible.

The section of the Article that gave some leeway for interpretation was the term “established”. The Greek government interpreted “established” as pertaining to all Greeks who were established de-facto in the city of Constantinople by October 30 1918, whereas the Turkish government was of another opinion. The Turkish government insisted that only those who had “complied with the stipulations of Turkish law concerning inscription in a local register of population should be exempt”. The difference amounted to approximately 100,000 Greeks.³³⁰

In the autumn of 1923, a Canadian technical adviser to the League, Colonel Hiam, had reported during a directors’ meeting in Geneva that there was a lot of scepticism amongst foreigners in Constantinople towards the Lausanne treaty. The Colonel, who had just returned from a meeting there, told the group of directors, including Colban, “that it would only be a matter of short time before the League begins getting complaints on Minority questions”.³³¹ Still, it was only during the summer of 1924 that the difference in the interpretation of the word “established” was officially broached at a Mixed Commission meeting.

At a meeting in August, the neutral members asked the two parties to present their views in order to agree on a mutual understanding. The Greeks argued that the word “established” should not be confused with “domicile[d]” as it referred to an actual situation, not the legal status of the citizens. The Turks, however, saw it differently,

³²⁹ Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Population, Lausanne January 30th, 1923. Article 2.

³³⁰ Memo from Colban to Drummond regarding a conversation with P. Pappas, the head of the Greek delegation in the Mixed Commission, October 8th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 39593, Dossier 31152,1, LONA.

³³¹ Minutes of the Directors Meeting 14th November. Meeting nr 98, 1923, 6-7, LONA.

arguing that the meaning of “established” was related to moving somewhere with the intention of staying there permanently, therefore also involving formal, legal registration in the city. The Greeks who did not fulfil these formalities should not be exempt from the exchange.³³²

The neutral members of the Commission sided with the Greeks on this matter, as the Convention did not take national legislation into account, unless explicitly referred to. All Greeks inhabiting Constantinople, like all Muslims residing in Western Thrace prior to October 1918, should be exempt from the exchange unless it was proven that such persons did not have the intention to stay.³³³

The ensuing debate on this issue became heated and even personal. In a report from the negotiations, *The Globe* revealed on September 8 that the Turks were “enraged” by the position of the Mixed Commission, even threatening to continue the exchange regardless of its decision. It further stated that “Possibly, this is only a bluff, but a most serious view is taken in the Greek circles, which are even going to the length of considering the possible necessity of breaking off diplomatic relations”.³³⁴

Despite the harsh language and the difficult political climate, the Mixed Commission managed to come close to an agreement. However, at the last minute, the head of the Turkish delegation resigned, supposedly informing the Commission that no one could replace him. This turn of events led to the suspension of the entire question.³³⁵ The Greeks believed that the reason for the resignation was to stall the decision, by preventing a meeting of the full Commission which was necessary to make a ruling.³³⁶

M. Pappas, who had been the head of the Greek delegation in the Mixed Commission, expressed little faith in the possibility of a friendly settlement, and asked that the matter be referred to the League. He also assumed that this would be a solution Ishmet Pasha would support. Colban, who by now most probably realized that all controversies about this agreement would end up on his desk sooner or later, wrote a memo to Drummond where, instead of dismissing the issue as not being a League

³³² Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 402.

³³³ *Ibid*, 403.

³³⁴ *The Globe*, 8.9.1924. “Trouble threatened by Greeks and Turks”.

³³⁵ Memo from Colban to Drummond regarding a conversation with M. Pappas, the head of the Greek delegation in the Mixed Commission, October 8th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 39593, Dossier 31152,1, LONA.

³³⁶ Record of conversation between Colban and Dendramis, October 14th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 39803, Dossier 39499,1, LONA.

matter, he suggested that they should deal with it in the same way as the Albanian question if either of the parties brought the matter to the League - this implied treating it as a minority problem.³³⁷

It soon became clear that the Greeks did not want the matter to be brought to the League Council, as suggested by Pappas, probably fearing that the Turks would expel the Greeks of Constantinople before the League could address the issue. In a meeting between Colban and Dandramis, the latter a Greek government representative to the League, Dandramis made it clear that the expulsion of Greeks from Constantinople was a very serious matter for Greece. On a private note, he also complained about the neutral members whom he believed should have acted more firmly, demanding that the Turkish government appoint a new head of the delegation. He also believed that for the sake of the prestige of the Commission and the League that had appointed the neutral members, it was important to put the process back on track. Dandramis therefore also appealed to Colban to force the neutral members to act.³³⁸

Surprisingly, instead of saying that the League had no authority over the Commission as he had done earlier in similar situations, Colban told Dandramis that he would consider it. He also added that he supported the conclusion not to bring the matter to the League under Article 11 of the League Covenant, but informed him that it could be handled under the minority treaty.³³⁹

Colban was not the only League bureaucrat under pressure from the Greeks. Drummond had been asked by the Greek government to send Ishmet Pasha a personal letter, protesting against the expulsion of Greeks from Constantinople and the breach of the Lausanne treaty. The secretary general had initially thought that this would be very difficult to do constitutionally and refrained from doing so. Instead, he indicated the Mixed Commission as the correct body, a decision which he expressed great satisfaction with in hindsight as the matter proved to be more complex than anticipated.³⁴⁰

According to the Greeks, their concerns about the way in which the Turkish authorities would handle the situation while a decision was pending soon proved to be

³³⁷ Memo from Colban to Drummond regarding a conversation with P. Pappas, the head of the Greek delegation in the Mixed Commission, October 8th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 39593, Dossier 31152,2-3, LONA.

³³⁸ Record of conversation between Colban and Dendramis, October 14th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 39803, Dossier 39499,1-2, LONA.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Minutes of the Directors Meeting 22nd October. Meeting nr 124, 1924, 4, LONA.

justifiable. On October 18 and in the following days, Constantinople's authorities started arresting a high number of Greek citizens "arbitrarily and illegally", according to the Greek League of Nations' delegate, M. Politis. This left the Greek government with no choice but to appeal to the League under Article 11 of the Covenant.³⁴¹

5.3 The Greeks challenge the Mixed Commission

The first time the Council had to deal with the Population Exchange Agreement and the work of the Mixed Commission was during the initial months of the exchange and this was related to the treatment of Muslims in Macedonia and Thessaloniki. This controversy was solved before it was even discussed in Geneva. The second time it was discussed, it was related to the consequences for a third nation, Albania, part of the League but not a signatory to the Lausanne agreement. This time, however, a case was brought to the League because one of the signatories did not believe that the Mixed Commission would be able to resolve the unfolding controversy and situation on the ground. For the neutral members of the Mixed Commission, the Greek appeal to the League seemed provocative. It also did not help that several Greek newspapers had reported, before the Council meeting in Brussel, that the neutral members of the Commission would be dismissed.³⁴²

The Council meeting commenced with a statement by the Greek representative, Politis, accusing the Turkish government of attempting to influence the Mixed Commission and of deporting Greek citizens illegally from Constantinople. He also reiterated that the word "established" was not interpretable in any other way than "actual presence". Politis affirmed his belief in the impartiality of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission and their competence, while insinuating that the Commission was not up to the task.³⁴³ For the Greek government, the disagreement about the Greeks of Constantinople did not represent a purely legal matter but pertained to "The general application of the Treaty of Lausanne and of the instruments annexed thereto. It concerns the spirit in which these instruments are applied every day which are of importance to a number of persons. [...] For this reason it still appeals to the League of Nations for its intervention and support".³⁴⁴ The lack of confidence in the Commission

³⁴¹ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1663.

³⁴² Letter to Rosting from Widding regarding the Council debate on the Greeks of Constantinople, December 17th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 41117, Dossier 31152, 1, LONA.

