

the value of this work, but what appears specially to deserve mention and repetition are the victories which our institution has gained in the moral sphere. To give you one illustration. Is not moral disarmament, which is the essential preliminary condition to material disarmament, a field which the League of Nations has had the great credit of opening up by taking its stand upon public opinion as manifested in the Press? The Geneva organisation has thus created a most reassuring atmosphere from the point of view of world peace. This atmosphere, which is colloquially known as the Geneva atmosphere, contains a very vital element. The Locarno Agreements, which have consolidated the foundations of the peace of Europe, are the fruit of this modern orchard tilled by the League of Nations.

The Council has the right to be proud of the manner in which it carries out its task, which is sometimes both difficult and delicate. This body formed of members representing all continents and every civilisation, has as its sole guide international justice and as its sole object world peace, while impartiality and conciliation are the imposing guardian angels keeping constant watch over the progress of the discussions. Differences of culture, tradition, religion and race vanish by magic, and only the sincere and continuous co-operation of all members prevails. It is thus which constitutes the best of omens for the future of the League. It is therefore my very pleasing duty to state that I shall take away with me the most agreeable and delightful memories of this cordial co-operation.

The President has been good enough to refer just now to my share in the work of the League. He overwhelmed me with compliments which embarrassed me, for I certainly do not deserve them. Nevertheless, among those compliments is one which my conscience will allow me to accept without scruple, namely his reference to my devotion to the cause of the League. The sacred fire of that devotion will never desert me. Even after I have ceased to take part in your discussions, and am far away from Geneva, I shall devote the remainder of my life with the same constancy of purpose, without remission, to secure the triumph of the great cause of the League of Nations.

#### 1971. Settlement of Armenian Refugees.

Dr. Nansen, High Commissioner for Refugees, came to the Council table.

M. VILLEGAS submitted the following proposals: <sup>1</sup>

“ 1. That the Minutes of this meeting of the Council and any further documents which Dr. Nansen may think it desirable to circulate should be sent to all Governments, in order that the present position with regard to the settlement of Armenian refugees may be made quite clear, and that the question should be placed on the agenda of the next session of the Council;

“ 2. That the Members of the Council should invite their Governments to examine with sympathy the proposals put forward by Dr. Nansen, subject to satisfactory undertakings by the Armenian Government as to the necessary irrigation work in connection with the settlement scheme.

*These proposals were adopted.*

Dr. NANSEN, High Commissioner for Refugees, wished once more to appeal to the Members of the Council, and to the Governments of other countries, to do their utmost to support the proposal which was about to be placed before the Governments. He wished most earnestly to beg the Powers to consider carefully what situation might arise if, after all that had happened and after the promises that had been given to the Armenian refugees, those Powers came to the final conclusion that nothing could be done to assist the refugees.

Dr. Nansen withdrew.

#### 1972. Report of the Financial Committee on the Work of its Twenty-seventh Session.

M. POSPISIL, Chairman of the Financial Committee, M. SARAFFOFF, Representative of the Bulgarian Government, Dr. SAHM, President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, and Dr. VAN HAMEL, High Commissioner of the League at Danzig, came to the Council table.

M. VANDERVELDE read the following report and draft resolution. <sup>2</sup>

“ The Financial Committee has addressed to the Council separate reports on the settlement of refugees in Greece and on the financial assistance to be given to a State victim of aggression. The present report (Annex 973) relates to the settlement of Bulgarian refugees, the balances of the Austrian and Hungarian loans, the Danzig municipal loan and double taxation.

“ The Committee notes with pleasure the satisfactory progress achieved in the work of the settlement of Bulgarian refugees. I, in my turn, am glad to note this favourable view of the situation

<sup>1</sup> Document C. 298 (a). 1927. IV  
<sup>2</sup> Document C. 334. 1927. II.

held by well-informed judges. But I cannot omit to draw the Council's serious attention to the fact that, despite the progress accomplished, the situation cannot yet be considered as really satisfactory in a number of respects.

In his third quarterly report (Annex 974), the Commissioner, M. Charron, points out that the greater part of the land on which it is proposed to settle refugees is not at present available, being not yet the full and entire property of the State. He adds, moreover, that often the situation of these estates is not accurately known, and that a considerable amount of topographical work will have to be carried out to fix their limits and allot them.

