

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

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Abstract. *Without opting out for a pro/con position concerning the efficiency of the League of Nations especially in the first decade of its existence, we will resume by reminding the article of Raymond Fosdick, The League of Nations is alive asserting that it is now (in 1920) the duty of humanity who choose its path of development, namely to follow the old order or to implement the new standards in the framework of the new organization (The League of Nations). To choose to act within this organization means, in fact, the ralliation to the unexplored paths of human cooperation and to pursue the creativity in the diplomatic relations, is the opinion of the author.*

Keywords: *League of Nations, diplomacy, First World War, Versailles, international organization*

At the end of the First World War, the great allied powers search for solutions to come out from the crisis and pursued the establishment of a system of alliances which to lead to the instauration of a collective security system at global scale. At the end of the war, there existed only two solutions to come out from the crisis: either to set some leftist or right wing orientation regimes which to pursue the unification of the economic vital space of the European continent by means of force and conquest, either the re-organization of the European system by the free and voluntary association of the states of the European continent (Gyemant, 1999: 57). It was opted out initially for the second solution by the creation of an international organization known as the League of Nations, but, as it failed in the promotion of the proposed objectives, the other alternative appeared more pregnant and threatening in the second decade of the interwar period (Brie and Horga, 2009).

The Covenant of the League of Nations, initiative that belonged to a greater extent to the American president Woodrow Wilson, was adopted unanimously by the participants to the Conference of Paris at April 28, 1919. The pact contained initially 26 articles concerning the new organization and it was included in the texts of the treaty from Versailles from June 28, 1919 and, also, in the texts of the treaties from Saint Germain, Neuilly, Trianon and Sevres. The newly created organization had a global character because it included states belonging to the different regions of the world, however by non-participation of USA, Soviet Union and Germany to this organization, its universal character was a lot reduced.

Initially the Covenant of the League of Nations was ratified by 32 states to which it adhered ulteriorly other states. In the same time, it existed also states who left the organization (Germany, Japan, etc).

The principles consacrated by the Covenant of the League of Nations

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Firstly, according to the Covenant, the member states had the obligation to assume the 26 articles of the document, to which there were added the amendments and ulterior revisions. The Covenant expressed clearly the character of the League of Nations which was created as an open body, any state being allowed to become member of the organization with the condition that its admission be ratified by two thirds from the members of the Assembly¹. This opening is reflected also in the fact that any state was allowed to leave the organisation with the condition that the respective state to announce its intention of redrawing from the League with two years in advance. In the same state a state who breaks its obligations could have been, according to the Covenant, excluded from the organization by a vote of the Council.

An important fact to mention is that, in the framework of the League of Nations, the decisions were taken according to the *rule of unanimity*. This is the principle followed by the decisional organisms of the League of Nations: the Council and the Assembly. Still, in what it concerns the Assembly, in the issues regarding the procedural actions, the decisions were taken with the qualified majority (two thirds from the total of votes). This unanimity vote led sometimes to decisional blocking especially in what it concerned the attitude of the League towards the aggressive states, being well known that the unanimity, independantly of the circumstances, it is not easy to reach.

The location of the League of Nations was established according to the Covenant of the League of Nations to Geneva, existing the possibility to be changed with the League of Nations' Council's consent.

Because the fundamental aims of the League were the preservation of the world's peace and to stop the aggressionist actions and that any problem that might have endangered the international security (independantly that the involved states were or not part of the League) was the subject of the debates in the Council and the Assembly, it is important to see which was the attitude of the organization in the issue of dearmament and of aggression, in general.

Concerning the dearmament, at least in theory, the Covenant of the League of Nations consacrated the principle of reducing the armaments of the member states, the Council following to create dearmament plans according to the geographical position and the condition of each member state. In the same time, the manufacturing by private actions of arms and munitions was condemned by the Pact. In reality, the principle of dearmament was not applied, on the contrary some states increased their armaments (the case of Germany).