³⁴³ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1664.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

was obvious and Politis therefore asked the Council to place the Greek minority in Constantinople under its protection and ensure the “loyal application of the Treaty”.³⁴⁵

After Politis, there was a statement by the Turkish representative, Fethy Bey, who denied the Greek representative’s accusation of the Turkish government hindering the work of the Mixed Commission. He also denied that any Greek citizens had been exchanged without a decision by the Constantinople sub-commission. Fethy Bey declared his full support for the Commission, adding that he “should be glad if the representative of the Greek Government would make a similar declaration regarding the recognition of the competence of that Commission”.³⁴⁶

With two highly conflicting views on the latest development, the president asked General de Lara, who had been asked to attend the meeting, to give his opinion on the matter. De Lara first explained that the interpretation of the word “established” had been discussed and that various solutions had been proposed. It had also been referred to the Legal Section of the Commission for interpretation, and the reason why it remained unsettled was because of the absence of the Turkish member, and also due to the illness of a Greek representative. According to de Lara, the question was still under discussion, and the Commission was drawing closer to an agreement. The Greek accusations of random arrests and deportations were rejected by de Lara who assured the Council that only those who were undoubtedly part of the exchange had so far been deported. De Lara also took the opportunity to remind the Council of Article 12 of the Convention, empowering the Mixed Commission to “solve on its own authority all the questions referring to that Convention”. For de Lara, it was difficult to understand why this matter had been brought to the Council “over the head[s] of the Mixed Commission to even such a high tribunal as the League of Nations”.³⁴⁷

De Lara, to Colban’s frustration, had earlier not wholly understood that his Commission did not draw its authority from the League - now, however, he fully understood the autonomy of his Commission. Perhaps this was a result of the Minority Section’s successful tutoring of de Lara in international politics and constitutional ground rules, or perhaps he only wanted the support of the Secretariat and not the interference of the Council. Either way, Viscount Ischii soon took the floor and spoke on

³⁴⁵ League of Nations Official Journal, October 1924, 1665.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 1666.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 1665-66.

behalf of the Council: "I think, however, that it is not necessary or indeed desirable, for the Council to express any opinion on the events of the past. I believe we should concentrate on the future. I am, therefore, most happy to note that the Greek and Turkish Governments are agreed that the Commission should be in a position to proceed with its task without being hampered in any way".³⁴⁸

The Council clearly did not see it as its role to mediate in a conflict where the parties had already been provided with neutral members to solve disputes such as this, and sent a message to both governments that could not be misinterpreted. Viscount Ishii added that the Mixed Commission always had the possibility to ask the International Tribunal in The Hague for help in the legal interpretation of the Agreement. Regarding the Greek plea to place the Constantinople Greeks under the protection of the League, which had been met during the discussion with a similar request by the Turkish delegation regarding the Muslims of Western Thrace, Ishii explained that such a request required extensive investigation. In addition, as these concerns had been raised for the first time during this meeting, it would have to be postponed until the next Council meeting.³⁴⁹

The Commission was pleased with the council's support. In a personal letter in Danish to Rosting, Widding enthusiastically stated that the Commission was now stronger than ever, despite the Greek government's attempt to have it dissolved.³⁵⁰ Widding considered "the Council decision on our behalf an immense advantage, although quite natural".³⁵¹ The Danish diplomat had already thought of the possibility of referring the matter to the Tribunal in The Hague, as the matter had sparked much emotion and engagement on both sides. He believed that a decision by The Hague would help the situation regardless of its ruling, as "it will be accepted with more resignation should it go against them and with more satisfaction if it be in their favour".³⁵²

As with the question of the Greek Albanians, the Minority Section had kept the secretary general updated by providing him with the letter from the Mixed Commission, as well as letters of a more private nature. Drummond responded to Rosting on one of these occasions, instructing him to tell Widding that "nothing which was done at

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 1669.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Letter to Rosting from Widding regarding the Council debate on the Greeks of Constantinople (Danish), November 14th, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 41117, Dossier 31152,1, LONA.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

Brussels was inspired by any doubts as to the wisdom or impartiality of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission".³⁵³

Perhaps the Greeks had thought that weakening, or ideally, dissolving the Mixed Commission would lead to the Council becoming more involved. For Greece, this could be advantageous as the sympathy of the Council was largely more with Greece than with Turkey, but since Turkey was not even a member of the League, it would become difficult to make decisions on its behalf. Therefore, the Council indicated that the Permanent Court should resolve the legal issue, whereas the Mixed Commission should implement it. This support quelled any uncertainty regarding the international legitimacy of the Commission, reiterated by Drummond in his letter to Rosting.

5.4 The ruling of the Permanent Court of International Justice

Shortly after the Council meeting, the Mixed Commission convened in Constantinople, and this time all members were present. The interpretation of "established" was discussed again, but no agreement was reached. However, with the Council's recommendation fresh in the delegates' minds, it was decided without any protest to ask the Permanent Court of International Justice for advice. It was also mutually understood that the ruling of the Court should be awaited before doing anything about the people in question.³⁵⁴ As the League had offered to facilitate the request to the Court, the Mixed Commission contacted the Minority Section to learn how to proceed; on December 18, the acting director of the Legal Section, McKinnon Wood, wrote a letter asking the Court to supply an advisory opinion on the matter.³⁵⁵

As this was regarded as an urgent matter, the Court assembled early in January 1925 during an extraordinary session. The two parties were given the opportunity to present their cases, which both Politis and Ruchdi Bey did. The Court initially considered that the meaning of the word "established" (*établis*) had to be interpreted in the context in which it was used in Article 2 in the Population Exchange Agreement, and not debated in more general terms.³⁵⁶ Its first conclusion was that the word had to be understood as it "refers to a situation of fact constituted, in the case of the persons in question, by

³⁵³ Letter to Rosting from Drummond regarding the work of the Mixed Commission and the issue of the Greeks of Constantinople, December 3d, 1924. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 41117, Dossier 31152,1. LONA

³⁵⁴ Report from the Mixed Commission to the League Council on the progress on the matter of the Greeks of Constantinople. Box R84, 1924, File 2, Document 41101, Dossier 31152,1, LONA.

³⁵⁵ Letter from McKinnon Wood to the Permanent Court of International Justice regarding the matter of the Greeks of Constantinople, December 18th, 1924. Box 84, 1924, File 2, Document 40528, Dossier 39799, LONA.

³⁵⁶ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 406.

residence of a lasting nature". Therefore, it concluded that the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople might be considered "established" if they had arrived prior to October 30 1918 with "the intention of residing there for an extended period".³⁵⁷ Regarding the many individual cases that would arise, the Court underlined that the Mixed Commission alone was competent to investigate whether a person fell under the definition of "established", as long as the definition provided by the Permanent Court was met. The advisory opinion of the Court was communicated officially to the League of Nations' Council at its next session.³⁵⁸

During this session, Viscount Ishii declared his hope that the opinion of the Court would ease the work of the Mixed Commission, adding that he hoped the Commission would "attribute to this Opinion the same high value and authority which the Council always gave to the Opinions of the Permanent Court of International Justice".³⁵⁹ The Greek and Turkish representatives supported this statement, with Caclamanos adding that he would like Ishii's statement to be added to the letter to the president of the Mixed Commission.³⁶⁰

This decision by the International Court of Justice settled the sensitive issue of the Greeks of Constantinople in favour of the Greeks. The fact that both parties accepted the ruling, and consequently the authority of the Court, demonstrates how far international law had come as early as 1924, less than two years after it first had been established. Still, for the Turkish government, the Greek citizens were only part of the problem. For the Turkish Nationalist government, what the Greeks' presence in Constantinople symbolized was just as important. During the Ottoman Empire, the Greek minority had enjoyed a large degree of legal and religious autonomy under the rule of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The desire to get rid of as much as possible of the Greek heritage in the former capital, was therefore also a way of confronting its own history and the old rule and traditions of the Sultanate; Atatürk wanted a Turkey for the Turks, and not a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire as it had been under the rule of the Sultan, were the Greek minority had enjoyed significant political and economic influence.

