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INTERNATIONALISM IN A DIVIDED WORLD: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LEAGUE OF NATIONS SOCIETIES, 1919-1939

Despite the challenges of the geopolitical divisions of the interwar years, the International Federation of League of Nations Societies (IFLNS) brought together associations claiming to promote the ideals of the League of Nations in forty countries. It pioneered techniques for the lobbying of intergovernmental organizations that were so extensive that some considered it a "third chamber" of the League of Nations, and in areas such as its minorities work the Federation's independent policy initiatives may be considered to be precursors to present-day "politics beyond the state." Based largely on hitherto neglected publications and archives of the IFLNS, this is the first article to evaluate specifically the work of a body that at the time was often considered to be the leading international non-governmental organization for the promotion of peace between the World Wars. The article introduces the evolution of the IFLNS and explores its national and international work in turn.

This article is envisaged as a contribution to the history of peace movements and to the emerging field of research into transnational history, which according to Ian Tyrrell is concerned with "the movement of peoples, ideas, technologies and institutions across national boundaries" in which international non-governmental organizations are among the key actors.[1] It aims to evaluate one of the many international non-governmental organizations that have developed since the nineteenth century, but which to date have too rarely been subjected to historical investigation.[2] This article aims in particular to investigate an example of a transnational organization with international ideals that operated in an era in which the world was highly fragmented, and in which the role of transnational non-state actors has tended to be neglected by historians.

There are a number of studies of peace activism in the period between the two World Wars, but existing work on this subject has tended to focus on activities within particular countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.[3] Peace activism on a more international scale has received treatment in respect of the periods before the First World War and after the Second World War.[4] However, peace activism on an international scale between the First World War and the Second has to date received limited attention.[5] This article aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the work of the IFLNS. While the Federation's British participant, the League of Nations Union, has received detailed treatment,[6] the Federation's other member branches and its international secretariat, have not.[7]

An increasingly common trend in the literature on peace movements in the interwar period is to view their activities sympathetically, as having contributed, for instance, to an international climate of opinion which made possible the creation of the United Nations despite the failures of the League of Nations.[8] This article aims to provide a more balanced perspective, and discusses the importance of international tensions in the work of the League of Nations movement, as well as its achievements.

The principal materials on which this article is based are the archives and publications of the IFLNS held at the League of Nations Archives in the United Nations Office in Geneva, which contain particularly extensive material on the Federation's interactions with the League of Nations, minorities work, promotion of disarmament, and member societies beyond Western Europe and the United States. Amongst the further materials consulted were the archives of the organization's most powerful member society, the League of Nations Union (LNU), the papers of the Federation's most influential leader, Lord Robert Cecil, president of the IFLNS at the peak of the organization's activity in the early 1930s, and publications of and concerning the national members of the IFLNS.[9]

By the close of 1918, a range of organizations had been set up to promote the formation of a League of Nations, including the LNU in Great Britain, the League to Enforce Peace in the United States, the *Association Française pour la Société des Nations* in France, the *Deutsche Liga für*

Völkerbund in Germany and *Famiglia Italiana* in Italy. Upon the invitation of the *Association Française*, representatives of League Societies from Britain, the United States, Italy, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Romania, and China met the French Societies in Paris from January 25 to February 1, 1919. There they established a temporary Interallied Bureau of Associations and agreed upon a common seven-point program that was intended to influence the "Big Four" at Versailles. A Committee of Eight was also set up to consider how to cooperate on a permament basis.[10] After further refining their common goals in London in March, delegates from sixteen countries (but not the United States) met for a third conference in Brussels in the first three days of December 1919. The focus of the debate was upon the proposals of the commission led by Baron Descamps outlining a scheme for an "International Federation of League of Nations Societies," with the goal of "uniting in co-ordinated action the associations established to promote the principles embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations and to urge the application of those principles."[11] The establishment of this organization, with a Representative Council, Plenary Assembly and permanent Bureau, along the lines of the apparatus of the League itself, was soon agreed upon. Against British wishes for it to be established at the seat of the League, Geneva, it was to be based in Brussels to "express geographically its independence from the League."[12] To achieve greater coordination than its predecessor, the International Peace Bureau, had achieved, it was decided that the Federation should be composed of only one national Society or Federation of Societies per country, so as to bring together the variety of pre-war peace groups sympathetic towards the League and the newer League Societies within each country.[13] Thus the Federation was born. *The Covenant*, an organ of the British League of Nations Union, claimed optimistically in 1920 that the Brussels Conference "will undoubtedly find a place when the history of 1919 comes to be written."[14]

It was to be another couple of years, however, before the organization was completely up and running. At the Milan conference of October 1920, the two representatives per nation of the Representative Council were appointed, and it was decided that there would be a summer office at Geneva in addition to the Brussels headquarters, so as to be present when the League Assembly met. The Representative Council met for the first time in Paris in January 1921 and appointed Gustave

Ador, former President of the Swiss Confederation, as president of the Federation for 1921. That April, the Bureau of the Federation, as yet without a Secretary-General, met for the first time to prepare for the Plenary Congress in Geneva in June, at which the *Deutsche Liga für Völkerbund* was admitted to the Federation. Shortly afterwards, Théodore Ruyssen, *doyen* of the French peace movement and a professor at the University of Bordeaux specializing in Kant, was appointed the Federation's Secretary-General. By October 1921, a permanent headquarters had been established in Brussels, and the organization became fully operational.

In 1921, the organization was already composed of members from twenty-four countries, and one of the Federation's main goals was to widen membership to as many countries as possible. By 1930, forty countries were represented, including such non-European entities as Palestine, Japan, China, the United States and Argentina, among others. The total fully paid-up membership of the Federation peaked at about one and a half million.[15] Membership was significantly higher if associate membership, such as French ex-servicemen and the corporate membership of the *Deutsche Liga*, is included. The Secretary General made frequent visits to member societies to assess the techniques of the larger societies and to pass them on to less successful groups, and from 1926 onwards, a Special Propaganda Campaign Secretary was given the full-time role of conducting such visits. The secretariat also facilitated correspondence between the various national societies, and published a quarterly bulletin detailing the activities of the Federation and each member group.

