THE ESPERANTO PRESSURE GROUP AT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

1920 - 1925

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short chapter

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1920, the first year that the League of Nations met in Geneva, one of the most hopeful groups seeking support from League members were the Esperantists, advocates of the international language, Esperanto. Esperantists believed that the support of the League would enable them to persuade national governments to adopt Esperanto as an international auxiliary language. The purpose of this work is to examine the efforts of the Esperantists to gain international acceptance through the League and to consider the reaction of League members to the proposed world language.

a) Background

The Esperanto movement had begun in 1887 with the publication of An International Language by "Dr. Esperanto," or "one who hopes". The brochure presented a precise, constructed language, based mainly on root words of West European languages. Since the grammar of the new language was simplified, tending to be more consistent and logical than those of national languages, it was considerably easier to learn.

"Dr. Esperanto", or Louis Lazarus Zamenhof (1859-1917), was a young Polish oculist of Jewish origin. Zamenhof had been

working on this project since his high school days, when he had studied Greek, Latin, French, German and English. His father, a press censor and teacher of modern languages and geography, had had little sympathy with his son's activities, and had insisted Zamenhof pursue medical studies at Moscow University. During his son's absence, he had even burned all Zamenhof's manuscripts.[1] However, Zamenhof had a strong faith in the need for an international auxiliary language to help unify mankind, and had persisted.

As a native of Bialystock, the Russian part of partitioned Poland, where Polish, German, Russian and Yiddish competed, Zamenhof was sensitive to the division and strife caused by national language differences. Zamenhof believed that the spread of a neutral world language would lead to international understanding and brotherhood - a concept that became known as the "interna Ideo"[2] (or inner idea) of Esperanto.

This aspect of the language had had as much influence in attracting early supporters as did the language's linguistic and practical merits. The first supporters of Esperanto,

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1. E.D. Durrant, The Language Problem, London, Esperanto Publishing Co., 1943, p. 38.

2. According to Zamenhof's presidential address at the Third Esperanto Congress at Cambridge in 1907, his "interna ideo" was to establish a neutral foundation on which the various races of mankind may hold peaceful, brotherly intercourse, without obtruding on each other's racial differences.

mostly Russian citizens,[1] have been described as "largely of an idealistic turn of mind, in full sympathy with the humanitarian aspects of the international language ideal".[2]

Supporters of Esperanto were often drawn to the idea of international federalism as well. Hector Hodler[3] for instance, looked to "the ideal from which will emerge a new international order based on the collaboration of all peoples united in federation."[4] On such a federation would

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1. In 1889, when the first Esperanto journal, la Esperantisto, began publication in Nurnberg, it had 544 subscribers, of which 355 were in Russia, 124 in Germany, 56 in Sweden, 10 in France, 6 in U.S., 4 in Italy, 3 in Bulgaria, 2 in Spain and 1 each in England, Belgium, Portugal and Brazil (ref: E.D. Durrant, op.cit., p. 50). Moreover, the first Esperanto society was founded in St. Petersburg, in 1892. Unfortunately, the movement in Russia suffered a setback in 1895, when la Esperantisto published an article on 'Commonsense and Belief' by Count Tolstoy, bringing it under the ban of the Russian censorship.

2. E.D. Durrant, op. cit., p. 49.

3. Hodler (1887-1920), a pacifist, and leading Esperantist. A Swiss, Hodler had first become interested in Esperanto in 1903 at the age of 16. He founded the Journal Esperanto in 1907, and the Universal Esperanto Association in 1908.

4. H. Hodler, 'le Coupable; la Voix de l'Humanité (a weekly journal published in Lausanne by the League for the Defense of Humanity and for the Organization of its Progress), April 12, 1916.

depend the success of Esperanto. Zamenhof himself realized the possible role of some authoritative external agency whose decisions would be regarded as final. In a letter dated January 18, 1908, Zamenhof wrote: "When the matter shall have been taken in hand by some great agency (e.g. the governments of the great nations), which by reason of its power will be in a position to give us not merely overconfident verbal promises, but full guarantee that it will carry our project to its goal more certainly than we, and that it will not lightly commit itself to a decision before these shall have been subjected to definite and practical tests, then we can confidently transfer to this great agency the fate of our affair."[1]

The major selling point of the Esperantists was that the international adoption of Esperanto, a constructed language, would have all the benefits of one world language, the breaking down of linguistic cultural barriers to mutual understanding and world peace. This would be achieved by Esperanto without the drawbacks of a national world language -- cultural jealousies and fears of linguistic imperialism.

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1. Quoted in the Report on an International Language by the British Association for the advancement of Science, published by the Association in London, 1921, p. 12.

Since the declared aim of the League was also world peace, through the friendly association of all nations on a basis of equality and co-operation, the League could be expected to agree with the necessity for such a language. Other groups professing universalist and pacifist ideologies had already demonstrated support for Esperanto. They included the International Red Cross,[1] the Young Men's Christian Association,[2] the Roman Catholic Church,[3] and the Society of Friends,[4] or Quakers.

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1. During World War I, the International Red Cross had recommended its workers learn Esperanto.

2. The association had distributed thousands of Esperanto lesson books to prisoner of war camps between 1914-1918.

3. The Roman Catholic Esperantist journal, Espero Katholika (Catholic Hope), had received papal blessing (ref: League of Nations, Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language, Report of the General Secretariat to the Third Assembly, A.5. (1), 1922, p. 12.

4. Quakers were very interested in Esperanto as an instrument of peace. A Friends' Esperanto Association was formed in 1921 in London (ref: the British Esperantist, vol. 17, 1921, p. 24.)

Esperantist attempts to overcome national language barriers had also brought support from internationally-oriented groups such as Freemasons and Rotarians.[1] Distinct from such liberal internationalist supporters were those of the international left - the Socialist, the Communists. In France, for example, Esperanto was advocated by Romain Rolland[2] and by Henri Barbusse.[3] In Russia, a commission had been appointed in January 1919 by the People's Commissariat for Education to examine the question of teaching an international language in Soviet schools. The commission had recommended Esperanto.[4]

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1. Esperantist Freemasons and Rotarians had formed societies which participated in the annual Universal Esperanto Congresses, and like other specialized groups, were a direct part of the movement.

2. Rolland (1866-1944), French writer, winner of the 1915 Nobel Prize for Literature. During World War I, Rolland had lived in Switzerland and had published a famous series of articles (Au-dessus de la melée) urging France and Germany to respect truth and humanity throughout the war. This had not endeared him to the government of either country.

3. Barbusse (1873-1935), well-known French writer, pacifist, Communist (as did Privat, Barbusse, wrote for l'Humanite, the socialist paper founded by Jean Jaures). Like Rolland, Barbusse published articles supporting Esperanto in le Travailleur Espérantiste. In 1921, Barbusse was Honorary President of the First World Congress of Labour Esperantists, the Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda.

4. League of Nations, Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language, op. cit., p. 9.

Esperanto attracted not only idealists, but also utilitarians. These men saw the language as a practical tool, useful in foreign travel and commerce, and in the exchange of ideas. General Hippoyte Sebert,[1] for instance, was a ballistics expert, and member of the French Academy of Sciences, who had, as President of the Bibliographical Institute of Brussels and founder of the Paris branch of that organization, come to realize the practical necessity for an international language. He joined the French Society for the Propaganda of Esperanto in 1900, and his organizational skills soon brought him to the forefront of the movement. In 1905 he founded the Congress Organizing Committee and the Central Office in Paris.

Another example was John Merchant,[2] who as a Sheffield businessman, was able to persuade various Chambers of Commerce of the practical uses of Esperanto. Merchant was President of the British Esperanto Association from 1922 to 1931, and in 1923, was President of the International Conference of Trade and Transportation Organizations for the Diffusion of a Common Commerical Language, held in Venice.

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1. Sebert (1839-1930), former artillery officer in the French colonies, founder and director of the Central Naval Laboratory, also founder and President of the International Science Association, an Esperantist organization.

2. Merchant (b. 1872), had also been active in the YMCA and in the Wednesday Critics Club.

b) Organization of the Movement

In 1920, the Esperanto movement was not directed by one central body, but by national organizations and by a system of annual international congresses. Local Esperanto societies were usually affiliated to a national organization, such as the British Esperanto Association, or the French Society for the Propaganda of Esperanto. These national organizations and the specialized Esperanto groups[1] came together at annual congresses.

These congresses had been held in a different city each year[2] since 1905. They not only provided social contact for the members, but also selected representatives to sit on such governing bodies as the Esperanto Academy, the Congress Organizing Committee and the Universal Esperanto Association (the latter was not then considered an 'official institution' of the movement, but a private one). Meetings were held at the annual congresses.

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1. For example, at the Universal Esperanto Congress of 1906 in Geneva, special meetings were held by Esperantist journalists, socialists, freemasons, Catholics, Protestants, pacifists, Red Cross members, lawyers, businessmen, temperance believers, doctors, pharmacists, musicians, stenographers, and those interested in science. (E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto, Leipzig, v. 2, 1927, p. 40).

2. Except 1916-1919, due to the disruption of World War I.

Another organizational layer was formed by the local representatives called 'consuls'. These were originally appointed by local clubs and societies to deal with requests for information, and were later organized by the Universal Esperanto Association into a world-wide network of "delegitoj."

In terms of decision-making, the organization of the movement seems to have been governed by the principle of division of labour. Language questions were settled by the Esperanto Academy or the Language Committee, located in Paris. Propaganda was handled not only by the official Central Office in Paris, but also by the Universal Esperanto Association's Central Office in Switzerland (as well as by various national propaganda societies). Decisions on where to hold the important annual meetings were made by neither Central Office, but by the Congress Organizing Committee (Paris).

Why was the organization of the movement so diffuse? Zamenhof, unlike Johann Schleyer,[1] the creator of Volapük (prior to Esperanto, the most successful constructed language), had not attempted to take personal control by claiming the right to confirm or deny the election of officials of the

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1. Johann Martin Schleyer (1831-1912), a priest from Baden who had become interested in an international language through his linguistic studies. In 1878-9 he had presented Volapük, believing that for Christian Europe, a single alphabet was as necessary as a single religion (E.D. Durrant, op. cit., p. 30).

movement. Perhaps influenced by the example of Volapük's internecine squabbles, Zamenhof had from the first brochure declared that 'the author abandons for all time all personal rights over it.'[1]

Esperantist members too, had been made wary by the Volapük power struggles, and when, in 1893, Zamenhof did suggest that Esperantists should create an International Esperantist League, this had been rejected. According to this opposition, the development of the language ought to be carried out by writers, rather than by any committee.[2] Zamenhof's suggestion had again been brought up at the first Universal Congress in 1905, but it was still felt that the movement was too young for an international organization. The proposal for an International Language Committee was accepted, and even then, the precise functions of the Committee were not defined till the 1908 Universal Congress in Dresden. Two other international bodies were created in 1905. The first, The Komitato Representarntaro de la Naciaj Societoj, or Standing Committee of Representatives of the National Societies, was set up in London.

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1. E.D. Durrant, op. cit., p. 45.

2. Ibid., p. 52.

The second, a Congress Organizing Committee was based in Paris. In co-operation with the local societies, it was to make arrangements for the annual universal congress. After the rejection in 1905 of an umbrella international organization, Zamenhof encouraged General Sebert to found a Central Office in Paris. This would fill the need for an organizational headquarters, an official gazette, and an archival record of the movement. However, actual direction by the Central Office, went only as far as the Central Office was able to persuade the other Esperanto organizations.

The continuing organizational de-centralization was detrimental to the movement. For the Esperantists to succeed in gaining the support of national governments through powerful allies like the League of Nations, concentrated effort was imperative. This had been only partially recognized at the September 1919 Esperanto Conference in Paris, when it was formally decided that propaganda efforts in each country be directed by one central propaganda society, which could have regional branches.[1] Admittedly this was an advance, but one only on a local level.

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1. British Esperantist, vol. 16, no. 181, January 1920, p.11.

The problem of organization needed more attention than this. Unfortunately for the movement, the war had not only wiped out a large number of potential leaders, but it had left the pre-war organization of the movement in disarray. During the war, the main institutions of the movement (please see opposite page) had declined; particularly affected were the Central Office and the Congress Organizing Committee, both based in Paris. The only main Esperanto organization which had functioned regularly during the war was the Universal Esperanto Association.[1]

The movement needed a leader. Yet Zamenhof had died of a heart attack during the war. General Sebert was well on in years (81), and not in good health. In April, 1920, he wrote to the young Swiss Vice-President of the Universal Esperanto Association, Edmond Privat, "the unsteady state of my health...prevents me from intervening as much as I would like in the recovery of the Esperantist movement in France."[2] Within the Universal Esperanto Association itself,

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1. Even the membership of the U.E.A. had declined from 7233 in 1914 to 3894 in 1920 (Lajos Kökeny, V. Bleier (eds.) Enciklopedio de Esperanto, Budapest, Literatura Mondo, 1933-34, vol. 2, p. 548.)

2. From a letter in French, April 1, 1920, Privat Papers.

Harold Bolingbrok Mudie[1] had recently died, Hector Hodler was near death of tuberculosis, and Edward Stettler[2] was often ill for months at a time with 'nerve crises'.[3]

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1. Mudie (1880-1916), founder of the Esperantist (1903), President of the British Esperanto Association, editor of the British Esperantist (1904-), a founding member of the Universal Esperanto Association in 1908; Mudie had presided over the U.E.A. from 1908-1916.

2. Stettler, (b. 1880), an Esperantist since 1908, succeeded Hodler in 1920, as Director of the Universal Esperanto Association.

3. According to a letter from Hodler to Privat, February 17, 1920, Privat Papers.

OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE ESPERANTO MOVEMENT

1920

ESPERANTO ACADEMY

President: Theophile Cart

founded in 1908
based in Paris

function: language regulation, through the

LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
based in Paris
founded in 1906

President: Theophile Cart

Vice Presidents:
Dr. E. Mybs
J.M. Warden
A. Grabowski

CENTRAL OFFICE

founded in 1905 by Gen. Sebert

function: publish official gazette and documents; archives

based in Paris

Director: Gen. Sebert

Secretary: Gabriel Cha

KONSTANTA REPRESENTANTARO
(de la Naciaj Societoj)

Standing Committee of Representatives of the National Societies founded in 1905 by the first international Congress

President: General Sebert

Secretary: Gabriel Chavet

KONSTANTA KOMITATO DE L KONGRESOJ

Congress Organizing Committee
founded in 1905 by Sebe

function: to arrange annual Congresses; memb chosen by the Paris Cen Office, and by local committees.
based in Paris

President: Gen. Sebert

General Secretary: Cha

The man who did become the Central figure of the movement during the post-war years was Edmond Privat.[1] Due to the death of Hodler and to Stettler's frequent illnesses, it was Privat who in 1920 was left with the actual control of the Universal Esperanto Association. Privat had been an Esperantist since early youth. In 1905, with Hector Hodler, he had launched a magazine for young Esperantists, Juna Esperantisto. Privat and Hodler were then 16 and 17 years of age. Privat had also helped Hodler found the Universal Esperanto Association, and the journal, Esperanto (which Privat then edited between 1920 and 1934.) Privat proved of great importance to the movement not only because of his abilities, but also because of his position, as a Swiss, as a lecturer in linguistics at the University of Geneva, and as interpreter and later technical advisor at the League of Nations. In Geneva, the headquarters of the League, the International Labour Office, the Red Cross and other international organizations, Privat was favourably placed to deal with these bodies.