In what concerns the aggressivity of certain states in international relations system, this is also condemned by the Covenant of the League of Nations. When a state member of the League of Nations is agressed, it is the competence of the council to take the necessary measures². In the cases of the conflicts between certain member states it is recommended the arbitrage of the Council and the creation of the International Court of Justice was designated to bring the judicial solutionning of the divergences, the pronounced sentences of the court being final. In the same time, the members of the League are obliged not to use the means of the war in the bilateral relations. A state that infridges the provisions of the Covenant will be subjected to some sanctions that came from the other states which will lead to the break of international and economic relations with the respective state, but also of the relations between their citizens and the citizens of the state who infridges the rules of the Covenant. The armed

¹ "The Covenant of the League of Nations", art. 2, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv13/ch10subch1>

² *Ibidem* (art.11).

intervention was also recommended. In reality, these sanctions were not applied efficiently in the cases of aggression (the attack of Italy on Abissinia (Ethiopia) or the attack of Japan on Manciuria).

The institutions of the League of Nations

The main institutions of the League of Nations as they were set by the article 2 of the Covenant of the League of Nations are the Assembly, the Council and the Secretariat. Since 1922, to this institutions was added an International Court of Justice.

Concerning the Assembly, initially it was intended the creation of a deliberative forum, convocated without periodicity, formed from the representatives of the national Parliaments, but also of the public opinion. The italiens sustained an organization in which the decisions to be taken with two thirds of the votes (Gyemant, 1999: 66). Finally, it was achieved following the scheme presented below. The assembly was a forum that included representatives of the members of the League, not more that three for each state who are benefitting from a single vote. It is lead by a president and by six vice-presidents. It names permanent committees in which the member states are represented. It is gathered at the periodical intervals, existing as a rule an annual session which is developed in September, in Geneve to which it can be added also extraordinary sessions in special situations. The first gathering of the Assembly was convocated by the president of the United States and took place in Geneve during November 15-December 18, 1920. The decisions are taken with the unanimity of votes (in most of the cases) or with a qualified majority (in the issues of procedure as, for instance, the admission of a new member state). An important attribution of the Assembly was the fact that it ensured the financial management of the League of Nations. The competences of the Assembly are extended on all international problems which affected the peace of the world. In the framework of the Assembly, there were voted resolutions or recommendations. Also, the Assembly chooses non-permanent members of the Council of the League of Nations and the judges who work for the International Court of Justice. With the consent of the Council and with a qualified majority in Assembly there can be brought amendments to the Covenant of the League of Nations. Another attribution of the Assembly is to advice the members of the League to reconsider the treaties which became unapplicable and to determine the international conditions of whose perpetuation can be endangered the peace of the world³.

In what concerns the Council of the League of Nations, it was composed of five permanent members, being finally reduced to four as a consequence of the redrawal of United States (Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan) and from four non-permanent members (which became 6 from 1922 and 9 from 1926). The non-permanent members were elected one by one by the Assembly and they exerted a temporary mandate. The president of the Council was designated by rotation and its meetings took place at least once a year. The reunions of the Council had to take place at the location of the organization of the League of Nations (Geneve) or in another place, but it must have been established previously their organization. Among the non-permanent members of the Council there were Belgium, Brasil, Spain and Greece.

Each member of the Council had a vote and a representative. When a problem concerned directly a member of the League who is not represented in the Council, this can send a representative to the gatherings of the Council (Baptiste Duroselle, 1993: 59). The first reunion of the Council was convocated by the president of the United States of America. The modality of adoptation of the decisions in the Council is the rule of unanimity.

³ *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, art. 19.