The congresses of the organization marked the annual peak of the Federation's activities. Held in a different city each year, the common position of the League Societies on international issues was debated, and new propaganda methods decided upon. Sometimes the discussions became very heated as a result of the biases of some of the national League Societies.[16] The disputes once led Eric Drummond, the League's first Secretary-General, to complain that "I cannot help feeling that these meetings lead more to dissension than to union."[17] Nevertheless, the congresses often attracted considerable attention from the press, and were usually addressed by senior political figures from the host countries. Shortly after Germany had joined the League, for instance, the Berlin congress of 1927 was addressed by Gustav Stresemann, who warmly welcomed the Federation as "the friends and

spiritual army of international peace."[18] Spanish press coverage of the 1929 Madrid congress, on the other hand, was so extensive that entire pages were devoted to verbatim speeches from the conference.[19] The popularity of the League Societies in each of these two countries rose dramatically after their respective conferences. The congresses in Geneva, Budapest, and Paris in 1930-2, were also particularly well received. The Federation continued to hold these congresses until 1938, when the last was held in Copenhagen.

In addition to these annual congresses, the Federation arranged special mass conferences when it was felt that specific international issues needed greater attention. These often involved collaboration with other peace groups and unofficial organizations with similar interests. In October 1927, the Federation's Representative Council felt that governments were not doing enough to implement the recommendations of the official International Economic Conference that had been held in May, so it decided to hold an unofficial International Economic Conference in Prague in October 1928. It was attended by representatives of thirty-four organizations, including the International Cooperative Alliance, the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Banking Committee, the International Council of Women, and the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, and was also attended by the Secretaries-General of the League of Nations and International Labor Organization, and the Czech Prime, Economic and Foreign Ministers. As well as demonstrating public concern for the role of international economic stability as a condition for peace, a number of resolutions for the practical realization of this stability were drawn up, and the conference declared itself in favor of the implementation of the goals of the official Economic Conference.[20] A less popular second conference met in Geneva in 1930.

After the failure of the League in the Manchurian dispute and in the World Disarmament Conference, the Federation organized a mass demonstration of nearly all international peace societies in Brussels in February 1934 to demonstrate their continued faith in the League. The International Congress in Defence of Peace was attended by representatives of a hundred organizations from twenty-four countries, and was a forerunner of the attempts at mass mobilization of opinion in favor of the League later conducted by the International Peace Campaign.[21] When the need for such mass

mobilization of opinion became most urgent, once the Abyssinian dispute had begun, the Federation of League Societies cooperated with the International Peace Campaign, and also set up the World Youth Congress movement. This movement coordinated all the major youth organizations of the world and brought them together at two large international congresses, one in Geneva in September 1936, and another in the United States in August 1938. The World Youth Congress movement originated in the 1933 Federation assembly, when "it was felt that the hour had come for the generation which was not old enough to have participated in the world war itself to take action for the reform of international and social policies that their elders had followed with such unhappy results,"[22] but one should also note that after 1935 the Comintern also saw the organization as a useful means of pursuing its popular front policy. The Geneva congress was attended by 700 delegates from thirty-six countries, with representatives of Christian, students', women's, youth and political organizations, and declared itself in favor of collective security, disarmament, free trade and an improved League of Nations to deal with all these issues.[23] The second congress was attended by representatives of fifty-three countries, and with the collaboration of Eleanor Roosevelt drew up the "Vassar Peace Pact" in favor of fair pacific settlement of disputes and collective security when such settlement fails, and against aerial bombardment of towns.[24]

The International Federation helped establish new League Societies where they did not already exist, encouraged existing Societies to form national federations where the movement was fragmented, persuaded each Society to form commissions to prepare for the annual IFLNS congresses, and provided suggestions for their propaganda activities. Nevertheless, the Federation left the national League Societies relatively autonomous in their conduct within their own countries, and therefore their experiences varied greatly from country to country.[25]

Certain factors severely hampered the efforts of some of the League of Nations Societies. For instance, the fact that the League of Nations was tied to the Versailles Treaty was particularly harmful to the work of League Societies in the defeated countries. The story of the League movement in

Germany is instructive on this point.[26] Commissioned by the government, Ernst Jaeckh, a consultant to the Foreign Ministry, set up the *Deutsche Liga für Völkerbund* in December 1918. The body relied upon government subsidy from then onwards. Rather than building up a mass membership, the focus was upon corporate affiliation of such organizations as trade unions. Individual membership reached 2,000 in the early 1920s, and fell back to 1,200 later in the decade, but corporate membership amounted to some ten million. Most political parties, except the communists and nationalists, were represented in its leadership throughout the 1920s, and it carried out publicity through pamphlets, study circles, conferences, press circulars, and a journal, *Völkerbundfragen*. Before the Versailles settlement was announced there was great popular support for a League of Nations so the *Liga*'s gatherings were well attended and it had a good reception in the press. As Kimmich argued, "in 1919 most of what had been said and written in Germany about an association of nations could be traced to its initiative."[27] Once the draft Covenant of the League had been announced in February 1919, the *Liga* led the popular German demonstrations in favor of its revision. A demonstration it held on March 16 was so crowded that it had to be held in two places.[28]

