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Geopolitical Interests in the Corfu Incident and the Peaceful Resolution of Disputes in the Context of the League of the Nations

The establishment of the League of Nations constituted the cornerstone and the crowning achievement of the Peace Treaties, which ended the First World War. The union of the states of the time, which was based on the common wish to establish a permanent peace after four consecutive years of war, was the inspiration of the American President Wilson, who believed that the pre-existing European security system, the Directorate of the Great Powers, constituted the basic cause for the war. In addition, Wilson considered the creation of an international social contract as a need of uppermost importance. Such a contract, based on a framework of internationally acceptable principles, would guarantee peace and security in perpetuity.

The Pact of the League of Nations, Wilson's inspiration and successful accomplishment, which repeated his fourteen points in its preamble, did not constitute a separate treaty for different reasons, following the wish of the American President. Wilson did not want a separate treaty for the League of Nations because, on the one hand he was fearful that this might lead to its weakening in relation to the main Peace Treaty, and on the other, because of the difficulty he would have to face for the ratification of two treaties —the Peace Treaty and the Treaty of the League of Nations— by the Senate. The acceptance by the Conference of the American President's proposal for the Treaty of the League of Nations to somehow constitute the preamble of the Peace Treaties was seen as a fact that from the very beginning was a blow against the nascent League of Nations. This was mainly because the incorporation of the Pact in the body of the Treaty deprived its democratic and liberal nature as far as international cooperation was concerned. Such a nature was deemed indispensable for the long-term functioning of an institution of collective security. Indeed, as was proven, the defeated powers saw its implementation as a compulsory obligation

in the wider framework of the Peace Treaties' implementation. All the more, because the defeated powers were viewing this Pact in a negative manner, since they were obliged to sign the Peace Treaties on the one hand, but on the other they could not become members of the League of Nations until the Conference envisaged by the League of Nations decided with a special majority vote on their accession. This would become true under the condition that these states would exhibit their "sincere intentions to abide by their international obligations and to accept the provisions of the League of Nations as far as their armed forces and their military and naval armaments were concerned"¹.

On the positive side of the League of Nations Pact, for the period it was concluded, it is worth mentioning that it functioned as a cross-Atlantic bridge, enabling the United States to acquire access to European affairs, contributing to the de-colonization process and to the first organized attempt of the international community, and serving as an alternative to "the charm the October Revolution and the dangerous reactionary anachronisms had on the people"².

For states of lesser power, for which security and justice are values of uppermost importance in their international relations, the Pact of the League of Nations was indeed luring so as to support its establishment. Nevertheless, the vision never materialized and reality proved, once again, stronger than imagination. As it is successfully pointed out, despite the fact that the League of Nations "put on Wilson's liberal outfit", however, "in substance its practice was just the continuation of the old diplomatic methods in a modern way"³. Achieving a consensus in the Council was practically impossible unless the Great Powers agreed to that.

The Corfu Incident, which will be analyzed immediately afterwards, presents special research interest and is important for the drawing of useful conclusions, as it was the first incident that surfaced the inherent

1. See A. I. Korandis, *Diplomatic History of Europe (1919-1945)*, v. A', Athens 1996, pp. 25-29; André-François Poncet, *De Versailles à Potsdam*, Paris 1948, p. 76; Federico Curato, *La Conferenza della Pace (1919-1920)*, Milano 1922, p. 126; Lucian Berra, *La Pace Armata*, Milano 1946, p. 16.

2. See L. Divani, *Greece and Minorities. The System of International Protection of the League of Nations*, Athens 2000⁴, p. 13.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

weaknesses of the new and promising system of collective security, established by the League of Nations. Mainly because the dispute that arose between two disproportionate in power states —Greece and Italy— pointed out the weakness of the new collective security system to resolve disputes using law as a base. The weak Greece, a victim of fascism, as this was expressed by Mussolini, was considered the victimizer by the League of Nations because of the strong pressure exercised by Italy to the League of Nations.