³⁵⁷ Collection of advisory opinions. Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations. Publication of the Permanent Court of International Justice, Series B, nr 10, February 21st 1925, 25-26.

³⁵⁸ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 406.407-408.

³⁵⁹ League of Nations Official Journal, March 1925, 441-442.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Ishmet Pasha had managed to strip the Patriarch of his legal and political authority during the Lausanne negotiations, but lost the fight over his presence and his religious authority. The Turkish government had now also lost over the interpretation of the term “established”. During the winter of 1925, however, the regime made one last attempt to secure a symbolic victory in the struggle against Greek influence in Constantinople.

5.5 The removal of the Patriarch

On the morning of January 30 1925, the Turkish authorities in Constantinople ordered His Holiness Constantine, the ecumenical Patriarch and Archbishop of Constantinople, to leave the city, and transported him against his will to the Greek border.³⁶¹ This was bound to cause problems, and it did not take many days until it had created a lot of public attention on both sides of the Aegean Sea. During a directors’ meeting of the League Secretariat four days later, Drummond informed his team that he expected the Greeks to use Article 11 to put the matter to the Council. He hoped that the situation would allow for it to wait until the next Council Meeting in March, or else they would have to arrange for an extraordinary meeting. He added that he considered that “in provisions of the Covenant, the Greek Government could hardly go to war without first appearing before the Council”.³⁶²

As Drummond had anticipated, the expulsion of the Patriarch had strongly provoked the Greek government.³⁶³ For Greeks living in Greece and abroad, the Patriarch was not only a religious symbol, but had also become an important institutional figure in helping Greek refugees in Asia Minor survive after the Greco-Turkish War.³⁶⁴ His expulsion was therefore regarded as a serious provocation which drew attention beyond Greece and Turkey. On February 3, *The Globe* published an article from its Geneva office stating that the deportation had not been ordered nor accepted by the Mixed Commission, and that the Greek government would bring the matter to the Council under Article 11.³⁶⁵ This proved to be correct and soon afterwards the government addressed the League Council, claiming the expulsion was not only a

³⁶¹ League of Nations Official Journal, April 1925, 478-482.

³⁶² Minutes of the Directors Meeting 4th February. Meeting nr 129, 1925, 7, LONA.

³⁶³ League of Nations Official Journal, April 1925, 478-482.

³⁶⁴ Minutes from the Near East Relief Executive Committee, May 16th, 1923. Rockefeller Archive Center, Collection: NER Foundation, Record Group FA406, Series AC2010:002, Box 1.

³⁶⁵ *The Globe*, 3.2.1925, “Greece will appeal to the Nation’s League”.

breach of the Lausanne treaty but also an attack on the Patriarchate.³⁶⁶

The Turks viewed this differently, claiming that the expulsion of Constantine was merely the result of the provisions laid down in Article 2 of the Convention; the Patriarch was simply one of the many Greeks of Constantinople who had “established” himself in the city after 1918. As there was no clause in the Convention regarding status or office, he was no different from “hundreds of thousands of Turks and Greeks [...] exchanged without any regard whatsoever being paid either to their status or their office”.³⁶⁷ The Turkish government, that had “the greatest respect for the League of Nations”, did not want to appear before the Council in this case, as the question of exchangeability was a matter where the Mixed Commission had full authority, and the status of the Patriarchate as an institution was an internal Turkish affair. They were also critical of the Greeks claiming the threat of war each time a decision did not go in their favour, and hoped that the matter would not be brought to the Council as this would set a dangerous precedent.³⁶⁸

The Council did not share the view of the Turkish government on the latter argument. Perhaps because as indicated by Drummond in the Directors’ meeting, the plea from Greece to address the issue as a matter of political stability and peace, was considered highly real. Therefore, the Council decided to discuss the matter, but the result of the discussion was again to address the Permanent Court of International Justice. However, the Council did also encourage the parties to try to find a solution to the problem themselves.³⁶⁹

Despite the seriousness of the matter and the heightened feelings on both sides, the Mixed Commission managed to arrive at a compromise both parties could accept within a few months. In a letter from June 1925, Dendramis informed Drummond that he was withdrawing the Greek complaints, and asked the secretary general to inform the Court in the Hague that it was no longer necessary to hear its opinion. The rather simple solution to the problem was that the Greeks had accepted the expulsion of the Patriarch as he had abdicated from his position, and in return, the Turkish government accepted that there would be an election for a new Patriarch.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ League of Nations Official Journal, April 1925, 478-482.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 416.

³⁷⁰ League of Nations Official Journal, July 1925. Annex 763, 895.

5.6 The Mixed Commission is strengthened

The ruling of the Court on the interpretation of “established” laid down important principles on which the Mixed Commission could base its work. The solution to the expulsion of the Patriarch of Constantinople also settled the last important question regarding the Greek presence in the old capital of the Ottoman Empire. Still, these challenges were only two of many that the Commission faced. The criterion of religion in the exchange kept returning as a problem, and in Crete for instance, there were several examples of Muslims converting to Christianity to avoid the exchange. The converts drew little sympathy with both the Turkish representatives who did respect fellow Muslims who gave up their faith, and the Greeks who wanted their property for settlement of Greek refugees. The final decision was therefore that only people who had converted prior to the signing of the Lausanne agreement was excepted.³⁷¹

An additional question was the status of people who had fled or emigrated prior to the Greco-Turkish war. What should happen to their land and properties? And how far back in time could Greeks or Turks have fled before no longer being eligible for compensation? There was also a discussion about which towns and islands could be counted as part of Constantinople, and whether certain religious authorities should be included in or excluded from the exchange.³⁷²

The reason for the many controversies was clear - the Lausanne Convention and its 19 points, written during hasty negotiations, were simply not precise enough. According to the Turkish historian, Onur Yildirim, the agreement “was pregnant with many complications owing to the very fact that while crafting the provisions, the decision makers in Athens and Ankara did not take into account the actual dynamics of the possible consequences of the issues at stake”.³⁷³

From the start of the exchange process, the Mixed Commission therefore had to deal with numerous problems, some of which it managed to solve internally and briefly, and others which had to be discussed between the two governments outside of the Commission. Some were also brought to the Council and the Permanent Court of International Justice. However, by the summer of 1925, many of the most important controversies had been solved and the result was the Ankara Convention, where all

³⁷¹ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 391-392.

³⁷² *Ibid*, 377-401.

³⁷³ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 108-109.

these provisions were laid out, marking in many ways the end of the first period of the population exchange. This was later followed by the Athens Convention in 1927 and the second Ankara Convention in 1930.³⁷⁴

By the summer of 1925, the Mixed Commission had been working for almost two years, and most of the people who were to be exchanged from both Greece and Turkey had indeed been exchanged. Regarding the liquidation of property and land, much work remained, and the Commission would continue its work for almost another decade. However, perhaps the most important initial conflicts had been settled, and with the signing of the Ankara Convention in June 1925, the exchange entered a new phase.³⁷⁵

From the outset, the neutral members of the Mixed Commission had been under a difficult pressure from the various governments, as well as the humanitarian organizations, the media and others. Even though they drew their legitimacy from the Lausanne agreement, and in theory they only had to answer to it and its signatories, it soon became clear that the League of Nations, and especially the Minority Section, would play an important role in their work. The members themselves had close relations with the various members of Erik Colban's Section and consulted the League several times when difficult questions arose. The Greeks and Turks also regarded the neutral members as representatives of the League, even though both the neutral members and the League Secretariat clearly communicated that this was not the case.

However, by 1925, it seems as though Colban and his staff were becoming less concerned with officially distancing themselves from the neutral members of the Mixed Commission, and also from the execution of the Lausanne agreement. They had by then been involved in both the initial problems of the Greek refugees and the Muslims of Macedonia not yet exchanged, and the question of the Albanian Greeks. Colban, Gilchrist and Rosting were all discussing with and advising the Greek and Turkish governments as well as the neutral members.