Concerning the attributions of the Council of the League of Nations, they were extended on all questions that regard the peace of the world. The council designates the main functionaries of the Secretariat and formulated plans for the dezarmation. In the case of conflicts, the Council recommends measures of military and naval nature which must have led to the defeat of the agressor. The Council receives the annual reports of the mandatory powers (that had the task to exert their authority under the form of mandates in the lost colonies of Germany in Africa). The council decides in unanimity that if the Pact must be ammended and it also can invite the governments to the international reunions. With the approval of the Assembly, the Council can name new members of the League. In the attributions of the Council was the task of nomination of the General Secretary of the League of Nations with the approval of the majority of the Assembly. It had special tasks (the nomination of the Commission of governance for the Saar region or of the Higher Comissioner for Danzig). The Council can decide that the location of the League to be moved somewhere else⁴.

In case of threat with the war, the Secretary General had to gather the assembly of the Council. In what it concerns the disputes among the member states, any member of the League represented in the Council could publish a declaration in which to express its own vision. The council is the one which recommended to the governments measures of military, naval, aerien nature in the solutionning of the conflicts. By the vote of the Council it can be excluded a member state of the League who infridged its obligations. The council included as part of the expenses of the Secretariat, the expenses of any office or commission found under the surveillance of the League.

The Secretariat was an administrative unit whose personnel was recruited on the basis of the state representation by the virtue of the geographical criteria. Its members were responsable in front of the League, not in front of the state of provenience. The main members were responsable in front of the League, not in front of the state of provenience. The main members of the Secretariat but also the General Secretary are named by the Council. The Secretariat had its residence at the centre of the League of Nations (Geneve). The first general secretary of the League of Nations was Sir James Eric Drummond. The Secretariat prepared the documents and the reports for the Assembly and the Council. The Secretariat coordonated the publication of the documents of the League of Nations in two official languages of the organization, English and French. The Secretary General prepared the dayly order for each session of the Assembly with the Council's consent. The international agreements and treaties are registered at the Secretariat and only after that they enter into vigour.

The international Court of Justice was created in 1922 being initially composed from 11 judges, then from 15 people chosen by the Council and then by the Assembly. During 1922-1934 they were judged in front of the Court, 66 of cases. The expense of the Court was supported by the League of Nations in the manner brought up by the Assembly and with the Council's content. The official language of the sessions of the Court were English and French. The decisions were taken with the consent of the majority of the judges of the Court. The decisions of the Court are final and without right of appeal. The Court's attribution was to judge the disputes and to formulate consultative opinions at the request of the League. But the member states of the League of Nations could make appeals in front of the Court.

The successes of the League of Nations

⁴*The Covenant of the League of Nations*, art. 7.

The decade of glory of the League of Nations is considered to be the years '20. The achievements of the League happened mainly in this interval and they were possible because of a favourable context generated by the existence of some factors that we will analyze further on.

The war from 1914-1918, the first war of global anvergence imposed at its end a situation of material scarcity, frustration and insecurity. It existed a dream of the national peoples and of their political elites to come back to stability, security, economic prosperity.

The causes that led to the war were firstly the existence of the armaments and of the course of re-inarmation, the alliances and the secret diplomacy and the existence of the souverain states concerned exclusively by the maintenance of their own interests (Bell, 1988: 7-8). In order to avoid a new world conflict they were imposed certain remedies: dezarmation, open diplomacy and the creation of an international organization with the purpose to restrain the possibility of recourse to war and to promote the international law. The last desiderata was fulfilled by the creation of the League of Nations, and the first two necessary remedies became fundamental objectives mentioned by the League of Nations Pact⁵.

The idea of creating this organization belonged to Woodrow Wilson who militated very much for this ideal in the context of the peace negotiations from Paris-Versailles, and its role could not be neglected, even if finally United States did not adhere to the new organization. For its role played in the sustenance of the League of Nations, Wilson received the Nobel Prize for Peace in the year 1919.