The League of Nations unable to surpass its predecessor for the developments in Europe, the European Directorate of Powers, ignored the procedures that were taking place and before the acquitting outcome —for Greece— of the fact-finding commission had been announced, it had already succumbed to Italian pressure, adjudicating a particularly high fine for Greece. The same time when weak Greece, a victim of Mussolini's geopolitical and political aspirations, was wearing the cloak of the victimizer, the vision of the weaker states was immediately crushing on the field of the cruel international reality. Visions for a more mature international society of states, which by having felt the painful experiences of the recent past, would create not only a modern but also a just system for collective security. Visions, which proved false soon afterwards.

General Tellini's assassination: cause or excuse for the Corfu Incident?

The bitterness felt by Hellenism after the Asian Minor Catastrophe was, according to some historians, even greater than that felt after the Fall of Constantinople⁴. The ensuing Lausanne Peace Treaty apart from the fact that it signalled the end of the vision of the Great Idea⁵, it also constituted the starting point of a circle of deadlocks at a diplomatic level. Greece's diplomatic position was significantly weakened and the countries surrounding Greece thought —and rightly so— that the moment was favourable for the fulfilment of any aspirations they had concerning their respective short or long-term national interests.

4. See E. Driault, *La Question d'Orient (1918-1937)*, Paris 1938, pp. 110-113; N. Psiroukis, *The Asia Minor Catastrophe*, Athens 1977, p. 184.

5. See S. V. Markezinis, *Political History of Modern Greece*, v. 4, Athens 1966, p. 324.

Indeed, Greece was faced with a host of important hardships, following the Asia Minor debacle. In the domestic field, and within the context of the implementation of the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty⁶, the main concern was the reinstatement of the refugees that came into Greece⁷. This was because a large number of refugees settled in the region of Macedonia, where a large number of slavophones also inhabited, under the protection of the provisions of the Neilly Treaty. It is worth pointing out that only 388.146 Turks and 53.000 Bulgarians left the Greek territory whereas 1.221.849 Greeks returned to it, according to the provisions of the Neilly and Lausanne Treaties respectively⁸. The friction between the slavophones and the Greek returnees had an immediate impact on the Greek-Bulgarian relations, which remained intense for that very reason.

Mussolini, the Italian Prime Minister, was the first to exploit – in order to satisfy his personal interests in the domestic arena —Greece’s weakened position. The excuse was given when certain unidentified individuals, on the morning hours of 28 August 1923, murdered the members of the Italian delegation responsible for the delimitation of the Greek-Albanian borders, head of which was General Tellini. Immediately the next day, the Italian government, through diplomatic channels, handed to the Greek government an ultimatum including claims which were described as penalties. According to these claims: (i) the Greek government should apologize in the most wide and formal manner to the Italian government. This apology would be asked by the Ambassador of Italy in Greece, on behalf of the highest Greek military authority, (ii) to honour the victims the Greek Government will have to hold a memorial service in the Catholic church of Athens, in which all ministers of the government should be present, (iii) tribute shall be paid to the Italian flag the same day with the memorial service in the following manner: after eight o’clock in the morning an Italian naval squadron will sail to Faliron. Once it anchorages, many ships of the Greek navy (excluding light torpedo carriers, which have to stay in the harbour of Salamina Bay