After the League had become an established fact and the *Liga* had decided to campaign for German admission to the body, however, the group became an ineffectual lobby.[29] The government continued to subsidize the *Liga* (albeit at a quarter of the pre-1921 rate) for the sake of appearances and the information it provided, knowing that they could stop the aid if it ceased to be useful.[30] Nevertheless, the Federation of League Societies was unable to do much to stimulate the activities of its German member. When the Federation sent its first Special Propaganda Campaign Secretary, Dr. Walter Schlesinger, to help revive the organization by broadening its membership and cooperating with big business, he was turned away, accused of "intrigues against the Liga."[31] His successors in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Herman Kirchoff and Baron Albert von Bodman, also had little success in trying to set up an extensive regional network of local League groups along the lines of the British League of Nations Union. In 1927, therefore, Kirchoff stated that "no lasting organization on a broad basis has been built up in Germany," and by 1932 von Bodman had lost hope: "it would be illusory to imagine that it is possible to create a popular movement in favor of the League in Germany."[32] While

the history of the *Liga* has so far demonstrated the difficulty of campaigning for the League in a defeated power, the subsequent history of the German League of Nations movement is indicative of the even greater problems faced by such groups under what Ruyssen called the "paralysing influence" of dictatorial regimes.[33] In 1933, the organization changed its name to the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerbundfragen*, and it changed its role from promotion of the League to that of "objective criticism" of the institution.[34] It continued to cooperate with the Federation throughout the 1930s, and sent students to its summer school, but did not challenge the Nazi government's policies. The *Gesellschaft* therefore refused to attend the Federation's 1936 congress in Glasgow because of discussion of the persecution of Jews in Germany. On January 6, 1938, the organization left the Federation of League Societies, having changed its name again to remove all reference to the League: it had become the German Society for International Law and World Politics.

The German League of Nations movement was not the only one to come under immense pressure after the rise to power of a despotic regime. In Italy, for example, there was a vibrant League of Nations movement until Mussolini's rise to power. At the end of the First World War, 150 groups united in Milan to form the *Famiglia Italiana* for the promotion of a League of Nations, which held a large conference in December 1918 to help advise Vittorio Orlando on his League policy. This body succeeded in uniting a diverse membership, ranging from imperialist to socialist groups, in favor of the League of Nations in the early 1920s. After Mussolini's rise to power, however, the organization became ineffectual. By December 1923, Francesco Ruffini, president of the *Famiglia Italiana*, reported to Ruyssen that his organization had been "virtually silenced" by Mussolini, who had reversed the position he had held when a founder member of the group because of League and *Famiglia* opposition to his Corfu policy.[35] Nevertheless, Ruyssen's subsequent visit to Rome in January 1924 resulted in the creation of the *Associazione Italiana per la Societa delle Nazione* with the help of the fascist government. The new organization was funded and run by the Fascist Foreign Office, under the guidance of Amedeo Giannini, head of the Fascist Press Department. It was to play a significant role in the Federation throughout the interwar period, with Giannini becoming the Federation's president in the mid-1930s. However, the organization was used by Mussolini to

publicize throughout Italy his interpretation of the League as Britain's puppet and in 1932 its dependence upon the government became complete when individual membership was abolished. By the time of the Ethiopian crisis, therefore, Giannini's statements in the Federation's meetings tended to emphasize how "the Italian action in oriental Africa clearly conformed with the spirit of the Covenant."[36] The society left the Federation on 22 December 1938, once Italy had left the League.

A similar story applies in the Far East. The League of Nations Association of Japan was established in April 1920 and from that date its activities were prolific. It conducted extensive propaganda in the media, schools, temples, churches and universities, had several annual summer schools for up to a thousand students, held over a thousand public meetings per annum in the 1920s, and published numerous books as well as a journal called "International Understanding." In 1929, the Association had over 12,300 fully paid-up members in seventy-three branches, including fifty-nine particularly active students' groups and a substantial parliamentary group with members from all political parties. The Japanese society continued to "conduct propaganda in favor of the League of Nations, and to make known to the people the *real* intention of the League"[37] throughout the 1930s, even after Japan had left the League. It maintained 12,500 members as the "Japanese International Association" from 1934 onwards and continued to co-operate with the Federation until it left the organization on March 1, 1938, having abandoned faith in the League. Despite such promising appearances, however, its relations with the government of Japan were close from the start, and as the Japanese government became increasingly nationalistic in the 1930s, so did the Japanese League of Nations Association. During the Manchurian crisis, for example, the president of the Japanese Association stressed Japan's "vital interest arising from historical, geographical and economic circumstances" in Manchuria at the meetings of the IFLNS.[38] From then on, its opposition was voiced to many of the Federation's resolutions.

The history of the League movement in China, on the other hand, is instructive of the difficulties faced by pressure groups in fragmented countries in earlier stages of development. League Societies in such places as China and Eastern Europe found it difficult to attract members outside of the major cities. The Chinese League of Nations Society stated that it "was established soon after the

League itself came into existence…The sponsors and most enthusiastic supporters of the organization were at first not found among the ranks of the Western educated students and public officials, but were a group of old Chinese scholars [who] found in the League of Nations the modern embodiment of the concepts of peace and humanity which have been preached by the Chinese philosophers throughout the ages."[39] It described itself as initially a "study group of no large membership," but included among its leadership the former Prime Minister of the Chinese Republic, Hsing Hsi-Ling.[40] After the invasion of Manchuria the organization was reconstructed with the help of the nationalist government and expanded somewhat. Although it never acquired a mass membership, it expanded through the creation of a number of regional branches. Systematic propaganda was conducted through the press, its own journal, a prime-time slot on the Central Broadcasting Station in Nanjing and mass meetings (with 10,000 strong audiences), and attempts were made to revise school curricula. After the failure of the League to assist China and the withdrawal of Japan from the League, the Society found its work increasingly difficult, but continued in the hope that the League might yet provide them with collective security, and it still had 3,200 individual members in 1938.