The Council also had to deal with controversies regarding the Lausanne agreement but the role of the Council was very different from that of the Secretariat. The bureaucrats in Geneva acted largely as advisors, endeavouring to get the governments of the two states to understand how the international system worked and how disagreements should be dealt with. It was obvious that many of the representatives of

³⁷⁴ Yildirim, *Diplomacy and Displacement*, 102-103.

³⁷⁵ Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 371.

the two states involved did not completely understand the “game rules” of international diplomacy, nor the role of the various actors and organizations.

The Council, on the other hand, could not or would not involve itself in matters outside of its competency. Therefore, it dismissed the complaints related to the internal cooperation problems within the Mixed Commission in 1923. It dealt with the treatment of Albanians living in Greece, but this was because it regarded a League member becoming a victim to an agreement it was not part of, and a minority that would soon come under the protection of the League. The question of the Greeks of Constantinople was in the same category as the first attempt to involve the League Council, and the Secretariat therefore advised the Greek government not to bring the matter to the Council. The conflict pertained to the interpretation of an agreement to which Greece itself had agreed, and which had nothing to do with the League. The Lausanne agreement also entailed that any controversies should be dealt with by the Mixed Commission, and according to the Agreement, the Commission was given full authority to interpret it and deal with disputes. The decision to ask the League to intervene in the matter therefore indicates a lack of confidence in the Commission and it is not surprising that the neutral members of the Commission also regarded it as an attack by the Greeks.

The Greek government argued that using Article 11 in the Covenant was necessary as the Turkish police were already expelling Greek citizens from Constantinople, posing a real threat to peace and stability in the region. However, according to the neutral members and the Turkish representatives, this was not the case, which strengthens the notion that bringing the matter to the Council was an attempt to have the Commission dissolved. This did not occur, however, as the Council had now - as earlier - no intention of intervening in the conflict, instead indicating the Mixed Commission as the relevant addressee for disagreements about the interpretation of the Agreement. Nonetheless, it provided some guidance in that it indicated that the International Court of Justice represented a means to deal with juridical controversies.

After this process, the Mixed Commission was stronger than ever, a position emphasized by the way it solved the difficult disagreement regarding the Patriarch of Constantinople a couple of months later. The Commission was now also better equipped to continue its important work regarding the liquidation of properties of both Greek and Turkish refugees and migrants. It had survived two difficult and demanding years, where the Lausanne agreement, as well as the peace and stability of the region, had been

at stake. It had done so by way of the impressive diplomatic work carried out by the neutral members Ekstrand, Widding and de Lara, supported, motivated and advised by Gilchrist, Rosting and Colban at the Minority Section of the League of Nations' Secretariat.

6.0 Conclusion

The Greco-Turkish population exchange represented one of the most important events in the history of Greco-Turkish relations in the twentieth century. It also represented one of the most extensive forced displacements of people in modern European history.

Due largely to the violent conflict and the humanitarian crisis which led to the decision to force more than 1.4 million people to move, the population exchange was long surrounded with taboos. Even though the exchange is still a controversial part of the collective memory of both nations, these taboos have gradually lifted.

In the last two decades scholars from both countries have studied the events and the consequences the exchange entailed for the people and nations involved. First, they have tried to understand what actually happened and how it affected the lives of those who were forced to move or flee. Second, they have tried to find explanations as to why it happened. Their perspective has often been related to the Great Power politics which led to the Lausanne negotiations, and the cultural, political and religious context that allowed the two states to agree upon the exchange. In this sense, increased nationalism on both sides of the Aegean Sea, and especially the emergence of a new, strong Turkish republic from the vestiges of the defeated Ottoman Empire, have been important parts of the explanation.

The interwar years in many ways represented a breakthrough for international cooperation, with the League of Nations often as the centre of gravity. The League consisted of branches which were political (the League Council), legal (the Permanent Court of International Justice) and bureaucratic (the League Secretariat), set up by the victors of the Great War to prevent new wars through international cooperation and the establishment of international rules and legislation. The establishment of the League constituted a paradigmatic shift in the way in which states related to each other, which survived the radicalization of international politics in the 1930s as well as the Second World War, even though most of the League itself did not.

In this thesis, I have approached the Greco Turkish population exchange from a transnational perspective, not by looking primarily at what it meant for the involved states, but at what it meant and how it may be understood as part of the evolution of international relations in the interwar years. In this respect, I have been particularly interested in the Secretariat of the League, and even more specifically in the

International Commissions and Minority Questions Section which emerged as a central actor in the Greco-Turkish population exchange.

6.1 How and why did the League of Nations get involved?

The first research question in this thesis was to what extent, how and why the League involved itself in the process.

In most of the literature on the population exchange, the League has primarily been given a role in the negotiations of the Lausanne treaty, not in its execution. It has been documented that some of the controversies that occurred during the exchange reach the League Council as well as the Permanent Court of International Justice, but little has been written about the involvement of the Secretariat. The most likely reason for this is that the extensive correspondence between the independent Mixed Commission established by the parties to oversee the exchange and the Minority Section has not yet been studied. Consequently, an important part of understanding how the treaty was carried out, and perhaps also why it was completed, has been lacking.

In this thesis, I have presented a number of letters, memos, proceedings and notes regarding the execution of the agreement and the work of the Mixed Commission, suggesting that the involvement of the Minority Section of the League was significant. It is also clear from this archive material that it was involved from the outset. From September 1923, the Minority Section, led by the Norwegian diplomat, Erik Colban, kept in close contact with the Mixed Commission, providing them with advice and support as to how best to carry out their tasks. This was done through unofficial channels, as the League had no formal responsibility for the Population Exchange Agreement and the Secretariat did not want to become officially associated with the work of the Mixed Commission.

One initial challenge for the Commission was to establish its authority as the organization responsible for the execution of the agreement. At this time, multiple actors with different agendas were present and active in the region, aiding but also complicating the process. Many of them, such as NER, had long experience of the area and contacts in both governments locally and centrally. The neutral members of the Commission, appointed to act as impartial mediators between the Greek and Turkish commission members, were in contrast not especially well prepared for the task they were assigned. On the contrary, they were largely thrown into a complex conflict where time was scarce and political tension ran high. Due to the initial Greek and Turkish

complaints to the Council, the Commission did not have the best start, but thanks to impressive diplomatic skills, especially by the Danish diplomat, Karl Marius Widding, and the support and advice from the Minority Section, the Commission survived the first hectic months and gained control over the situation in a way that was respected by both parties. This involved setting up local sub-commissions to organize the exchange at the different ports of Greece and Turkey, and generally taking control of the transfer of people in accordance with the exchange agreement.

The second challenge for the Mixed Commission was the question of the Albanian Greeks. Should Muslims of another nationality living in Greece also be part of the exchange? Here too the neutral members of the Commission were placed under great pressure by the parties involved and tensions ran high during the meetings. This was a complicated matter as it related not only to Greco-Turkish relations, but also the interests of Albania, a sovereign state and a member of the League of Nations, but not a signatory to the population exchange agreement.

The Commission was placed in an even more difficult position when it was asked by the League Council to act as mandatories for the Albanian minority, while coordinating the exchange of Muslims in accordance with the population exchange agreement. Still, despite continuous protests by Albania, the Commission managed to continue its work and the neutral members kept the Commission together. However, the Albanian question did partly change the way the League Secretariat communicated with and related to the Mixed Commission. With its new dual role, it was difficult to maintain the official status of not intervening or involving itself in the execution of the agreement as it had done so far. Consequently, what most of the people involved had long known became more obvious: namely that the League's involvement with the Mixed Commission did not end with the appointment of its members.