6. See S. Th. Laskaris, *Diplomatic History of Modern Greece (1914-1939)*, Thessaloniki 1954, p. 233.

7. See R. Clogg, *A Concise History of Modern Greece*, Athens 1993, p. 181.

8. See I. Korandis, *op.cit.*, p. 370; K. Vakalopoulos, *The New Greek Nation (1204-2000)*, Athens 2001, p. 495.

and those which have previously anchored in the port of Piræus close to the place where the squadron were going to sail), will pay tribute to the Italian flag by means of twenty and one gunshots and the Italian flag will run up the masts of all Greek ships. During the memorial service all ships will have their flags half mast. The same afternoon, before the sun sets the Italian naval squadron will leave and its departure will be accompanied by gunshots to salute the Italian ships, (iv) the Greek authorities are obliged to conduct the strictest of investigations in the place the slaughter took place, with the assistance of the military attaché of the Embassy, Colonel Peronne de San Martino. The Greek government will be responsible for the Colonel's personal security and should facilitate his mission in every way. The investigation shall have to be completed within five days from the acceptance of the claims included in this note, (v) all those found guilty will be sentenced to death, (vi) the Greek government is obliged to pay the Italian government, as a compensation penalty, the amount of 50 million Italian liras. The aforementioned amount should be paid within five days from delivery of this note; (vii) military honours will be assigned to the remains of the victims during their transfer to an Italian steamboat⁹.

The Greek government on its part wrote a memorandum according to which it would accept/reject the following: (i) to express its regret to the Italian government in the most formal way. According to that, the Ambassador of Italy will receive the provost marshal of Athens, (ii) the Greek government will hold a memorial service to honour the victims, which will be attended by members of the government, (iii) the same day tribute will be paid to the Italian flag by a squad of the Athenian garrison, which will be sent to the Italian Embassy to pay tribute to the Italian flag according to the formal way, (iv) the military authorities in Preveza will render formal honours during their transfer on an Italian steamboat, (v) rejects claims (iv), (v) and (vi) (as described above) as insulting towards the sovereignty of the Greek state. In addition, it is stated that the Greek government, because of the just spirit it characterizes it is willing to compensate the families of the victims and to assist in the investigation process through the information which the Italian

9. See K. Paparrigopoulos, *History of the Greek Nation*, v. 8, p. 384.

military attaché possesses¹⁰.

The result of the partial rejection of the Italian ultimatum was that one week afterwards three Italian battleships, under the command of admiral Solari, bombarded and occupied the island of Corfu, on 31 August 1923¹¹.

The Bombardment and Occupation of Corfu

The same day, a delegation of the head of the Italian squadron, Admiral Solari, was handing to the prefect of Corfu a document which contained the following:

Following orders from the government of His Majesty the King of Italy, I will proceed to the peaceful occupation of the island of Corfu. Captain Foskini, chief correspondent of the squadron, bearer of this document, will make known the conditions and the way the occupation is going to take place. In case resistance or hindrance is met by you or any other political or military authority, I will proceed to the violent occupation of the island and I will hold you personally responsible for any consequence. The occupation is going to be effected 30 minutes after the delivery of this document and by the time this deadline expires, if my envoy does not return to the ship or if the expressed claims are not fully met, I will immediately start action through the means and forces I have at my disposal. A two-hour notice is provided so that the citizens of foreign Powers will have time to assemble in their respective consulates or move away from all military premises.

The prefect's answer was clear: "I am not surrendering the island to you via a protocol, but I will not put up any resistance because I am deprived of the necessary forces"¹².

10. *Ibid.*

11. See S. N. Gregoriades, *The Terrible Documents-Corfu Case-August 1923*, Athens 1976; G. Kordatos, *Great History of Greece-Modern*, v. E' (1900-1924), Athens 1958.

12. See *Historical Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 1923, file no. 27, sub-file 5.

A while later, the commander of the Italian squadron ordered the beginning of the bombardment. The cable the prefect of Corfu, Evripeos, sent to Athens illustrates the situation:

To the leader of the Revolution, Plastiras, President of the Government, Gonatas. This very moment Corfu is being bombarded by the Italian fleet, which by means of an ultimatum demanded its surrender. STOP. Occupation of the island by way of reprisal for Tellini's murder. STOP. We turned proposal for surrender down but stated that no resistance is going to be put up. Send orders on what to do further. STOP¹³.