The League of Nations enjoyed the sustenance of the public opinion especially from the states affected by the war who were searching for guarantees that a new war could not be produced. Even later, in 1938, in Great Britain, the League of Nations was enjoying a large soutenance. The British editor of the journal "Times" wrote that the British people is the most favourable to the League of Nations from the entire world (Bell, 1988: 103).

If the socialists from France, the labourists from Great Britain or the communists from Soviet Union were reticent in what concerns the new organization on the ground that it would be a manifestation of capitalist imperialism, slowly they were admiring with regard to the initiatives of the League with the view of dezarmation, fact desired by them, and offered slowly to the League their agreement. The conservators from the Great Britain, reserved with regard to the new organization and partisans (some of them) of the old diplomacy, did not afford to sustain the League, this especially from electoral reasons because of the fact that the majority of the population of Great Britain was favourable to the League. By the acceptance of Germany in the League of Nations (1926) and of USSR (1934), the League lost its quality of League of "the victors".

In this sense, we can stop on an article published in 1920 by Raymond B. Fosdick entitled "The League of Nations is alive"⁶. The author writes about the large participation of the states to the new organization (all the neutral states in the time of the war, all the allied powers from the time of the war-especially USA-, all the countries from Southern America- excepting Ecuador). It was expecting that some states such as Romania, Russia, Germany, Portugal, China, Japan to become members soon.

⁵ *The Covenant of the League of Nations*,

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv13/ch10subch1>

⁶ Raymond B. Fosdick. "The League of Nations is alive", Accessed May, 28, 2018.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1920/06/the-league-of-nations-is-alive/515550/>

From this article it results the positive role of the League justified by the concrete actions of the organization until 1920. Such positive actions were: the take-over by the commissars of the League of the control of Danzig and Saar basin; the endeavours pursued in order to create the International Court of Justice; the support of the League of Nations to the International Organization of Work; the registration of the treaties and documents at the Secretariat of the League this “marking the end of bad days of the secret diplomacy”; the constitution of some groups in the framework of the specialized domains in the framework of the League such as the problem of the mandates of different colonies; in the issue of international cooperation in order to combat the traffic of opium; in the domain of information on all political events of the world; the activity of the League of Nations in the field of health protection (in concret terms they were organized projects for the constitution of an International Office of the Health preservation; the involvement of the League in the resolution of economic problems of the post–First World War world (it was created an economic section involved in the global study of coal, production, markets and the movement of raw resources; in February 1920, at a meeting of the Council it was fixed the organization of an international conference for the study of the financial crises and for searching means for its remediation; also, in the domain of economic affaires, the author mentions the intention of the League to militate for the extent of the credits for the poor countries from Europe).

The author appreciates also the politics of the League for dezarmation and of ensurance of the collective security. Also, he makes a clear distinction between the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, seeing in this organization an institution deeply charitable and generous, asserting that the role of the organization was to find remedies to keep a world in function (motion). In reality, one could not underestimate the interests of the victorious allies, as much as they were permanent members of the Council and, thus, they had a hard word to say in the activity of the League.

The League of Nations was an organization open to all the states that pursued to implement the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations and of its ulterior amendments. Among the written documents of the organization (firstly the Covenant of the League of Nation) were revealed some principles of international law which they had to undertake all the member states. Moreover, the League could intertwine also in conflicts in which they were not involved the member states, but which threatened the international peace preservation system. The internal law of the member states in the matters of internal politics was not influenced accordingly.

The concept of international law was developed in the framework of the League of Nations also by the acceptation of the authority of some institutions of the League of Nations by the member states: the Assembly, the Council, the Secretariate (article 2 of the Covenant), the Court of Justice (article 12) of the Covenant of the League of Nations⁷.

The protocole of the League of Nations concerning the pacific reglementation of the international disputes defines the international aggression in the article 10⁸, asserting that the states can be named aggressors when:

-refuse to submit to the procedure of pacificatory solutionning of the conflicts according to the articles 13 and 15 of the Protocole and of the present protocole;

⁷ *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, art. 2 and 12.