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1. Privat (1889-1962) had been born in Geneva, in a well-known teaching family. He had studied at the Collège de Genève, the Université de Paris and Cambridge. His thesis (1912) had been on Polish aspirations, and he had been President of the International Committee for the Independence of Poland. He was Secretary of the Swiss Committee for the Rights of People.

Privat himself was largely responsible for the Universal Esperanto Association's move to Geneva in 1920. In the summer of 1920, the League and the International Labour Office had taken up offices in Geneva; by September, the Universal Esperanto Association had transferred its operations from Berne to Geneva.

Unfortunately, it took somewhat longer for the Universal Esperanto Association to gain official status within the movement, and to exercise real leadership.

Re-organization

At the first post-war Universal Esperanto Congress held in the summer of 1920 at the Hague,[1] two prominent Esperantists from without the Universal Esperanto Association, J.R.G. Isbrücker[2] and Alberto Alessio,[3] pressed for a radical re-organization of the movement. Edward Stettler, the Director of the Universal Esperanto Association, of course agreed. "It (the organization of the movement) must be concentrated as much as possible; only thereby can we develop our great strength."[4] However, both he and Privat seem to have refrained from too much overt public pressure in that direction.

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1. The Congress was attended by about 400 Esperantists, of which 100 were Britons, but only 5 were French (ref: E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto (History of the Esperanto Language) op. cit., p. 100). Obviously, the French Esperantists were in a greatly weakened position.

2. Isbrücker (b. 1889), a Dutch engineer, member of the Language Committee, and Esperanto Academy. His wife, Julia Isbrücker, was President of the Dutch Esperantist Association.

3. Alessio (b. 1872), an Italian mathematician, officer in the Italian Navy and author of several books on science and navigation. Alessio's name is often mentioned in accounts of Esperantist technical conferences as an official representative of the Italian Navy Ministry.

4. Quoted in German by the Germana Esperantisto, August-September 1920, no. 8/9, p. 101.

The Congress at the Hague was generally in favour of some form of re-organization, but was unable to decide to what extent. The Congress therefore decided to appoint a commission to study the entire question of re-organization, and to report to the next Congress.[1] This commission was so composed as to satisfy both the Paris Central Office and the Universal Esperanto Association. Presided by William Page,[2] the editor of the British Esperantist, the commission included two representatives of the Paris Central Office, Gabriel Chavet[3] and John Mabon Warden,[4]

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1. According to a circular letter by William Page, October 4, 1922, Privat Papers.

2. William Main Page (1869-1940), a solicitor in the Supreme Court of Scotland. Esperantist since 1905, Page was editor of the Esperanto Monthly (1914-19), and the British Esperantist (1920), author of Pitman's Commercial Esperanto (1919), and Vice-President of the British Esperanto Association.

3. Chavet (1880-1972), a member of the French post-office, was General Sebert's right-hand man. Secretary-Treasurer of the Esperantist group in Paris since 1900, and of the Paris Central Office since its founding in 1905, General-Secretary of the Standing Committee of National Representatives and of the Congress Organizing Committee. A pacifist, Chavet helped found several pacifist Esperantist groups, as well as the review Espero Pacifista (Pacifist Hope) (1905-6). In 1922, he became Secretary-Treasurer of the Paris-based International League of Peace and Liberty.

4. Warden (1856-1933), a British actuary (life insurance), President of the British Esperanto Association (1916-1922); Vice-President of the Esperanto Academy (1920) and later President (1931).

two representatives of the Universal Esperanto Association, Edward Stettler and Edmond Privat, and also three supposed neutrals,[1] Dr. Heinrich Arnhold,[2] Léon Poncet[3] and J.R.G. Isbrucker.

The brief subsequently presented by the commission in 1921 suggested that all the existing Esperanto organizations and institutions be united under the name 'Universal Esperanto League.' However, this plan was strongly opposed by General Sebert. He saw it as a plot by the Universal Esperanto Association to eliminate the Paris Central Office.[4]

Sebert refused to recognize that the Paris Central Office could not recover its pre-war position as a major

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1. The very next year J.R.G. Isbrucker was named as a member of the Central Committee of the Universal Esperanto Association.

2. Arnhold (b. 1885), a german banker. His pacifist beliefs had led Arnhold to support Esperanto. In 1912, he had become Treasurer of the German Esperanto Association. He was also President of the Saxon Esperanto League.

3. Poncet, a Frenchman.

4. In a confidential letter to Privat, Sebert complained that it was Privat and Stettler who had been pushing at the Congresses of the Hague and Prague for the nomination of a Commission of inquiry, of which the final result would be the elimination of the Paris Central Office (October 12, 1921, Privat Papers.)

centre of the movement. During the war, the Paris Central Office had not been able to function at all, and even after the war, its publication of official documents and of the 'Oficiala Gazeto' (Official Gazette) was strictly curtailed, due to lack of funds.

Perhaps more important, the war had also broken contacts between French Esperantist leaders and the Esperantist leaders of central and eastern Europe. The Universal Esperanto Association, on the other hand, had been located in neutral Switzerland, and had been the only international Esperantist organization to have been able to continue during the war. Moreover, it did not carry the same burden of wartime memories and active government opposition,[1] as did the Paris Central Office.

Hector Hodler had already written to Sebert in March 1920, about the necessity of strengthening the direction of the movement, so that the principal Esperantists of more countries could take part.[2] Hodler had pointed out that high post-war costs and the weakened financial position

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1. Official French opposition to Esperanto was particularly strong after the war, and is discussed at length later in this work.

2. Confidential letter, March 3, 1920, Privat Papers.

of many Esperantists[1] rendered impossible the continuation of the Congresses as a sort of Parliamentary system for the movement. By this method some countries were poorly represented; this particularly applied to the Eastern countries, due to their geographic distance from Europe.

Hodler had suggested the formation of a central committee by the union of the Paris Central Office and the Universal Esperanto Association. The committee, Hodler had proposed, would be located neither in Paris or Berne, but in a neutral city such as Brussels or Geneva, depending on which was chosen as the seat of the League of Nations.[2] As an added inducement, Hodler had offered Sebert the presidency of the combined Universal Esperanto Association-Paris Central Office.[3]

Sebert however, would not agree to such a union. At most, he saw a transfer to Paris of all or part of the functions of the Universal Esperanto Association.[4]

Turning from 'the disagreements which exist between the two organizations,'[5] Sebert instead tried to re-organize

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1. Those in a weakened financial position included Sebert.

2. According to a copy of a letter from Privat to Sebert, April 6, 1920, Privat Papers; also according to the journal Esperanto, no. 236, April 1920, p. 62.

3. E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto (History of the Esperanto Language), v. 2, p. 99.

4. From a confidential letter in French by Sebert to Privat, April 12, 1920, Privat Papers.

5. Ibid.

Comparison of U.E.A. Membership

1920-1921

	1920	1921
Austria	43	103
Bulgaria	45	125
Czechoslovakia	325	535
Germany	456	744
Yugoslavia	25	146
Hungary	95	189
Italy	106	166
Holland	160	233
Poland	131	312
Turkey	30	67
France	408	457
Britain	677	708

the Paris Central Office and to renew old contacts.[1] This effort failed, and even members of Sebert's own staff recognized that the delay in the re-organization of the movement was most damaging.[2]

The Universal Esperanto Association had in the meantime been more successful in its own re-organizing efforts. Not only had it relocated to Geneva, the new site of the League and of other international organizations, it had also widened its base of support within the movement. In 1921, for instance, it increased the number of its Committee members from 8 to 20. Reflecting the sharp rise in membership in central Europe,[3] these new members were drawn

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1. E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto (History of the Esperanto Language) v. 2, p. 100.

2. "Mr. Chavet realized...that the decline of the Central Office in Paris will kill our cause in France and cheer our enemies." (According to a letter from William Page to Privat, April 25, 1922, Privat Papers.

3. Please see chart on opposite page.

principally from there.[1] Then in 1922, the Universal Esperanto Association published for the first time a list of

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1. In 1920 Committee members of the Universal Esperanto Association were: PAUL BLAISE (BELGIAN, b. 1880, Secretary of the Belgian Chamber of Commerce in London, former professor of commerce and language at the University of Louvain); A. CARLES (FRENCH, an Esperantist since 1898, founder in 1904 of the Esperanto group in Beziers, in 1906, organized the commercial representatives of the Universal Esperanto Association); JOHANNES KARSCH (GERMAN, b. 1881, a government accountant, had been an Esperantist since 1908, and active in the Universal Esperanto Association after the war, especially interested in promoting the use of Esperanto in tourism); FRITZ ROCKMANN (GERMAN, b. 1878, a teacher, one of the earliest members of the Universal Esperanto Association); P. LINARES (SPANISH): DR. H.C. MEES (DUTCH, b. 1865, Vice-President of the Dutch Esperanto Association, editor of la Holanda Pioniro since 1913), S. SZABUNIEVICZ (RUSSIAN); and Edmond Privat (SWISS).

In 1921, the expanded Committee included: PAUL BLAISE, ALPHONSE CARLES, JOHANNES KARSCH, F. ROCKMANN, P. LINARES, DR. H.C. MEES, S. SZABUNIEVICZ, PRIVAT, and also MISS L. BLICHER (DANISH); MISS JOSEFINE FINHOLT (NORWEIGIAN, 1857-1921, governess and teacher; in 1911 she co-founded the Norwegian Esperanto League, in 1915, she became the founder and secretary of the Association of Norwegian Teachers); RUDOLPH HROMADA, (CZECHOSLOVAK,) b. 1890, a Prague bank official, a leader of the Czech Esperanto movement (General Secretary) co-founder and co-editor of Ĉehoslovaka Gazeto, 1921-23, editor of la Progresso, and later a member of the International Central Committee, 1923-30); MARCEL GENERMONT (FRENCH architect); DR. MAX METZGER from Graz, AUSTRIA, a member of the Central Committee of the Universal Esperanto Association, especially interested in the development of co-operation between Catholic Esperantists); DR. LEON ZAMENHOF (POLISH, 1875-1934, son of L.L. Zamenhof, former editor of the Polish Esperantist, 1908-1913); STANISLAV MINKOV (BULGARIAN, teacher at a technical school at Sofia, member of the Bulgarian Esperanto Association since 1912, its Secretary during the war, later Vice-President); WILLIAM PAGE (BRITISH); VILHO SETÄLA (from Helsinki, FINLAND, b. 1892,

(continued on the next page)

1. (cont.)son of the well-known linguist and government advisor, E.N. SETÄLA, he had become interested in Esperanto at the age of 15, Secretary, 1921-22, later Director, 1922, of the Finnish Esperanto Association, editor of Esperanta Finnlando, 1921 and member of the Esperanto Academy); DR. ANAKREON STAMATIADIS (Greek, representing TURKEY, b. 1868, director of the Health Office in Samos, exiled for political activities, from 1921 to 1924, he published an Esperanto journal, Bizantio in Istanbul, later founder of an Esperanto group at Athens, member of the Language Committee and of the Esperanto Academy); ACHILLE TELLINI (ITALIAN, b. 1866, professor of geology and natural sciences at the University of Bologna, had been interested in Esperanto since 1901).

(Note: the list of Committee members was taken from the Universal Esperanto Association, Jahrlibro (Yearbook), Geneva, 1920 and 1921; biographical references were taken from Lajos Kökeny and V. Bleier's Enciklopedio de Esperanto (Encyclopedia of Esperanto), 2 vols., Budapest, 1933-34.

honourary members.[1] These moves all gained support for the Universal Esperanto Association[2] and willingness that the Association play a larger role in the movement.

Thus, agreement on the form of re-organization of the movement was finally reached in 1922, at the Congress of Helsinki. A new organization was planned, the International Central Committee, consisting of representatives of the Komitato Representantaro (Committee of Representatives of the National Societies) and of the Universal Esperanto Association. This new committee, to be based in Geneva,

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1. They included GENERAL SEBERT, DR. EDUARD MYBS (1858-1923, a German medical doctor, founder, and president of the German Esperanto Association (1914-1918), a member of the Language Committee and Vice-President of the Esperanto Academy), JUSTIN GODART (1871-1956), a leader of the French Radical-Socialist party, member of the French Chamber of Deputies (1906-1926). Godart belonged to the Central Committee of the Paris-based Ligue des Droits de L'Homme, an organization in which Privat had been active during the war), JOHN POLLEN (1848-1923, Irish, retired Army colonel, stationed in India from 1871 to 1903, Hon. Secretary of the East India Association, former President of the British Esperanto Association (1904-1912), Patron, Scottish Esperanto Association), KLARA ZAMENHOF (widow of the founder of Esperanto, L.L. Zamenhof), MME. HODLER-RUCH (widow of Hector Hodler, founder of the Universal Esperanto Association), PAUL BLAISE, ALPHONSE CARLES, and FRITZ ROCKMANN.

2. Between 1923 and 1925, the membership of the Universal Esperanto Association rose from 6332 to 9424 (ref: Ulrich Lins 'Organizaj kaj ideologiaj problemoj de Universala Esperanto Asocio, la Revuo Orienta (Organizational and Ideological Problems of the Universal Esperanto Association, Oriental Review), Tokyo, March 1972, p. 22.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT

UNIVERSALA ESPERANTO-ASOCIO

(Universal Esperanto Association) founded in 1908, based first in Rotterdam, then Berne, then Geneva.

Director: E. Stettler (Berne)

Vice-President: Privat (Geneva)

Secretary: Hans Jakob (Geneva)

KONSTANTA REPRESENTANTARO DE LA NACIAJ SOCIETOJ

(Standing Committee of Representative of the National Societies) based in London founded in 1905

Hon. President: Gen. Sebert (Paris)

President: John Merchant (Sheffield)

Vice-President: Gabriel Chavet (Paris) plus one member from each national society

INTERNACIA CENTRA KOMITATO

(International Central Committee) formed according to the Helsinki Agreement of 1922, based in Geneva

ESPERANTO ACADEMY

founded in 1908
based in Paris
independent of I.C.K.

function: language regulation, control of Language Committee (f. 1906)

President: Theophile Cart, Paris

Vice-Presidents: J.M. Warden, Edinburgh
Dr. E. Mybs, Altona, Germany (1924 Dietterle)

(note: the far-left wing of the Esperanto Movement, the Sennacieca Asosio Tutmonda, or World Association of Non-Nationalists, had a separate organization, and didn't hold meetings with other Esperanto labour groups until 1927)

Hon. President: Gen. Sebert (Paris)

President: E. Privat, Geneva (in charge of propaganda)

Gabriel Chavet, Paris (International Affairs & the Paris Central Office)

Dr. J. Dietterle, Liepzig (Education & Literature)

R. Hromada, Prague (Public Information and Journals)

Won Kenn, Lyons (Relations with America and the Far East)

William Page, Edinburgh (Finance and Law)

KONSTANTA KOMITATO DE LA KONGRESOJ

(K.K.K.)

founded in 1905 by General Sebert (Congress Organizing Committee based in Paris

function: to arrange annual meetings (had declined during the war)

members chosen by Paris Central Committee (Sebert) and by local committees.

