LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY INTO THE INCIDENTS ON THE FRONTIER BETWEEN BULGARIA AND GREECE.

REPORT.

I. INTRODUCTION.

At the meeting held at Paris on October 29th, the Council of the League of Nations decided to appoint a Commission to carry out a full enquiry into the recent incidents on the frontier between Bulgaria and Greece to the north-west of Salonica, and to ascertain as exactly as possible the origin of these incidents and all the facts in relation thereto, which had given rise to the intervention of the Council.

The Commission was directed in particular to establish the facts enabling the responsibility to be fixed, and to supply the necessary material for the determination of any indemnities or reparation which might be considered appropriate.

The Commission was requested to submit a report before the end of November in order that the Council might examine it at its December session.

Further, in order that the Council might be in a position to make suitable recommendations to the Governments concerned, the Commission was requested to submit to the Council, either in the report referred to above or subsequently, any suggestions as to measures which in its opinion would eliminate or minimise the general causes of such incidents and prevent their recurrence.

As regards the immediate steps to be taken for the repatriation of prisoners and the restoration of movable property, the Commission was authorised to exercise the powers referred to in the report of the Rapporteur, which was approved by the Council at the same time as the resolution.

With regard to movable property, cattle, etc., that might have been seized by the troops of either side, the report provided for immediate restoration, or, if that was not possible, for the payment of suitable compensation. To prevent any dispute as to the right to or amount of such compensation, the Bulgarian and Greek Governments agreed that such matters should be referred for final settlement to the Commission.

The Commission was authorised to conduct its investigations both on the spot and at the seats of the two Governments concerned, these Governments undertaking to give to the Commission every assistance, supply all facilities and take the necessary measures to enable it to accomplish its task.

The Commission was directed to assemble at Geneva on November 6th. Sir Horace Rumbold, His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador at Madrid, was appointed by the Council as Chairman of the Commission, and the following members were subsequently appointed:

- Général de Division Serrigny, of the French Army;
- Général de Division Ferrario, of the Italian Army;
- H.E. M. de Adlercreutz, Swedish Minister at The Hague;
- M. Droogleeever Fortuy, Member of the Netherlands Parliament.

The Secretary-General of the League of Nations appointed Major G. H. F. Abraham, of the League Secretariat, as Secretary of the Commission, and as Assistant Secretaries:

- Captain Mathenet;
- M. Cespedes;
- Count L. Pietromarchi,

also of the League Secretariat.
At its first meeting, on November 6th, the Commission decided to proceed on the following day to Belgrade. It requested the Military Attachés of France, Great Britain and Italy at the Court of Belgrade to meet the Commission there on November 9th.

At the request of the Council these officers had remained in the district where the incidents had occurred in order to supervise the withdrawal of the Bulgarian and Greek troops to their respective territories, and they had conducted a preliminary enquiry concerning the incidents.

The Commission also decided, on leaving Belgrade, to proceed to the Bulgaro-Greek frontier, in the neighbourhood of Demir-Hissar, where the incidents had occurred. The Bulgarian and Greek Governments were informed of this decision.

The Commission met the Military Attachés at Belgrade on November 9th. These officers had arrived that day from Demir-Hissar and had not had time to prepare their report for the Commission. It was decided that this report \(^1\) should be examined on November 11th in the train on the way to Salonica and Demir-Hissar, the Military Attachés being invited to accompany the Commission thither.

The Commission was received at Belgrade by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. It left Belgrade on November 11th and arrived at Demir-Hissar on the evening of the 12th. On the 13th it entered Bulgarian territory and, dividing up into three sub-commissions, visited, with Bulgarian officials, the ten villages and the small town of Petrich situated in the district in which the military operations of October 22nd-28th took place. Several members revisited some of these villages and the town of Petrich on November 14th and 15th. During these three days the Commission received at Demir-Hissar the representative of the Greek Government and several deputations.

The military members of the Commission, with the assistance of the Military Attachés, conducted a minute enquiry at Demir-Hissar and in Bulgarian territory into the frontier incidents and the advance of the Greek troops. They interrogated a number of staff and regimental officers and several non-commissioned officers and men.

The Commission left Demir-Hissar on the evening of the 15th and proceeded to Athens. On the evening of the 16th it called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and interviewed him for the first time. The Chief of Staff of the Greek Army and the General Commanding the 1st Army Corps were present at this meeting. On the following day the Commission was received by the Prime Minister. It left Athens for Sofia on the 20th at 7 a.m. During its stay in Athens the Commission had frequent interviews with the above persons and with many others.

The Commission arrived at Sofia in the afternoon of the 21st. On the following morning it called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, whom it interviewed for the first time. On the same day in the afternoon the military members were received by the Minister of War and the Chief of the General Staff. On November 23rd the Commission was received by the Prime Minister and on the 24th by His Majesty the King. The Commission left Sofia for Belgrade on November 26th at 4 a.m. During its stay at Sofia it had frequent interviews with the above persons and with many others.

The Commission arrived at Belgrade on the afternoon of the 26th, and proceeded to draw up its report. It decided that, owing to the short space of time which would elapse between the completion of its work and the meeting of the Council, fixed for December 7th, it would be necessary, before leaving the Balkans, to communicate to the Bulgarian and Greek Governments its report and its decision concerning the indemnities due for movable property seized.

These documents were handed on November 28th to the diplomatic representatives at Belgrade of the two Powers concerned. The two Governments were requested to keep the report secret until the Council met, since, contrary to established procedure, the report had been communicated to them before it had been forwarded to the regular members of the Council, owing to the exceptional urgency of the case. The Council was informed of this decision by the Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

The Commission left Belgrade for Geneva on November 28th.

The Commission desires to express its thanks to the Bulgarian and Greek Governments for all the facilities accorded to it when carrying out its work and particularly for the goodwill displayed by the various authorities in the two countries in answering the numerous questions which it felt bound to ask.

The Commission also desires to express its thanks to the Serb-Croat-Slovene Government for the hospitality extended to it at Belgrade, where it stayed on two occasions.

II. ENQUIRY.

DEMIR-KAPU INCIDENT.

I. Historical Summary.

In order to form an opinion on this incident the Commission utilised the statements sent to the Council by the two Governments and the subsequent letters modifying these statements, the enquiries conducted on the spot by the Military Attachés in co-operation with the Greek and Bulgarian officers, who had either been witnesses of the incident or had been personally concerned therein, and the statements made in the course of further examinations conducted by the Comm-

\(^1\) As regards the assurance demanded of the Bulgarian and Greek Governments by the Council that all prisoners that might have been captured by their troops would be forthwith returned, the Commission was informed by the Military Attachés that the Greek Government had sent back to Bulgaria the Bulgarian prisoners taken by the Greek forces, which included regular soldiers and militiamen (armed civilians). The Bulgarian forces had taken no prisoners.
mission with a view to clearing-up certain points which still remained in doubt. The final opinion reached by the Commission is that the incident took place as follows:

The Greek post No. 69 and the Bulgarian post No. 1 are stationed in a pass through the frontier hills known as Demir-Kapu, a distance of about 40 metres separating the two posts. Neither post is visible from the other, but the sentinels stationed on the frontier line itself face each other on either side of the pass, also at a distance of 40 metres. The country round the posts is bare and is only frequented by shepherds and wood-cutters; it takes nearly three hours on foot to reach the nearest village in either direction. The Greek post was manned by eight men and the Bulgarian post by six. The Greek post was under the command of a corporal and the Bulgarian was commanded by a private soldier in place of the commander of the post, who was ill; this soldier was on sentry duty when the incident occurred. The men had been there since the summer frontier posts had been first occupied, that is to say since May.