"It is proposed to settle a large number of families in the district of Burgas, on the site of marshes which are going to be drained. Not only will the work be more costly than had at first been anticipated, but it appears from Professor Swellengrebel's report that malaria will not disappear even when the work has been completed. It exists in this district in a particularly acute form, and many refugees, anxious though they are to find a settlement, are terrified at the idea of settling in a district where they run the risk of being infected, and of perishing.

"Needless to say this situation has caused M. Charron, the Commissioner, much anxiety. Professor Swellengrebel's report points out that it would be very difficult to get rid of the places in which mosquitoes breed. There remain therefore only two methods of combating the evil. The first consists in improving general health and thereby the physiological resistance of the refugees against contamination. It seems very unlikely that the years of hardship through which they have passed and the difficult period which lies ahead of them will enable them to preserve the exceptional strength required to resist the disease. The regular use of quinine may certainly give important results, and M. Charron has built up substantial stocks of this medicine. It is doubtful, however, whether quinine alone will provide the refugees with really effective protection. It is exceedingly desirable that the question should be studied anew and very carefully before the work of settlement is proceeded with further and a large number of families thus exposed to very grave dangers.

"Those parts of the Financial Committee's report which relate to the Austrian and Hungarian loans and to the Danzig Municipal Loan call for no comment.

"The Financial Committee has forwarded to the Council the final report of the Committee of technical experts on double taxation and tax evasion<sup>1</sup>. It recommends that the Council should send this document to all the Governments in order that they may express their opinion on its contents. At the same time the Financial Committee recommends the convening of a general meeting of Government experts in 1928 to enable Governments, which have not hitherto had occasion to appoint experts, to take part in the technical discussions.

"In accordance with the Financial Committee's recommendations, I venture to submit to you the following resolution:

"The Council.

"Approves the report of the Financial Committee on the work of its twenty-seventh session,

"Requests the Secretary-General to forward to the Governments of all States Members and non-Members of the League of Nations the report of the technical experts on double taxation and tax evasion, with the request that they express their opinion on its contents, and to convene a general meeting of Government experts in 1928 for the purpose of discussing this report.

M. POSPISIL, Chairman of the Financial Committee, referred to that part of the report concerning the establishment of Bulgarian refugees, and, more particularly, to the passage containing justified apprehensions concerning malaria.

He could assure the Council that the Financial Committee had considered carefully this aspect of the problem of the establishment of Bulgarian refugees and, in the conversations that had taken place, the Committee had obtained assurances which went further than the statements contained in M. Charron's report. The Commissioner, M. Charron, and the Bulgarian Office, at the head of which was M. Sarafoff, were closely investigating this aspect of the problem.

M. Pospisil was sure that those concerned, as well as the Financial Committee, would continue to make untiring efforts. He thought it necessary however, to add that, in view of the manner in which this disease was spreading over all the country it was not possible to contemplate its total disappearance before the putting into force of certain measures concerning the establishment of the refugees. The Council should also note that the refugees came from countries where it had been possible for them to become familiar with the protective measures used against this disease. It was also important — and every effort was being made in this direction — to improve the physical standard of health of the population in order to increase its resistance.

M. SARAFFOFF, representative of the Bulgarian Government, wished to make a short statement, which, while explaining further the conclusions reached by the Commissioner of the League, would at the same time give satisfaction to M. Vandervelde.

There were numerous difficulties in the way of a regular and cheap solution for an undertaking such as the establishment of the Bulgarian refugees. The greatest of these difficulties consisted in finding the necessary land on which they could be installed. To overcome this difficulty was the greatest preoccupation of the General Directorate regulating the establishment of the refugees.

<sup>1</sup> See document C. 216. M. 85. 1927. II.

By the terms of the Protocol the Bulgarian Government was required to place at the disposal of the General Directorate 1,320,000 decares of land ready for cultivation and free from all financial burdens. The Agrarian Funds Department had placed at the disposal of the General Directorate 1,700,000 decares instead of 1,320,000 in order that it should be able to find a remedy for the various inconveniences arising either from the insufficiently defined ownership of the land or from the impossibility of cultivating it.