The final challenge was the question of the Orthodox Greeks and the Patriarch in Constantinople. The Greek citizens of Constantinople were originally excluded from the exchange, but how should being a citizen of the city be defined and what was the position of the Patriarch? This was perhaps the most important symbolic controversy and it soon became clear that even though the parties had agreed in Lausanne two years earlier about a solution for these people, the issue remained unsettled. The Greek government thus challenged the authority of the Commission and brought the matter to the Council. The Council had already indicated that the Commission should be addressed

whenever a complaint was raised by either party, but this time the authority of the Commission was confirmed by the Permanent Court of International Justice. This seems to have settled once and for all the question of the legitimacy of the Commission, and in the ensuing nine years it could embark upon liquidating the property of the people of both Greece and Turkey who had been subject to the agreement.

After 1925, the number of documents in the League of Nations' archive relating to the exchange decreases, and there were fewer documents from the period 1925-1934 than from the period 1923-1925. The most likely explanation is that after the signing of the Angora treaty in 1925, the most controversial issues had been solved, and there was less need for League intervention in order to keep the process on track.

The majority of the workload of Colban's Section either pertained to minority treaties guaranteed by the League, or to the Administrative Commissions under their control. Breaches of the minority treaties could be brought to the Council of the League, but according to the literature, such breaches were usually dealt with by the Minority Section, travelling to the countries in question and negotiating a solution without involving the Council. The hallmarks of this silent diplomacy were discretion, perseverance and a rather extraordinary ability to create and maintain good relationships with all parties. In examining the way in which section members such as Huntington Gilchrist, Hjalmar Rosting and Erik Colban dealt with the execution of the Population Exchange Agreement, it seems as though they attempted to, and also long, succeeded in implementing the same approach in this case. In other words, they treated controversies arising from the implementation of the population exchange agreement in the same way as they did all questions pertaining to minorities. Here, however, the strategy proved to be more difficult for three reasons.

First, because Colban and his colleagues could not directly involve themselves in the execution of the agreement and could only advise the neutral members of the Mixed Commission about what to do. The neutral members did not necessarily understand the *modus operandi* of the Section, however. This was particularly apparent with the Spanish Commission member, de Lara, but frustration with the other neutral members of the Commission in members of the Minority Section can also easily be read in and between the lines of internal communications within the Secretariat.

Second, maintaining silent diplomacy was difficult due to the high number of actors involved. Normally, the Section had to deal with one government and one

minority; here, however, they had to deal with three and even four governments at the same time, as well as a number of different minorities. In practical terms, it was also difficult to keep confidential letters and notes only meant for the neutral members, as the rest of the Commission was entitled to see all official communication between it and the League.

The third reason to why it was difficult for the Minority Section to approach the Greco-Turkish population exchange in the same way as they treated other minority questions, was the high number of treaties and agreements that were sometimes even in conflict with each other. The Albanian question is a good example of the way in which it became difficult for the Section to work behind the scenes on the population exchange, while playing an official role in the question of the Albanian minority under the official protection of the League.

The initially strong reluctance to be affiliated with the agreement was due to constitutional considerations. However, fearing being too closely associated with the process if it all collapsed was probably an equally important consideration. The League had been indirectly involved in the drafting of the agreement through Fridtjof Nansen's work prior to the Lausanne conference. Still, it bore no formal responsibility for the final outcome, and it would make little sense if the League were blamed if it turned out to be a fiasco. However, as the Commission grew stronger and the execution of the agreement seemed to be on the right track, the bureaucrats in Geneva seemed to be less concerned about officially distancing themselves from the Commission and the Agreement, because it had become all too apparent that the League was involved in the process on many different levels, but probably also because they felt more confident that it would work, and the risk of being dragged down together with the Lausanne Agreement was less than in the beginning.

The Minority Section had an extensive portfolio ranging from administrating the International Commissions of the Saar and Danzig, as well as the many minority treaties under the League's guarantee. This meant that Colban was almost always on the road, putting out fires all over Eastern Europe. This is evident from the proceedings of the Directors' meeting at the Secretariat of the League, where Gilchrist or Rosting represented the Section far more often than Colban himself. Colban has been described by the historian, Christoph Guterman, as a person with a great capacity for work, but also as a person who expected the same from his colleagues. His deputies, and especially

Gilchrist, seemed to share his great capacity for work and were therefore also given much responsibility in his absence. Not only the leaders of the two Sections were given significant autonomy by Colban; Colban's Section also seems to have been given much autonomy by Eric Drummond, especially with regard to the population exchange which was discussed only a few times at the Directors' meeting during the first two years.

This did not mean that Drummond was not involved or updated on the matter. He was present at several of the meetings of the Section where the execution of the agreement was discussed, and informed of the process by notes and minutes from Section meetings. Drummond was the head of an organization dealing with matters ranging from labour legislation to health care, and from armaments to refugees. Why he was kept updated and involved in this process leads to the next research question of this thesis - why was this an important process for the League of Nations? Why did the League involve itself in the execution of an agreement when it had little responsibility for its wording, bore no formal responsibility for it and which it may seem as though it only had something to lose if it became part of it?

The League knew that the population exchange agreement was about more than the fate of the Greek and Turkish minorities; it was also about peace and stability in a part of the world which had seen little of either for hundreds of years. It was also a part of the world that was of much importance to the stability of the most unstable part of Europe, the Balkans.

The Sèvres treaty can hardly be described as anything but an arrogant and ahistorical attempt to marginalize the vestiges of the Ottoman Empire. Even though the Ottomans had brought the sultanate to its knees after years of poor governance, Anatolia, with its tens of millions of inhabitants and its rich imperial and cultural heritage, could not be expected to bow down to Britain, France, Italy or Russia. The idea of separating Asia Minor into small vassal states under European rule was crushed by Atatürk and when the parties met again in Lausanne, the tables had turned. Turkey was given control of all of Asia Minor, and more importantly it had become a state to be reckoned with and respected in the new international arena.

Huntington Gilchrist's plea to Henry Morgenthau, the former US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, to act impartially and respectfully towards Turkey in his new job for the League in the region is one of many indications of this change in attitude towards

treating Turkey as an equal state actor. This was not due to sympathy, but due to considerations of realpolitik. For the same reasons, the Secretariat hoped Turkey would become a League member at some point. This would be of considerable value in terms of political and military stability in the region and in Europe - accordingly, building trust and good relations with Turkey were of great importance to the Secretariat. In this respect, the Population Exchange Agreement was important because to Turkey, this would be the first test of the intentions of the victors - would Turkey be treated fairly and would commitments be honoured? The agreement was with Greece, but it was widely known that British diplomats as well as Nansen had been heavily involved in the negotiations ahead of the Lausanne convention. Furthermore, all of the other signatories to the Lausanne convention were League members, and the League was in many ways already tied to the mast.

This also seems clear from multiple statements by Greek, Turkish and Albanian actors throughout the process of the exchange; they regarded the League as responsible for the agreement, and the Mixed Commission members as seconded by the League. One reason for this was that many of the actors involved probably did not wholly understand the ways of international relations, diplomacy and constitutional game rules. Still, it may also seem as though it was in the interests of the parties to hold the League responsible for the actions of the neutral members of the Mixed Commission, even though they well understood that the neutral members were also neutral towards the League.

The fact that many actors held the League responsible for the agreement was one reason why the League involved itself, but another explanation may be that the League, represented by Colban and his Department, simply regarded it as its mandate and responsibility to help out and avoid the process collapsing, especially since it had already taken on responsibility for the Greek minority in Turkey and the refugees of Asia Minor. It became clear several times during the first two years that there was a small distance between failed negotiations in the Mixed Commission and the threat of war, and avoiding an armed conflict must have been an important reason for the Section involving itself from the outset.

In 1923, the Section had already gained substantial experience in dealing with minority questions, and one of the most important lessons learned was that disputes were more easily solved through silent diplomacy than by Council meetings. Therefore,

the Section actively tried to sway the parties to use the Mixed Commission as a buffer for dissent, and not bring matters to the Council inexpediently.