On October 19th at about 1.30 p.m. according to the Greeks and 2.45 p.m. according to the Bulgarians, shots were exchanged between the two soldiers, there being no witnesses. The Greek soldier was killed after he had fired. This is proved by the fact that an empty cartridge of a kind not used in Bulgaria was found in the charger of his rifle, which fell into the hands of the Bulgarians. It is impossible to determine which of the two soldiers fired the first shot.

The Bulgarian soldiers of post No. 1 state that the Greek sentry was killed in Bulgarian territory. The Greeks assert the contrary and say that they saw the Bulgarians drag the corpse into Bulgarian territory. Medico-legal examination and the arguments put forward by both parties have thrown no further light on this point. The question, moreover, is only of relative importance since at other times the soldiers lived on friendly terms and passed from one post to the other to exchange food supplies; they could not therefore attach much importance to the fact that a sentry had proceeded a few metres beyond the frontier.

After shots had been exchanged the two posts turned out with their arms and the firing began. The Bulgarians occupied various points along the crest; the Greeks first of all remained in their post, then abandoned it and retired to a position about 150 metres in the rear. At some time or other the other Bulgarian soldiers very probably entered the Greek post: in any case, every article that could be carried off was taken away, blankets, equipment, etc. The Bulgarian soldiers accuse Koutsou-vlach shepherds of the theft, but this explanation is most improbable because the post was situated between two lines of fire at very close range. The lie of the land, however, was not such as to encourage the Bulgarians to advance in order to improve their field of fire. Consequently if they violated Greek territory at all it seems unlikely that they advanced more than 20 metres into Greek territory.

As the firing was heard reinforcements gradually arrived at both posts. On the Greek side the post’s reserves which were stationed at about 1 kilometre in the rear, came up to the assistance of the post; these reserves consisted of a few men under the command of a second-lieutenant. On the Bulgarian side a number of armed civilians—about 15 according to the Bulgarian reports—reached the spot three hours after the beginning of the affray. It is also possible that some of the latter who were working in the neighbourhood may have arrived on the scene much sooner. Captain Vassiliadis, who was in charge of the Greek post, decided to proceed to Demir-Kapu with the intention, as he stated to a friend, of stopping the fight. His command headquarters were situated in the village of Poroia, two hours on horseback from the frontier. He therefore left on horseback, accompanied by a mounted soldier carrying a small white hastily improvised flag. When he arrived at a few hundred metres from the lines of fire he stopped under shelter to dismount, ordered firing to cease and then advanced, the soldier carrying the white flag walking in front of him. He had already advanced a few paces from the shelter when he was struck by a bullet. The Greek soldiers say that they had seen the officer and the white flag and had ceased fire on his order to do so. The Bulgarian soldiers state that they saw neither the white flag nor the officer, that the Greeks had not ceased firing and that Captain Vassiliadis was killed by a bullet not aimed at him. The Commission has not been able to form a definite conclusion on this point. It seems at all events to be quite certain that Captain Vassiliadis was killed under the white flag and that the Greeks of all ranks believed he was deliberately shot down when trying to put an end to the incident.

What was the effect produced on the higher commands by these incidents? Captain Vassiliadis’ company formed part of the fourth covering battalion, the command headquarters of which were at Kilkis, a town situated about 50 kilometres from the headquarters of the company. The officer commanding the battalion had three companies deployed in line along the frontier on a front of about 80 kilometres and his sole reserves consisted of a machine gun company. When at about 3 p.m. he was informed by telephone that firing had taken place at Demir-Kapu, he despatched his adjutant with all the troops that he was able to concentrate near Poroia, including the reserves of the neighbouring company.

The latter arrived with the adjutant at about 2 a.m. The neighbouring covering battalion— the 8th — with command headquarters at Demir-Hissar, sent as reinforcements, on the morning of the 20th, part of its nearest infantry companies. Finally, armed civilians came to the assistance of the troops. In the course of that day (November 20th) a force consisting of about 200 men took up its position along the crest line.  

1 His company occupies the frontier for a distance of about 15 to 20 kilometres; its sole reserve consisting of a section of about 20 men.

2 The Commission does not think it necessary to attach much importance to the fact that the Captain was not accompanied by a bugler as laid down in the regulations, for it seems that in similar incidents which had occurred on previous occasions neither Bulgarian nor Greek officers had felt themselves bound to comply with these formalities.
On the Bulgarian side, a number of civilian reinforcements had already, as stated above, arrived on the scene. The captain commanding the Petrich sub-sector arrived at Demir-Kapu on October 19th at 7 a.m. and took over the command of the post and of the civilians. During the night other inhabitants from the four neighbouring villages hurried to the spot. They amounted in all to about 150 men, and according to Bulgarian reports possessed only about 40 rifles.

It should be observed that the orders of the frontier-guards, as communicated to the Commission by the Bulgarian authorities, provide for the arming of a portion of the local population, called the militia. For this purpose six or eight rifles are stored in each commune under the care of the mayor. The head of the sector also possesses a number of rifles in reserve. This arming and constitution of a militia are contrary to the Treaty of Neuilly.

On the morning of the 20th, the commandant of the Petrich sector sent some machine-guns. The commandant of the Sveti-Vratch sector did not send any reinforcements on the 20th or the 21st. As a matter of fact, the Bulgarian regular forces were even more sparsely scattered along the frontier than the opposing Greek forces. The reserves for this sector, which is 212 kilometres long, consist of only 60 men stationed at Sveti-Vratch, 25 kilometres from Petrich, the latter town itself being five hours' march from the post at Demir-Kapu.

The reports concerning the operations which were subsequently carried out on the morning of October 20th are naturally very vague and contradictory; the opposing parties often make mistakes as to dates and time. We gather from these reports that the firing continued throughout part of October 20th and continued intermittently on the 21st. The fighting must have been desultory in view of the small number of casualties. On the Greek side on October 19th, apart from the sentry and Captain Vassiliadis, one soldier was mortally wounded: on October 20th, one civilian was killed and one soldier was wounded: on the 21st an officer was slightly wounded. On the Bulgarian side only one soldier was wounded on October 21st.

While these military operations were in progress, the local commands were making every effort to stop the affray. Both sides displayed a desire to enter into pourparlers with a view to terminating the incident. On the Greek side, mention should be made of Captain Vassiliadis' effort and further action taken by two Greek officers from a post near Post 69, this action being admitted in a Bulgarian report. It should also be observed that the commandant of the Greek covering battalion, after turning out his units, ordered his officers to do all in their power to end the fighting, subject to the proviso that they should "safeguard the territory and the honour of their troops". These officers state that they endeavoured, without success, to establish contact with the Bulgarians.

On the Bulgarian side, similar attempts were made along the line of fire, and at the same time the Bulgarian Government was trying to obtain from the Greek Government at Athens, through diplomatic channels, the appointment of a Mixed Commission of Enquiry. In addition, the commandant of the Bulgarian sector at Petrich attempted, without success, to get into telephonic communication with his adversaries through another point on the frontier. It is admitted in a Greek report that on the 21st a Bulgarian officer came to the Kula Bridge seeking an interview. As no Greek officer was present, the interview did not take place.

It seems that on both sides lack of confidence in the honest intentions of the adversary unfortunately prevented that conciliation which, in previous similar circumstances, Greek and Bulgarian officers had often been able to effect. The somewhat rapid reinforcement of the line by armed civilians and the false report that a Bulgarian battalion was on the spot undoubtedly helped to produce a conviction in the minds of the Greek command that operations on a large scale were afoot and that it was essential therefore to take adequate precautions. At the same time, the news of the death of an emissary caused a deep impression throughout the whole country.