⁸ 2 October, 1920/ “The League of Nations Protocole for Pacific Settlement of International disputes”, art.10. Accessed May 28, 2018. Accessed May 28, 2018. <http://www.lib.byu.edu/rdh/wwi/1918/pacific.html>

-refuse to take into consideration an unanimous report of the Council, a judicial sentence or a decision who declared that the dispute between the respective state and another state is exclusively of internal competence of the other state;

-they ignore the provisional measures for the interval in which the problem is analyzed by the organisms of the League of Nations.

Besides the definition of the aggressor, this new concept of international law established in the framework of the League of Nations tried to impose modalities of solutionning of international conflicts (arbitration, judicial decisions, consultation of the Council)⁹. In case of failure the next step is the sanctionning of the agressor state (article 16, Covenant of the League of Nations – the forbiddance of the trade with the respective state, of the ties between the citizens of the member states of the League of Nations with the agressor state)¹⁰, but also the helping of the prejudiced state by granting the assistance (raw materials, provisions of any kind, credit, transport, transit)¹¹.

This international law has on its base “the open diplomacy”¹² and the equality of all states in the relation with the norms imposed by it. And also a great state can be considered as agressor and it can be applied for it the sanctions imposed above.

In the same time, it can be made a step towards the protection of human rights. The protection of the minorities (ethnic, linguistic, religious), the granting of help to the refugees, the forbiddance of the traffic with slaves, women and children and the fixation of the adequate conditions of work are only a few from the concerns of the League.

At least from a teoretical point of view, the norms of international law promoted in the framework of the League of Nations meant a step forward in the domain of the development of international relations, even if, in reality, the interests of the great powers made that these generous principles not to prevail allways.

The dezarmation was the one of the main objectives imposed by the League of Nations. Its application in practice was considered as a measure to make the war less probable. Even if finally, this deziderata did not succeed, the efforts in this sense must not be left aside.

The dezarmation was not brought forward for the first time in 1918. The problem of the limitation of arms from a qualitative and quantitative point of view, was imposed for the first time at the Conferences from Hague (1899 and 1907). This efforts were not successfull and the problem was brought into discussion at the end of First World War by the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The Conference from Washington (1921-1922) and the naval Conference from London (1930) had as purpose the limitation of naval armaments. Even the Royal Navy of England, the symbol of the British power, was subjected to some agreements of dezarmation. The conference for dezarmation from Geneve (1932-1934) failed because the redrawal of Germany, and the points of view of France and England were against the increase of the armaments. There existed voices of the French socialists who suggested the unilateral dezarmation of France, believing that by this policy Germany will be determined also herself to inarmate.

The idea of dezarmation was sustained also from economic arguements, even in the period of relative prosperity at the end of the years 1920, both in France, but also in

⁹ *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, art.12,...

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ 2 October, 1920/ *The League of Nations Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes*, ...

¹² *The Covenant of the League of Nations*...

Great Britain, limiting thus the budget for inarmation. This limitation was more severely in the years of the economic crises (1929-1933).

The lack of interest for the army issues is revealed by the fact that in the European state, the military service was a lot reduced. If we take the example of France, immediately after 1918, the military service was of 3 years, being reduced in 1921 at two years, in 1923 at 18 months and in 1928 at one year (Bell, 1988: 166).

When the situation in Europe became more tensioned (after 1936), the majority of the European states increase their funds granted to the defense and the duration of military compulsory service.

The article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations entrusted to the League the responsibility of governing of the peoples who lived in the former German colonies (at least Kiaochow) and of the territories from the former Ottoman Empire from the Arabic Peninsula. The League could delegate some advanced nations to act as administrators of these territories under the means of mandates. There existed three types of mandates (A, B, C) (Baptiste Duroselle, 1993: 54) in function of the political development level of the colonies, of their geographical position, of their economic and social position. The mandates of C and B types were granted exclusively to the four winning states from the Conference of Peace from Paris, and the mandates of type A were granted in a special conference in San Remo (April, 1920).