At the same time a "biblical scene" is taking place:

... a boat with two young rowers is heading undeterred towards the Italian ships. Standing on the boat, with his beard waving in the wind, Athinagoras [the bishop of the island and the Ecumenical Patriarch to be] is making his way through the masses of the Italian warships which were roaring death, shouts with his thunderous voice in Italian: - You are murdering innocent people. Italians, your cannonballs are killing women and children ... - Unfortunately, I was following Duce's orders [Admiral] Solari would later confess to him¹⁴.

Corfu's Status of Perpetual Neutrality

It is worth pointing out that Corfu at that time was under a status of perpetual neutrality, according to the provisions of the London Treaty of 13th of July, 1863 and was set under the protection of England¹⁵, France and Russia according to article 2 of the aforementioned Treaty. On the Corfu neutrality status the following should be noted: Greece's territorial expansion which took place on 13th July 1863, according to the London Treaty, included a conditional clause, specifically a dilatory clause. The conditions that would have to be fulfilled for the incorporation of the Ionian Islands were the consent of Austria, France, Prussia,

13. See A. Rigou, *The Critical Years 1922-1935*, v. A', Athens 1995, p. 92.

14. *Ibid.*

15. See, *Eleftheron Vima*, 2nd of September, 1923.

Russia and the concurrent opinion of the Ionian Parliament. For the fulfilment of the second condition, the Ionian Parliament passed a resolution on 23rd September / 5th October 1863 which has as follows:

The House of Parliament of the Seven Islands decides that the islands of Corfu, Cephalonia, Zakynthos, Lefkas, Ithaka, Kythira, Paxoi and their dependents are uniting with the Kingdom of Greece in order to constitute an indispensable part in a unitary state under the Constitutional Scepter of His Majesty, the King of Greece, George A' and his heirs¹⁶.

It is interesting to point out that despite the fact that since the 1st August both preconditions, set by the London Protocol, have already been met, yet the London Treaty of 14th November 1863 did not provide for the full unification of the Seven Islands, as these islands were under the specific status of neutrality, which in this case meant that no military forces could be established on these islands. It is obvious that this clause, which provided for the conditional unification of the islands, was virtually depriving Greece from the right of lawful defense, which is inextricably associated with the notion of sovereignty. In the case of the "Corfu Incident" the inextricable relation of defense (by means of establishing a military force) and sovereignty was proven in the most dramatic way: the lack of organized defense on Corfu allowed Mussolini to challenge the undisputed Greek sovereignty on the island.

The neutrality status which governed Corfu in 1923 was the reason why England felt annoyed, due to the unexpected Italian action and finally led to its intervention in favour of Greece during the drafting of the Note of the Ambassadorial Conference. The document of the Ambassadorial Conference has as follows:

Through this Note, the Ambassadorial Conference: First of all strongly protests in the name of its comprising powers (England, France and Italy) for the atrocious crime, which was committed on Greek soil and victims of which were members of an international committee which had a peaceful mission.

16. See Th. Christou, *From the Epidaurus National Assembly (1821) to the Incorporation of the Dodecanese (1947)*, Athens 1999, pp. 63-68; K. Vakalopoulos, *op.cit.*, pp. 274-281.

Secondly, it calls upon the Greek government to move forward with the investigations and the attribution of responsibilities. The Powers reserve the right to request corrective measures which they will see fit ...¹⁷.

The moderate nature of the Note is exactly due to England's intervention. This decision was not holding the Greek government responsible—as the Italian Note clearly did—but was requesting the clearing up of the case and the attribution of responsibilities¹⁸.

The Crisis of Mussolini's Government

Examining the attack and occupation of Corfu by the Italians at a time of peace, the fact that the incident took place under conditions whereby Mussolini's fascist regime was aware of its largest crisis throughout its whole existence, generated a great deal of questions. This was because Mussolini had lost any sense of measure while exercising his powers and had expelled a large number of his party's officers, whereas a large percentage of the people that brought his party into power were starting to be displeased because Mussolini was incapable of accomplishing a series of pre-election promises concerning national issues, economic issues (the improvement of the Italian lira's position, depreciation of basic goods). This also applied to the labour sector, where a large number of job losses occurred¹⁹.