Neither side reports that the enemy at Demir-Kapu received any reinforcements on the 21st. On October 22nd, at 6 a.m., when the situation had been stabilised at that point and the local conflagration was dying down of its own accord, Greek troops entered Bulgarian territory through the Struma Valley. Everything tends to show that the officer commanding these troops, not being in direct contact with those at Demir-Kapu who were not under his orders, was unaware of the exact situation at that moment.

2. Conclusions to be drawn from the incident.

(a) This affray is only one incident among many. The authorities on both sides have handed to the Commission a long list of similar quarrels, disputes and skirmishes which have occurred between frontier posts during the summer. Naturally the accounts given do not coincide either as to facts or dates. They are nevertheless of great interest since they throw light on the conditions of life on both sides of the frontier. In the two territories the frontier zones are inhabited by populations which have recently been installed and which have not properly settled down in the country. Most of the Bulgarians formerly inhabited the neighbouring districts of Macedonia which they have been forced to abandon and in which they have witnessed the settlement of refugees whom they regard as intruders. These Greek refugees possess the mentality of populations who have undergone great sufferings and are undergoing great want. Some of them are Cretans who are reputed to be turbulent. These populations are all the more restless in that they have been armed by the authorities and expect at any moment to be called upon to fight. This state of mind inevitably reacts on the mentality of the soldiers living in their midst.

(b) Incidents of this kind were bound to occur between posts thus isolated in the high mountain country and placed in immediate contact with one another, the sentries being within hailing distance. It was inevitable that there should be friction between the opposite posts and that disputes should have occurred, even had no political dissensions existed between the two countries. In these circumstances, however, soldiers' quarrels were destined to assume particular importance for the following reasons:
The organisation of the frontier-guards is defective. The front sector entrusted to each unit is enormous. The officers commanding units who are stationed at a distance of several hours from the posts are unable to take rapid action, and in addition, both the Greek and Bulgarian sectors, only one post out of every two or three is provided with a telephone. In this respect the case of the adjutant attached to the officer commanding the Greek covering battalion is typical. This officer, who was instructed to proceed to the spot to take the necessary defensive steps, left his post at 5 p.m. and did not arrive at his destination until about 2 a.m.

The officers of the units, and particularly the posts, is inadequate.

The frontier-guards, which have to act as Customs guards, forest guards and field outpost sentries, possess no special qualifications. They generally consist of very young soldiers who, owing to the fact that they are distributed in small groups, receive only a rudimentary military training, and are never taken in hand again by the organic units. Moreover, as the duties, if not entailing actual hardship, are at any rate extremely irksome, individuals of doubtful character are often sent to these posts. Finally, on both sides the only disciplinary action generally taken is to transfer soldiers punished for causing frontier incidents from one post to another. The Bulgarian soldier who killed the Greek sentry, although he had a good soldier’s record, was probably sent to the post as a result of an incident in which he had been involved at another post at the end of August.

The fact that these soldiers are left too long in one post offers serious disadvantages from the point of view of morale, discipline and even the proper execution of their duties. The more frequent relieving of posts would have obviated the formation of too intimate acquaintanceships, which are always liable to degenerate into brawls.

The instructions issued are dangerous in view of the intellectual level of the heads of the posts, who are allowed all possible latitude in carrying them out. The Greek instructions are similar to those which would be issued to outpost sentries in the field. The posts must offer resistance on the spot and sentries must always carry their rifles loaded. The posts are armed with automatic rifles, three cases of ammunition, grenades and pistols for Verrey lights. The Bulgarian instructions are even more explicit. Their posts are ordered to maintain the integrity of the frontier and are entitled to call upon the civil authorities and heads of the neighbouring military units, which are always liable to degenerate into brawls.

The crossing of the frontier was decided upon at Athens on the morning of October 20th. In order to obtain a correct view of this decision it is necessary to get back to the atmosphere which prevailed at the time, determine as accurately as possible the circumstances in which the news from Demir-Kapu was received in Athens and the effect which this news produced on the minds of the members of the Greek Government.

Although, as we have stated above, telephonic communications between the frontier posts are most defective, they are, on the other hand, very well organised in the rear. The information communicated by the officer commanding the covering battalion in the form of telephonic messages to the staff of the 11th Division at Salonica was reported by the latter to the 3rd Army Corps Headquarters which are in the same building. The Chief of Staff of this Army Corps has communicated by the officer commanding the covering battalion in the form of telephonic messages to the General Staff in Athens. The maximum period which elapsed between the sending-off of a despatch and its receipt at Athens may be estimated at two hours. It was therefore possible for the Greek Government rapidly to receive news from the firing line and the Government was inclined to regard this news as absolutely correct, seeing that no authorities had intercepted these messages with a view to revising or verifying them. That is what actually occurred.

Information.

In the night of October 19th-20th, at about 3 a.m., the first news was received in Athens regarding the original incident at Demir-Kapu — the death of the sentry and the wounding of Captain Vassiliadis. The despatch added that the incident was premeditated by the Bulgarians and that Captain Vassiliadis had been wounded when, under cover of the white flag, he was going out to meet the Bulgarians.

On October 20th at 9.30 a.m. the Intelligence Officer of the covering battalion sent from Demir-Kapu to the officer commanding his battalion the following information: "I beg to report that, according to information, Bulgarian forces amount to one battalion. Bulgarians possess
machine-guns." The head of the battalion transmitted this news in a slightly altered form: "The Bulgarians have attacked with a battalion and are occupying the hill-top." The news which thus assumed an extremely serious aspect was forwarded to Athens, where it was received at 10.30 a.m. At the same time Athens learned the precautionary measures which had been adopted by the 3rd Army Corps.

We have seen that, on the morning of the 20th, the Bulgarian forces amounted to about 160 men, a figure admitted in a Greek report drawn up on October 31st. But at the time, taking into account the natural tendency of combatant to exaggerate, it may be admitted that the information received from the firing line or even the impression obtained by the Intelligence Officer may have so swelled these figures as to lead the Greeks to suppose that a whole battalion was in action. The officer commanding the 4th covering battalion committed the fault of not verifying his information, and above all of not resisting the temptation of improving upon it, whereas in none of the reports drawn up by officers in the firing line was it expressly stated that the Bulgarians were occupying positions in Greek territory. It should also be added that the 3rd Army Corps had, on the evening of October 19th, already received information at second-hand from the neighbouring covering battalion vaguely reporting that the Bulgarians had attacked in considerable force.

2. Measures successively adopted in Greece and Bulgaria.

(a) Greece. — On receiving one after another the above items of information, the staffs of the 3rd Army Corps at Salonica and the Ministry of War in Athens ordered more general steps to be taken to supplement those which the local authorities had already adopted.

1. Orders of the 3rd Army Corps. — On October 20th, at 8 a.m., on learning of the death of Captain Vassiliadis, the Officer Commanding the 3rd Army Corps sent to the 6th Division, the headquarters of which is at Serres, an order that may be summarised as follows: "Bulgarians are attacking in force between Posts 67 and 69. All units are ordered to turn out. One battalion and one mountain battery will stand to." At 8.30 a.m. there followed another order to guard the Rupel Defile and principal mountain passes, and to advance the units up to the frontier.