In the newly-created states of Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the League of Nations Societies had to contend with the strong nationalistic forces that held together the young nations. Of these League Societies, Ruyssen pointed out in 1930 that "too many…consist only of a small nucleus of intellectuals, centred for the most part in the capitals."[41] The situation in Czechoslovakia was probably the least promising. Several groups, each representing a particular segment of Czech society and each containing 500-1,500 members, emerged separately, and proved unwilling to accede to the International Federation's demand that they unite in a national federation. The Czech League of Nations Union was set up after the war by the leader of the fascist Czech Political Science Union, Senator Marec, in order to prevent anyone more moderate from organizing such a body. Marec was quickly replaced by another Chauvinist, Jaroslav Brabec, then editor of *Navroni Listy*. The organization was funded by the Czech government and run from the offices of the Prague Fascist Club. Kirchoff noted when he visited the group in 1926 that it had "no interest in minorities or even pacifism," that its members "refuse to accept the Treaty of Versailles or

the League's statutes in general," and that it felt a League Society "should reflect the mood its country, in this case nationalistic."[42] Edvard Benes told Albert von Bodman in 1932 that "the international policy of his government was in every case in advance of any that the society sponsored."[43] In addition to the national group, there were separate League of Nations Unions set up by the German, Hungarian and Jewish minorities in Czechoslovakia, each with the main purpose of pressing their case for reform of the highly restrictive Czech language laws at the Federation's and the League's Assemblies. There was nevertheless one Czech League Association that genuinely embraced the League of Nations: the "Chelcicky" Peace Association which had emerged near the start of the First World War to promote the creation of such an institution. While this group never managed to gain a substantial membership in the interwar period, it did succeed in arranging a "Peace Day" annually throughout the Czech schools. However, the overall movement for the League of Nations in Czechoslovakia was scattered, partisan, and, with the exception of one small group, generally uninterested in the work of the League of Nations. All the Czech societies were funded by the Czech government, in order to play them off against each other as it saw fit.

Many of the other central and Eastern European societies were, according to von Bodman, of a similar "amorphous kind" as in Czechoslovakia. Von Bodman said of the Bulgarian group in 1932 that it was "rather a society for minorities and treaty revision than a full collaborator in our work for the League of Nations," and of the Austrian group that "as in so many other countries, that society is surrounded by forces ready for international collaboration which it has not learned to harness."[44] The only group that represented Russia in the Federation was a society consisting of a group of tsarists exiled in Paris, whose main desire was to make known their denunciation of other governments' recognition of "the reactionary, tyrannical, traitorous and criminal authority of the Soviets as the legitimate government of Russia."[45]

Despite the bleak descriptions outlined so far, it was still a highly significant achievement that the Federation's Special Propaganda Secretaries had managed by 1930 to establish a League Society in nearly every European country often in the face of extremely unpropitious conditions. However much they may have relied upon their governments for funds and in spite of a frequent unwillingness

to challenge their governments' policies, they at least ensured that the League of Nations figured in the political debate of hostile countries and ensured that the debates of the IFLNS were inclusive of varied opinions. As for the rest of the world, the Federation never found it feasible to visit non-European countries to set up associations across the globe. It was nevertheless represented in both China and Japan as has been described, and three Latin American countries hosted member societies of the Federation. There was an enthusiastic society in Argentina, alongside two smaller groups in Haiti and Cuba. In the Near East, too, the Federation had members in Persia and Palestine, although both were limited in size, and the Palestinian group's primary purpose was the promotion of the Zionist cause.

Elsewhere conditions were more advantageous for the work of the League of Nations Societies. In Western European countries with a history of peace activism and a national interest in the status quo upheld by the League of Nations, the League Societies were much stronger. The chief neutral states (Belgium, Holland and Switzerland) therefore contained significant League Associations. The Swiss League of Nations Association, for instance, was important in helping to secure the narrow majority in Switzerland in favor of joining the League in the referendum of May 16, 1920. The group in Belgium was particularly active in the Federation as a result of the work of Henri Rolin, while the Dutch Association made an especial effort to organize conferences with like-minded organizations based there such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

In France, several nineteenth-century societies which had survived the First World War such as the *Association de la Paix par le Droit* and the League for the Rights of Man joined forces with the various League of Nations Societies that had emerged during and after the war. Although the French movement was hampered by its diffuse and decentralized nature resulting from the diversity of the organizations in favor of the League there,[46] membership of the *Fédération Française pour la Société des Nations* reached one and a quarter million in 1932. This organization represented up to seventeen peace organizations and held occasional mass meetings, as well as obtaining a subsidy from the French government and securing collective representation of its constituents at the conferences of the International Federation. Although four-fifths of the membership of the *Fédération Française* was

accounted for by the collective adherence of French ex-servicemen, there were still about 250,000 individual subscribing members of France's pro-League non-governmental organizations in the 1930s. Of these, the two main groups were the long-standing *Association de la Paix par le Droit*, led by Ruyssen, and the *Association Française pour la Société des Nations* which emerged under Léon Bourgeois' direction during the First World War. The French movement's focus was primarily educational. However, pressure-group activity was also undertaken. This included securing affirmations of support for the League from candidates at each election (with a third of candidates' support secured in the 1928 election) and sending deputations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the Ethiopian crisis, for instance, two deputations to Pierre Laval were made in July and October 1935 to press for adherence to the sanctions entailed by Article 16 of the League Covenant. These did not persuade Laval to abandon Mussolini, but the massive demonstrations in favor of adherence to the League Covenant arranged by the French League Societies after the announcement of the Hoare-Laval plan helped to undermine public confidence in the government and nearly led to Laval's resignation. Their co-operation with all the various elements of the left in these demonstrations also served as a precedent for the Popular Front government elected the following year. During these elections, the French League Societies helped keep the Abyssinian issue at the forefront of the debate, and secured the approval of their demands for full application of the League Covenant by five hundred candidates.[47]

In the Anglo-Saxon countries, conditions were the most advantageous for the work of the League of Nations movement. The Federation's member in the United States of America was the League of Nations Non-Partisan Association (LNA). Although it was hindered by the fact the League was regarded with great scepticism by a large proportion of the American public (which viewed the organization as a continuation of the balance of power system), the LNA was helped in its efforts by a long-standing tradition of peace activism and an active civil society. The American Association was set up in 1923 to gain non-partisan approval of membership of the League. Despite its elitist membership and perspectives and despite seeing itself as a body of "legalists" interested mainly in securing a functional system of international law through the World Court,[48] the body was able to

attract a wider membership of 30,000 people in thirty-five different states by the 1930s. It conducted mass education campaigns throughout the interwar period and persuaded successive U.S. administrations to approve of American entry into the World Court. Difficulties were encountered when the administrations attempted to actually implement the policy of World Court entry, because Congressional approval was never fully forthcoming.[49] Nevertheless, according to Cecelia Lynch, the Congress did approve U.S. membership of the ILO in 1935 "through the direct efforts of James Shotwell and Clark Eichelberger", two of the leading figures in the LNA.[50] Furthermore, as Lynch has argued, the LNA was to have much greater success in achieving the implementation of its goals after the outbreak of the Second World War.[51]