In the opinion, which sees Mussolini as having planned the "Corfu Incident" in advance, are included, amongst other things, the following cases: firstly, an Italian navy ship had docked at Corfu a month before the murder of the Tellini delegation, the captain of which had invited to dinner all the members of the Italian community who were known for their support of their pro-Italian propaganda action²⁰. Also the fact that all the disembarked Italian soldiers were equipped with mantillas which had printed on them a map of Corfu with the central places of the island underlined. It is obvious that it was impossible for these mantillas to

17. *Ibid.*

18. See *Eleftheron Vima*, 1st and 3rd of September 1923.

19. See *Historical Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, file no. 29, sub-file 6.

20. See *Historical Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, file no. 27, sub-file 5.

have been produced the day of Corfu's occupation, or even two or three days previous to it²¹.

It is worth noting that a month before the said incident an assembly of Italian military powers was taking place in southern Italy. It was these exact powers which disembarked in Corfu, the soldiers of whom, let it be noted, had absolute knowledge of the locations that they occupied²² and, finally, the declarations of Don Luigi Strunzo, founder and of first leader of the Italian Christian-Democratic party, according to whom: "... the denial [of Italy] to acknowledge the League of Nation's jurisdiction, extended the negative impression. More to the essence, the insulting form of this refusal resulted in establishing the foreign policy of the Italian government as suspect"²³.

Let it also be noted that the occupation and attack of Corfu, which Mussolini commanded in a cynical way —and whereby he is justified only where his premeditated actions are concerned— radically reversed the fall in his popularity at the time²⁴. In this sense Mussolini achieved his goal: At the same time that the international public opinion and in particular the English press was turning against Mussolini, the Italian people rallied around him providing him with their greatest support²⁵.

The hardships of Greece after the Corfu Incident

The end of the "Corfu Incident" was followed by the assessment by the League of Nations for a very large amount for the time, against Greece. However, the suffering of Greece would not end here. This time around, the responsibility for mistakes committed and brought with them significant blows to the already weakened Greek foreign policy, lay exclusively with Greece.

The first of these errors was committed by Nikolaos Politis —repre-

21. *Ibid.*

22. See *Eleftheron Vima*, 5th September 1923. See also *Historical Archive of the Hellenic Ministry for Foreign Affairs*, file no. 28, sub-file 4 (document - cable of the Greek embassy in Albania of 17th September 1923, register no. 9109 A5/III).

23. See G. Daphnis, *Greece between two wars*, vol. I, Athens 1955, p. 11.

24. *Ibid.*

25. See S. V. Markezinis, *Political History of Modern Greece*, Vol. II, (Σειρά Β'), Athens 1973, p. 365; Sir I. Kirkpatrick, *Mussolini, a Study of a Demagogue*, London 1964, p. 201.

sentative of Greece in the League of Nations, and an international law expert of global prestige— when, in conjunction with his Bulgarian counterpart, he acknowledged a protocol which gave an advantageous nature to the Slav-speaking minority which resided in Macedonia. The said protocol—which concerned two statements that were signed and submitted to the League of Nations Council by Nikolaos Politis and Christos Kalfos and which was then established as the Politis-Kalfos protocol²⁶— apart from the fact that it gave Bulgaria the capability to continuously pose obstacles to Greece using as an excuse the protection of their so-called fellow nationals, it also afflicted the national interests of Yugoslavia in Serbian Macedonia²⁷. It constituted, however, the reason that Yugoslavia denounced the Alliance Treaty that they had agreed to with Greece in 1923, and the relations of the two countries became stagnant.