Hon. President: Gen. Sebert

President: J.M. Warden

Vice-President: E. Privat

lapsed after 1923

and to consist of six persons (please see opposite page), elected for 3 years. Its duty would be to provide the general direction of the movement.

Unfortunately, the new organization was not confirmed till March 1924, when it was finally ratified by a majority of written votes.[1] Part of the delay was due to the continued opposition of General Sebert, whose Central Office had been liquidated by the Helsinki agreement. When the national societies and the Universal Esperanto Association met in Venice in 1923, they had nominated members for the new Central Committee. General Sebert, then interim chairman of the Komitato Representantaro,[2] had been asked to submit the names of the members of the new Committee to all the national societies for ratification. He refused.

A deeper problem was the persistence of national feelings to the extent that they were put before the interests of the movement. The British Esperanto Association, for example, privately rejected the idea of a super-structure in which the national societies would be branches rather than affiliates, for it was felt that "we should put into

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1. E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto (History of the Esperanto Language), vol. 2, p. 127.

2. Sebert resigned this position in July 1923 (ref: ibid; v. 2, p. 127).

the hands of the Universal Esperanto Association tremendous power because they would become the undisputed head of the Esperanto movement...Our voices would be one of a number, and we should be overruled, and our numbers would no longer be under our control. Our organization was probably the best in the world, and such a scheme would weaken it because what would be good for other countries would not necessarily be good for us and we should be bound to something against our will sooner or later."[1]

A joint conference of the national societies and the Universal Esperanto Association was finally called in 1924 at Vienna to consider just what powers the Central Committee would have. It was decided that the Committee would handle not only international publicity and administration, but also the organization of the annual Congresses. This gave the Committee (that is, the Universal Esperanto Association) a great deal of control over the movement. It is unfortunate, however, that these growing pains should have taken so long, and that they occurred at a time most critical to the movement, during the early hopeful years of the League of Nations.

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1. From the confidential minutes of the British Esperanto Association Sub-Committee meeting, regarding co-operation with the Universal Esperanto Association, Wed. June 13, 1923, p. 6 (of 8 pages), Privat Papers.

Post-war interest in all forms of international co-operation was at that time very strong. According to a 1920 editorial in the New Europe, "the dominant currents of thought during the war all had a supra-national orientation. There was then, and there still is now, a world-wide uneasy sense of discontent with the exclusively national basis of the old European system.."[1] If one could hope for an international auxiliary language, it was then.

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1. The New Europe, vol. 16, no. 211, October 1920, p. 53, published in London.

Language Policy of the League

After the first World War, there was no longer one recognized world language. Thus, when the form of the League of Nations was decided, the question of the language in which to conduct League business was an added difficulty. French had formerly been the chief medium of diplomacy, and France had proposed the use of French as the sole official language of the League.[1] However, both Britain and the U.S. were not in accord, since English had wider international use in trade and commerce. English, it was pointed out, was spoken by more than 180 millions as a native language, compared to 48 millions who spoke French.[2]

Already at the Paris Peace Conference between the U.S., Britain, France and Italy, English had been more in use, since, of the major negotiators, Clemenceau was fluent in English, while neither Wilson nor Lloyd George could express themselves in French.

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1. James Brown Scott, le francais: langue diplomatique moderne, Paris, 1924, p. 156.

2. From the draft copy of a report by Inazo Nitobe, concerning his mission to the 13th Universal Esperanto Congress, entitled the Language Question and the League of Nations, p. 32, Privat Papers.

Nevertheless, due to the tradition of French as a diplomatic language, and to the insistence of France,[1] French and English had been recognized as equal for purposes of protocol and for the publication of documents. Though there is no mention in the covenant of the League of Nations, of the language or languages to be used by the League, according to the Rules of November 30, 1919, the League would employ 'the two usual languages', French and English.[2]

Although the Rules provided that each member state of the League should have the right to use its own language, it was on condition that the state should then itself take responsibility for translation into one of the 'usual' languages.

Not all the countries represented at the League were satisfied with this language arrangement. It was apparent to delegates of nations whose languages were neither English or French that they were at a distinct disadvantage when trying to receive support for their claims among their fellow delegates and in the world press. It was to the delegates of such nations that the Esperantists could look to for support.

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1. The relative decline of French as a diplomatic language hardened the resolve of the French government not to allow further erosion by Esperanto.

2. Ivo Lapenna, the Language Problem in International Relations, and Some Aspects of the Language Problem in Public International Law and Comparative Law, pamphlet published in Rotterdam, 1963, p.4.

Japan in particular became dissatisfied with the inequality of the League's language arrangements. Only recently recognized as a modern nation and as a major power, Japan was very sensitive to her position. She had sought international acceptance of the principle of national equality by proposing that an 'equality clause' be inserted in the League Charter. This however, had been rejected, both at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and at the First Assembly in 1920. It was soon after these unfavourable votes that Japan lent public support to Esperanto.

Gonsuké Hayashi,[1] the Japanese delegate to the League, had explained his country's interest in Esperanto in the following terms: "Although the English and the French languages are relatively widespread outside their respective borders...the first as a commercial language... the second as a language of social relations, nevertheless they have different spheres of influence...when one considers the work necessary to learn them, one recognizes that their usefulness is limited. That is why we wish to make of Esperanto an international language."[2]

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1. Gonsuké Hayashi (1860-1939), Japanese delegate to the League in 1920, later Ambassador to Italy and to Britain.

2. Quoted in French by the Esperantist Central Office, Note sur l'emploi... Paris, 1921, p.3.

More frank is a report prepared by a Japanese member of the League Secretariat, Ĉikao Fugisawa[1] : "The neutrality of this language is indispensible in putting all nations on an equal footing in the expression of ideas... If this question is resolved in a satisfactory way, Japanese will henceforth have nothing to fear or complain about in international Conferences."

Of course, however dissatisfied small or weaker powers were with the arrangements made for the League by the great Powers, they would hesitate to directly attack the use of French and English. For this reason, the Esperantist policy at the League was to concentrate on rallying support for the teaching of Esperanto.

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1. Fujisawa (b. 1893), a Japanese, an active Esperantist. Fujisawa was editor of Nova Tagigo (New Day), a mimeographed bulletin of the Interpopola Rondo Esperanto ĉe la ligo de Nacioj, or International Esperanto Circle of the League of Nations. Later professor of the modern history of international politics at the University of Kyushu, as well as Director of the Japanese Esperanto Institute. Fujisawa wrote extensively in Japanese, English, Esperanto, German, French and Spanish.

2. Memorandum sur la langue auxiliare internationale au pointe de vue japonais, an unpublished pamphlet, dated May 30, 1921, found among the Privat Papers, p. 3-6.

The First Assembly

Esperanto was introduced to the League during the first Assembly on December 11, 1920. Senator Lafontaine,[1] the Belgian delegate, presented a resolution on welcoming the teaching of Esperanto in the schools of some League members, and recommending that the Secretariat prepare a report for the next Assembly on the obtained results.[2] The resolution was signed by nine other delegates -- Lord Robert Cecil[3] (representing South Africa), Eduard

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1. Henri Lafontaine (1854), who had received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1913, was Vice-President of the Belgian Senate, President of the Judicial Committee of Inter-Parliamentary Union, and President of the International Peace Bureau. Believing peaceful international relations could be built up by increased international contacts and organizations, he had, with another Belgian, Paul Otlet, founded the Union of International Associations and the International University in Brussels.

2. League Document A.194 (1920).

3. Cecil (1864-1958), head of the British Association for the League of Nations, had been the British Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1918. Between 1920-23, he represented South Africa at the League. In 1923, he again became a member of the British Cabinet, this time in charge of League Affairs.

Benes[1] (Czechoslovakia), Rodrigo Octavio[2] (Brazil), Carlos Restropo[3] (Columbia), Huneeus (Chile), Carlo Schanzer[4] (Italy), and by 3 Asian delegates, Wellington Koo[5] (China),

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1. Benes (1884-1948) Czechoslovakia Foreign Minister. He represented a country but recently separated from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and which included Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Magyars, Ruthenes, Poles and Jews. Thus, Benes had two main reasons for supporting Esperanto: first, it's use could strengthen the League of Nations, which Czechoslovakia hoped could be depended upon to maintain the status quo; second, it could be a help with Czechoslovakia's own language problems.

2. Octavio (1866), a former jurist, was Brazil's chief delegate.

3. Restrepo (1867), former President of Columbia, was a member of the Rotary Club of Medillin. As a group, Rotarians were sympathetic to the ideals of Esperantists.

4. Schanzer (1865-1953), was Italy's delegate to the League in 1920, 21, 24. In 1922, he became Foreign Minister. He was chief Italian delegate to the 1922 Washington Conference, at which Italy got naval parity with France.

5. ViKyuin Wellington Koo, or Ku Wei-chun (1887), then Chinese Ambassador to London, and chief Chinese delegate to the League, had been delegate to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Between 1922-24, he was acting Prime Minister of China, and in 1924 became Minister of Foreign Affairs.

the Maharaja of Nawangar[1] (India), and the Emir Zoka-ed-Dovleh (Persia). The resolution was qualified by the reservation "that the signatories bring forward this proposal in their private capacity, and that no responsibility is laid on their respective delegations".[2]

However, the French delegate, Gabriel Hanotaux[3], strongly protested such support of an artificial international language. Esperanto was superfluous, he declared,

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1. The Maharaja of Nawangar (1872-1933), a ruling Prince of India. A British civil servant, the High Commissioner of India, was the chief Indian delegate, not the Maharaja. However, Britain, which had been greatly criticized for insisting that Dominions like India have separate representation in the League, allowed the Indian delegates a semi-independent position in matters considered of secondary importance (ref: D.N. Verma, India and the League of Nations, Patna, Bharati Bhawan, 1968, p. 162-63). The Maharaja was anxious to make as much of India's representation as possible, by linking Indian ambitions with those of other Asian states. Already in the First Assembly, he had demanded adequate eastern representation in the Vice Presidentship of the Committees (ref: League of Nations, Records of the First Assembly, 1920, p. 73).

2. League of Nations, Records of the First Assembly, (Plenary), Dec. 11, 1920, p. 413.

3. Hanotaux (1853-1944), doyen of the French Academy, had been French Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1894, 1895, and 1896-8, a period when France had followed a frankly imperialist policy in Africa and in the Far East. A well-known historian, his writings had praised French vigour and expansion. Hanotaux' publications included: Histoire de la Fondation de la 3e Republique, Histoire de la Nation Francaise, Histoire des Colonies Francaises, Histoire du Cardinal Richelieu, Jeanne d'Arc, Gambetta et J. Ferry, Fondateurs, etc.

since 'the French language and literature are already universal.'[1] The president of the Assembly, former Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul Hymans[2] apparently agreed. Mr. Hyman immediately put postponing the discussion to a vote, and the delay was carried.

Although further discussion of Esperanto was thus curtailed, the League could not reject Esperanto and its friends outright. Only that September, the Congress of the Union of International Associations (of which Henri Lafontaine had been a founder), had considered recommending as an international auxilliary language either French, Esperanto, Ido*, or Esperantido.** The Union with over 200 affiliated associations, had decided to endorse Esperanto, with the recommendation that all improvements

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* Ido, a variation (according to some, a refinement) of Esperanto.

** A further variation.

1. Quoted by E. Privat, Aventuroj de Pioniro, La Laguna, J. Régulo, 1963, p. 93.

2. Mr. Hyman, a political adversary of Lafontaine, as Belgian Foreign Minister he had recently negotiated a post-war alliance with France, aimed against Germany (September 7, 1920).

deemed necessary be deferred 'until the moment when the language has officially been adopted by the governments'.[1] Obviously the Union believed that acceptance was only a matter of time.

The Congress of the Federation of Associations for the League of Nations meeting in Milan in 1920 had also voted in favour of Esperanto,[2] believing that the Esperanto language could furnish to the League a useful aid for the League's own development.[3] The Federation, with associations in over forty countries was not without influence. Like the Union of International Associations, it maintained permanent headquarters in Brussels, and the resolutions of its annual Congress were regularly printed in the Journal of the League Assembly.

Thus, despite the opposition of Mr. Hanotaux and Mr. Hymans, the Esperanto question was sent for consideration to the Second Committee for Technical Matters. At

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1. Quoted by A. Guérard, op. cit; p. 188. It is interesting to note that this motion was proposed at the conference by General Sebert (according to E. Privat, Historio de la Lingvo Esperanto, or History of the Esperanto Language, op. cit., v. 2., p. 101).

2. G. de Reynold, Mes Mémoires, Geneve, 1963, vol. 3, p. 452.

3. In February 1921, at a meeting of the League of Nations Union in England, Lord Robert Cecil indicated that he supported Esperanto as a 'universal language (which) would very materially assist the usefulness of the League of Nations'. (British Esperantist, vol. 17, no. 193, April, 1921).

the Committee's December 16th meeting, Lafontaine, Zoka-ed-Dovleh, Tang Tsai Fu (China), and Henriette Forchhammer[1] (Denmark) expressed their desire to see the Lafontaine motion on Esperanto passed. The vote within the Committee was ten in favour, one (France) opposed.[2] Therefore, despite the re-iterated opposition of the French delegate, Mr. Hanotaux, the First Assembly placed the matter on the agenda of the next Assembly, and instructed the Secretariat to prepare a report.[3]

Meanwhile, pressure on the League to discuss the International Language question continued. In November 1920, a number of Swedes (including B.J. Bergqvist, the Swedish Minister of Education) met in Stockholm and elected a committee of four Esperantists, four Idists, two partisans of the selection of a national language, and four members who professed neutrality. This committee composed a petition to the League[4], urging it to study

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1. Miss Forchhammer (b. 1863), Danish social worker, Hon. President, Danish National Council of Women, Hon. Vice-President, International Council of Women (1914-1930).

2. Germana Esperantisto, January 1921, p. 5.

3. This was on December 18, the very last day of the Assembly.

4. Submitted by the Swedish government to the Assembly.

and adopt a universal language, eventually taking steps to create an International Academy to control the development and uniformity of the language selected.[1]

Also helpful in the Esperantist campaign at the League were two important declarations in support of Esperanto. The first was by the Paris Chamber of Commerce. In 1920, the Paris Esperanto group had persuaded the Paris Chamber of Commerce to examine the commercial usefulness of Esperanto. Andre Baudet[2], Vice-President of the Paris Chamber of Commerce had then presented a report[3] on December 18, 1920, strongly supporting Esperanto. The following month, the Paris Chamber of Commerce unanimously decided to offer the instruction of Esperanto in its commercial schools, and to recommend Esperanto to the Chambers of Commerce of

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1. A.L. Guérard, op. cit.; p. 179-180.