By far the most successful national League of Nations society in the interwar period, however, was that in Great Britain. The League of Nations Union benefited from a similar deep-rooted tradition of peace activism and active civil society as in America, but without such a sceptical public. The LNU managed to obtain a vast membership, peaking at more than 400,000 paid-up subscribers in 1931, and the body had over 3,000 branches at its peak.[52] The LNU is possibly best known for its organization of the "Peace Ballot" in 1934-5, of which Ceadel has noted "The fact that half a million volunteers helped distribute the forms was more impressive than the fact that 11,640,066 people, an estimated 38.2 percent of the U.K. population aged over 18, were persuaded to fill them in."[53] Since the LNU and its impact have already received considerable attention, it will not be given further treatment here.[54]

While the League Societies attempted to mold public opinion and influence the governments in their respective countries, in unison the League Societies attempted to influence the decisions of the League. Just as governments attempted to manipulate their respective League Societies, the League of Nations attempted to "prevent if possible tendencies…[that were] overly radical or extremist" in the Federation.[55] Nevertheless, so great was the extent of the influence that it had upon debates at the League of Nations that the Federation of League Societies was often seen at the time as an additional

decision-making body of the League. Furthermore, when the League failed to live up to the Federation's expectations it would sometimes carry out policy initiatives of its own, pioneering what has more recently been termed "politics beyond the state."[56] The next paragraphs will therefore examine in turn the Federation's influence upon the League Assemblies and its independent transnational policy initiatives.

At its ninth meeting on February 13, 1919, the Peace Conference Commission on the League of Nations discussed an interesting amendment proposed by General Jan Smuts. The proposal was for a third chamber in addition to the Council and Assembly: "At least once in four years, an extraordinary meeting of the Body of Delegates shall be held, which shall include representatives of national parliaments and other bodies representative of public opinion, in accordance with a scheme to be drawn up by the Executive Council." It was hoped that this body could represent in the League popular opinion to balance the official opinion expressed in the other bodies. But this proposal for a "representative assembly" was rejected, as it would have made the League machinery too complicated. By the end of the 1920s, however, it was increasingly thought that, as a result of the "attention given by the Assembly to the annual resolutions of the Congress of the Federation of League of Nations Societies," the Federation provided "in its yearly conference the third chamber which was desired by so many in 1919."[57]

As a result of Federation pressure, in fact, each year from 1923 onwards a delegation from the Federation was received by the Secretary General of the League and the President of the League Assembly, at which they presented the resolutions of the Federation's annual congress. These resolutions were subsequently published in the Assembly Journal, and in this manner could influence the delegates. From 1927, a similar procedure was established in the International Labor Organization. Furthermore, each time the League Assembly met, the Federation organized dinners, balls, and other social events at which Assembly delegates were entertained and told about the Federation's desires. Large demonstrations were also conducted in Geneva while the Assembly was convened, such as the gathering at Victoria Hall in 1925 when 1,200 people, including Assembly delegates, met to demonstrate their support for the Geneva Protocol. In October 1923, the League

Council also voted in favor of allowing the League Secretariat to hold at the disposal of Council members the resolutions adopted by private organizations, after a letter from the Federation's president had asked them to do so.[58]

Ruyssen therefore claimed that many of the resolutions of the League Assembly were pioneered by the congresses of League Societies. For example, the Federation proposed an International Economic Conference at its 1924 congress, and the following year the League Assembly proposed such a conference too. Federation resolutions for the abolition of slavery and control of noxious drugs were also followed by similar resolutions by the League Assembly in the 1920s. But, as Ruyssen himself was well aware, "it would be extravagant to attribute those results expressly to the effort of the Federation…Between the resolutions of purely non-official organizations and the influence they exert on political life it is no doubt arbitrary to trace a too direct line of cause and effect, for we are dealing here with *imponderabilia*."[59]

Nevertheless, in some cases the link from Federation resolution to League Assembly debate was quite clear. For instance, the Federation's resolution at its 1928 congress at The Hague for the general study of minority problems by the League and the establishment of a Permanent Minorities Commission was the same resolution that the first delegate of Holland proposed at the subsequent League Assembly.[60] While the Assembly did not agree to this resolution, some of the proposals for the reform of League minority procedures that the Federation had suggested were implemented by the League Council the following year. Furthermore, the Federation's criticisms of the League procedures for the examination of minority petitions continued to be referred to in League Assembly discussions of the subject throughout the inter-war period; for instance they were directly referred to by the German delegation to the Sixth Commission of the thirteenth League Assembly in 1932 when issuing its own complaints. The IFLNS was not alone among international non-governmental organizations in lobbying the League on minorities questions: Carole Fink, for instance, has noted the work of groups such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle,* the International Law Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, but argues that "the most-far reaching" proposals were made by the IFLNS.[61]

At the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva of 1932-4, the IFLNS was again especially notable for its proposals. Initiated by the British and Irish League of Nations Unions, the congress of League Societies in Budapest in May 1931 agreed to a set of proposals to guide the proceedings of the Disarmament Conference. These included "the principle of equality in disarmament between the 'vanquished' and the 'victorious' powers," inspired "by the conviction that in any Convention for the limitation of the means of national defence it was impossible to divide States into two categories and apply different weights and measures to each."[62] Another vital element of the Budapest proposals was the distinction between "aggressive" and "defensive" weaponry, and the need to keep the latter intact. These proposals were then adopted as the programme of the International Consultative Group, consisting of the Federation along with women's, Christian, and student international organizations, which conducted a vast propaganda campaign throughout the conference. The women's organizations within this group, united in a Disarmament Committee which claimed a combined membership of 40 million women, gained special prominence for having acquired for a disarmament petition 12 million signatures, making it the world's largest petition to that date.[63]