The second mistake, uncomparatively greater in magnitude than the first, was committed by General Theodoros Pangalos. The said general—known for his military qualities in the Asia Minor war— in order to satisfy his innermost desire to re-acquire Eastern Thrace enforced military dictatorship. Soon after, he signed a number of agreements with Yugoslavia which created a web of rights in favour of Yugoslavia and established in general a Serbian port in Thessaloniki. Due to the one-sided and the particularly oppressive in nature for Greece of the agreements, the said agreements were established as the Pangalos Agreements²⁸. One of the unfortunate actions of the said general—apart from the “Pangalos Agreements” which was the gravest— concerns the handling of a certain incident at the Greco-Bulgarian border²⁹. The said incident took place in October 1925 when, after the murder of two Greek military personnel—an officer and a soldier— at the Greco-Bulgarian border, the dictator Pangalos ordered the advancement of the Third Army Corps in Bulgaria. The advancement of the Greek troops in

26. For the Politis-Kalfos protocol see A. Tounda-Fergadi, *Greco-Bulgarian Minorities. Politis-Kalfos Protocol 1924-1925*, Thessaloniki 1986.

27. See P. Pipineli, *History of the Foreign Policy of Greece 1923-1941*, Athens 1948, p. 27; S. A. Yialistra, *National Struggles (1909-1959)*, Athens 1963, p. 229.

28. For this matters see further the work of P. Sioussiouras, *Aspects of the Foreign Policies of Greece during the Inter-War Period* (in the press).

29. See G. Daphnis, *op.cit.*, pp. 302-305.

the valley of the Strymona River, without a war having first being declared, finally stopped at Petritsi³⁰. This unfortunate action cost Greece 30 million leva, an amount which was called by the League of Nations in December 1925, to be paid to Bulgaria as compensation.

The end of this period signalled the rise of Eleftherios Venizelos to power. This acute politician managed, in a small frame of time, to restore the shaken, against Greece, geopolitical balance. He laid down new bases, complying with the spirit of the League of Nations, concerning international organizations, partnerships and open diplomacy, and at the same time going forward with revision of the country's foreign policy.

The Deficit of the League of Nations as an Institution of Collective Security

It could reliably be argued that the injustice which Greece suffered by the League of Nations due to the murder of General Tellini, acted to Greece's advantage. Greece was the first nation which felt the inability of the League of Nations to function as an institution of collective security for countries of lesser power. This was clearly ascertained when the solution of the differences between Greece and Italy was given by the Ambassadorial Conference, which was unqualified, because Italy, one of the two members of this difference, belonged to the group of Great Powers³¹. It is accurately noted by Lloyd George³² that the Council of the League of Nations gave the impression that it sided with one member (i.e. that of Italy), before heeding the other (i.e. Greece) and thus committed the gravest mistake that can be committed by a court: to heed only one side, critically losing the trust of the other.

Italy, playing the role of the victim against the victimizer, succeeded in the enforcement of unbearable clauses against Greece, even before the completion of the League of Nations' Examining Committee project, and against the Greek authorities which had undertaken the investigation of the incidence and the discovering of relative findings. This, despite the

30. See A. Kyrou, *Greek Foreign Policy*, Athens 1955, p. 74.

31. See L. Divani, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

32. See Lloyd George "Italy and the League of Nations. The annihilation of the Authority/Prestige of the Convention of Geneva", *Neue Freie Presse* 15th September, 1923.

fact that according to the pre-interrogation that took place in Ioannina, grave indications were generated that the crime was planned at Argyrokastro in Albania and was executed by Albanians with the possible involvement of the Albanian authorities³³. The result was the difference of this being settled against Greece's best interest, which was obligated to reimburse a large monetary amount as compensation.

The positions of the Swedish delegate in the Ambassadorial Conference was deemed to be proven prophetic for the future of the International Organization: "the Council of the League of Nations was informed that a decision of the Ambassadorial was given whereby the authority of the International Court of Hague is sidestepped, without us being updated of the result of this undergoing investigation. That it has occurred exhibits vividly the vital importance which the potential function of the League of Nations' organs display for the solution of international dispute. The League of Nations' purpose is indeed to be a preserver of peace but the kind of peace which is not based on justice incorporates the sperm of future conflicts"³⁴.