2. Baudet (1876-1940) was not an Esperantist. However, in his capacity as Vice-President (1920) and later Treasurer (1923) of the Paris Chamber of Commerce, he proved very favourable towards Esperanto.

3. Baudet's report, 'Utilité et choix d'une langue auxiliare internationale, presenté au nom de la Commission de l'enseignement commerciale', was adopted by the Paris Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 9, 1921. It was published by the Chamber in Paris in 1921.

all countries, advising them that by promoting the rapid propagation of this international language, they would be greatly facilitating international trade.[1] This testimony, by a French Chamber of Commerce, was particularly welcome to the Esperantists, in view of the unfriendly attitude of the French government.

The second major recommendation came from the International Red Cross. On April 7, 1921, this organization also adopted a resolution recommending Esperanto, citing as their reason, the conviction that Esperanto was one of the most powerful means of obtaining international understanding and co-operation in the realization of the humane ideal of the Red Cross.[2]

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1. The text of the resolution may be found in Germana Esperantisto, 4/302, April, 1921, 9.73-74.

2. From a letter by Edmond Privat to Wellington Koo, the Chinese delegate to the League, June 24, 1921, Privat Papers.

Preparations for the Second Assembly

In 1920, Privat had not fully expected French opposition at the League. Rollet de l'Isle[1], a French Esperantist writing to Privat, had chided, "I am astonished that you wonder at this hostility, since we have here for some time encountered the most violent hostility from the Quai d'Orsay."[2]

In 1921, Privat was not only well-aware of French official opposition, but also determined to leave no stone unturned in preparing for a new offensive at the next session of the League. He kept in close touch with friendly delegates who could sponsor Esperanto in the Assembly.[3] On May 28, Privat asked Benes that Czechoslovakia demand the re-opening of the discussion on Esperanto at the next Assembly.[4] Several days later, he repeated the request, indicating

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1. Maurice Rollet de l'Isle (1859-1943), hydrographic engineer in the French Navy, Director of the Central Hydrographic office in Paris; President of the French Society for the Propaganda of Esperanto (1911-1923), later member of the International Central Committee; in 1933, he became President of the Esperanto Academy.

2. From a letter in French, by Rollet de l'Isle to Privat, Dec. 30, 1920, Privat Papers.

3. It is interesting to note, however, that of Privat's strongest supporters within the League, Lafontaine, Wellington Koo, and Cecil, none were themselves adept in speaking Esperanto.

4. Letter from Privat to E. Benes, Czechoslovakian Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 28, 1921, ibid.

to Beneš, that this strategy had the support of Wellington Koo, the Chinese delegate.[1]

Privat also recognized that if Esperanto had a much greater chance of securing the approval and support of the League, if a number of national governments could be persuaded to support Esperanto by instituting optional or perhaps compulsory Esperanto courses in state schools. Therefore, Privat further proposed to Beneš that Czechoslovakia, with China, and several unnamed governments, sign an agreement on the compulsory learning of Esperanto in state schools for a trial period of five years. According to Privat, Wellington Koo was prepared to press this with his government.[2] At the very least, such an agreement, would go a long way in convincing other governments to consider Esperanto.

A vital part in the preparations was the 13th annual Esperanto Congress, held that summer from July 31 until August 6 (the Congress at which Esperanto was to be the working language to demonstrate to the League the practical value of the language). The Congress not accidently

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1. Ibid; June 2, 1921.

2. Ibid.

took place in Prague, the capital of Benés' country, Czechoslovakia. A major effort was made to obtain official representation at the Congress by governments, private organizations, and especially by the League of Nations. Although the League Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond[1], had already promised to send a representative to the Congress,[2] Privat had Benés add the weight of an official invitation by Czechoslovakia.[3] Benés was also urged to send formal invitations to interested states, to send delegates.[4]

To ensure a good turn-out, pre- and post-congress gatherings of Esperantists were held in Berlin, Dresden, Vienna, Budapest, Graz, Tranto and Reichenberg.[5] Indeed, the Prague Congress was very well attended by Esperantists, and by delegates of other organizations. The 2,561 attending

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1. Drummond (1876-1951), a former British civil servant, had been a member of the Foreign Office since 1900. Between 1912-1915, he had been private secretary to the Prime Minister, and from 1915-1919 to the Foreign Secretary.

2. Esperanto, June 1920, no. 238, p. 114.

3. Letter from Privat to Benes, June 2, 1921, Privat Papers.

4. Ibid; May 28, 1921.

5. E.D.Durrant, the Language Problem, Heronsgate (England) p. 85.

included Esperantist representatives of 35 countries,[1] and delegates of the International Red Cross, Mr. Horner[2] of the International Labour Office and Mr. Blumel[3] of the League Secretariat. The latter had even sent Under-Secretary-General Nitobé,[4] accompanied by a young Esperantist member of the Information Bureau of the Secretariat, Čikao Fujisawa (see previous biographical note). Also attending were official representatives of 10 states -- from the Departments of Education of Belgium, Holland, Saxony, Finland, Lithuania, and Czechoslovakia; from the Spanish

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1. E. Privat, Historio de la Esperanto Lingvo, v. 2, op. cit; p. 103.

2. The delegate of the International Red Cross, Rodolphe Horner, was also Vice-President of the Swiss Esperanto Society (of which Privat was President).

3. Andre Blumel (1893-1973), French Socialist Lawyer, and friend of Albert Thomas was deputy director of the International Labour Office's Section on International Relations. Blumel had been editor of various socialist journals, La Guerre Sociale, of Victoire and of l'Humanité. (ref. Le Monde, May 27, 1973).

4. Inazo Nitobé (1862-1933), a Japanese, was Director of the Secretariat's Section of Intellectual Co-operation, and one of 3 Under-Secretary-Generals. A Pacifist and an active Quaker, he was, according to F.P. Walter (ref. A History of the League of Nations, op. cit; p. 78), a spokesman of the liberal movement in Japan. A former professor of colonial history at the Universities of Kyoto and Tokyo, he was well-known in the West for a book he had written on 'bushido'.

Ministry of War, the Italian Ministry of the Navy, and from the diplomatic missions of Yugoslavia and the Ukraine.[1]

At Prague, Benès showed generous support, and informed the Congress that the people and government of Czechoslovakia considered the propagation of Esperanto as one of the most powerful means in the re-construction of a peaceful Europe.[2]

The Congress, at which Esperanto was the working language throughout, passed a resolution asking the League to recommend the gradual introduction of the teaching of Esperanto in the schools of member states.[3]

proceedings ? problems ?

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1. Journal de Genève, August 25, 1921.

2. Ibid.

3. This resolution was fully quoted by Nitobé's report on the Congress (League of Nations, the Language Question and the League of Nations, a report by Dr. Inazo Nitobé, document A.72.1921. XII; p. 9).

Results: the 1921 Report

After the Congress, Mr. Nitobé, on behalf of the League Secretariat, drew up a report on the international language question.[1] Although the final version was considerably toned down and shortened from the original he had drafted with Privat's help,[2] the Nitobé report prompted a fresh resolution[3] on the earlier report by the Second Committee, advising the Secretariat to prepare a study on the teaching of Esperanto in schools. Thus, on September 13,

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1. Document A.72, September 14, 1921, XII, 34 p.

2. According to a draft of the report, found in Privat Papers.

3. Resolution A.194.

Lord Robert Cecil presented a proposal on behalf of 13 states,[1] that the report of the Second Committee[2] and of Under-Secretary-General Nitobé be communicated to the

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1. The resolution was signed by Lord Robert Cecil (SOUTH AFRICA); Senator Lafontaine (BELGIUM); Eduard Benes (CZECH-OSLOVAKIA); Take Ionnescu (RUMANIA), Ionnescu (1858-1922) had founded Rumania's Conservative-Democratic party in 1908 (when Rumania was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). In 1920, Ionnescu had become Foreign Minister of the new country; in 1921, Prime Minister. Earlier that year, Ionnescu had accepted Benes' invitation to join in a small-power alliance with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia; Bishop Fan Noli (ALBANIA), Fan Noli (1882), a nationalist reformer, had founded the Albanian Orthodox Church, independent of the Greek Orthodox Church. A Harvard graduate, he was Albania's Foreign Minister during 1921-22, and President briefly in 1924. He has been described as 'idealistic and rather impractical' (L.S. Stavrianos, the Balkans Since 1453, New York, 1958, p. 718); Dr. A.J. Restropo (COLUMBIA), Dr. Diogenes Escalante (VENEZUELA); (b.1880), lawyer, journalist and diplomat, delegate to the League from 1920 to 1933; in 1922 he was appointed minister to Britain; Carl Enckell (FINLAND), Enckell, a former banker, was Finland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1918-19, 1922, 1924 and later in 1944; Viscount Mineichiro Adatci (JAPAN), Adatci (1869-1934), an eminent jurist, former Japanese minister to Mexico and Belgium; Tang Tsai Fu (CHINA), the Emir Zoka-ed-Dovleh (PERSIA), the Maharaja Khengarji of Kutch (INDIA); and provisionally, Askenazy (POLAND), (b. 1867, a politician, and well-known historian of Poland).

2. No. 235, December 17, 1920.

Assembly without delay.[1] It is interesting to note that this motion was supported by all the Asiatic members[2] of the League except Siam (which may have been influenced by her 'special relationship' with France.) The Polish delegate, Szymon Askenazy, signed the proposal,[3] but with reservation that Poland would support Esperanto as an international auxiliary language only so long as it did

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1. League of Nations, Records of the Second Assembly (Plenary), pp. 210-219.

2. Privat was aware of the possibilities of joint Asian action, and tried to encourage it. At a meeting of the 5th committee, during the 4th Assembly, when the Chinese delegate, Chao Hsin Chu complained that the intellectual movement in the Far East was not adequately represented in the Committee of Intellectual Cooperation, Privat expressed his deep regret that 'the great types of Asiatic Culture had not obtained due recognition' (League of Nations, Records, 1924, Minutes of the Fifth Committee, Geneva, p. 24).

3. In signing the document, Askenazy may have been influenced by Edmond Privat's previous support of Polish independence. In 1916, while still in Paris, Privat had founded the International Committee for the Independence of Poland, and, despite the protests of the Russian Ambassador, and the warnings of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Privat had written his doctoral thesis as well as numerous newspaper articles on the Polish desire for independence. (Alice Rivas et al, 'Edmond Privat 1889-1962' Revue Neuchâteloise, no. 43-44, p. 38-9).

not detract from the prestige of the French language as an international diplomatic language.[1]

Though the proposal did not receive much discussion, it being declared that the problem needed further study, the Second Assembly[2] did request the Secretariat to make a thorough investigation of 'experiments already made and ascertain the actual results attained.' The Secretariat decided to send out questionnaires to all member States and to various concerned organizations. The inquiry was placed under the supervision of Under-Secretary-General Nitobé. The League Secretariat further offered the use of its own offices in Geneva for a technical conference on the teaching of Esperanto in schools.

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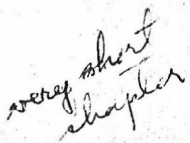
1. Poland was counting on France to protect her from German revenge or Russian expansion. The Franco-Polish alliance, signed in 1921, was regarded as the foundation of Poland's international position. (R. Debicki, The Foreign Policy of Poland, p. 58).

2. League of Nations, Records (Plenary), 13th Session of the Second Assembly, Sept. 15, 1921).



Side Tactics

Meanwhile, Privat pursued another approach to the problem of getting the League to make use of Esperanto in its debates and publications. Since the rules of the League still prevented this, Privat turned to a semi-autonomous branch of the League -- the International Labour Office. Esperantist leaders saw to it that the I.L.O. received abundant correspondence in and about Esperanto, both from their own societies (particularly labour ones), and from other organizations sympathetic to Esperanto. The Universal Esperanto Association then offered the free services of an Esperantist to translate the International Labour Office's burgeoning Esperanto correspondence. Such was the flood of letters on Esperanto, that the I.L.O. accepted the U.E.A.'s offer and soon had some of its own staff learning Esperanto. Conveniently, the Universal Esperanto Association was offering teaching facilities. 'I am counting a good deal,' wrote Privat at the time, 'on the success of the experience at the International Labour Office.'[1]

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1. From a letter in French, by Privat to General Sebert, October, 1921, Privat Papers.

The Esperantists were fortunate that the Director of the I.L.O., Albert Thomas,[1] was a very independent man, whose language policy was not dictated by the League Council or the Assembly, and who moreover, declared himself favourable towards Esperanto.[2] In 1921, Thomas, as Secretary-General of the International Conference of Labour, permitted Privat to give the delegates an address on Esperanto (November 18, 1921). As a result, a resolution was presented at the conference on November 20, 1921, by the Japanese and French labour delegates, Mr. Matsumoto[3] and Mr. Godart,[4] approving the International Labour Office

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1. Thomas (1878-1932), a prominent French socialist, former wartime Cabinet minister and ambassador to Russia (1917-1918). He had known Privat, since the latter's university days in Paris.

2. According to a letter from Thomas to Privat, November 22, 1921, ibid.

3. Shunichi Matsumoto (1897-1966) had graduated from the law faculty of Tokyo University in 1921, and had immediately joined the Japanese Diplomatic Service. He represented Japan in various conferences of the League. A member of the Liberal-Democratic Party, Matsumoto later became Deputy Foreign Minister (1942-44, 1945) and Ambassador to London (1952-55).

4. For a biographical note of Justin Godart please see the section on Re-organization. He was listed among the 'honourary members' of the Universal Esperanto Association in 1922. In 1924, Godart became the Minister of Labour in the new Herriot government, which proved favourable towards Esperanto.

administration's publication in Esperanto of certain documents, and recommending that the administration use Esperanto more and more often as a practical solution to facilitate international relations.[1] This resolution, while not whole-heartedly embraced by the administration, was not rejected either. The administration promised as a matter of policy to respond in Esperanto to any inquiries made in that language. Thereafter, the International Labour Office also sent representatives to Esperanto Congresses and technical conferences,[2] and between 1923 and 1932 published a bimonthly bulletin in Esperanto.[3]

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1. Quoted in Esperanto, no.12, December 1921, p. 202 (2).

2. E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto (History of the Esperanto Language), v. 2, op.cit; p. 170.

3. According to E.D. Durrant, op. cit; p. 92.

Infiltration

The reception of Esperanto at the League in 1920 and 1921 convinced Privat of the necessity for Esperantists to work within the League. Although he himself had taken active part in the affairs of the League in 1920-21, it had been as a translator, not as a delegate. To keep Esperanto in the immediate attention of the other delegates, Esperantists with delegate status would be most helpful. 'We will not succeed at the 1922 Assembly,' he judged, 'unless we have a real Esperantist as a delegate.'[1]

Privat wanted 5 or 6 Esperantists as delegates, or at least as technical experts with the right of speaking in Committee. These, he believed, could be attached to the delegations of sympathetic countries like Finland[2] or

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1. From a letter in French, by Privat to Sebert, September 19, 1921, Privat Papers.