Mandates of type A: were including diverse countries from the former Ottoman Empire which were capable of self administration and had to be subjected to a chosen power according to their will, while them are getting their full independance.

Mandates of type B: were including Afrikan countries incapable of self administration. They had to be shared between the mandatary powers with a few restrictions with military character and following the principle of commercial equality.

Mandates of type C: were including the countries from South Western Afrika and a few isles from Pacific with a population reduced or dispersed, being able to be administrated by the mandatory power according to their own laws as an integrant part of their territory.

After the distribution of the mandates, the South-West of Afrika was granted to the South-Afrikan Union, France and England were sharing Togo and Cameroon, France received also a part from French Ecuatorial Afrika, territory that it ceased to Germany in 1911. The German West Afrika was granted to UK for administration, Belgium received Ruanda-Urundi, territory situated in Eastern Afrika, and Portugal received Kongo.

In Oceanie, Australia received the German part of the isle New Guineea, New Zealand received the isle Samoa, and Great Britain received the isle Nauru.

At the North of Ecuador, Japan received for administration the isle Marianne, Caroline, Marshall, Palaos.

These mandatory states did not exert total sovereignty in the administered territory and were oblidged to present an annual report in front of the League of Nations. In order to see better how they were administered these colonies, we will analyse the provisions of the British mandates for German Eastern Afrika and for Palestine.

The British mandate for German Eastern Afrika¹³ (case study)

¹³ The text of the mandate was provided in Consuela Langsam, Walter, *Documents and readings in the history of Europe since 1918*, (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969), XXV, 90-95.

According to this mandate, the mandatory power was obliged to form a Commission who had as task to grant the boundaries between the Portuguese possessions from Eastern Afrika and the above mentioned territory.

Among the provision of the treaty, it results a few most important characteristics:

- The mandatory power was responsible in front of the League of Nations for the mandate that governed German Eastern Afrika

It was responsible for the peace, order and good governance of the territory, it had to ensure its moral and material good but also the social progress of the inhabitants (article 3 of the mandate). It had to ensure to the citizens of the member states of the League an equal treatment with the one of the British citizens from German Eastern Afrika (article 7 of the mandate). The mandatory power was responsible in front of the Council of the League of Nations for the administration of this territory and it had to present an annual report in this sense. (article 11 of the mandate)

- The mandatory power had to protect especially the rights of the native inhabitants in German Eastern Afrika

- o For this purpose, the mandatory power committed herself that it would not organize any military autohtonous force or military basis with other purposes than the defence of the territory and for the maintenance of order.

- o The protection of native inhabitants is revealed also in what it concerns the transfer of lands, the article 6 of the mandate stipulating that no land could have been transferred, excepting the transfers between the native inhabitants, only with the consent of the authorities.

The British mandate Palestine¹⁴

Among the provisions of the mandates it results a few more important characteristics:

- The mandatory power was responsible in front of the League for the way in which Palestine was governed

It had to establish in Palestine a Jewish state and to encourage the Jewish immigration in Palestine. It had the power to lead the external politics of the Palestine and it had to protect the citizens of Palestine both in the interior of the state but also outside of it. It was responsible by the maintenance of the territorial integrity of Palestine and of the ensurence of the good governance of the country. According to article 14 of the mandate, the mandatory power was obliged to present an annual report of the Council of the League of Nations in which to show its activity. In the same time, it was obliged not to discriminate the citizens of the member states of the League of Nations found on the territory of Palestine.

The mandatory power obliged itself to protect the rights of native inhabitants in Palestine

The mandatory power had to ensure the territorial integrity of Palestine, to grant the Jewish citizenship of all Jews who wanted to establish in Palestine, to ensure that all the religious buildings and saint places (including the muslim ones) will be protected.