These covering and concentrating movements, which were all carried out within Greek territory, took place on October 20th and during the night of October 20th-21st. At that time the measures taken were nothing more than perfectly legitimate precautions in view of the information received. They clearly prove that the Officer Commanding the 3rd Army Corps really believed the Bulgarians to be attacking in force or at least, in the light of his subsequent statements, that strong comitadjı units were in action. These measures seem all the more natural if we consider that at the time the Army Corps was in a very difficult position. All the infantry units of its two divisions were concentrated throughout the villages to ensure law and order during the municipal elections.

2. Orders of the Ministry of War. — On October 20th at about 11 a.m., on receiving the telegrams already referred to announcing an attack by a Bulgarian battalion, the Ministry of War sent out the following order: "The 3rd Army Corps will prepare to advance with all its forces towards Livunovo in the Struma Valley in order to outflank Mount Beles by way of Petritch. The 4th Army Corps will prepare for an invasion with all its forces in the direction of Nevrokop with the object of diverting and containing some of the Bulgarian forces. Both Corps will await further orders before advancing. Aeroplane reconnaissances will be carried out forthwith in the neighbourhood of Demi-Kapu, Petritch, Livunovo, Kula and the Libonovo district."

All the places mentioned in this order are in Bulgarian territory.

In the afternoon of the same day, the Ministry issued the following supplementary order: "The Bulgarian attack at Demir-Kapu is still continuing. The 3rd and 4th Army Corps will concentrate as rapidly as possible, in accordance with previous orders. The 3rd Army Corps, having concentrated its troops, will place them under the orders of the Officer Commanding the 6th Division, who will march on Petritch and the heights north of Kula, the occupation of which will secure the outlet of the Rupel Defile and the deployment of our forces on the northern side of it to meet all eventualities."

This amounted to invasion of Bulgarian territory.

3. Orders of the 3rd Army Corps and the 6th Division, and their Execution. — In forwarding this order to the 6th Division, the 3rd Army Corps assigned to it the following objectives:

(1) The occupation of the heights north of Kula;
(2) The occupation of the heights south of Petritch;
(3) The outflanking of the Bulgarian forces attacking at Demir Kapu.

In the course of the 21st, the 6th Division accordingly proceeded to concentrate in Greek territory three columns, whose objectives were to occupy the heights specified, to encircle Petritch, and to carry out the flanking movement on Demir-Kapu. The original order to march on Petritch had in the meantime been superseded by instructions from the Ministry of War, which was anxious to avoid casualties among the civilian population and therefore ordered that the town should merely be invested.

These aeroplane reconnaissances mentioned in the orders were carried out, and no movements on the part of the Bulgarians were reported.

In the evening of October 21st, the Commander of the 6th Division gave the following order: "There is no further information as to enemy movements. The offensive will begin at 6 a.m. on the 22nd, and will be carried as far as the objectives fixed. The positions occupied will then be organised."
On October 22nd, at the hour fixed, the execution of these orders began. The Greek troops approximately reached their objectives, except Petrich, where Bulgarian resistance stopped them south of the town. No attempt was made to outflank Demir-Kapu by way of the northern slopes of Mount Beles.

On the 23rd and 24th, the troops consolidated their positions and received reinforcements. A special operation against Petrich with two battalions, three batteries and two squadrons was arranged in the evening of the 23rd, and was to have been carried out on the 24th, but at 6 a.m. on that day orders for the suspension of operations were received from Athens, and the attack on Petrich did not take place. The troops remained in the positions marked on the attached map 1 until October 28th, when orders for evacuation were received.

(b) Bulgaria. — The Bulgarian General Staff at Sofia received the news of the firing at Demir-Kapu at about 5 p.m. on October 19th. Instructions were given to terminate the incident, and the Staff thought no more of it. As we have already seen, neither on the 20th nor on the 21st did the officer commanding the sector send his available reinforcements to Demir-Kapu. In the course of the 21st, however, he was notified of the concentration movements among the Greek troops which had been observed by the frontier posts. He forwarded this news to the General Staff at Sofia, adding that he expected a Greek attack, and asking for one battalion and one battery as reinforcements. He also passed the news on to the officer commanding the nearest infantry regiment.

Owing to official ceremonies which stopped all work in the Ministry, this despatch, though forwarded to Sofia during the night, was not communicated to the Chief of the General Staff until about 9 or 10 a.m. on October 22nd, when news of the forward movement of the Greek troops was already being received.

On the 22nd, therefore, the Greeks were confronted by the forces from the outposts which had been driven in, by the sector reserve which was brought up in the morning, and, towards the evening, by one company of infantry and one machine-gun company from the infantry regiment stationed at Dupnitsa (75 kilometres north of Petrich), which had been brought up by rail. It is true that these troops were reinforced by 432 civilians (according to Bulgarian reports). Not all of these, however, were armed; those who were unarmed acted as liaison and supply troops.

At noon on the 22nd the Ministry of War ordered certain reinforcements to be sent to Petrich by motor-lorry or by rail from the west and south-west of Bulgaria. These reinforcements consisted of small units — sections, batteries and companies — detached from their regiments and formed into fighting units on arrival. The Bulgarian General Staff was clearly hesitating to displace its main units in case a larger movement of troops became necessary.

The general order given to the Colonel commanding the troops was as follows:

"Make only slight resistance, protect the fugitive and panic-stricken population, prevent the spread of panic in the Struma Valley, and do not expose the troops to unnecessary losses, in view of the fact that the incident has been laid before the Council of the League of Nations, which is expected to stop the invasion."

The reinforcements (in all, six companies of infantry, three machine-gun companies and twelve guns) were in position on the morning of the 24th. On the same day the Ministry of War issued the following order:

"Should the Greeks attack, our troops will abstain from all resistance."

The Government sent two of its members, the Ministers of Agriculture and Finance, to ensure the observance of this order; they arrived at Petrich on October 25th.

Throughout the operations the Bulgarian artillery did not fire a shot.


(a) As we have seen, the Demir-Kapu affair was really nothing more than a frontier incident which could, and should, have been quickly settled on the spot. The false news of a Bulgarian attack with a battalion — news which was forwarded unverified by subordinates and distorted by some of them, and was rather too readily accepted by the Greek General Staff on October 20th — greatly complicated the matter. The nervousness of the Greek General Staff was partly due to its constant anxiety for its communications with Thrace, which are highly precarious in that district 2; and the natural apprehension as to the action that might be taken on the frontier by a rapidly alarmed Bulgarian population must not be overlooked. The fact remains that an investigation ought to have been carried out on the spot. But even in the absence of such an investigation, the news received as to the progress of hostilities, and the fact that no movements of Bulgarian troops were reported on October 20th and 21st, should have sufficed to allay any such apprehensions which might have been felt in Athens.

(b) The covering operations carried out by the Commander of the 3rd Army Corps were perfectly regular and legitimate. The Greek Command really feared an invasion in force of its territory; but as soon as the situation at Demir-Kapu became stable, the Greeks should have been satisfied with securing the other frontier passes, and should not have entered Bulgarian territory. As regards particularly the Struma approach, the frontier line gave them an entirely adequate covering position.

(c) There can be no question of premeditation on either side. The operation orders of the various units show that neither of the armies was prepared for operations amounting to war. The troops engaged consisted merely of fighting units formed out of small detachments which were assembled in haste and organised on the spot.

1 Note by the Secretariat: This map is in course of preparation and will be distributed later.
2 In this district the Salonica-Seres-Dedeagatch railway, which connects Macedonia with Western Thrace, runs parallel to the Bulgarian frontier at a distance which is often less than 10 kilometres.
This fact, on the Greek side, together with the circumstance that no steps were taken after the order for the advance to start the machinery of general mobilisation, proves quite clearly that the Athens Government had in view merely an operation with limited objectives, and that it believed that it could control the progress of this operation and limit its consequences.