6.2 What conclusions can be drawn from the League's involvement?

In the historical literature, the League has traditionally been considered a failure as it was not able to withstand the totalitarian forces which emerged in the 1930s or prevent the outbreak of the Second World War. This judgement has changed over the last two decades, however, as scholars have expressed renewed interest in the League and its organizational legacy, and lines are drawn from the interwar years and up to the establishment of the UN.

The International Labour Union (ILO) is perhaps the best example of an organizational continuity between the interwar years and the years after the Second World War, not only because, unlike the rest of the League of Nations' organizations, it survived the war, but also because of its conventions and recommendations adopted in the interwar period. These ILO conventions, focusing on women's and children's rights, anti-slavery and freedom of association, represented progressive ideas which enjoyed substantial support around the world and became an important precursor to modern day international labour legislation,

The work performed by the Minority Section can hardly be reduced to only "a failed attempt". The historian, Mark Mazower, differentiates between the legacy of the political and bureaucratic branches of the League, and the legacy of the work of the Minority Section must be seen in this context. The political branch of the League was often not able to act in accordance with its ideals, such as during the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, or during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. But even though the Council is often remembered for its impotency, this does not necessarily apply to the work of the Secretariat. There is little doubt that the minority treaties helped safeguard the rights of minorities, even into the 1930s. This also applies to the Greek and Turkish Minorities who were at least secured some rights while being forced to move by the League's involvement. Consequently, the legacy of the League cannot only be determined by the action or lack thereof by the Council, but also by the substantial work of its bureaucracy.

Colban's Section represented a small but rather advanced bureaucratic body. Its officers managed to balance loyalty to the political branch of the organization with pragmatic, swift diplomacy. According to the German historian, Christoph Guterman,

Colban “created the Minority System”.³⁷⁶ This system was based on discretion and personal diplomatic skills, combined with an impressive network of information providers, ensuring that the bureaucrats in Geneva were often better updated on the situation on the ground than many local actors. The findings in this thesis support the work of scholars such as Pedersen, Clavin, Sluga and Mazower on the League, particularly the League Secretariat. It shows the relatively strong autonomy of the Secretariat which essentially ran the League between annual General Assemblies, its capacity for implementation, and the way in which many individual bureaucrats were part of a network of internationalists believing in the League and international governance.

This international group of young bureaucrats working in Geneva to safeguard the political and religious rights of minorities around the world did not work in a vacuum, however. To understand more fully the emergence of a system and a movement concerned with the rights of minorities worldwide, one would have to apply a broader, more transnational perspective.

In the 1920s, the world had become smaller, people were moving around more than ever, and the liberal internationalist ideas the League was built on were gaining increasing support around the world. These were ideas of international cooperation, free trade and national self-determination, but newspaper articles, petitions and the actions and donations of NGOs and individual philanthropists also demonstrate a new dedication to the rights of minorities worldwide. Whether this can be regarded as the beginning of the humanitarian work of the United Nations is a difficult question. To Colban who continued to work in the international arena as the Norwegian ambassador to Paris and London, and as the head of the Norwegian delegation to the first UN General Assembly, the UN was clearly a continuation of the League of Nations. It had a similar structure, similar tasks and shared its overall purpose - securing international peace and stability.³⁷⁷ One aspect that speaks in favour of such continuity is that many of the central figures in the League continued their work at the UN after the war. One of these was Huntington Gilchrist, who, as executive officer with the International Secretariat of the League of Nations during the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, played an

³⁷⁶ Guterman, *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Volkerforbundes*, 283.

³⁷⁷ Colban, Erik. *De Forente Nasjoner Som Permanent Verdensorganisasjon*. «Nordic Journal of International Law», 4:1,3-15, 1954, 3-4.

important role in the shaping of the new organization. He also held several senior positions within the UN in the 1950s and 1960s, including UN envoy to Pakistan.³⁷⁸

An organizational continuity between the League and the UN is also supported by Mazower. According to him, the League is “a model of international government that would not only survive the Second World War but [would] be greatly expanded and refined thereafter”.³⁷⁹ Whether there is also an ideological continuity between the work of Colban and his colleagues, and the work for human rights within the UN, would require a more extensive comparative analysis. This could be worth investigating, as according to Mazower, “it is not the League[’s] failures that we should focus on, but its enduring influence”.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ *New York Times*, 15.1.1975, «Huntington Gilchrist, 83, Dies; International Relations Expert».

³⁷⁹ Mazower, *Governing the World*, 153.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

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Appendix



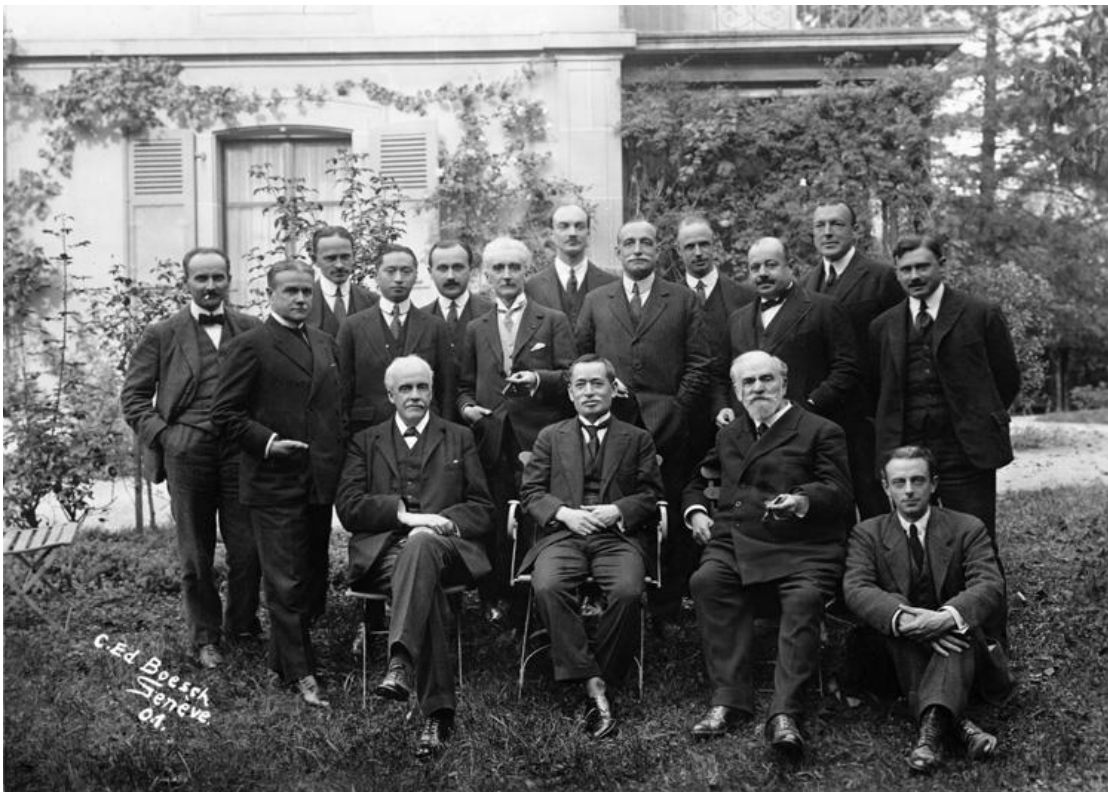
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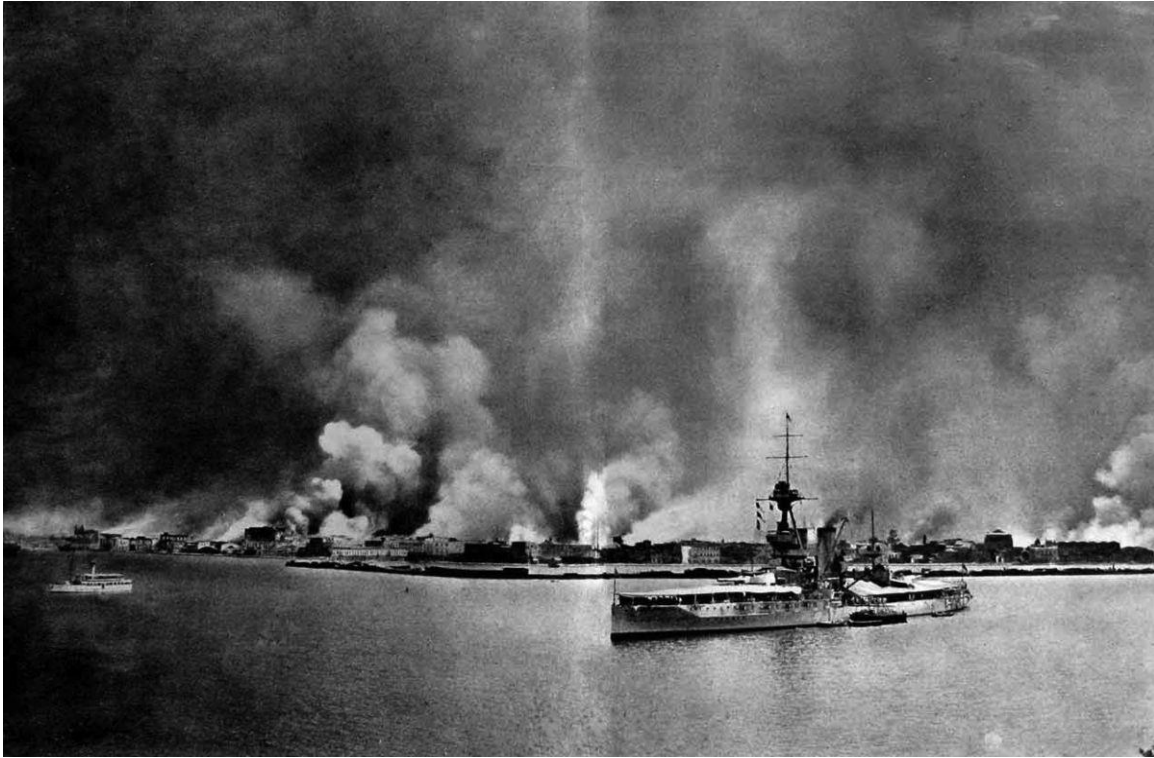