Out of the 1,700,000 decares of land placed at the disposal of the General Directorate, 1,200,000 had been included in its general plan and divided as follows:

36,000	decares	belonging	to	private	persons,
280,000	»	»	»	»	Greek emigrants.
900,000	»	»	»	»	the State and the various communes.

By Article 65 of the Law on the establishment of the refugees, which dealt with the question of land belonging to private persons, such lands were declared State property from the moment of their occupation by the refugees, their expropriation falling under the law of expropriation on the grounds of public utility. The extent, however, of these lands had no importance as regarded the general solution of the problem.

As far as the question of lands belonging to emigrants and to communes was concerned, the matter was settled by the recent law which had come into force on May 20th, 1927. By the terms of this law the land belonging to the communes was considered as the property of the State from the moment it was handed over to the General Directorate for the establishment of the refugees, the duty of the State being to compensate the communes in proportion as the General Directorate received, from the refugees established upon the land, the amount of its value.

Provision was made in this law for land belonging to persons benefiting from the Convention between Bulgaria and Greece, concerning the freedom of emigration of Greco-Bulgarian ethnic minorities to be used for the establishment of the refugees, but the future position of the land was to be settled later by the State and the Mixed Commission on Greco-Bulgarian emigration. Negotiations on this point were proceeding and would shortly be completed.

With regard to the question raised in the following passage of the report: " He adds, moreover, that often the situation of these estates is not accurately known, and that a considerable amount of topographical work will have to be carried out to fix their limits and allot them " M. Sarafoff would complete the passage as follows:

Fifty surveying parties were now marking out the boundaries of these plots, surveying them and allotting them according to the quality of the land and the number of refugee families. These fifty parties were preceded by numerous committees which, in accordance with the above-mentioned laws, received the land from the Agrarian Funds Office and handed it over to the General Directorate for the establishment of refugees. The surveying parties were followed by other committees which, having already received the plans drawn up by the surveying parties, proceeded to hand over the parcelled-out land to the refugees by means of a system of lots. These committees included representatives of the various administrations interested, as well as of private landowners and the Mixed Greco-Bulgarian Committee.

This whole organisation, which had had to be set up for various reasons, had been obliged to work as fast as possible in order that, at about the end of the year, at least 900,000 decares of land could be delimited and handed over to the refugees. This land would suffice for the upkeep of 25,000 families, care being taken to make sure that each family of refugees received its land free from all charges. In this way the legal part of the resolution had been combined with the technical part, which concerned the handing over of the land to the refugees.

Referring to the large number of refugees who were being established under unfavourable conditions in the district of Burgas, M. Sarafoff explained that this was due: (1) to a large amount of land becoming available there as the result of the emigration to Greece and to Turkey; (2) to the fact that this district was the only one which was not subject to the restrictions of the forbidden zone.

In accordance with the general plan, 60,000 refugees would be established in the district of Burgas, or about 12 per cent of the total population of the district, amounting to 484,000 inhabitants. The district of Burgas included 333 villages and each of these villages, without exception, would receive one or more families of refugees. In 248 villages from two to thirty families would be established. Fifty villages would receive from thirty to one hundred families and only in twenty villages would from one hundred and fifty to three hundred families be concentrated, so that the measures taken against malaria would safeguard the health of the whole population and not only that of the refugees. The drying of the marshes must be carried out with a view to obtaining land for the refugees and in order to assist the general campaign against malaria in that district.

It was true that the distinguished Dutch professor, M. Swellengrebel, had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to count on a final disappearance of malaria, but it was also true that, according to him, the struggle against malaria might be successfully achieved by applying certain measures which he had suggested to the Bulgarian Government and which had already been put into practice side by side with those which the General Directorate of Public Health had adopted on its own account.

Whatever happened, it was quite certain that refugees would not be established on marshy lands until the draining and works of improvement had been carried out.

M. COMNÈNE said that at previous meetings of the Finance Committee, of the Advisory Committee for Refugees, and the Council of the League, certain principles had been established. These

principles must not be forgotten. They were defined in the Protocol as well as in the discussions of the three international bodies which he had just mentioned, and they were intended, among other things, as the Council was aware, to ensure order and security in the districts near to the frontiers of Bulgaria. It had been considered that, among the most effective means for attaining this end, was the establishment of the refugees who came originally from Macedonia, Thrace and the Dobrudja in districts far from the village from which they came.