2. Finland, which had voted for Esperanto in the Second Assembly, was particularly sensitive to linguistic problems. Her Swedish-speaking minority involved Finland in acrid international disputes. During this period, the Swedish-speaking inhabitants of the Aland Islands were agitating to join Sweden. Moreover, the Finnish language, belonging neither to the Scandinavian or the Baltic linguistic group, was virtually unknown outside the country.

In 1919 the liberal government of K.J. Stahlberg (a professor of law, leader of the Progressive Party) had decided to financially support the teaching of Esperanto in Finnish secondary schools. This support was later extended to public schools, teachers colleges, Esperanto schools and to the Finnish Esperanto Society as well (ref: Memorandum of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 1, 1922, League Archives, dossier 17495, doc. 21700Y). A grant of 25,000 Marks was voted to the Finnish Esperanto Society by the Finnish Parliament in 1921 and 1922 (ref: Germana Esperantisto, no. 311, January 1922, 9.2).

Spain.[1] In September 1921, Privat asked the Finns to appoint Mr. Setälä, a well-known Finnish linguistics professor and an Esperantist, as technical advisor to their delegation to the League.[2] Likewise, the Lithuanians were asked to appoint Mr. Don Browski, whom Privat called 'our old Esperantist friend.'

While these efforts were unsuccessful, he did manage to attain an appointment to a League delegation for himself. Through the friendly offices of the Council of State of Geneva, he first tried to persuade the Swiss Foreign Ministry to appoint him as part of the Swiss delegation, as a special delegate or technical expert in Esperanto.[3] This failed, but through the friendship of the new chief of the Persian delegation, Prince Arfa-ed-Dovleh[4] (whose cousin, Zoka-ed-Dovleh, had in 1920-21 voted for Esperanto, both in the Assembly and in committee), Privat jointed the Persian delegation at the League as a legal advisor.[5]

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1. Letter from Privat to Ernest Archdeacon of the French Touring Club, Paris, October 21, 1921, ibid.

2. Letter from Privat to Sebert, Sept. 27, 1921, ibid.

3. According to a letter from Mr. Motta, Swiss Political Department, Foreign Affairs Division to the Council of State of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, June 24, 1922, ibid.

4. Also called Prince Mirza Riza Khan.

5. He soon became a vice-delegate, and between 1922 and 1927, Privat represented Prince Arfa.

Hardening Attitude of the French Government

The more Esperanto seemed to receive serious League consideration, the more determined official French opposition became. It was not to France's advantage to allow furtherance of what might become the new diplomatic language -- bad enough that English had encroached on French diplomatic pre-eminence. The French government's official stand was that if France recognized Esperanto as an auxiliary international language that could be used for the publication of official texts of League documents, France would compromise the recognition that the French language had attained 'not without difficulty' at the Paris Peace Conference.[1]

French determination to resist the subversion of the diplomatic position of the French language was doubtless heightened even further in August 1921, when U.S. President Harding announced that the forthcoming international conference at Washington was to be conducted solely in English.

In any case, it was soon after that, that France gave its delegates at the League formal instructions to obstruct

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1. From a letter in French, by Raymond Poincaré, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, to General Sebert, August 15, 1922, Privat Papers.

any recognition of Esperanto by the League.[1] On September 16, 1921, the French delegate, Georges Noblemaire,[2] wrote to General Sebert in most friendly terms about 'our' language (Esperanto), seeing difficulties not so much from the French as from the English, in its implementation at the League.[3] Yet several days later, he publically denounced Esperanto. Sebert explained this about-face to Privat by suggesting that Noblemaire must have written to him prior to learning of the French government's orders, telegraphed to their delegation at Geneva, to oppose Esperanto.[4] Noblemaire, at that time, was engaged in an inquiry

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1. In contrast, the French government of 1905 had awarded the Legion of Honour to Dr. Zamenhof, and the same year, had permitted the first Universal Esperanto Congress to take place in France, in Boulogne-sur-Mer.

2. Noblemaire, French delegate to the League, also a member of the House of Deputies.

3. From a letter by Georges Noblemaire to General Sebert, September 16, 1921, Privat Papers.

4. From a confidential letter by Sebert to Privat, Sept. 1921, ibid.

into the organization of the League. In his ensuing report,[1] he particularly deplored the League's exorbitant cost of translation.[2] This, with his letter to Sebert, suggests Noblemaire might have come out in favour of Esperanto, had it not been for the instructions of his government.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to influence the politics of other governments towards Esperanto not only by formal instructions to French delegates to the League but also by formally forbidding the use of Esperanto in any meeting in which French officials took part.

French opposition also extended to manipulation of the press. In 1921, the journal La Suisse refused to publish an attack on Esperanto by Marcel Pesch, an Idist. Pressure was brought by a great power, presumed to be France, forcing the publication of the article.[3]

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1. Noblemaire Report, League Document A.3.1921.

2. Apparently translation costs accounted for 3/4 of the total operating expenses of the League (Mr. Noblemaire, October 1, 1921, League of Nations, Records of the Second Assembly, vol. 1 (Plenary) 1921, p. 582.

3. Referred to in a confidential letter from Privat to General Sebert, September 27, 1921, p. 2, ibid.

Privat had no doubt as to the effect of active French opposition on the smaller nations. "We will not be able to succeed next year if this opposition mounts," he forecast.[1]

Already in April, when he had been engaged in trying to persuade Wellington Koo to take the Lafontaine report on Esperanto back before the Assembly in September, he had feared French opposition, for politically, China was in the sphere of influence of the U.S. and France, and so was vulnerable to French pressure.[2]

What could be done? "It is absolutely necessary to act upon the (French) government itself, before next year," he wrote.[3] However, for unspecified 'security reasons', Privat himself was forbidden to enter France. Efforts to lift the veil of mystery surrounding this interdiction, by General Sebert through his connections with the Military and the French Academy of Science,[4] by Privat himself through the Swiss government, and also

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1. From a confidential letter in French by Privat to General Sebert, September 27, 1921, p. 2, ibid.

2. Letter from Privat to General Sebert, April 25, 1921, Privat Papers.

3. From a letter in French, to General Sebert, September 19, 1921, ibid.

4. Through which Sebert was acquainted with Daniel Berthelot. Sebert went to see him on Privat's behalf. (ref. letter from Sebert to Privat, Oct. 12, 1921, Privat Papers.)

by Mme. Privat in several trips to Paris,[1] failed.

According to Sebert,[2] the interdiction against Privat was due to the emnity[3] of the Minister of Education, M. Bérard,[4] behind whom lay 'the secret influence of the former chief of wartime Censorship', who was still the 'grey eminence' of not only the Ministry of Education, but also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[5] This shadowy unnamed figure, to whom Sebert referred in several

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1. At least two trips were made, in January 1919 (according to a letter from Privat to Georges Clemenceau, July 19, 1919, Alice Rivas et al; Edmond Privat 1889-1962, op. cit; p. 51-52), and in Oct. 1921 (according to a letter from Gen. Sebert to Mme. Privat, Oct. 15, 1921, Privat Papers.

2. Letter from General Sebert, April 25, 1921, Privat Papers.

3. Privat had not endeared himself to the French government by his war-time articles in far left-wing journals like Travail and L'Humanité.

4. Léon Bérard (1876-1960), had been secretary to Raymond Poincaré, 1901-1910. Berard was first appointed as Education Minister in 1919. According to J.M. Sherwood (Georges Mandel and the Third Republic, Stanford, 1970, p. 39), Berard owed his appointment as Education Minister to Georges Mandel, as a reward for political support. Mandel was the 'grey eminence', who, according to correspondence between Sebert and Privat, was behind official French opposition to Esperanto.

5. From a letter in French, by Sebert to Privat, September 21, 1921, Privat Papers; Sebert again mentions this 'grey eminence' on October 12, 1921, ibid.

letters, was probably Clemenceau's chief lieutenant, Georges Mandel (who had been in charge of wartime censorship in France). That Mandel was indeed an opponent to Esperanto is probable, for he was a fervent nationalist.

In any case, it eventually transpired that during the war, when Privat had been in Paris, he had, in the records of the Sureté Generale, been confused with a Swiss journalist, Etienne Privaz, an ardent Germanophile.[1] Yet had Privat not been a prominent Esperantist, it is doubtful that this misunderstanding would have persisted so long. Even after the error was discovered in late 1921, Privat still had difficulties in entering France.[2]

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1. According to a letter from Privat to Sebert, January 7, 1922, Privat Papers.

2. On February 7, 1922, Gustave Ador, the Swiss delegate to the League transmitted to Privat a telegram from Léon Bourgeois, that it was 'impossible to obtain a visa' (Alice Rivas, et. al. Revue Neuchâteloise, no. 43-44, 1963, p. 52).

Competition

Esperanto was not the only constructed language seeking support at the League of Nations; others included Ido, Occidental Esperantido, Latine sine Flexione (a simplified Latin) Perfekto, and Interlingua. The most damaging to Esperanto was Ido.

Ido was actually an offshoot of Esperanto. In 1907, Esperantists had been divided between those who favoured a reform of the Esperanto language to Ido (Esperanto for 'descendent', offspring'), and those who rejected the proposed changes in the language.

The Idists had then set up their own Societies and held separate Congresses. Both Esperanto and Ido suffered from this division. Ido (and its own splinter-group, Esperantido), was seen by critics as proof of the inevitable dialectization of a language aspiring to universal usage. Even those receptive to the idea of an international auxiliary language were sometimes confused about whether to choose Esperanto or Ido. In 1921, for example, the British Association for the Advancement of Science had declared itself in favour of an international auxiliary language, but had been unable to decide between the relative merits of Esperanto and Ido.

In the League such indecision was used against Esperanto.[1] The Idists were very active at the League and had organized a 'Uniono por la linguo internaciona' (Union for the International Language). At the same time that the Secretariat and League Committee members were receiving appeals from the Esperanto group, they were also flooded with appeals from the Idists.

While the achievements of the Idists were more modest[2] than those of the Esperanto movement, Ido seems to have had an unexpected and powerful backer -- France. In January 1921, after Privat had received an appeal from a pro-Idist Swiss company, asking him to join in recognition of the linguistic superiority of Ido, Privat not only denied such superiority, but warned the Idists that they could not rely on French support, for the French government was opposed to all international auxiliary languages. "There are formal instructions on this subject," wrote Privat, "in two ministries, and certain officials have

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1. Miss Forchhammer, Danish delegate, in the 5th Committee, League of Nations, Third Assembly, Minutes of the 5th Meeting, September 13, 1922, doc. A.V./P.V.S.1922.

2. In 1922, for example, the Secretary of the Idist Society informed Inazo Nitobe, the 'Sportinternational' had adopted Ido as an auxiliary languge, and that the Republic of Abkhazia (in the Caucusus) had introduced Ido in the final year program of all schools (ref: L.M. de Guesnet, Secretary of the French Idist Society, to Undersecretary-General Nitobe , November 10, 1922, Privat Papers.

even been ordered...to assist Idist propaganda, as a tactic to undermine Esperanto, which till now they have regarded as the only (auxiliary language) strong enough to be dangerous."[1] Privat later expanded on this in a letter to the French Esperantist, General Sebert: "the tactic of throwing Ido at us, is certainly officially recommended to them (the French delegates)...it seems evident that your government subsidizes an office, just established in Geneva under the direction of a certain Marcel Pesch (a Frenchman), a some- time stenographer at the International Labour Office, who has just begun a campaign, ostensibly for Ido, but in reality directed against all international languages other than French."[2]

France's Machiavellian policy was not without success. It ensured that the Idists were not discouraged by the League Secretariat. Inazo Nitobé wrote to the President

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1. From a letter in French by Privat to Director of the Societé Anonyme Chocolat Tober, January 14, 1921, Privat Papers.

2. From a confidential letter in French by Privat to Sebert, undated, apparently September 1921, p. 2, ibid.

of the French Idist Society,[1] "you may be sure that we will examine with equal impartiality documents which have been sent us by the different authors of international language projects."[2]

As Privat was aware, Nitobé's 1921 report, the Language Question and the League of Nations, was very favourable to the concept of an international auxiliary language, but actually made little direct reference to Esperanto. Idists then freely contended that all the arguments of the report were only in favour of an international language in general, and left open the possibility of choosing a better language, Ido.[3]

Nevertheless, Privat believed Nitobé could be counted on to side with Esperanto. "He is sincerely in our favour," judged Privat, "and detests the conflicts (between Esperanto and Ido)."[4]

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1. Louis de Beaufront (pseudonym of Louis Chevreux) (1855-1935), author of another international language system, Adjuvanto, which he had discarded in 1888 in favour of Esperanto. In 1898 he had founded the French Society for the Propaganda of Esperanto. In 1907, he co-authored Ido.

2. From a letter in French by Inazo Nitobé, League Under-Secretary-General, to Louis de Beaufront, May 13, 1922, League Archives, Geneva.

3. From a confidential letter in French, by General Sebert to Privat, September 27, 1921, Privat Papers.

4. From a confidential letter in French by Privat to General Sebert, September 27, 1921, Privat Papers.

Actually, Nitobé practised an impartiality that benefitted neither Esperanto nor Ido. In a commentary on the Secretariat's correspondence with Idists, a British member of the Information section, P.J. Baker,[1] asked Nitobé: "...could these people not be told that they damage their cause by their quarrels with the Esperantists?"[2] Nitobé's reply was merely that fighting would strengthen and improve their system and that of their adversaries.[3]

Thus, while Privat did propose an Esperanto-Ido coalition in 1921,[4] it was never seriously considered. It may have been that Esperantist conditions were too demanding; Privat's proposal would have given most of the direction

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1. Baker (b. 1889), a trouble shooter in the Information Section, he later received the Nobel Prize under the name Noel-Baker.

2. From a circular memo, dated 30.5.1921, Doc. 12633, dossier 5691, League Archives.

3. Ibid.

4. Letter from Privat to the Director of the Societé Anonyme Chocolat Tobler, Jan. 14, 1921, Privat Papers.

to Esperanto.[1] However, the encouragement Idists received at the League, from France and from the League Secretariat, forestalled any further negotiations with the Esperantists.

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1. Privat had suggested coalition on the following basis: 1) popular propaganda and practical use: Esperanto, 2) scientific study: a special review in which Idist, Esperantists and linguistics professors could express their opinions and study the necessary progress of the language, collaborating in technical vocabularies, 3) a common propaganda towards the League, for the nomination of a commission of experts with real authority and power, ibid.

Esperantist Approach to the League: Education

In 1921, Privat believed that it was still too early to attempt a League resolution introducing the official use of Esperanto. The tactic to follow, he believed, was to work towards a League recommendation for the teaching of Esperanto in schools.[1] For this reason, a technical conference on the teaching of Esperanto had been planned for the spring of 1922 in Geneva (April 18-20). It would be officially sponsored by the prestigeous school of educational science, the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The school, well-known as a forerunner in educational methods, had already experimented with the teaching of Esperanto in elementary classes the year before.