First Assembly of the League of Nations, Geneva, 1920.



13th Council Session, President Kikujiro Ishii (Japan). Geneva, 1921.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ All pictures from "The League of Nations Photo Archive". <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/index.htm>



The quai of Smyrna, September 1922.³⁸²



The quai of Smyrna, March 2017.³⁸³

³⁸² The Burning of Smyrna as seen from HMS King George V. From Wikipedia:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Burning_of_Smyrna_as_seen_from_HMS_King_George_V.jpg

³⁸³ The reconstructed Customs House on in Izmir. Photo: Mads Drange.

I have the honour to propose the following resolution:

"(1) The Council of the League of Nations hereby appoints M. Erik Ejnar Ekstrand (Sweden), General Manrique de Lara (Spain) and Kari Marius Widding (Denmark) as members of the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11 of the Convention concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations which was signed at Lausanne on January 30th, 1923. They shall each be entitled to receive, from the time they leave their present homes and from funds provided by the Greek and the Turkish Governments, a salary at the rate of £1,500 sterling per annum, in addition to necessary travelling and office expenses.

"(2) The Secretary-General is authorised to make an advance from the League's Working Capital Account of not more than £300 sterling to each commissioner appointed by the Council of the League immediately upon his acceptance of this appointment. The amounts thus paid over are to be considered as personal advances and are to be refunded at the earliest possible time.

"(3) The Council adopts the conclusions of this report of Viscount Ishii regarding the appointment of the three members of the Mixed Commission referred to above.

"(4) Copies of this resolution and of the report of Viscount Ishii are to be communicated to the representatives of the Greek and of the Turkish Governments, as well as to the three members of the Mixed Commission."

APPENDIX.

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE EXCHANGE OF GREEK AND TURKISH POPULATIONS.

Signed at Lausanne, January 30th, 1923.

The Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Greek Government have agreed upon the following provisions:

Article 1. — As from the 1st May, 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory.

These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorisation of the Turkish Government or of the Greek Government respectively.

Article 2. — The following persons shall not be included in the exchange provided for in Article 1:

- (a) The Greek inhabitants of Constantinople.
- (b) The Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace.

All Greeks who were already established before the 30th October, 1918, within the areas under the Prefecture of the City of Constantinople, as defined by the law of 1912, shall be considered as Greek inhabitants of Constantinople.

All Moslems established in the region to the east of the frontier line laid down in 1913 by the Treaty of Bucharest shall be considered as Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace.

Article 3. — Those Greeks and Moslems who have already, and since the 18th October, 1912, left the territories the Greek and Turkish inhabitants of which are to be respectively exchanged, shall be considered as included in the exchange provided for in Article 1.

The expression "emigrant" in the present Convention includes all physical and juridical persons who have been obliged to emigrate or have emigrated since the 18th October, 1912.

Article 4. — All able-bodied men belonging to the Greek population, whose families have already left Turkish territory, and who are now detained in Turkey, shall constitute the first instalment of Greeks sent to Greece in accordance with the present Convention.

Article 5. — Subject to the provisions of Articles 9 and 20 of the present Convention, the rights of property and monetary assets of Greeks in Turkey or Moslems in Greece shall not be prejudiced in consequence of the exchange to be carried out under the present Convention.

Article 6. — No obstacle may be placed for any reason whatever in the way of the departure of a person belonging to the populations which are to be exchanged. In the event of an emigrant having received a definite sentence of imprisonment, or a sentence which is not yet definitive, or of his being the object of criminal proceedings, he shall be handed over by the authorities of the prosecuting country to the authorities of the country whither he is going, in order that he may serve his sentence or be brought to trial.

Article 7. — The emigrants will lose the nationality of the country which they are leaving, and will acquire the nationality of the country of their destination, upon their arrival in the territory of the latter country.

Such emigrants as have already left one or other of the two countries and have not yet acquired their new nationality, shall acquire that nationality on the date of the signature of the present Convention.

Article 8. — Emigrants shall be free to take away with them or to arrange for the transport of their movable property of every kind, without being liable on this account to the payment of any export or import duty or any other tax.

Similarly, the members of each community (including the personnel of mosques, tekkes, meddresses, churches, convents, schools, hospitals, societies, associations and juridical persons,

or other foundations of any nature whatever) which is to leave the territory of one of the Contracting States under the present Convention, shall have the right to take away freely or to arrange for the transport of the movable property belonging to their communities.

The fullest facilities for transport shall be provided by the authorities of the two countries, upon the recommendation of the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11.

Emigrants who may not be able to take away all or part of their movable property can leave it behind. In that event, the local authorities shall be required to draw up, the emigrant in question being given an opportunity to be heard, an inventory and valuation of the property left by him. *Procès-verbaux* containing the inventory and the valuation of the movable property left by the emigrant shall be drawn up in four copies, one of which shall be kept by the local authorities, the second transmitted to the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11 to serve as the basis for the liquidation provided for by Article 9, the third shall be handed to the Government of the country to which the emigrant is going, and the fourth to the emigrant himself.

Article 9. — Immovable property, whether rural or urban, belonging to emigrants, or to the communities mentioned in Article 8, and the movable property left by these emigrants or communities, shall be liquidated in accordance with the following provisions by the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11.

Property situated in the districts to which the compulsory exchange applies and belonging to religious or benevolent institutions of the communities established in a district to which the exchange does not apply, shall likewise be liquidated under the same conditions.