The mandatory power was obliged to protect the rights of people both for the foreigners but also for the native inhabitants from Palestine.

¹⁴ “The Palestine Mandate”, accessed May 28, 2018
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp

It obliged itself to ensure the liberty of thought and to exert of any kind of cult on the territory of Palestine and to ensure that it wasn't make any discrimination between the inhabitants of Palestine on the basis of race, religion or language.

The mandatory power has full administrative and legislative authority

In spite of all these, it had to take care of the creation of a Jewish agency which to involve in the exercise of the administrative power. The administrative power in cooperation with the Jewish Agency had to have the management of the natural resources of the country to the extent in which they were not in totality taken over by the administration.

Conclusion

Regarding comparatively these two mandates, we notice that, at least in theory, they plead for the implementation of beneficial intended measures. The provisions are democratic, it was pursued the protection of the rights of the native inhabitants, but also of the foreigners and it was militated for a good management of this territories. The Palestinian mandate contains more provisions concerning religious liberty, maybe because of the interferences of cultures existing here, and, in the same time, we notice, moreover, the involvement of the native inhabitants in the management of the resources of the country by this Jewish Agency, fact that indicates an advanced degree of development of the local population from Palestine.

The role of the League of Nations in the issue of protection of national minorities

In the context of the fall of the three European empires (the Austrian Empire, the Turkish Empire, The Russian Empire) in Central and Eastern Europe several states were created (so as Romania), they extended their territory, but the fixed boundaries by the peace treaties did not correspond with the ethical boundaries. Thus, in Central and Eastern Europe existed 30 millions of minoritarians.

It was imposed the problem of the protection of their rights, aspect sustained by the president Wilson. The guarantee the rights of minorities was stipulated in the treaties of peace signed with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. The special treaties having as task the protection of minorities were signed by Poland, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia. The treaty with Czechoslovakia was signed at Saint Germain-en Laye la September 10, 1919, becoming effective at July 16, 1920 and we will bring into discussion as case study.

The treaty signed by Czechoslovakia (1919) for protecting the minorities¹⁵

Case study

By the article 27 of the treaty of peace signed by the allies with Austria, the Czechoslovakian state obliged itself to undertake a treaty having in view the protection of the minorities.

Case study

The present treaty mentions the rights granted to the minorities in Czechoslovakia:

- The Czechoslovakian states undertakes the obligation to ensure full protection of life and liberty of all its inhabitants, independantly of their birthplace, nationality, race, religion

¹⁵ The text of the treaty in Consuela Langsam, Walter, *op.cit*, 117-121.

- it ensures to all inhabitants of Czechoslovakia the liberty of thought, faith, religion, with the condition to avoid the immorality or the inconsistency with the public order.

- To ensure to the minoritarian population the right to the Czechoslovakian citizenship

- It is guaranteed the equality in front of the law, civil and political rights for all the citizens of Czechoslovakian state

- the minorities will be able to use their own language also in front of the Court of Justice and in the localities with a considerable proportion of Czechoslovakian citizens of other ethnies than the Czech one, the state will ensure the instruction of the children in their own language, with the obligativity to teach the Czech language; in these localities a considerable number of minoritarians will be paid an equitable share from the sums resulting from the public funds of the state.

In the same time, the treaty mentions also the constitution of an autonomous territory in Czechoslovakia, at Southern Carpathians –the Rutenian territory- which had to benefit by a large possibility of self-governance and of a Diet. This territory had to be represented in an equitable way in the Legislative Assembly of Czechoslovakia.

Conclusions

Analyzing these provisions, we notice that there are granted a big number of rights to the minoritarian population and that these are democratic and even regarded from the perspective of our actual world.

The League of Nations is invited following to this treaty to formulate its opinions regarding the respectation of the above mentioned rights in Czechoslovakia. In spite of the policy of protection of minorities, there existed in Central and Eastern Europe revisionist powers (Germany, Hungary), discontented by the fact that the citizens of the same ethnies were living outside the boundaries of their state.