At the sessions of December 1926 and March 1927 it had been decided, in agreement with the representatives of Bulgaria and the Commissioner of the League of Nations, that a plan of settlement should be drawn up, that this plan should be accompanied by lists giving the names of the refugees to be settled, and that these documents should be communicated or published within about a month in order to enable the neighbouring Governments to present their observations, and particularly to indicate certain individuals who were directly involved, in order that steps might be taken to remove them from the frontier. The Roumanian Government greatly regretted that the Bulgarian Government had not been able to finish this work.

During the present session the Commissioner of the League of Nations, as well as M. Sarafoff, had, nevertheless, given further assurances which it was important to emphasise before the Council:

1. It was agreed that the general plan of settlement, as well as the lists giving the names of the refugees, including the details specified in the Minutes of the Council of March 10th last<sup>1</sup> should be communicated to the Roumanian Government without delay or at least published in the *Official Gazette* of Bulgaria.

2. It was understood that, in any case the Governments of the countries which were neighbours of Bulgaria should be enabled to acquaint themselves with these documents several months before the execution of the scheme, and that care should be taken to avoid the creation of new situations and accomplished facts.

He was particularly glad to state that the Roumanian Government had noted with satisfaction the declarations made by M. Charron before the Financial Committee and the assurances given by M. Sarafoff:

1. That, of the 32,000 refugees to be relieved, about 31,000 had already made declarations opting for Bulgarian nationality under the Protocol.

2. That the law concerning landed property based upon labour would be interpreted in such a way that the former owners would receive the full price of their property and that, therefore, the Commissioner of the League of Nations would not give his approval to any settlement upon property the price of which had not been paid in full.

These observations had been the subject of various discussions before the Financial Committee, which had taken note of them. The Roumanian Government thought it necessary to ask the Council also to note them.

M. SARAFFOFF said he desired to state that the lists giving the names of the refugees were published in the *Official Gazette*. Every day there appeared an annex which indicated the number of families to be settled in a particular village, the number of the families which would be removed and the names of those to which assistance would be given. The Bulgarian Government had been obliged to proceed rapidly with the settlement of the refugees, and had begun in the district in which it was possible to establish the greatest number, namely the district of Burgas. After the publication of the lists for this district, the publication of the lists for the districts in which M. Comnene was interested would be begun, and it was very probable that upon his return to Sofia M. Sarafoff would find the lists for which the representative of Roumania had asked. In no case would refugees be established before these lists had been published and placed at the disposal of the neighbours and the refugees themselves, in order to enable either the one or the other to submit their possible claims.

As regarded the lands to be expropriated, he would confirm what he had said in his declaration, namely that the Bulgarian Government would not take land from private individuals, and that it would not finally establish the refugees until it had paid the owners of the land.

M. VANDERVELDE said he was glad to associate himself with the tribute paid to the work done with a view to the settlement of the Bulgarian refugees. As the result of a personal study of the documents, he had noted the serious difficulties to which M. Sarafoff had referred, and he had noted facts which seemed to him to be scarcely reassuring in regard to the health conditions at Burgas. He could not refrain from drawing the attention of the Council to the situation. The Council was responsible for the persons concerned, and the approval which it would give to these reports involved its responsibility. He had no need to say that, in making these observations, he was only inspired by one anxiety namely the interest shared by all the members of the Council in seeing the Bulgarian refugees settled under satisfactory conditions.

His report had provided M. Sarafoff, whose activity was particularly praiseworthy with an opportunity of submitting to the Council some very interesting observations on the plans of the Bulgarian Government, and upon its desire to overcome the difficulties which still existed. From this point of-view the submission of his report had served a useful purpose, and he thanked M. Sarafoff for his declarations.

*The draft resolution proposed by M. Vandervelde was adopted.*

M. Sarafoff, Dr. Sahm and Dr. van Hamel withdrew.

<sup>1</sup> *Official Journal*, April 1927, page 352.