Teaching was in the area in which Esperanto had had considerable success. Esperanto was already taught officially in a number of state schools -- in Bulgaria[2] by act

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1. Letter from Privat to Gen. Sebert, Oct. 9, 1921, Privat Papers.

2. The Bulgarian Esperanto movement was under the patronage of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association of Tourists, the Red Cross, the Society of Literary Men, and the Teachers Society. However it was probably the Aprarian Socialist government's (1920-June, 1923) stress on reform that was the prime factor in Paris's official support of Esperanto. The Esperanto movement itself was not particularly stong in Bulgaria.

of Parliament, in Albania,[1] China, Germany, and the new republics of Hungary (Oct. 13, 1920) Finland and Czechoslovakia[2] by ministerial decree, and in a limited number of municipal, commercial, and technical schools of Belgium, Britain, Holland, Ireland and Switzerland by decisions of local authorities. In Spain, Esperanto was taught at the Madrid Police Academy, and since July 27, 1911, had been authorized for optional courses in state schools. In Rio, Barzil, Esperanto had been an elective course in primary and secondary schools since 1910.[3]

As could be expected from the widespread interest in Esperanto by so many countries, the conference proved a great success. Delegates included representatives from 16 governments, and were welcomed by the Secretary-General of the League, Sir Eric Drummond.

Governments sending representatives were: Czechoslovakia, Finland, Spain, Holland, the Canton of Geneva,

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1. Decree No. 475, June 3, 1922.

2. Decree of March 29, 1921.

3. For a complete report on the teaching of Esperanto at this time, see the Report of the League Secretariat to the 3rd Assembly, Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language, adopted Sept. 21, 1922, document A.5.(1).

Austria, Germany, Italy, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Chile, and three Asian states, China, Japan, and Persia. These official delegates included the Polish Minister of Education, Anton Czubrynski; the School Inspector of Madrid, Don José Nunez Rey; the Greek Secretary to the League, Spyridon Pappas; the Chilean delegate to the League, Manuel Rivas-Vicuna; Van Ho Fang for the Chinese Ministry of Education; and also several well-known Esperantists, Alberto Alessio for the Italian Education and Naval Ministries;[1] Prof. J.W. Sevenhuijsen[2] as a representative of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Albert Steche[3] for the Saxon Ministry of the Interior; and of course, Edmond Privat for the Persian delegation to the League.

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1. Later that year, on November 21, 1922, the Italian Naval Ministry issued a circular resulting in the teaching of Esperanto as an optional language in 6 naval colleges.

2. Jan Villem Sevenhuijsen (1858-1923), a Dutch teacher, was President of the International Association of (Esperantist) Teachers and of the Esperantists Vegetarian League.

3. Albert Steche (b. 1862), President of the German Esperanto Association since 1920. A chemist and businessman, Steche was the former Vice-President of the Union of Saxon Industries (1905-1920), and former deputy in the Saxon Parliament (1909-1918). He had helped finance the Esperanto Institute at Leipzig.

Actually, most of those attending the Conference were members of Esperantist organizations or were active sympathizers. Their connection to Esperanto was not always immediately apparent. The host director of the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, declared in his opening address, that he was 'not at all an Esperantist.'[1] But already in 1920, the director, Pierre Bovet,[2] had helped Privat to persuade the Geneva Department of Education to experimentally replace the teaching of German as a compulsory second language[3] with Esperanto. A few months after the 1922 Conference, Bovet himself published a very favourable report on Esperanto.[4] Obviously, the

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1. From a copy of 'the welcoming address', in French, 'by Pierre Bovet at the opening of the 1922 Education Conference,' Privat Papers, p. 8 (of 26 pages).

2. Bovet (b. 1878), former professor of Philosophy at the University of Neuchatel (1904-1912). In 1912, he had become professor of Education at the University of Geneva, and had joined the staff of the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

3. The petition to the President of the Geneva Department of Education, dated February 18, 1920 (a copy of which was found among the Privat Papers) was signed by Bovet, with 7 other professors. Reynold also mentions Bovet's assistance to Privat in his memoirs, op.cit; v. 3, pp. 453-454.

4. Pierre Bovet, 'l'esperanto à l'école, 'an extract from Education, Paris, Natier, December 1922, 16 p. (a copy of this report was found among the Privat Papers.

Conference had been very carefully planned, in its location, its sponsors, and in the delegates who attended.

At the conference, an international agreement on the teaching of Esperanto in schools was proposed,[1] whereby signatory states promised to introduce and to encourage the teaching of Esperanto in their state schools. The agreement was to become obligatory when it had been signed by ten states, of which five were to be European states.[2] This condition was added, presumably, lest some European countries refuse to be bound by what appeared to be an 'Oriental pact.'

Government officials who had attended the Geneva Conference sent their ministry a report both of the Conference and of the resolution taken to further encourage the teaching of Esperanto in state schools. As propaganda, this was doubtless more effective than such information passed by Esperantists themselves.

Privat, attending the Conference not as a leader of the Esperantist movement, but as official delegate of the Geneva Department of Education and of the Persian Delegation

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1. It was Privat who drafted this agreement (according to drafts found among his papers, la Chaux-de-Fonds).

2. League of Nations, Records of the 3rd Assembly, v. 2 (Committee), 1922, p. 110.

to the League, had been President of the Geneva Conference. As such, Privat personally followed up the Conference by writing to 24 national delegations at the League to bring the conference resolutions favouring Esperanto to their attention, and to ask if their governments intended to uphold the international accord.[1]

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1. Letter from Edmond Privat to William Page, editor of the British Esperantist May 14, 1922, Privat Papers.

Results of the Geneva Conference on the Teaching of Esperanto

The international accord proposed by the Conference was never implemented. A few states, like Albania, did decide the teaching of Esperanto was to be obligatory in state schools.[1] Even then, however, actual implementation did not always occur. In the case of the Albanians for instance, by late 1924, they still had not hired their first Esperanto teacher.[2] Other states like Germany sent Privat non-commital replies, that for the present, 'technical reasons' prevented acceptance of the accord.[3] Some like Estonia prosaically replied that while Esperanto groups were permitted to teach the language, the State itself didn't want to take on the cost.[4]

The response of Lithuania's Education Minister was particularly interesting. "I am convinced that Esperanto will gain all its importance when the representatives of

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1. According to the Albanian Ministerial Decree No. 475, June 3, 1922.

2. Letter from Privat to the Albanian delegate to the League of Nations, October 1, 1924, Privat Papers.

3. From a letter in German, from the German Minister of the Interior to Privat, June 26, 1922, ibid.

4. Letter to Privat, June 13, 1922, ibid.

the Powers use it regularly and when this international language is introduced in the schools of these states. I believe that the time of official introduction (of Esperanto) in Lithuanian schools will not come until this language is introduced into the schools of the Power."[1] This prudent wait-and-see attitude was probably representative of that of many small states.

Unfortunately, it became more and more obvious that France and Britain were unlikely to officially support Esperanto. If anything, the show of Esperanto strength at the Geneva Conference drew a direct counter-offensive from France. On June 3, 1922, the French Minister of Education, Léon Bérard,[2] sent a circular to French state schools forbidding the teaching of Esperanto, not only on the school curricula, but even on school premises.

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1. Letter in French from the Education Minister of Lithuania to Privat, June 14, 1922, ibid.

2. For a biographical note on Bérard, see the section, 'Hardening French Attitude.'

The French Counter-Offensive

Despite the earliest Esperantists protests that they aimed 'not at all at displacing the existing national languages,[1] it was on this ground that Bérard attacked Esperanto.

In his circular, Berard warned that "the international organizations which have foreign headquarters, are striving to develop the ties between Esperantist groups of various countries. According to documents published by certain of these bodies, the purpose of this propaganda ...is to separate language and fatherland...these groups aim chiefly at the Latin spirit, in particular, the French genius."[2]

In the newspaper controversy that ensued,[3] Bérard continued: "the nature of the struggle against national

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1. From the opening address of L.L. Zamenhof at the Boulogne Declaration, 1905, published by Zamenhof in his Originala Verkaro (Original Works), Leipzig, 1929, pp. 360-365.

2. From a copy of the circular, in French, by Léon Bérard, Minister of Education, dated June 3, 1922, found in the Privat Papers.

3. Le Temps alone published several letters directed against and from M. Berard, on the subject of Esperanto (i.e.: January 8, 1923, from M. Berard to a M. Buisson; January 23, 1923, from Gen. Sebert)

languages which certain of them (the Esperantists) exhibit in the congresses of international Esperantists, arouses in me a cautious wariness."[1]

Explaining the government's support of Bérard's action, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs[2] revealed that "the German officers have taken advantage of the confusion created by the use of a language without a national character, to lay hands on certain Esperantist committees of various neutral countries and to turn members of these associations into agents of the campaign directed against France and the treaty of Versailles."[3]

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1. Quoted in French by le Temps, June 8, 1922.

2. Raymond Poincaré (1860-1934), former Education Minister (1893-1895) and President (1913-20),(1922-24). Bérard had been Poincaré's secretary from 1901 to 1910. Poincaré had once been very interested in the question of an international language, and had in 1889 worked out 'l'ixessoire,' or reform Greek. Questioned at the end of 1926, Poincaré denied any knowledge of this auxiliary language. However, confronted with a brochure published at Nancy by himself, Lucien Poincaré and Paul Brouchot, he had to admit his authorship (according to E. Drezen, Historio de la Mondolingvo, op. cit., p. 135.)

3. From a letter in French from Raymond Poincaré, French Minister of Foreign Affairs to General Sebert, August 15, 1922, Privat Papers.

Poincaré may have been referring here to the confusion in French Sûreté files, between Edmond Privat and a strongly Germanophile Swiss journalist, Etienne Privaz.[1] But part of the argument that Esperanto was a 'Boche' language was a carryover from the war,[2] when Germany had circulated pro-German propaganda on the front -- brochures and journals like the Internacia Bulteno (International Bulletin). A Deutsch.-Esperanto-Dienst (German Esperanto Service) had also broadcast in Esperanto daily bulletins of the German General Staff. Of course, the French themselves had made use of Esperanto to publish a number of propaganda leaflets for German soldiers.[3] The purpose of this war propaganda in Esperanto presumably, was to demonstrate the international and basically anti-war outlook of the propagandizer, hoping thereby to encourage pacifist elements among the enemy's troops. Esperanto was a tool employed by both French and German war-time chauvinism.

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1. For an account of this mix-up, see the section on the 'Hardening Attitude of the French Government.'

2. Apparently the belief that Esperantists were disguised enemy spies was especially prevalent among the Military (ref: letter from General Sebert to Privat, September 27, 1921, Privat Papers.

3. A.L. Guerard, A Short History of the International Language Movement, London, 1922, p. 123.

The Bolshevist Link

To those critical of Esperanto, French accusations that not only was Esperanto a tool of German officers, but also that it was linked with international communism, seemed to have considerable justification.[1] Soviet favour towards Esperanto had already made the language vulnerable to veiled charges of 'bolshevism.'

This favour had been demonstrated by the Soviet government soon after the Russian Revolution. In January 1919, the People's Commissariat for Public Education had appointed a commission to examine the claims of Esperanto and to report on the advisability of teaching an international language in Soviet schools.[2] Although the official in

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1. To such critics, Esperanto was damned on both counts. According to Gonzague de Reynold, for instance, "Germany is becoming the middleman for the movement, between Moscow and the rest of Europe. The International Red Cross of Berlin will not be a stranger to all this Esperantist propaganda. One may fear that increasingly, Esperanto will be captured by all these extreme elements and serve their political and social ends (from an article in French by Reynold in the Revue de Geneve, May 1925, p. 626).

2. E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto (History of the Esperanto Language), v. 2, op. cit; p. 101.

charge, Zinoviev,[1] personally favoured Ido, he had accepted the commission's recommendation of Esperanto. In April, 1920, the Soviet government had declared the teaching of Esperanto obligatory in all Russian schools.[2] As with Albania, Russian declarations of support proved more verbal than real. However, the Soviet declarations hurt more than helped Esperantist efforts at the League.

Those suspicious of Esperanto because of its Russian backing, saw confirmation in the development of radical left wing of the movement -- The Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, or World Association of Non-Nationalists. This organization had been founded in 1921 by working class French Esperantists, and was led by a member of the French Communist Party, Eugene Adam.[3]

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1. Grigory Yevseyevich Zinoviev (1883-1936), member of the Politburo; Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (Communist International), from 1919 to 1926.

2. According to a letter from E. Adam (Lanti) to Privat, dated April 22, 1920, Privat Papers.

3. Eugene Lanti (originally Eugene Adam) (1879-1947), a teacher by profession, had previously worked on an anti-military anarchist gazette, and had then become editor of the Travailleur Esperantiste (renamed Esperantista Laboristo) (E. Drezen, Analiza Historio de Esperanto movado (Analytic History of the Esperanto Movement), op. cit; p.182.

There had been other Esperanto labour groups since 1903, and by 1910, such groups had existed in all the major countries of Europe, in the United States and in China. These groups usually held annual meetings in conjunction with the yearly Esperanto Congresses. However, the Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, reportedly influenced by its Russian members,[1] forbade its members from also belonging to national Esperanto societies or to the Universal Esperanto Association. It saw Esperanto as but a means for international worker solidarity. "Its apparatus is above party", wrote Lanti, but "its apparatus makes it possible for anarchists, communists, trade unionists, and socialists to enter into relations and become acquainted with one another on a world scale and to receive information which they can utilize polemically if they wish, outside the Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda against members of opposing parties and tendencies..."[2]

As an organization, the Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda grew rapidly in the 1920's. Founded only in 1921, by 1923, it had more than 3,500 members.[3] By 1929, there

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1. E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto, op. cit; v. 2, p. 132.

2. E. Lanti, the Workers' Esperanto Movement, a translation of la Laborista Esperantismo, London, 1926, p. 14.

3. Universala Esperanto Asocio, Jahrlibro, Geneva, 1923.

were more than 7,000 members; that same year, the Universal Esperanto Association had 9,113 members.[1]

Whether the split from the movement of the left-wing members was desirable, can be debated. According to Ulrich Lins,[2] the formation of the Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda in 1921 may have convinced the national Esperanto societies of the necessity to support a neutral movement. Certainly it prodded re-organization and focusing of the movement.

However, the activity of a radical Esperanto organization unmodified by the main movement invited charges that Esperanto was not politically neutral, but communist influenced. Although Privat himself insisted on the necessity of impartiality,[3] these accusations were as

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1. G. Waringhien, "Historio skizo de la esperanto movado", Lingvo kaj Vivo, Esperantologiaj esoj (Short History of the Esperanto Movement, Language and Life, Esperantological Essays), La Laguna, 1959, p. 409.

2. Ulrich Lins, "Organizaj kaj ideologiaj problemoj de Universala Esperanto Asocio" La Revuo Orienta (Organizational and Ideological Problems of the Universal Esperanto Association, Oriental Review), Tokyo, Marcy 1972, p. 22.

3. '...for the reputation of fanaticism would create great prejudice against us...' (from a confidential letter in French by Privat to General Sebert, undated, apparently October 1921, p. 4, Privat Papers).