From the beginning, the League Secretariat expected to have "very active" relations with such private organizations as the Federation in the period leading up to and during the Disarmament Conference.[64] The Federation was allowed to observe the Conference proceedings and distribute "Speaker's Notes" outlining their programme to all the delegates. At an Extraordinary Session of the Disarmament Conference on February 6, 1932, before the governments presented their own proposals, Lord Cecil outlined the Federation's Budapest programme. This was one of the few occasions upon which a League manifestation was directly addressed by non-state actors, and the Budapest proposals were to have considerable influence upon several of the delegations, for they were taken as a starting point for the conference. As Philip Noel-Baker stated in his history of the Disarmament Conference, the Budapest proposals "came to dominate the proceedings of the conference from first to last."[65] In his address to the conference, Count Apponyi of the Hungarian delegation said of the Federation and its proposals, "We listened to Lord Cecil as the spokesman of a great association, including the leading personalities and popular masses of almost every country in the world…First among its

demands, this great association has placed the recognition of the legal equality of all nations, the introduction of rules applicable to all…For my part I see no objection to such a proposal."[66] He was not the only one. By March 23, 1932, the Executive Committee of the Federation was able to declare that "In the opening stages of the Disarmament Conference three great powers and twelve smaller states have declared for the whole system of Disarmament Proposals made by the Federation at Budapest last June."[67] As Noel-Baker stated, "Simon was deeply impressed by Cecil's speech" and the British "qualitative disarmament" proposals embodied most of the Budapest proposals, as did the later Hoover plan from the US.[68] Even when Simon rejected the Hoover plan (which proposed abolition of many forms of armament and reduction of others by one third) and the conference began to fall apart, the Budapest proposals remained important for the Group of Eight lesser powers, which received a special deputation from the Federation.[69]

Research undertaken by the Federation of League Societies was also made use of by the League Secretariat and delegates at League conferences. For example, for the 1927 International Economic Conference, the Federation appointed a committee to produce recommendations that were published and distributed to the conference delegates, and a number of the Economic Conference resolutions reflected the Federation's recommendations. When League reform was debated by the 1929 Assembly, the research on this that the Federation had produced for its own congresses was requested by a number of delegates.

As has already been noted, the IFLNS was not alone in lobbying the League. Other international non-governmental organizations such as the International Council of Women and the International Chamber of Commerce were also important, especially in the League's work on women's rights and economic affairs respectively.[70] However, no other international non-governmental organization lobbied the League on so broad a range of issues as the IFLNS. Furthermore, the IFLNS had several unique resources at its disposal for influencing the League. Amongst the most significant was that several of the Federation's member associations counted amongst their leadership individuals who were commonly called upon by their respective governments to represent their countries at League meetings, such as Lord Cecil of the British LNU,

and Joseph Paul-Boncour of the French League of Nations movement. Furthermore, the membership of the IFLNS closely reflected that of the League of Nations: like the League of Nations, the IFLNS was dominated by its British and French components. The result was greater influence of the Federation at League discussions than might be expected given the Federation's divided and often weak membership in the defeated states of the First World War, the new states of central and Eastern Europe, and states in Asia and Latin America.

Despite the Federation's impact on its deliberations, the League often did not live up to the Federation's expectations, so influencing League debates was not the only way by which the IFLNS attempted to ensure its goals were realized. On several occasions, in fact, the Federation attempted to carry out its own programs where it felt that the League had failed. The Federation's greatest efforts in this respect were manifested in the attempted resolution of disputes over the treatment of minorities. After a visit to central Europe, Willoughby Dickinson of the British League of Nations Union told the General Council of the Federation in October 1921 how struck he was by the violent antagonisms between majority and minority groups in the countries he had visited, and stated how he "felt that a neutral organization such as the Federation was capable of studying these problems with the requisite impartiality, and of helping to mitigate the conflicts…by direct intervention between the majority and minorities."[71] A Minorities Committee was therefore set up by the Federation Council to do precisely this, for, as Willoughby Dickinson stated in 1923, "it is evident that the Council of the League is hampered by the necessity of having to act with excessive caution. In the general interest of world peace it must not risk the loss of its influence by making a mistake. The Federation is not in this position. It must indeed proceed with prudence but it is free to make experiments and I suggest that it might do so on this occasion."[72]

From then on, therefore, the Federation received complaints and information from numerous minorities, from the German minority in Italy, to the Catalonian minority in Spain, to the Jewish minority in Nazi Germany, totalling thirty-four different cases by 1938. Once a complaint had been received, the Federation's Minority Committee contacted the League Society of the relevant country to elicit their opinion, and then proceeded to bring together representatives of the majority and

minority groups to expound their respective cases. On five occasions, this resulted directly in the settlement of that dispute, such as in the case of the Bulgarian minority in Romania and the Romanian minority in Bulgaria in 1928.[73]

The example that Ruyssen most liked to cite as indicative of success was that of the treatment of the Danish minority in German Schleswig and the German minority in Danish Schleswig in 1924. At the January 1924 meeting of the Federation Minorities Committee, the *Deutsche Liga für Völkerbund* presented a report upon the education of the German minority in Denmark, and the Danish society was asked to produce a report for the subsequent meeting, in March, at which the situation of each other's minorities were discussed by representatives of the two minorities in question. Subsequently, the two League Societies drew their respective governments' attention to the problem, and the consequent direct negotiations between the two governments resulted in the passing of Education Bills in each country that provided for reciprocal treatment along the lines the two League Societies had initially demanded.

Thus far, the focus has largely been upon the pressure group role of the League Societies and their International Federation, attempting to get specific policies implemented. While on a number of occasions, they have been shown to have been successful in this role, the realization of specific policies was arguably not their only aim: as social movement organizations they also attempted to influence long-term norms as well as short-term policies. Much of the focus of their work had the long-term goal of changing the way people thought about international relations, and thereby changing the practice of international relations.