The "Corfu Incident" as it was initially pinpointed, found convenient grounds within the Greece's weak diplomatic position at the time it took place. This concurrence, as it turned out however, functioned positively for Greek foreign policy. It also brought about the first blow to the League of Nations and proved its inability to function as an institution of collective security.

Conclusion

It is a fact that the "Corfu Incident" and its consequences brought about significant blows to Greece so much in the international as in the domestic field. It is also a fact though that Greek foreign policy, after this dramatic experience, became more mature. This was because Greece, more than any other country, deciphered the League of Nation's message which gestated from the resolution of the "Corfu Incident". That this most promising organization was not going to constitute "the magic

33. See *Historical Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, file no. 27, sub-file 3 (Investigation Findings on the Covering Document of the Ioannina District Attorney's Office of 26th September 1923, register no. 13965).

34. See *History of the Greek Nation*, Vol. 15, Athens 1978, pp. 289-290.

key” for the solution of specific or other relevant issues which would henceforth arise³⁵. This was mainly when a Great Power would have, to a certain extent, a part in these. Greece, thus, constituted the first state which proved the inherent weaknesses of the new system which was the League of Nations and the hastiness of all who rushed into rejoicing its establishment as a system of collective security.

It is certain that the development which took place with the whole matter against Greece could have been avoided if the Greek-Italian dispute had been relegated to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The handling of this case by the Ambassadorial Conference as opposed to this court was the first indication that the League of Nations was incapable of functioning as a law attributing mechanism, and that the League of Nations would not satisfy the expectations of the mainly smaller countries on the level that was envisioned. The institution of collective security, after it was inspired by and enforced as a powerful measure by the Great Powers, was meant to be sacrificed on the alter of their geopolitical pursuits and aims.

The handling of the Greek-Bulgarian incident by the League of Nations, also leads to this very conclusion, as quite paradoxically in this case the League of Nations handled the Greek-Bulgarian dispute quite successfully. Indeed, the immediate intervention on behalf of the international organization in the Greek-Bulgarian incident eased off the impressions the mishandling of the Corfu Incident had created. However, the optimism that was created in the whole of the international community, according to which the League of Nations would be the “magic key” for the resolution of disputes, was false. This is because the case of the Greek-Bulgarian incident was not the best example of conflict resolution between two states. It was an extraordinary case which proved rather the contrary to what gave the Great Powers a chance to rejoice. The resolution of the dispute was because its parties were two small states, two states with little or no grounds for international diplomatic antagonisms³⁶.

We would support the view that a more detailed analysis of the Greek-Bulgarian incident would lead to the conclusion that in the future

35. See L. Divani, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

36. *Ibid.*

the League of Nations would only resolve disputes when the Great Powers are not directly or indirectly involved. In this sense, despite the fact that the said incident had a positive outcome and was handled according to the provisions of international law on behalf of the League of Nations, yet the attribution of justice would be deprived of its meaning as long as

there was no involvement of the Great Powers or of their conflicting interests. There was a dispute between two small Balkan countries with no powerful friends. It was, thus, an extremely simple case without any legal or political implications³⁷.

The fact that the unfortunate and mainly unjust handling of the Corfu Incident by the League of Nations, as it had to do with a dispute between a powerful state and a state with much less power in relation to the fact that the Greek-Bulgarian incident was successfully resolved as it had to do with a dispute between two states with small or no diplomatic weight in the international scene, *a contrario* confirmed the exact same position: that the League of Nations, prisoner of the expediencies and geopolitical aspirations, would fail to function as a law-attributing mechanism, achieving, the necessary, mainly for the smaller states, collective security.

37. *Ibid.*