The general conclusion is that the Greek Government intended to cover its communications with Thrace and to carry out a policing operation. Probably it did not weigh all the possible results of its action, nor, perhaps, did it realise that, without having sent an ultimatum, it was committing an act of war against Bulgaria.

It may certainly be stated that:

1. That the Greek Government claim to an indemnity amounting in all to 90 million drachmas (£142,000), in order to compensate the families of officers and soldiers killed or wounded and in order to pay for the costs of the transport, concentration and feeding of the troops, must be rejected except as regards the claim on account of Captain Vassiliadis, which will be dealt with later.

2. That, on the other hand, the Greek Government is responsible for the expenses, losses and suffering caused to the Bulgarian people and the Government by the invasion of Greek troops, and on this account should make reparation to Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian Government has submitted claims amounting in round figures to 52,500,000 levas (approximately £78,828).

III. RESPONSIBILITIES AND INDEMNITIES ARISING THEREFROM.

The Commission considers that it should place on record that the Bulgarian Government acted in conformity with the Covenant of the League of Nations and that the fact that Bulgarian soldiers at Demir-Kapu may have at one moment penetrated a few yards into Greek territory cannot be held to be a violation of the territorial integrity of Greece.

With regard to Greece, the Commission noted the statement of the Greek Prime Minister to the effect that, prior to the incident at Demir-Kapu, the relations of his country with Bulgaria were good, and that personally he had never attributed to the Bulgarian Government the least intention of attacking Greece. He considered that the incident was due to the action of comitadjis, which enlisted the support of local Bulgarian forces without the latter being authorised by their Government to give this support. He confirmed that the reconnaissance made by the Greek Air Force on Bulgarian territory revealed no movement of Bulgarian troops.

While taking account of these facts, of the absence of a Head at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time of the incident and finally of the emotion aroused in Greece by the death of Captain Vassiliadis when carrying a white flag, the Commission must nevertheless record that, by occupying a part of Bulgarian territory with its military forces, Greece violated the Covenant of the League of Nations.

In view of the foregoing considerations, the Commission is of opinion:

1. That the Greek Government claim to an indemnity amounting in all to 90 million drachmas (£142,000), in order to compensate the families of officers and soldiers killed or wounded and in order to pay for the costs of the transport, concentration and feeding of the troops, must be rejected except as regards the claim on account of Captain Vassiliadis, which will be dealt with later.

2. That, on the other hand, the Greek Government is responsible for the expenses, losses and suffering caused to the Bulgarian people and the Government by the invasion of Greek troops, and on this account should make reparation to Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian Government has submitted claims amounting in round figures to 52,500,000 levas (approximately £78,828).

Recommendations regarding Reparation to be Made for Loss of Life, for the Wounded and for Material and Moral Damage.

In order to calculate the reparation due to the Bulgarian Government — in addition to the indemnity definitely fixed by the Commission in virtue of the powers conferred upon it (see page 10) — it would seem that account must first be taken of the cost of the military measures which the Bulgarian Government was compelled to take. As the statements furnished on this subject by the Bulgarian authorities include the cost of maintaining a certain number of militiamen, the Commission must point out that the calling-up of these inhabitants of frontier districts is contrary to the Treaty of Neuilly and that in its opinion these costs should not enter into the calculation.

Next, the Commission thinks that account should be taken of the loss of life and the number of wounded. One lieutenant, 4 soldiers and 7 civilians, including 2 children, were killed; 8 soldiers and 11 civilians were wounded, 8 of them seriously. Killed or wounded militiamen ought not to be taken into account for the reasons given above.

Finally, the Commission considers that account should be taken of the fact that the inhabitants of the invaded district, to the number of about 3,500, who thought it necessary to leave their homes, suffered the loss of a number of working days as well as undergoing unquestionable moral sufferings. Three cases of rape were reported to the Commission and a certain number of cases of ill-treatment by Greek soldiers with a view to extorting money.
The figure which these considerations would indicate should nevertheless be reduced on account of the death of the Greek Captain Vassiliadis. It was explained in an earlier part of the report that the death of this officer, who had gone forward bearing a white flag, is one of the features which to some extent explains the attitude adopted by the Greek Government. It would therefore seem that account should be taken of this fact in calculating the reparation to be placed to the charge of that Government.

For the reasons given above, the Commission expresses the opinion that the sum to be paid by the Greek Government to the Bulgarian Government as reparation for material and moral damage, in addition to the sum definitively fixed by the Commission as compensation for the removal of portable property, might in equity be fixed at 10,000,000 levas.

STATEMENT OF MATERIAL LOSS AND THE COMMISSION'S DECISION REGARDING INDEMNITIES.

In order to ascertain the material loss caused by the Greek invasion, the Commission visited the Bulgarian territory occupied, as well as the town and station of Petrich and village of Markostono, which, although they had not been occupied, had been under the fire of the Greek troops.

The limits of the Greek occupation are shown on the map attached to the present report. This territory includes the villages of Kula, Topolnitsa, Liahovo, Kartachino, Dolno-Spantchovo, Novo-Hadjovo, Marinopolié, Chuchuligovo and Pipersitza.

The population chiefly consists of refugees from Thrace and Greek Macedonia who have settled in the district from 1913 up to the present day. The inhabitants are engaged almost entirely in agriculture, bee-keeping and cattle-breeding. The principal agricultural products are tobacco, cotton, maize, rice and corn. A few of the inhabitants work at the usual trades common to all the villages of this district.

The ground on which the villages are built is somewhat hilly. The houses - most of them huts - are built irregularly on the tops or sides of hills and generally consist of a single floor with two rooms, a stable and an outhouse.

When settling refugees, the Bulgarian Government granted to each family a certain amount of land according to the size of the family and the fertility of the land allotted. In a few villages the land had to be redistributed on the arrival of further batches of refugees. For this reason there are great differences in the value and size of landed properties. Generally speaking, the average in the villages visited by the Commission varies from 5 to 15 decares per person (one decare equals 10 ares).

After the withdrawal of the Greek troops the Bulgarian Government appointed a Central Commission, with Sub-Commissions in the different villages, to make a preliminary inquiry into the damage done. This Commission drew up a questionnaire with a number of headings (clothing, cattle, agricultural products, etc.), to which the inhabitants, under the control of the Commission, had to reply.

After evacuation by the Greek troops and the return of the inhabitants, the latter were provisionally fed by the Bulgarian Government with the help of the Bulgarian Red Cross and certain charitable associations. Travelling kitchens were still working in some of the villages when the Commission arrived.

The Bulgarian Government forwarded to the Commission with the reports of its Commission of Enquiry and the questionnaires filled in by the inhabitants. Furnished with these documents, the Commission also visited the villages mentioned above. It found no devastation in the strict sense of the word, but only a few damaged houses and burnt huts. Losses consisted mainly of cattle and agricultural products, clothing, jewels, securities and cash.

At the request of the Commission, the Bulgarian Government furnished it with a statement of prices and statistics on the acreage of cultivated lands in the villages in question, on the proportion between the different crops and the value of the average harvest for the last three years, and on the amount of live-stock. With the help of these figures and by checking the stocks which remained in possession of the inhabitants it was possible to test to some extent the justice of the claims.