The role of the League of Nations in supporting the small states from Europe and the successes registered in the solutionning of the disputes arosed among them

Enjoying a high prestige in the years 1920, the League of Nations offered a framework of affirmation in international relations, for the smaller states. The annual reports of the Assembly, in which all the members states were represented, allowed also to the smaller states to play an active role in the diplomacy of the world, opportunity used with success by Benes and from the side of Czechoslovakia, Branting of the Sweden side, Hymans from the side of Belgium and Nicolae Titulescu from the side of Romania.

It was succeeded the annihilation of some conflicts appeared between the smaller states from Europe. In 1926, the Council succeeded the solutionning of some border incidents between Bulgaria and Greece who could lead to war. It was tried, in the same time, also the appeasement of the conflict between Poland and Czechoslovakia for ducate of Teschen. It belonged previously to 1918 to Austria-Hungary and it was inhabited in proportion of 55% by Polish people, 27% Czechs and 18% Germans. In 1920, the Conference from Spa settled this dispute granting the city of Teschen to Poland, and a part from the ducate Teschen to Czechoslovakia. The parts involved were not content but the conflict was somehow appeased. In the same time, by British mediation it was achieved the dismanteling of the conflict between Greece and Italy who occupied in 1923 the isle Corfu.

There were concluded treaties of friendship and non-aggression between states such as the one signed in Tirana, in 1926, between Italia and Albania¹⁶ which, by the virtue of the ralliation of the League of Nations obliged themselves to sustain reciprocally and not to make alliances with states who would prejudice the situation of some of them. They were obliged to ask for the arbitration of the League of Nations in case of a dispute appeared between them. Signed for five years, the agreement did not let to be noticed the future hostilities.

The League of Nations supported the smaller states from Europe and by means of giving them credits, as it was the case of Austria and Hungary.

The role of the League of Nations in establishing a peaceful climate in Europe

The most powerful factor of tension in Western Europe was the problem of the German debts. The Comission had as task the payment of the German reparations and established in 1921 the figure of 132 billions golden marks which had to be payed in three rates. The incapacity of Germany to pay determined France to occupy Ruhr (1923). A positive fact was the dismanteling of this conflict by the acceptance of the American mediation and because of the the plans Young and Dawes.

The symbol of pacification for the years 1920 was the success of the Treaty from Locarno which, besides the guarantee of the French-German frontier and German-Belgian and of the demilitarized zone of Renania, suggested the peaceful acceptance of Germany in the League of Nations, aspect that happened in 1926. It remained memorable the discourse of Aristide Briand, French minister of external affairs, in which he pleaded for the acceptance of Germany in the League. The treaty of Locarno had its limitations, connected with the fact that Germany was not obliged to guarantee its Eastern frontier.

Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresseman continued to have their plans of Franco-German ralliation and, if in 1929 the economic crises did not errupt, probably the faith of Europe would have taken another course.

In 1928, all the European states (with the exception of USSR) were member of the League of Nations (Bell, 1988: 166). The end of the decade closed promisingly by the signing of the Briand- Kellog Pact at Paris, at August 27, 1928 to which adhered the member states of the League of Nations, but also outside it (USSR, SUA). The article 1 of the Pact was mentioning that the member states condemn the recursion to war for the solutionning of the international controversies and rennounces to it as an instrument of the international politics in their relations some with the others¹⁷ and the article 2 was suggesting the solutionning of the conflict only by pacific means.

At the end of the years 1920, the League of Nations was strong, viable and with an active role organism in the international relations. The economic crises deeply affected the interbelic world and starting with 1931 the prestige of the League started to decrease.

¹⁶*Ibidem.*

¹⁷ "Kellog-Briand Pact 1928", art.1, accessed May 28, 2018, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kbpact.asp.

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