

The Sanjak (the word denotes the subdivision of a province) contains an area of some 4,000 square kilometres, and within its boundaries are situate the City of Antioch and the important and fine port of Alexandretta, which has rail communication with, amongst other places, Angora, the capital of Turkey. Many of the statistics available are not very reliable—indeed, they vary—but the Turkish inhabitants probably number rather more than two-fifths of the total population, which is put at 190,000 souls. From a military point of view Alexandretta and the neighbouring district are of great importance strategically, whilst commercially the possibilities of the port are enormous.

When, in 1920, it was agreed that the mandate for Syria should be exercised by France, the frontiers of the country to be governed under the mandate had not been determined. Late in 1921, under an arrangement between France and Turkey, some territory was restored to the latter, and the agreement which gave effect to the restoration also provided for a measure of freedom in language and cultural matters being accorded to the inhabitants of the Sanjak, which, although geographically a part of Syria, has a local culture Turkish in character. Indeed, I understand that Turkish is the language of the greater part of the inhabitants, even of thousands of persons who are not members of the Turkish race.

It will be recollected that as the result of the war in Asia Minor between Turkey and Greece the treaty signed by Turkey and the allied and associated Powers in the early post-war years was abrogated in favour of one negotiated at Lausanne in 1923. The latter treaty confirmed the Turkish-Syrian frontier established in 1921 and the Turkish renunciation of her rights and titles to the territories over which France was exercising a mandate. The Lausanne Treaty was followed by yet another, signed in 1926 by representatives of the Mandatory Government of Syria and the Turkish Government, by which a number of outstanding questions were settled and a degree of autonomy, especially in matters of finance and education, was accorded to the Sanjak; very important was the recognition by Syria of the claims of the Sanjak in the matter of autonomy, should the form of Government in Syria change in the future.

The terms of the last-mentioned treaty had been kept, and France had declared that when, in three years' time, Syria became an independent State she would see that the engagements she had assumed towards the Sanjak would be taken over by the Government of Syria, but what in the eyes of France was merely the interpretation of Treaties—a legal question—was for Turkey a political question (especially as Turkey claims that no less than four-fifths of the inhabitants of the Sanjak are of the Turkish race); and to incorporate the Sanjak with Syria, and to make it an integral part of Syria, would create a minority in an Arab State, with the risks which minorities run. The history of minorities in Europe and the complaints of the ineffectiveness of the League in settling minority questions are a warning which should not be ignored. It is all very well to say that under a good administration the rights of minorities will be preserved, but fanaticism, hatred, and greed all play their part, and sometimes it is easier for a Government to take the line of least resistance. (In this connection I would mention my experience as a member of one of the minority committees of the Council of the League in regard to a petition from a minority group of citizens who had been dispossessed of land by peasants of a different race; whose right to the land had been upheld by the Supreme Court of the country; but who had never been able to obtain execution of the judgment because of the powerlessness or unwillingness of the authorities to intervene against citizens of their own race.) Moreover, there were certain international aspects which, although not part of the question to be determined, were yet ever present in the minds of the Turkish people. A situation might arise leading to events in Asia Minor which would vary according to existing circumstances: Syria independent would be a different proposition from Syria governed under mandate by a strong power like France. Let us endeavour to narrow down the issue: Were the steps which had been taken by France to ensure a measure of autonomy to the Sanjak, once Syria had become an independent State, of a nature to satisfy the Turkish Government in regard to the future?

The legal standpoint of the Turkish Government was that the agreements of 1921 and 1926 were made between France and Turkey, not between the mandatory power and Turkey, and that since the Sanjak had been ceded under certain conditions to France, and not to the mandatory power, France was in a position to accord to the Sanjak independence in full measure, just as she was giving independence to Syria and Lebanon. At the same time the Turkish Government made certain suggestions regarding the Sanjak which, however, need not concern us here.

The French case was a denial of the Turkish claim. In treating with Turkey, France had always acted as a mandatory power. She had no rights of sovereignty over Syria, and under the Treaty of Lausanne Turkey had renounced all rights and titles to territory beyond a frontier line which she had accepted. From a geographical point of view nothing had occurred to give occasion to a reconsideration of the original reasons for including the Sanjak in the mandated territory.

Between the ninety-fifth and ninety-sixth sessions of the Council the parties negotiated in Paris in the presence of a representative of the Rapporteur (Mr. Sandler, Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs), but without success. Negotiations were later conducted through the usual diplomatic channels, but no measure of agreement was reached, and, indeed, the position was causing considerable anxiety. Shortly before the opening of the session now under review the Rapporteur placed himself unreservedly at the disposal of the parties, and conversations were then resumed in Geneva, under the guidance of the League and to such good purpose, that about the 25th January the press announced that a settlement had been practically reached. On the 26th January Mr. Sandler issued his report (Document C. 91), which came before the Council on the 27th.

I do not propose to give an account here of the negotiations in Paris or in Geneva. The report furnishes sufficient information to enable the situation to be followed progressively. What we are concerned with is the final settlement, and this I consider a triumph for the League. Let us forget for a moment the cry for "open diplomacy" and consider the method adopted for dealing with the