Consequently, the Commission is able to state that the invaded district was not subjected to systematic pillage; on the other hand, it suffered considerable loss in movable property, while the damage to buildings was comparatively insignificant. The villages nearest the frontier naturally suffered most. The inhabitants, surprised by the invasion, fled in haste, leaving almost everything behind them. Their possessions accordingly remained unprotected for a whole week. The Commission found long trails of tobacco, cotton and cereals along the roads leading to Greece, bearing evidence to the transport of property. In other villages the inhabitants had time to place a part of their goods in safety. Certain villages situated near to the Bulgarian forces escaped permanent occupation and therefore suffered much less. Losses of movable property were further reported in the passport and Customs offices at Kula-Chiflik and in the posts and barracks of the Sixth Frontier Sub-Sector.

The principal losses consist in clothing, bedding, cattle and poultry, bee-hives, cereals, cotton, foodstuffs, wagons, agricultural implements and various tools, cash, military equipment, arms and ammunition. According to the information received, none of the goods carried off have been restored in execution of the Council's resolution, with the exception of three draught-animals and a few personal belongings.

As has already been stated, the damage to buildings is small. Neither the town nor the station of Petrich suffered any appreciable damage, and no claim has been submitted on their account.

The Bulgarian claims amount in round figures to a total of 31,750,000 levas.

1 Note by the Secretariat. — This map is in course of preparation and will be distributed later.
It should in justice be recognised that the official Bulgarian Commission, with its Sub-Commissions, made a serious attempt to arrive at a total as accurate as possible. It must not be forgotten that this Commission was compelled to register in the main the claims made by villagers without being able to check them. The Commission appointed by the Council of the League was also, and for the same reasons, unable to determine such matters, for example, as the size of the stocks of various cereals, the real value of the clothing and furniture contained in the different villages at the moment of the invasion, and the sums in coins or notes in respect of which claims were made by a number of the inhabitants.

Accordingly, the Commission feels bound to take into account the well-known fact that, in submitting claims for damage sustained, private persons are generally inclined to over-estimate the value of goods they have lost and to increase the amount of their claim in proportion as they know that it is difficult to verify their statements.

In these circumstances, the Commission thinks it a fair decision that the Greek Government should pay to the Bulgarian Government an indemnity of 20,000,000 levas, which will include the comparatively unimportant damage done to buildings.

In virtue of the powers conferred upon it by the Council's resolution, the Commission has notified to the Greek Government the sum that it must pay to the Bulgarian Government under this heading.

Copies of the letters addressed to the two Governments are annexed to the present report.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION. — GENERAL HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The districts with which we are concerned have had an eventful history for centuries. They have been the theatre of many wars, long foreign occupations and a great deal of propaganda, both religious and nationalist.

During the last 50 years in particular, drastic alterations of the frontier have involved frequent changes of nationality for the inhabitants of this district and, with the usual train of attendant misfortunes, have on many occasions resulted in sudden mass emigrations.

These populations, which are comparatively backward, have been worked upon by contradictory propaganda, which has led them to distrust one another and to seek to do each other injury.

To-day, as the result of the last Balkan wars, the Great War and events in Asia Minor, the populations of Bulgaria and Greece have become comparatively homogeneous, although at the price of unquestionable suffering. These sufferings have implanted feelings of hatred which cannot be expected to disappear quickly in view of the fact that the means at the disposal of those at the head of the two countries are unfortunately too limited to allow them to devise and execute measures of relief and remedies on the large scale required.

Nevertheless, there are certain measures on a comparatively modest scale which it may be hoped are within the power of the Governments and which, granted real good-will, might shorten the period of friction and lay the seeds of better times. These will be indicated at the end of a summary statement of the problems to be faced.

(a) The Refugees.

(1) In Bulgaria. — There are to-day near the Greek frontier some tens of thousands of peasants of Bulgarian race who originally came from provinces now included within the frontiers of the Greek Republic. In addition to these refugees on the frontier, some further tens of thousands are scattered throughout Bulgaria.

All belong to a hardy, martial and proud race. They have been entering Bulgaria at different times ever since the Balkan wars (1912) until the present day. Many of them had to leave behind them land, houses, cattle, personal belongings, etc. without being able to sell them and only a few of them have received any equivalent compensation. At the same time, many cherish the hope of one day returning to their native villages and regaining their former prosperity. Energetic propaganda fosters this belief and keeps alive in their hearts memory of injuries received, hatred and the spirit of revenge.

In spite of all this, a certain number of them have already taken root in Bulgaria. Even these do not forget the past, but probably few of them would avail themselves of any opportunity that might occur to return to Greece.

(2) In Greece. — During the last few years, Greece has received from one to one and a-half million refugees of Greek race, coming from Turkey. In face of this sudden and huge influx of population, the Greek Government had evidently to find shelter wherever possible for hundreds of thousands of refugees.

For this purpose it hastened the departure of Bulgarians from Macedonia and Thrace. Some left under a system of voluntary exchange, others apparently as the result of harsher measures, which are still the cause of deep resentment. Be that as it may, the Greek Government found itself faced with a problem, the vastness of which is perhaps without parallel. It had to face quite unexpectedly an increase of population of about 25 per cent. The bulk of this new population arrived destitute in an indescribable condition of misery and with a very large proportion of women, children and old people. Thanks to a foreign loan floated under the auspices of the League of Nations, a considerable proportion of the refugees is now settled in villages abandoned by the populations which have left Greece and in new centres created for them.
Many settlements are situated in the immediate proximity of the Greco-Bulgarian frontier. Great difficulty was experienced in persuading the refugees to settle there. They feared reprisals on the part of those whose places they were taking, especially as most of the latter had received no compensation. Nevertheless, it is of the very first importance that these refugees should remain where they are. Large sums have been spent on settling them and it would be impossible to find room for them in other districts.

(b) The Macedonian Committee.

A Committee, no doubt supplemented by many sub-committees throughout the country, has been formed in Bulgaria to deal with refugees in general and more particularly with those coming from Macedonia. The Commission was informed that the aims of this Committee are mainly charitable.

(c) The Revolutionary Macedonian Committee.

According to information obtained by the Commission, the heads of the Committee at first favoured an independent Macedonia, but later aimed at the creation of an autonomous Macedonia. In either case Macedonia was to include territories now incorporated in three sovereign States, all Members of the League of Nations.

To-day this organisation, which has never renounced its earlier views, is also claiming for the Macedonians the protection accorded by the Minority Treaties. It should be remarked that, as far as Greece is concerned, there can no longer be any question of non-Greek Macedonians in close proximity to the Bulgarian frontier, since these districts are now almost exclusively inhabited by Greeks.

(d) The Comitadjis.

The most varied definitions of this word have been given to the Commission, of which a few should be quoted.

A published report dated September 13th, 1924, and signed among others by M. de Roover and M. Corfe, neutral members of the Mixed Greco-Bulgarian Emigration Commission, gives the following definitions:

"A Greek officer describes as a Comitadji any person affiliated to the Macedonian autonomist organisation, independently of whether such person has or has not committed acts of violence."

"A Greek priest stated that to him 'brigand' and 'comitadji' were one and the same thing, and that he called a theft unaccompanied by murder brigandage, and theft with murder an act of comitadis."

"According to other Greek witnesses, the expression 'act of comitadjis' was generally applied to any act at variance with the law, the perpetrator of which was unknown."

The signatories of the report in question used the term "comitadjis" in respect of "persons of Bulgarian race affiliated to a political organisation who commit or attempt to commit an act of violence with the idea of serving the Bulgarian cause or the cause of Macedonian autonomy."