Sebert admitted,[1] supported by various writings like the Sennacieca Revuo (Non-National Review), and l'esperantiste révolutionnaire. Certain Russian members of the Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda even wanted S.A.T. to formally come under the guidance of Comintern.[2] The Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda provided just enough truth for the gullible to believe such canards as "behind Esperanto or Ido hides an internationalist and revolutionary mysticism."[3] One suspects that the French government was quite active in cultivating these beliefs.[4]

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1. From a letter in French by General Sebert to Privat, January 15, 1923, Privat Papers.

2. E. Drezen, op. cit., p. 82.

3. From a copy of a letter in French by Gonzague de Reynold to the Abbe Richard in Paris, June 5, 1923, Reynold Papers, Berne.

4. Privat later confided that "I saw a report in the French consulate in Geneva, on the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute of Professor Bovet, in which this respected teaching institution is described as a school for bolshevism" (From a copy of a letter in French, from Privat to Tony Jules Gueritte (b. 1875, French engineer, an Esperantist since 1906, member of Ministry of Foreign Trade, President of the French Chamber of Commerce in London, President of the (Esperanto Society of Engineers.), September 10, 1927, Privat Papers.

Within the 5th Committee

After the successful Conference at the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Secretariat produced a report (dated June 24, 1922) highly favourable to Esperanto.[1] The report, entitled 'Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language,' was sent first to the 5th Committee on Social and Humanitarian Questions.[2] It was presented in the Committee with Gilbert Murray's resolution that the Assembly should invite member states of the League to consider at the next Postal Conference, the possibility of admitting Esperanto in the postal[3] and telegraphic services, in addition to the national languages, that the Assembly recommend that facilities for teaching Esperanto be made general, and that

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1. It was drafted by Privat.

2. Privat himself was a member of this committee. Thus his attempts to get direct Esperanto representation within the League, albeit by the back door, were justified.

3. At this time, French was the international postal language. According to the Postal Union Convention signed in Madrid on Nov. 30, 1920, the statements, returns and forms used by the different Postal Administrations had to be drawn up in French, with or without an interlinear translation in another language (according to a letter from the British General Post Office to the Secretary, Offices of the Cabinet, August 22, 1922, ref: FO 371 8222 7013, Public Records Office, London.)

the Secretariat 'continue to watch the progress of Esperanto and to report on it.'[1] This resolution, in effect, incorporated the main points of the concluding chapter of the Secretariat's report.

In the discussion that followed, Privat, present as a representative of Persia, tried to mollify French opposition by asserting that there was no question of introducing the use of Esperanto into the League itself. The only question was whether the League would encourage the introduction of Esperanto into state schools.[2] Privat had already recognized that League adoption of Esperanto as a working language was 'already a lost cause, since the French instructions (to their delegates, to oppose this possibility) are formal on this subject.'[3] However, he did still think that despite official French opposition, he could persuade individually sympathetic French delegates

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1. Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language, a resolution submitted to the Fifth Committee by Prof. Gilbert Murray, Delegation of South Africa, A V/I, 1922, 3p.

2. League of Nations, Records of the Third Assembly, v.3 (Committee) 1922, p. 25.

3. From a letter in French by Edmond Privat to Gen. Sebert, September 5, 1922, Privat Papers.

like Senator Georges Reynald,[1] that France should at least support a recognition of Esperanto as a practical auxiliary languge, useful in commerce, science and telegraphy.'[2]

France at that time, had a very strong position. Reynald, not surprisingly, took a hard-line position, and attacked the suggestion of League encouragement of the introduction of Esperanto in state schools. He declared that it would impinge upon the independence of public education in his country and that it constituted 'an internationalistic threat to the patriotic education of children.[3]

Also upset at such a possibility were the British. To the dismay of the British government, the report on

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1. George Maire Reynald (1866-1937), lawyer, former mayor of Foix (1911), became a senator in 1912 as a member of the Union Republicaine, connected to la Presse Associée, and other journals. Former political director of l'Evenement. In 1915, he published a study on Delcasse, Vice President of the Financial Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A specialist in foreign affaires, he had worked under Léon Bourgeois in preparing a report on the Treaty of Versailles. French delegate to the League 1921-23.

2. According to a letter from Edmond Privat to General Sebert, September 5, 1922, Privat Papers.

3. League of Nations, Records of the Third Assembly, v.3 (Committees) 1922, p. 25.

Esperanto had made prominent use of the British Memorandum on Esperanto and of British teaching experience with Esperanto. The British Cabinet had quickly protested to the League that the report contained 'statements calculated to be either deliberately misleading or at least likely to be misunderstood.'[1]

Although official French opposition to League patronage of Esperanto was much more open, the British government was actually as much against such sponsorship, as the French. Within the Foreign office, for instance, Esperanto was considered a sure waste of time and utter nonsense.[2] Had there been any necessity to do so, they probably would have taken the same public attitude much sooner.

Already in 1920, at the First Assembly, the British delegate, Mr. Barnes,[3] had forced the exclusion of the section of the motion on Esperanto which had expressed

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1. From a copy of a letter by the Secretary of the British Cabinet, to the League Secretary-General, August 17, 1922, Privat Papers.

2. F.O. circular W10089/1331/98, Sept. 30, 1921, ref: FO 371 7053 7013, Public Records Office, London.

3. George N. Barnes (1859-1940), a former leader of the British Labour Party, had been a member of the British War Cabinet and Minister Plenipoteniary to the Paris Peace Conference.

the desire, 'that the teaching of the language may become general throughout the whole world, so that the children of all countries may know at least two languages -- their mother tongue and an easy means of international communication.'[1]

Nevertheless, as originally with the French, the Esperantists misjudged the British government. "Concerning the tactic to follow at the League of Nations, I freely recognize that we were mistaken as to the real feelings of the English, except Lord Robert Cecil."[2,3]

Thus Privat was not prepared in the Fifth Committee debate (Sept. 12-18, 1922) for the insistance of the British delegate, Mrs. W.M. Coombe-Tennant, on certain 'corrections' in the report on Esperanto. She demanded the toning down of references to British state support of Esperanto, and more important, on the ommission of the entire

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1. League of Nations, Report of the 1st Assembly, vol. 2-3, (Committees) 1920, p. 166.

2. Unfortunately, as even his friend, Benes, conceded, Cecil was regarded by many people in England as 'an unpractical or naive idealist.' (Compton Mackenzie, Benes, London, 1946, p. 99).

3. From a letter in French by Privat to General Sebert, September 29, 1922, Privat Papers.

final chapter of conclusions.[1] These conclusions included the recommendation of the teaching of Esperanto in state schools, the recognition of Esperanto as an international language valid for postal and telegraphic service, and worthy of continued League attention.

The Brazilian delegate, Sr. Rio Branco,[2] was also unfriendly towards the report, attacking Esperanto as 'a language without a history or literature.'[3] Later that month, Sr. Rio Branco went to the extent of publishing at his own expense (presumably), a pamphlet most hostile towards Esperanto.[4]

In trying to determine Sr. Rio Branco's reasons for opposing Esperanto so strongly, one cannot help noticing the remarkable similarity between some of his statements and those of the French government. Like Poincaré, Sr. Rio Branco believed Esperanto was part of a German

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1. League of Nations, Records of the 3rd Assembly, vol. 1-2 (Plenary), p. 188; also vol. 2 (Committees), p. 112.

2. J. Raul de Rio Branco, Brazilian delegate to Berne as well as to the League.

3. League of Nations, Records of the 3rd Assembly, vol. 3, (Committees), 1922, p. 26.

4. Sr. Rio Branco, Contre l'octroi du patronage de la Societe des Nations à l'Esperanto, Genève, Hallwag, Sept. 12, 1912, 20 pp.

offensive against France; 'for some years,' he wrote, 'I have had the impression that the Esperantist efforts operate in close co-operation (perhaps unconscious) with a German offensive...against the international use of French.'[1]

Some of Rio Branco's public criticisms of Esperanto, for instance, that the report had misrepresented the extent of support for Esperanto in Brazil, were patently false.[2] The teaching of Esperanto had been officially permitted in the federal district since January 1919, and by 1922 there were at least twelve active Esperanto societies in Brazil.[3] His contention that the report was one-sided were more justified.

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1. From a letter in French by Sr. Rio Branco to G. de Reynold, January 13, 1922, Reynold Papers.

2. In fact, after Rio Branco's attack on Esperanto, the Brazilian Parliament voted to establish official Esperanto exams in all state schools where living languages were also taught (ref: letter from Privat to General Sebert, Feb. 13, 1923, Privat Papers.

3. Brazilia Ligo Esperantista, Rio de Janeiro; Brazilia Klubo-Esperantista, Rio; Virina Klubo, Rio; Esperanto-Klubo de Aracaju, Aracaju; Grupo Esperantista Couto Frenandes, Maranhao; Esperantista Rendeto-Vendo Stelo, Sao Bonifacio; Verda Stelano, Pelotas; Esperantista Grupo-Energio, Belem, Mossoro-Esperanto Klubo, Mossoro; Pernambuka Esperanta Societo, Recife; Laborista Esperantista Grupo, Rio de Janeiro; Nova Samideanaro, Fortaleza (ref: Brazilia Vivo, Fortaleza, Brazil, January 29, 1922, p. 6.

However, more damaging were charges that the League Secretariat had deliberately coloured the 1922 Report in favour of Esperanto, by allowing Privat, as Esperantist leader, such a large part in its preparation.[1] These accusations cooled the friendliness of the League Secretariat. In 1923, it declined to send an official representative to the Esperanto Commercial Conference held in April at Venice, and League officials like Inazo Nitobé, took increasing care to appear impartial, giving more public consideration to such rival world languages as Ido.

Also opposed to Esperanto within the Fifth Committee was the Swedish delegate, Mr. Löfgren,[2] who indicated an interest in the question of one international language, but believed that it should be English.[3] This view was

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1. League of Nations, Third Assembly, Provisional Minutes of the 6th Meeting, September 14, 1922, Privat Papers.

2. Eliel Löfgren (b. 1872), leader of the Swedish Liberal Party, former Minister of Justice (1917-1920), was a delegate to the League from 1920 to 1928. He was appointed legal advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1924, and in 1926 became Minister of Foreign Affairs.

3. League of Nations, Records of the Third Assembly, (Committees) 1922, p. 27.

shared by the Norwegian delegate, Professor Kristine Bonnevie.[1]

On the other hand, the delegates of Finland (Kaarle Voionmaa),[2] China (Chao Hsin Chu)[3] Japan (Mr. Ariyoshi)[4], and of course Persia (Privat), strongly supported Esperanto as necessary and useful for their countries. The latter three not only supported the resolution of Gilbert Murray[5], by also urged that the League propose to its member states that they extend the use of Esperanto, due to the greater difficulty of Asian countries in learning Western languages.

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1. Kristine Bonnevie (b. 1872), a zoologist, first woman university professor in Norway (Lexikon der Frau, Zürich, Encyclios Verlag, 1953, vol. 1, p. 479.

2. Tapio Vionmaa had been the official Finnish delegate to the 1921 Conference on the Teaching of Esperanto.

3. Chao Hsin Chu, charge d'affaires at the Chinese embassy in London.

4. Akira Ariyoshi (b. 1876), Japanese diplomat; previously posted in China, London and Paris. In 1920, he had been appointed Minister to Switzerland.

5. For a biographical note on Giblert Murray, see the section on the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation.

However, before further discussion could take place, the French delegate, Senator Reynald, proposed postponing the matter by referring the entire question to the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation.[1] Reynald's motion was seconded by the Danish delegate, Miss Forchhammer, not because she was opposed to an international auxiliary language, but because she wanted the Committee to consider Ido as well as Esperanto. The French motion was adopted by a vote of 18 (including Mrs. Coombe-Tennant) to 8. Among those voting in support of the French delegate were the delegates of Rumania (Helene Vacarescu), [2] Poland (Mr. Sokal), Serbia (Ranislav M. Abramovic) and Cuba (Aristides de Bethancourt). Senator Reynald was then appointed to convey the Committee's decision to the Assembly.

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1. It is interesting to note that it had been French and Belgian pressure, that had led to the establishment of this committee (F.P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations, London, 1952, p. 190).

2. Miss Vacarescu (1866-1947), a writer, had been educated in Paris and Bucharest and held a brilliant literary and social position in Paris. She was an officier de l' Instruction Publique and a member of the Legion d'Honneur.

Surprisingly, Privat backed the appointment of the French delegate as rapporteur of the report on the teaching of Esperanto. This support was due not to a curious sense of irony, but to a belief that it would create in Reynald a moral obligation to be courteous towards Esperanto, and that then, no other Frenchman would dare contradict him.[1]

Thus, although the Third Assembly adopted Lord Robert Cecil's resolution to accept the report of the Secretariat on Esperanto, it was a much modified report, without conclusions or recommendations. As France wished, the question of an agreement on the teaching of Esperanto was shunted to the Committee for Intellectual Co-operation.[2]

However, the League report and resolution on Esperanto did give unprecedentedly widespread publicity to the movement. The report itself was published with the authorization of the League Secretariat and translated into 12 languages (including Chinese).

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1. According to a letter from Privat to General Sebert, September 14, 1922, Privat Papers.

2. Resolution 26, September 21, 1922.

Committee of Intellectual Co-operation

Privat had expected the Committee to delay in discussing Esperanto. To Sebert he wrote: "France will endeavor that it (the Committee) not discuss Esperanto before at least two years. This is also in our interest."[1]

However, the matter came up much sooner than Privat had expected. On July 31, 1923, while Privat was attending the Esperanto Congress of Nürnberg,[2] the Committee's Chairman, Prof. Henri Bergson,[3] recalled that the Committee was to examine the teaching of Esperanto. Then, Torres de Quevedo,[4] seconded by Gilbert Murray[5] proposed putting

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1. From a letter in French, by Privat to General Sebert, Sept. 29, 1922, Privat Papers.

2. Dr. Ellenbeck, Esperanto in Volkerbund (Esperanto in the League of Nations), op.cit; p. 49.

3. Bergson (1859-1941), a renowned philosopher, was a member of the French Academy.

4. L. Torres de Quevedo, a well-known Spanish scientist and member of the Committee for the Extension of Scientific Studies.

5. When Lord Robert Cecil returned to the British Cabinet in 1923, Murray replaced him in the delegation of South Africa. Murray (b. 1866), a prominent British classical scholar, was Chairman of the League of Nations Union (1923-1939). An international publicist, his writing included: A Study, Liberalism and the Empire, Foreign Policy of Sir Edward Grey, the Problem of Foreign Policy and the Ordeal of This Generation.

Esperanto on the agenda immediately. Although both Torres de Quevedo and Murray were sympathetic towards Esperanto,[1] they were unprepared for such an early discussion.