The importance to the League Societies and their International Federation of changing the way people thought about international politics is demonstrated by the extent of their efforts dedicated to public education in the ideas they expounded. Their views on international society were not merely propounded in mass gatherings, pamphlets, journals and press articles, but also in schools. The Federation was closely involved with the educational work of the Union of International Associations, the League's International Committee on International Cooperation, and the International Bureau of

Education, in their efforts to secure textbook revision.[74] From 1925 onwards, Ruyssen set up Federation-sponsored international summer schools (the "*cours Ruyssen")* in Geneva for the education of pupils at teacher training colleges, in the hope that their ideas would be passed on by the students. Held in German, French and English, with prominent speakers such as Eric Drummond and Alfred Zimmern, attendance peaked in 1931 with 286 students (117 with scholarships) from twenty-seven countries.[75] Additionally, the Federation disseminated to its members educational films and lantern slides, as well as League brochures about its aims and organization. As already mentioned, the Federation also passed on from society to society their respective educational techniques in its quarterly bulletin, and conducted visits to encourage weaker societies.

At the national level, education was an equally high priority. It was the central focus of the leading member of the French Federation of League Societies, the *Association de la Paix par le Droit*, which organized public lectures and exhibitions, published brochures and the popular journals *La Paix par le Droit* and *Les Peuples Unis*, ran summer schools and assisted in textbook revision, but did very little lobbying except for the securing of pledges at election-time.[76] While the British LNU was much more keen on its lobbying role, the Union expended as much effort informing the public through mass membership, mass meetings, books and pamphlets, the *Headway* journal, press campaigns and education in schools and churches. In conjunction with the Historical Association, pro-League textbooks were approved and films distributed that were shown to a million children. Their efforts at curriculum alteration were so successful that inspectors found that "even the apathetic teacher…will find himself encouraged to give League instruction."[77] The Geneva summer school idea was invented by the LNU, and copied by the Federation for students from the rest of the world.

The work of the Federation continued under Ruyssen's guidance until the outbreak of the Second World War, despite declining funds and membership after the failure of the Disarmament Conference. It was sidelined by the activity of the International Peace Campaign after the Ethiopian crisis, although its activities did not cease completely until it was replaced by the World Federation of United Nations Associations in August 1946. Ruyssen's successor as Secretary-General of the IFLNS, F. E. Figgures, felt in 1939 that "the efforts of the League of Nations Societies have come to nought,"

but saw a continued role for the League Societies in the conflict since "only the establishment of a more durable international society can justify this second European conflict in a quarter of a century."[78] The American League of Nations Association (LNA) and British League of Nations Union formulated plans for "World Settlement after the War" and passed them on to their respective governments. They proceeded to cooperate with the other peace, women's, and internationalist groups campaigning for similar goals, and, as Cecelia Lynch has argued, proved to be influential.[79] Several members of the American Association participated in the State Department's "Advisory Committee" for post-war planning, such as Norman Davis and Manley Hudson, "to represent informed public opinion;" and the State Department also included both the British LNU and the American LNA on a list of "private associations" with which it thought "it would seem to be definitely worthwhile for the Department to maintain contact of one sort or another."[80] During the San Francisco Conference, forty-two groups including the LNA were invited to serve as "consultants" to the US delegation. Their demands for institutionalization of human rights were incorporated in the Charter (e.g. in Chapter 1, article 1, number 3), despite not initially featuring in the plans of the State Department before San Francisco. The "consultants" also secured the acceptance of a future "consultative status" for non-governmental organizations in ECOSOC. After the conference was over, the State Department used these groups to ensure U.S. Congress would not reject international organization for a second time.[81] As for the LNU, the British Foreign Office refused them the privileges their American counterparts received, but so many elements of the Charter matched the proposals that the Union had sent to the Foreign Office that C. K. Webster, working at the Office, complimented the Union on how "so many of its recommendations had been adopted at San Francisco."[82]

While the influence such as this of the Anglo-Saxon components of the international League of Nations movement has become relatively well-known, this article has shed light on the wider movement for the League of Nations and its International Federation, which not only pioneered techniques for lobbying intergovernmental organizations, but also pioneered the carrying out of independent non-governmental policy initiatives such as in its minorities work. Nevertheless, that the IFLNS also reflected the divisions of the period should not be forgotten, and in its assessment of the

wider League of Nations movement this article has shown the difficulties faced by internationalists in countries that would appear to have a very different stake in the international order from those in a dominant position.

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[1] Ian Tyrrell, "History," in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, eds. Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 493.

[2] A notable exception is Arnold Whittick, *Woman into Citizen: The World Movement towards the Emancipation of Women in the Twentieth Century with Accounts of the Contributions of the International Alliance of Women, the League of Nations and the Relevant Organisations of the United Nations* (London: Athenaeum, 1979).

[3] See, for example, Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1971); Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Norman Ingram, *The Politics of Dissent: Pacifism in France, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[4] See, for instance, Sandi Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lawrence Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, volumes 1-3 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993-2003).

[5] A notable exception is Thomas Richard Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism: The Campaign for Disarmament between the Two World Wars* (Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007).

[6] Donald S. Birn, *The League of Nations Union, 1918-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

[7] There are occasional references to the IFLNS in a few works, such as Birn's study of the League of Nations Union, and Cecelia Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), and occasionally IFLNS member associations are briefly mentioned, such as in Christoph Kimmich, *Germany and the League of Nations* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

[8] Lynch, chapter 7.

[9] On the process of writing transnational history and the history of international peace organizations, see Thomas Richard Davies, "Researching Transnational History: The Example of Peace Activism", in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Non-State Actors* ed. Bob Reinalda (London: Ashgate, 2011), 35-46.

[10] *League of Nations Journal and Monthly Report*, February 1919, 72.

[11] Association Française pour la Société des Nations, *Troisième Conférence Interalliée des Associations pour la Société des Nations*, (Paris: Association Française pour la Société des Nations, 1920), 26.

[12] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1926, no. 1, 15.

[13] Ibid., 13-14.

[14] *The Covenant*, January 1920, 245-246.

[15] Source: *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1932, 29.

[16] At the Prague congress of 1922, for example, during which the Minorities Committee of the Federation was established, the principle of minority rights caused great offence to societies representing countries with substantial agitation from minority groups. Among these was the Czech League of Nations Union which was hosting the Conference. When they were outvoted on this issue, the Czech society, along with four others, withdrew from the Conference, which continued thanks to the hospitality of the more cordial Czech government.