A Bulgarian authority defines a "comitadji" as a man belonging to a political party who takes up arms for political purposes. He excluded from this definition all those taking up arms for purposes of brigandage, theft, etc.

After so short a visit to the Balkans, the Commission has not presumed itself to supply a definition of a word which is obviously the object of such controversy. At the same time, it must admit that it was impressed by the constant references to comitadjis.

It was able to note the anxiety caused both to the Greek Government and people, particularly on the Greco-Bulgarian frontier, by the potential activities of the comitadjis.

Nevertheless, the contradictory information received on this subject by the Commission gave rise to a feeling of perplexity in the minds of its members. The Commission received deputations of Greek inhabitants coming from villages near to the Bulgarian frontier which expressed with remarkable unanimity the terror in which they lived under threats from the comitadjis. However, only two specific facts were brought forward by these deputations. In one case a man had been wounded and in the other a man had been killed, the former in 1922, the latter in 1925.

The list of frontier incidents submitted to the Commission show that, either on one side or the other, armed civilians have been in the habit not only of crossing the frontier to commit acts of brigandage but also of taking part with the troops in the fights which occur from time to time.

The fact that civilians on both sides of the frontier are armed increases the causes of friction.

On the other hand, the Greek authorities informed the Commission that the activity of the comitadjis was on the decrease. The settlement of Greeks in the frontier zone instead of Bulgarians meant that the bands of comitadjis would no longer find support within the country and would be unable to make deep inroads into Greek Macedonia; the cases quoted seem to be rather in the nature of isolated acts of brigandage. The Greek Prime Minister declared to the Commission that since 1923, i.e. for about eighteen months, there had been no serious incident on the Greco-Bulgarian frontier. He attributed this fact in part to the settlement in the frontier zone of Greek refugees from the Black Sea and the Caucasus, a people possessing sound military qualities.
Finally, the Commission was informed on leaving Athens that, since the Demir-Kapu incident, the inhabitants of certain villages near the frontier had been seized with panic and desired to emigrate into the interior of the country.

The Commission was informed by the Bulgarians that the comitadji bands were formed without the knowledge of the Government and that they were recruited in all parts of the country but more particularly from among refugees discontented at the material losses which they had sustained. As already stated, these refugees are settled all over Bulgaria and are in their greatest numbers in the frontier districts. The Bulgarian Government communicated to the Commission the orders it had given to the frontier-guards for preventing the organisation and passage of these bands.

The Commission was further informed that several thousand refugee families still remained in Bulgaria without homes and without land, and that some of these families were being supported by the Government. Vacant land still existed, but, before it could be occupied, drainage or irrigation works would have to be carried out and communications developed. This work required money and the State did not possess the necessary funds.

Military Recommendations.

1. Measures to prevent Frontier Incidents.

It seems possible to take a certain number of technical measures to avoid the recurrence of such incidents in the future. The necessity of doing so must have become apparent even from the mere reading of the report.

(a) The rapidity and serious nature of the different events in the Demir-Kapu affair were caused above all by the daily contact of young and insufficiently officered troops.

In the first place, therefore, it seems that frontier duty should be carried out by a special body made up of picked men recruited and trained for this work. The men ought to be older, well paid and the officers selected with care.

The necessary effective and the cost of such an organisation do not seem to be beyond the resources of Greece; there are at the most three battalions along the Greco-Bulgarian frontier.

In the case of Bulgaria, the provisions of the Treaty of Neuilly seem to make such arrangements possible; it is only necessary to ensure their execution.

(b) It would be well to supplement this new organisation by an administrative measure. This would consist in placing these special troops no longer under the direct orders of the divisional or corps commanders, but under the civilian authorities on conditions similar to those prevailing in most countries with regard to the gendarmerie or civil guards. The frontier-guard could continue to be under the War Office through a technical inspector-general, who would be entrusted with its training, equipment and mobilisation.

(c) The present organisation also need improvement in other respects. The sectors attributed to each unit are too large, and the headquarters of the different commanders too far back and too distant from each other.

The signalling system is inadequate. All posts ought to be connected with the rear by telephone, and if possible with one another. This would make the passage of armed bands through this covering sector more difficult, especially in view of the fact that, as a result of emigration and exchanges, the frontier populations are to-day more homogeneous, and that the bands no longer find accomplices, as they used to do, among their own nationals on Greek soil.

Posts ought to be commanded by non-commissioned officers and be (including sentries) at least 500 metres away from the frontier. Should it be necessary for some reason or another to place a post less than 500 metres from the frontier, the corresponding post on the other side should be withdrawn so as to maintain a distance of 1 kilometre between them.

Grazing within the zone comprised between the two lines of posts should be strictly regulated. Finally, the orders given to posts and, in the case of Bulgaria, the instructions to the frontier-guard should be modified with the object of suppressing or minimising causes of conflict.

(d) In order to effect this reorganisation, the Commission considers it necessary that each Government should request the services of a qualified neutral officer. These two officers, who would have to be of the same nationality in order that the reform might be carried out on parallel lines in both countries, would be impartial, capable of foreseeing and so of averting, many conflicts; they would gradually create a more peaceful spirit.

They would be paid by the respective Governments and would be attached to the headquarters of the frontier-guards. Their appointments would be for two years, subject to extension.

2. Measures to limit the Effects of Incidents.

Experience has shown that attempts to settle frontier incidents by direct conciliation on the spot between the two parties concerned in the dispute frequently fail owing to the natural excitement prevailing at the moment.

The presence of neutral officers of the same nationality, as suggested above, would be likely to add greatly to the chances of success of such negotiations. It is even permissible to suppose that, through them, most incidents would be settled without any difficulty at all. At the same time, there may be cases in which, in spite of everything, agreement could not be reached. To
provide for such emergencies, the Commission proposes that a conciliation commission should be established with the least possible delay consisting of representatives of the two parties, that is to say, an officer belonging to the frontier guards on either side and the neutral officers, with another member as chairman. The chairman might either be chosen by the neutral officers or appointed in advance on a permanent basis. In either case, it would be necessary, in order to allow the Commission to meet without delay, that he should be selected from among persons belonging to organisations working in the Balkans which are attached to or have relations with the League of Nations.

3. Measures to enable the League of Nations to take Rapid Action in Cases of Serious Conflicts.

It is important to draw the attention of the Council to the situation at 6 a.m. on October 24th, at the moment when orders arrived from Athens to suspend offensive operations. Preparations had been made for a Greek attack on Petrich with a force of about 1,000 men and three batteries. The Bulgarians occupied a defensive position with something like a battalion of regular troops and 12 guns, not including the armed inhabitants, to the number, at this point, of about 150 men. It is known that on this day the Bulgarian commander had instructions to offer some measure of resistance in order to protect the inhabitants and that the order to abandon resistance only arrived during the day of the 24th. There would, therefore, have been a real defence of Petrich; the action would have been fiercely contested and would have involved heavy losses. It is impossible to foresee the consequences that might have ensued. The telegram from the Acting President of the Council, which reached the respective capitals on the 23rd, appears therefore to have arrived in the nick of time.

This date was the critical moment of the operations. After that, hostilities were virtually at an end, although incidents might still have arisen and degenerated into open war, since the two sides remained in touch with one another and skirmishing still continued. The danger was ended on October 28th by the arrival on the spot of the military attachés.

An examination of the operations undertaken and in particular of the situation on the morning of October 24th, as just explained, shows the necessity of the speediest possible action by the Council of the League of Nations. The saving of a few minutes may prevent a catastrophe. In the present circumstances, which were exceedingly favourable — in that the President of the Council received a telephone message one hour after Bulgaria’s appeal had been received by the Secretary-General — a military operation which might have had the most dangerous results was only just prevented.