Article 10. — The movable and immovable property belonging to persons who have already left the territory of the High Contracting Parties and are considered, in accordance with Article 3 of the present Convention, as being included in the exchange of populations, shall be liquidated in accordance with Article 9. This liquidation shall take place independently of all measures of any kind whatever, which, under the laws passed and the regulations of any kind made in Greece and in Turkey since the 18th October, 1912, or in any other way, have resulted in any restriction on rights of ownership over the property in question, such as confiscation, forced sale, etc. In the event of the property mentioned in this Article or in Article 9 having been submitted to a measure of this kind, its value shall be fixed by the Commission provided for in Article 11, as if the measures in question had not been applied.

As regards expropriated property, the Mixed Commission shall undertake a fresh valuation of such property, if it has been expropriated since the 18th October, 1912, having previously belonged to persons liable to the exchange of populations in the two countries, and is situated in territories to which the exchange applies. The Commission shall fix for the benefit of the owners such compensation as will repair the injury which the Commission has ascertained. The total amount of this compensation shall be carried to the credit of these owners and to the debit of the Government on whose territory the expropriated property is situated.

In the event of any persons mentioned in Articles 8 and 9 not having received the income from property, the enjoyment of which they have lost in one way or another, the restoration of the amount of this income shall be guaranteed to them on the basis of the average yield of the property before the war, and in accordance with the methods to be laid down by the Mixed Commission.

The Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11, when proceeding to the liquidation of *Wakf* property in Greece and of the rights and interests connected therewith, and to the liquidation of similar foundations belonging to Greeks in Turkey, shall follow the principles laid down in previous Treaties with a view to fully safeguarding the rights and interests of these foundations and of the individuals interested in them.

The Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11 shall be entrusted with the duty of executing these provisions.

Article 11. — Within one month from the coming into force of the present Convention a Mixed Commission shall be set up in Turkey or in Greece consisting of four members representing each of the High Contracting Parties, and of three members chosen by the Council of the League of Nations from among nationals of Powers which did not take part in the war of 1914-1918. The Presidency of the Commission shall be exercised in turn by each of these three neutral members.

The Mixed Commission shall have the right to set up, in such places as it may appear to them necessary, Sub-Commissions working under its order. Each such Sub-Commission shall consist of a Turkish member, a Greek member and a neutral President to be designated by the Mixed Commission. The Mixed Commission shall decide the powers to be delegated to the Sub-Commission.

Article 12. — The duties of the Mixed Commission shall be to supervise and facilitate the emigration provided for in the present Convention, and to carry out the liquidation of the movable and immovable property for which provision is made in Articles 9 and 10.

The Commission shall settle the methods to be followed as regards the emigration and liquidation mentioned above.

In a general way the Mixed Commission shall have full power to take the measures necessitated by the execution of the present Convention and to decide all questions to which this Convention may give rise.

The decisions of the Mixed Commission shall be taken by a majority.

All disputes relating to property, rights and interests which are to be liquidated shall be settled definitely by the Commission.

Article 13. — The Mixed Commission shall have full power to cause the valuation to be made of the movable and immovable property which is to be liquidated under the present Convention, the interested parties being given a hearing or being duly summoned so that they may be heard.

The basis for the valuation of the property to be liquidated shall be the value of the property in gold currency.

Article 14. — The Commission shall transmit to the owner concerned a declaration stating the sum due to him in respect of the property of which he has been dispossessed, and such property shall remain at the disposal of the Government on whose territory it is situated.

The total sums due on the basis of these declarations shall constitute a Government debt from the country where the liquidation takes place to the Government of the country to which the emigrant belongs. The emigrant shall in principle be entitled to receive in the country to which he emigrates, as representing the sums due to him, property of a value equal to and of the same nature as that which he has left behind.

Once every six months an account shall be drawn up of the sums due by the respective Governments on the basis of the declarations as above.

When the liquidation is completed, if the sums of money due to both sides correspond, the accounts relating thereto shall be balanced. If a sum remains due from one of the Governments to the other Government after a balance has been struck, the debit balance shall be paid in cash. If the debtor Government requests a postponement in making this payment, the Commission may grant such postponement, provided that the sum due be paid in three annuities at most. The Commission shall fix the interest to be paid during the period of postponement.

If the sum to be paid is fairly large and requires longer postponement, the debtor Government shall pay in cash a sum to be fixed by the Mixed Commission, up to a maximum of 20 per cent. of the total due, and shall issue in respect of the balance loan certificates bearing such interest as the Mixed Commission may fix, to be paid off within 20 years at most. The debtor Government shall assign to the service of these loans pledges approved by the Commission, which shall be administered and of which the revenues shall be encashed by the International Commission in Greece and by the Council of the Public Debt at Constantinople. In the absence of agreement in regard to these pledges, they shall be selected by the Council of the League of Nations.

Article 15. — With a view to facilitating emigration, funds shall be advanced to the Mixed Commission by the States concerned, under conditions laid down by the said Commission.

Article 16. — The Turkish and Greek Governments shall come to an agreement with the Mixed Commission provided for in Article 11 in regard to all questions concerning the notification to be made to persons who are to leave the territory of Turkey and Greece under the present Convention, and concerning the ports to which these persons are to go for the purpose of being transported to the country of their destination.

The High Contracting Parties undertake mutually that no pressure direct or indirect shall be exercised on the populations which are to be exchanged with a view to making them leave their homes or abandon their property before the date fixed for their departure. They likewise undertake to impose on the emigrants who have left or who are to leave the country no special taxes or dues. No obstacle shall be placed in the way of the inhabitants of the districts excepted from the exchange under Article 2 exercising freely their right to remain in or return to those districts and to enjoy to the full their liberties and rights of property in Turkey and in Greece. This provision shall not be invoked as a motive for preventing the free alienation of property belonging to inhabitants of the said regions which are excepted from the exchange, or the voluntary departure of those among these inhabitants who wish to leave Turkey or Greece.

Article 17. — The expenses entailed by the maintenance and working of the Mixed Commission and of the organisations dependent on it shall be borne by the Governments concerned in proportions to be fixed by the Commission.

Article 18. — The High Contracting Parties undertake to introduce in their respective laws such modifications as may be necessary with a view to ensuring the execution of the present Convention.

Article 19. — The present Convention shall have the same force and effect as between the High Contracting Parties as if it formed part of the Treaty of Peace to be concluded with Turkey. It shall come into force immediately after the ratification of the said Treaty by the two High Contracting Parties.

In faith whereof, the undersigned Plenipotentiaries, whose respective full powers have been found in good and due form, have signed the present Convention.

Done at Lausanne, the 30th January, 1923, in three copies, one of which shall be transmitted to the Greek Government, one to the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and the third shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the French Republic, which shall deliver certified copies to the other Powers signatory of the Treaty of Peace with Turkey.

(L.S.)	E. K. VENISELOS.
(L.S.)	D. CACLAMANOS.
(L.S.)	ISMET.
(L.S.)	Dr. RIZA NOUR.
(L.S.)	HASSAN.

PROTOCOL.

The undersigned Turkish Plenipotentiaries, duly authorised to that effect, declare that, without waiting for the coming into force of the Convention with Greece of even date, relating to the exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations, and by way of exception to Article 1 of that Convention, the Turkish Government, on the signature of the Treaty of Peace, will release the able-bodied men referred to in Article 4 of the said Convention, and will provide for their departure.

Done at Lausanne the 30th January 1923.

ISMET.
Dr. RIZA NOUR.
HASSAN.



The partition of the Ottoman Empire according to the Sèvres Treaty (1920).³⁸⁴



Turkey after the Lausanne Treaty (1923).³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ From Wikipedia: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TreatyOfSevres.png>

³⁸⁵ From Wikipedia: <https://uahsibhistory.wikispaces.com/Treaty+of+Sevres-Lausanne>