[17] Drummond to Cecil, 24 April 1928, Cecil of Chelwood papers, British Library, London, Add. MSS. 51111.

[18] IFLNS, *The XIth Plenary Congress* (Brussels: IFLNS, 1927), 16.

[19] League of Nations Union, *The International Federation of League of Nations Societies*, second edition, Pamphlet 190, (London: League of Nations Union, 1933), 3.

[20] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1928, 79-89.

[21] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1934, 55; IFLNS, *World Opinion and the League, Being a Report of the International Congress in Defence of Peace* (Brussels: IFLNS, 1934).

[22] IFLNS, *Youth Plans a New World: The Official Record of the First World Youth Congress, Geneva, 1936* (Geneva: IFLNS, 1936), 5.

[23] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1936, 227-246.

[24] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1938, 285-287.

[25] The reports of IFLNS member societies contained in the IFLNS archives and published in the *IFLNS Bulletins* are amongst the most substantial primary sources on many of these societies.

[26] On the German League of Nations movement, see Kimmich.

[27] Kimmich, 15.

[28] Kimmich, 18.

[29] Kimmich, 27.

[30] Kimmich, 214.

[31] Schlesinger, "Claim to decide whether my work has offended against the intentions of the created post", IFLNS papers, League of Nations Archives, Geneva, box P.107.

[32] Reports of the Special Propaganda Campaign Secretary, February 1927 and October 1932, IFLNS papers, box P.107.

[33] Annual Report of the Secretary General for 1935-6, *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1936, 66.

[34] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1933, 263.

[35] "Plight of the League of Nations Movement in Italy", Ruyssen's interview with Ruffini, 17 December 1923, IFLNS papers, box P.107.

[36] Report of the Italian societies to the Federation, *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1936, 148.

[37] Inagaki to Limburg, 26 June 1932, IFLNS papers, box P.108.

[38] Shibusawa to Ruyssen, 5 November 1931, IFLNS papers, box P.108.

[39] Report of the Chinese League of Nations Society, 22 May 1934, *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1934, 118.

[40] Ibid., 119.

[41] "Secretary General's Report on the Work of the Brussels Secretariat and the General Situation of the Federation (1 April 1929-31 March 1930)," *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1930, 20.

[42] Kirchoff, "Report on a visit to the Czech League of Nations Unions", IFLNS papers, box P.107.

[43] von Bodman, "The movement on behalf of the League of Nations in Central and Eastern Europe and Turkey", IFLNS papers, box P.107.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Resolution of the Russian National League of Nations Association, 1924, IFLNS papers, box P.93.

[46] Attempts at centralization of the French League movement began in 1934, but were overtaken by the development of the International Peace Campaign.

[47] Limited coverage of the League of Nations movement in France is provided in Ingram, op. cit., which focuses primarily on the *Association de la Paix par le Droit.* The *IFLNS Bulletin* and the journal *La Paix par le Droit* provide the some of the most extensive information on the League of Nations movement's activities in France.

[48] Lynch, 32.

[49] For instance, in 1926 the Senate approved of entry into the World Court, but with so many conditions attached that the League Council could not accept US entry on such terms.

[50] Lynch, 189.

[51] On the LNA, see Lynch, especially chapters 5-7.

[52] Ceadel, 272.

[53] Ceadel, 318.

[54] For a comprehensive survey of the LNU's work, see Birn.

[55] Quoted in Lynch, 182-3.

[56] Paul Wapner, "Politics Beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics," *World Politics,* 47, No. 3 (April 1995): 311-40.

[57] Felix Morley, *The Society of Nations* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), 115-116.

[58] Théodore Ruyssen, *The League of Nations Societies and their International Federation: Raison d'être, Activities, Results* (Brussels: IFLNS, 1930), 17.

[59] Ibid., 11.

[60] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1930, no. 1, 14; F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 406.

[61] Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 306.

[62] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1932, 323.

[63] The wide range of organizations involved in promoting disarmament at the League of Nations in 1932-1934 are discussed in Davies.

[64] Quoted in Lynch, 183.

[65] Philip Noel-Baker, *The First World Disarmament Conference, 1932-1934, And Why It Failed* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979), 75.

[66] League of Nations, *Conference for the Reduction of Armaments, Plenary Meetings, Verbatim Records*, Meeting of 13 February 1932, 106.

[67] Disarmament Information Committee, *Disarmament*, vol. 12 no. 7, 6 April 1932, 6.

[68] Noel-Baker, 77.

[69] The impact of transnational activism at the World Disarmament Conference is discussed in Davies and Lynch.

[70] Steve Charnovitz, "Two Centuries of Participation: NGOs and International Governance", *Michigan Journal of International Law,* 18, No. 183 (Winter 1997): 220-237.

[71] Théodore Ruyssen, "The Federation's Action in Minority Questions," *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1939, 39.

[72] Report by Willoughby Dickinson to the Federation Council, 17 February 1923, IFLNS papers, box P.99. For more on Dickinson's work with the IFLNS, see Daniel Gorman, "Ecumenical Internationalism: Willoughby Dickinson, the League of Nations and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45, Nol. 2 (January 2010): 51-73.

[73] Ruyssen, "Federation's Action in Minority Questions", 42-43.

[74] For a discussion of the activities of these organizations, see Elly Hermon, "The International Peace Education Movement, 1919-1939" in *Peace Movements and Political Cultures* eds. Charles

Chatfield and Peter Van den Dungen (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 127-142.

[75] *IFLNS Bulletin*, 1931, 99-101; IFLNS papers, box P.96.

[76] Ingram, 52-5.

[77] Quoted in Birn, 139; chapter seven of this book discusses LNU propaganda methods.

[78] IFLNS Circular No. 177, IFLNS papers, box P.113.

[79] Lynch, chapter 7.

[80] Quoted in Lynch, 195-7.

[81] On these developments, see Lynch, chapter 7.

[82] Quoted in Birn, 223.