In order to hasten intervention by the League of Nations, it might be considered whether special facilities for communications and transit could not be granted to Governments and to the Secretariat in case of a threat of war. In particular, the use of wireless telegraphy and priority messages might be considered.

Political Recommendations.

A Convention between Greece and Bulgaria regarding emigration was signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine on November 27th, 1919.

Under this Convention, the two Governments recognised the right of those of their subjects who belonged to racial, religious or linguistic minorities to emigrate freely to their respective territories. Emigrants lost the nationality of the country they left and acquired that of the country of destination. Their real property had to be liquidated in the country which they left. The time-limit for making declarations claiming this right of voluntary emigration expired on December 31st, 1924.

The value of the real property belonging to emigrants had to be fixed by a Mixed Commission consisting of representatives of the countries concerned and of two neutral members chosen by the League of Nations.

The Commission has learned that this work of liquidation is progressing slowly, that a very small number of emigrants have received the compensation to which they were entitled and that in consequence an excusable feeling of discontent has arisen.

It considers that it would be in the interests of both countries to hasten the procedure and to put an end to all vexatious measures. It has already made recommendations to both Governments with regard to the necessity of fulfilling in a spirit of good-will and without delay the financial clauses of the Convention respecting reciprocal emigration.

There are also in Bulgaria a considerable number of refugees of Bulgarian race who came from Greece at different periods and who have been unwilling to avail themselves of the Convention on voluntary emigration mentioned above, although they were entitled to do so. On the other hand, they claim the rights conferred by the Treaty between the Principal Allied Powers and Greece concerning the treatment of minorities, Articles 3 and 4 of which read as follows:

"Article 3. — Greece admits and declares to be Greek nationals ipso facto and without the requirement of any formality Bulgarian or Turkish (or Albanian) nationals habitually resident at the date of the coming into force of the present Treaty in territories transferred to Greece by Treaty subsequent to January 1st, 1913."

"Nevertheless, the persons referred to above who are over 18 years to age will be entitled, under the conditions contained in the said Treaties, to opt for any other nationality which may be open to them. Option by a husband will cover his wife and option by parents will cover their children under 18 years of age."
“Persons who have exercised the above right to opt must, except where it is otherwise pro-
vided in the said Treaties, transfer within the succeeding twelve months their place of residence
to the State for which they have opted. They will be entitled to retain their immovable property
in Greek territory. They may carry with them their movable property of every description.
No export duties may be imposed upon them in connection with the removal of such property.

"Article 4. — Greece admits and declares to be Greek nationals ipso facto and without the
requirement of any formality persons of Bulgarian or Turkish nationality who were born in the
territories referred to in Article 3 of parents habitually resident there, even if at the date of the
coming into force of the present Treaty they are not themselves habitually resident there.
Nevertheless, within two years from the coming into force of the present Treaty, these
persons may make a declaration before the competent Greek authorities in the country in which
they are resident stating that they abandon Greek nationality, and they will then cease to be
considered as Greek nationals. In this connection, a declaration by a husband will cover his wife,
and a declaration by parents will cover their children under 18 years of age."

These clauses entitle natives of districts now incorporated in Greece to return there even
if they left these districts many years ago, and in any case to retain their real property in these
districts.

According to information received by the Commission, the number of these persons at
present in Bulgaria is considerable. Most of them left property in Greece for which they have
received no compensation. Under the pressure of circumstances, the Greek Government employed
this land to settle refugees from Turkey. To oust these refugees now in order to permit of the
return of the former owners would be impossible. Not would such a proceeding be desirable,
for its consequences would be to re-create in Greece minorities which events had caused to
disappear.

Nevertheless, if these Bulgarians are to be asked to give up a right, it is only just that they
should be compensated for the value of the property they left behind them.

The value of this property will admittedly be very difficult to estimate in view of the consider­
able period which has elapsed since the departure of most of the owners. In the interests of
reconciliation between the two nations, the Greek Government should, however, display especial
good-will in this respect.

The Commission considers that these problems could be solved either by extending the time­
limit provided for making declarations of emigration in the Convention or by the signature of
a special protocol by the two Governments.

In this way Bulgarians who did not see fit to avail themselves of the right, which has now­
lapsed, of emigrating under the Convention might be led to renounce their Greek nationality,
receiving in return, as compensation for the rights conferred on them by the Minorities Treaty,
the value of their property calculated on a liberal scale.

CONCLUSION.

Taken as a whole, the measures proposed in the present report may be expected to contribute
in a large degree towards reducing the tension between the populations of the two countries, parti-
cularly in the neighbourhood of the frontier.

In the first place, the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee’s influence would decrease as it
found fewer and fewer grievances and sufferings among the refugees in Bulgaria to exploit.
Secondly, the Greek population settled near the frontier would have less to fear from comitadjis
and from the rancour of the Bulgarian population they have displaced. As the causes of discontent
and grievance disappeared, relations between the two countries — and even in the Balkans as a
whole — would become less strained.

In conclusion, the Commission considers that it would be well for the Council to request the two
Governments to keep it informed at sufficiently frequent intervals of the progress made in carrying
out the measures recommended by the Council.

The Commission is convinced that the two Governments would always be able to apply to the
Council for any assistance they might require in carrying out the recommendations contained
in the present report.

(Signed) Horace RUMBOLD,
Chairman of the Commission.

(Signed) SERRIGNY.

FERRARIO.

ADLERCREUTZ.

Droogleever FORTUYN.

Members of the Commission.
Annex 1.

LETTER TO THE GREEK MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY.

Belgrade, November 28th, 1925.

[Translation.]

In conformity with the resolution adopted by the Council of the League of Nations on October 29th, 1925, with regard to the Greco-Bulgarian frontier incident, to the effect that all movable property, cattle, etc. that might have been seized by the troops of either side should be forthwith restored, or if that were not possible, that suitable compensation should be paid, and in view of the fact that the Bulgarian and Greek Governments, in response to the Council’s invitation, have agreed that these questions should be submitted to the Commission of Enquiry for final settlement, I have the honour to inform you that this Commission has decided, for the reasons given in the report which I have the honour to communicate to you, that the Greek Republic owes to the Bulgarian Government the sum of 20 million levas as compensation for the movable property, cattle, etc. carried off during the occupation by Greek troops of Bulgarian territory. This sum also includes indemnity for a comparatively small amount of damage to buildings destroyed or partially destroyed.

A copy of this letter has been communicated to the Bulgarian Government with the request that it should be considered as confidential until the publication by the Council of the League of Nations of the report giving the reasons for this decision.

(Signed) Horace Rumbold,
Chairman of the Commission of Enquiry of the League of Nations.

Annex 2.

LETTER TO THE BULGARIAN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY.

Belgrade, November 28th, 1925.

[Translation.]

I have the honour to communicate to you a copy of a letter which I am sending to-day to His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Greek Republic, informing him that the Commission of Enquiry of the League of Nations on the Greco-Bulgarian frontier incident, acting in virtue of the powers conferred on it by the Council’s resolution of October 29th, has decided that the Greek Government owes to the Bulgarian Government the sum of 20 million levas as compensation for the movable property, cattle, etc. carried off during the occupation by the Greek troops of Bulgarian territory.

I request you to consider this communication as confidential until the Council of the League of Nations publishes the report giving the reasons for this decision. I have the honour to annex a copy of the report to the present note.

(Signed) Horace Rumbold,
Chairman of the Commission of Enquiry of the League of Nations.