Opposition to Esperanto was better planned. According to Privat, the French Minister of Education, Léon Bérard, had asked the Chairman of the Committee, Bergson, to 'drown the Esperanto thrust.'[2] Bergson did, in fact, make a speech just before the voting on Esperanto, warning against its recommendation,[3] for "the aim of the artificial language is precisely to render superfluous...the study of living languages."[4]

This argument, another version of that of Léon Bérard, that Esperanto was anathema to national culture, was based on the belief that if Esperanto became universal as the

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1. According to Gonzague de Reynold's Memoirs, Quevedo was even a 'fanatical Esperantist', op. cit; p. 55.

2. Quoted in Esperanto by E. Privat, Historio de la lingvo esperanto (History of the Esperanto Language), vol. 2, op.cit; p. 146.

3. Interestingly enough, Bergson had publically supported Esperanto a decade before (Ibid; p. 148)

4. League of Nations, Committee of Intellectual Co-operation, Minutes of the Second Session, July 26-August 2, 1923, C.570.M224.1923. XII. p. 40.

international auxiliary language, the study of other languages would practically cease. To carry the argument further, one might then conclude that this would naturally have the greatest effect on widely used languages like English and French. Besides suffering a loss of prestige, these languages would then no longer serve as one of the bonds holding extra-national territories.

But actually, it was not Bergson who led the charge in the Committee against Esperanto, but Gonzague de Reynold,[1] a francophone Swiss, followed by Jules D'Estrée[2] and Mr. Luchaire.[3] Julien Luchaire,[4] the French Inspector-General

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1. Frederic Gonzague, Baron Reynold de Cressy (b. 1880), professor of history and French literature at the Universities of Fribourg and Bern. A member of the Swiss Conservative Party, President of the Swiss Committee for International Intellectual Co-operation, and corresponding member of the Institute of France.

2. Jules D'Estrée, former Belgian Minister of Sciences and Arts, member of the Belgian Academy of French language and Literature. Unfortunately for the Esperantists, he had replaced one of their strongest supporters, Senator Lafontaine, as Belgian delegate at the League of Nations.

3. For an account of Luchaire's activities in the Committee, against Esperanto, see the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation, Minutes, Second Session, op. cit; also, G. de Reynold, Mes Memoires, op. cit; p. 456-7.

4. Luchaire (b. 1876). former Director of the Education Department of the Ministry of Colonies. He later became Director of the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation (1925-1931).

of Education, was not actually a member of the Committee for Intellectual Co-operation, but often replaced Bergson in the Committee's meetings.[1]

In his memoirs, Gonzague de Reynold recalls that he had been preparing for the battle against Esperanto since July 1922.[2] At that time, Henri Bonnet,[3] a French member of the Secretariat, had gone to see Reynold to ask his help "to avoid certain utopic absurdities, for example, Esperanto."[4] This appeal was made two months before the Esperanto question had even been referred to the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation.[5]

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1. Mentioned in a letter from E. Privat to Gen. Sebert, August 28, 1923, Privat Papers.

2. G. de Reynold, op. cit. p. 456.

3. Henri Bonnet (1888-19), a member of the Political Section of the League Secretariat between 1920-1931. He replaced Julien Luchaire as Director of the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation (1931-40), later becoming Commissioner and Minister (of Information) of the Committee of National Liberation (1943-1944) and French Ambassador to the U.S. (1944-1955).

4. Quoted in French by G. de Reynold, op. cit; p. 456.

5. The debates on Esperanto within the 5th Committee, and the decision to refer the matter to the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation did not take place until September of 1922.

In any case, Reynold seems to have viewed opposition to Esperanto as almost a sacred task. In a letter to Abbé Ricard of Paris, Reynold lamented: "You will imagine that there is a constant battle to wage against all those who would make of the League of Nations, not only a super-state, but a super-church as well, against all the utopist internationalists...I am referring to Esperanto."[1]

Torres de Quevedo had thought to marshal support for Esperanto by proposing that the Committee appoint a sub-committee, which with the help of experts,[2] would examine the different solutions to the problem of an international auxiliary language.[3] However, with Reynold's long and well-prepared attack, the sympathy of uncommitted delegates evaporated. Before support for Esperanto could be rallied, the Chairman, Prof. Bergson, cut off the discussion.

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1. From a letter in French, dated June 5, 1923, Reynold Papers, Berne, Bibliothèque Nationale Suisse.

2. This is what Privat had hoped would happen, according to his letter of Nov. 20, 1923, to Prof. Alphonse Aulard, Privat Papers.

3. Committee of Intellectual Co-operation, Minutes of the 9th Meeting, op. cit; p. 35.

Report of the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation

In its report to the Fourth French Assembly,[1] the Committee ignored its instructions from the Third Assembly specifically asking its views on 'questions relating to teaching of Esperanto' and on 'the various aspects of the problem of an international auxiliary language.'[2] Instead the Committee reported to the Fourth Assembly that it 'did not feel justified in recommending an artificial language to the consideration of the Assembly of the League of Nations.'[3]

The rapporteur of the Committee's decision, Jacques Bardoux,[4] was a French delegate, who according to Privat, had arrived in Geneva under formal instructions from the Quai d'Orsay 'to proceed against Esperanto to the very

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1. League of Nations, Records of the Fourth Assembly, Annex 19, A. 102, 1923.

2. Resolution 26, September 21, 1922.

3. This view had been supported in the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation by a vote of six to one, with three abstaining.

4. Bardoux (1874-1959), a foreign policy expert, had been foreign policy editor of the Journal des Debats, professor at the Ecole des sciences politiques and the Ecole superieure de guerre, and President of the Societe d'Etudes et d'information politiques.

end.'[1] In any case, Mr. Bardoux took the opportunity as rapporteur, to present a resolution to the Fourth Assembly, recommending the study of foreign languages as preferable to that of artificial languages.

The Assembly, however, did not publically agree with the Committee's scruples nor with Mr. Bardoux's resolution. Esperanto supporters such as Lord Robert Cecil roundly attacked the committee's report and the resolution as directly counter to the earlier 1922 report accepted by the Second Assembly. Even the British delegate declined to lend his weight to the French resolution. Influential organizations seemed too strongly attached to Esperanto for the League to actually condemn it. Recently, the League Secretariat had received yet another petition in favour of Esperanto, in this case, from 28 members of the French Academy of Sciences.[2] Also, in April of that year, the International Chambers of Commerce meeting in Venice had voted in favour of a resolution recommending Esperanto to the League.

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1. From a letter in French from Privat to A. Aulard, Nov. 20, 1923, Privat Papers.

2. Esperanto had first been presented to the Academy in 1898 by General Sebert and by Ernest Naville, the Swiss philosopher (Journal de Genevè, August 25, 1921).

However, while the Committee's opinion on Esperanto was not accepted, it was not rejected either. Though the only report by the Committee not to be accepted in that year, the lack of a formal rejection meant that in the future, those opposed to Esperanto could always point to the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation's hostile report to support their attacks.[1]

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1. This happened the next year, in a discussion on whether to recommend Esperanto as a clear language in radio and telegram communications. The Committee of Intellectual Co-operation's report was brought up by the Polish delegate, who was opposed to the recommendation (League of Nations, Records of the 5th Assembly, Second Committee, vol. 2, op. cit; p. 10).

Esperanto in Telecommunications

If Esperantists were forestalled on the education front, they were more successful in the field of telecommunications. Esperantists recognized that for Esperanto to gain mass acceptance, it was imperative that Esperanto be acknowledged as valid in international communications, in telegraph and radio. This seemed especially important for radio, a medium which might be very useful in publicizing Esperanto.

Technical conferences proliferated. They were used to press first the League for a favourable declaration, and then, the body that could actually make the decision to recognize Esperanto as a clear language -- the International Telegraph Union.

Thus, a conference on communications was held already in November 1923. The conference, held in Geneva, was sponsored by the Universal Esperanto Association. The following April, the U.E.A. arranged another technical conference. The conference, entitled, 'the Preliminary Conference for an International Agreement on Radio - Telephony', was organized with the help of the Swiss Radio Electrical Society, an organization presided by J.R.G. Isbrucker, a leader of the Dutch Esperantist Society. Naturally, both conferences were enthusiastic in declaring their support of Esperanto.

Then, on September 19, 1924, at the Fifth Assembly, Privat was able to make use of his position within the League to promote the cause. As a representative of Persia, Privat proposed to the Second Committee for Technical Affairs that the League recognize Esperanto as a 'clear language' in telegraph and radio communications and advise the International Telegraph Union to this effect.[1]

Actually, a number of League members[2] had already accepted Esperanto as a clear language for telegraph purposes, and with the strong support of delegates from two of these countries, Dr. Tcheou Wei[3] of China and Yotaro Sugimura[4] of Japan, Privat did manage to get a

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1. League of Nations, Records of the 5th Assembly, (Committees), 1924, vol. 2, p. 39.

2. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Denmark, Norway, Brazil, Bolivia, Egypt, New Zealand, China and Japan.

3. Dr. Tcheou-Wei was the technical advisor to the Chinese delegation at the League. He had been the official Chines delegate to the 1921 Conference on the Teaching of Esperanto.

4. Mr. Sugimura (b. 1884), Japanese diplomat, educated in Japan and France (Lyons), previous postings in Paris (as Secretary, 1912-1916), and in Peking (1916-1919). In 1923, he had been appointed Deputy-Chief of the League of Nations Bureau in Paris (till 1926). He became Chief of the Bureau (1926-27), replaced Inazo Nitobe as Under-Secretary-General.

favourable motion passed in committee, by a vote of 13[1] to 9[2], and then unanimously adopted by the General Assembly.[3]

Conspicuous among those in opposition in the Second Committee had been Britain. Two years before, Britain had also rejected a similar proposal contained in the conclusion of the Secretariat's report on Esperanto.

France, too, had not voted in the 2nd Committee for the recommendation of Esperanto as a clear language.

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1. Voting for the proposal were: Finland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Holland, Austria, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and of course, Persia. It is interesting to note here that two members of the British Empire, Australia and New Zealand voted against Great Britain. This may have been as much to make a show of independence of Britain, as to support Esperanto, which, after all, was not very widespread in these countries. (Australia, for instance, had then only 142 U.E.A. members, compared to 722 in Britain or 1741 in Germany; ref: 17 Universala Kongreso de Esperanto, Kongresa Libro, Geneva, 1925, p. 74).

2. Those who had spoken in the Committee against the measure were Georges Bonnet (FRANCE), who (b 1889), a Radical-Socialist, had been a member of the French Council of State, and Under-Secretary of State in Painleve's cabinet in 1925; Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith (BRITAIN), (b. 1864), a commercial expert, who had been economic advisor to the British government, 1919, and a British delegate to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919; E.F. de Montarroyos (BRAZIL), who had been appointed delegate to the League in 1923, and who was a member of the Economic Committee of League; Mr. Zumeta (VENEZUELA); and Henryk Strasburger (POLAND), (b. 1887), a commercial expert, and former Under-Secretary of State in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1923).

3. A.11/P.V.10, September 20, 1924.

However, no new initiatives were taken by the French government against Esperanto. In fact, by 1925, it was apparent that, whether because of a change in government, or whether because Esperanto was no longer perceived as a serious threat, official French opposition had waned. The previous year, the new Radical-Socialist government of Edouard Herriot,[1] had revoked the former Minister of Education's circular forbidding Esperanto in state schools.[2]

With this relaxed atmosphere, it was possible to hold 2 conferences in Paris in the spring of 1925. The first, the International Conference on the Use of Esperanto in the Pure and Applied Sciences (May 14-17), was held under the patronage of several members of the French Academy of

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1. Herriot (1872-1957), had come to power in June 1924. His enemies claimed Herriot's policies were inspired by the masonic lodges (ref: Henri Coston, Dictionnaire de la politique francaise, Paris, vol. 1, pp. 532-3). Actually, Herriot was not himself a Freemason, but was sympathetic towards the movement. It may be that this sympathy influenced him in adopting a moderate attitude towards the Esperantists. However, there were other connections. Like Privat, Herriot was a member of the 'Ligue des droits de l'Homme' (a nominally revolutionary party founded in 1898). There is not doubt that he was generally regarded as personally favourable towards Esperanto (ref: Esperanto, no. 266 (10), October 1922).

2. Privat personally visited Herriot and got his promise to revoke Berard's edict (ref: Centra Komitato de la Esperanto movado, Deksesa Universala Kongreso de Esperanto, (Vieno 8-14 Augusto, 1924) Geneve, 1924, (16th Universal Esperanto Congress).

Science (among them, Sebert) and was organized by the International Science Association. Not by chance, the past president of the latter association was General Sebert, and its current president Rollet de l'Isle, who also headed the French Society for the Propaganda of Esperanto.

The Conference was very well-attended by representatives of 230 scientific and technical societies of 37 countries.[1] Among the delegates[2], were representatives of the French Ministries for Technical Education, Aviation and Meteorology. An announcement was made at the conference by the French government that France would recognize Esperanto as a clear language for postal, telegraphic and radio communication.[3] The Conference itself expressed the wish that the League Committee of Intellectual

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1. E. Durrant, op. cit; p. 96.

2. Among the delegates were representatives from the Chinese Ministry of Education, the Spanish Ministries of Education and Military Aviation, the Rumanian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Czech Ministry of Commerce and Tourism (A. Pitlik, a Czech Esperantist), the Italian Ministry for Naval Affairs (Alberto Alessio), the Duth Ministry of Education (J.W. Sevenhuijsen), the Bulgarian Meteorlogical Institute, the International Bibliographical Institute (of which General Sebert had been President), the British and American Associations for the Advancement of Science, and the German League of Scientific and Technical Associations.

3. la Nouvelle Paris, 17.5.25.

Co-operation make use of Esperanto, particularly in scientific and technical matters, and that for this purpose, the Committee accept the collaboration of the Esperanto Scientific Association, creating within the Committee a Bureau of Esperanto. As a Committee of Intellectual Co-operation was not bound by this resolution, it was never acted upon. However, taking the main aim of the Conference to be favourable publicity, it was a success. The second Conference, on the 'Use of Esperanto in Commerce and Industry', too was both well-publicized and well-attended. It was officially sponsored by the Paris Chamber of Commerce, which only two years previously had been dissuaded from sponsoring a similar conference, due to government opposition.[1] The Conference, presided by André Baudet (then Treasurer of the Paris Chamber of Commerce), included representatives

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1. (E. Durrant, the Language Problem, op. cit; p. 93; and L. Courtinat, Historio de Esperanto, or the History of Esperanto, vol. 2, p. 515). The 1923 Conference had then been held in Venice under the auspices of the less prestigous Italian Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland. The main resolution passed by the Conference, recommending the introduction of Esperanto into all commercial schools, was proposed by the Paris Chamber of Commerce.

from 10 governments, 171 Chambers of Commerce and Industrial corporations, 14 fairs, and 208 firms.[1]

In August of 1925, the U.E.A. organized yet another Conference, this time in Geneva under the aegis of the Swiss Federal Postal and Railroad Department. The League itself was represented, on the invitation of the Swiss Federal Department of External Affairs.[2] This Conference, too, recommended Esperanto as a 'clear language.' These conferences, with the modified attitude of the French government, were no doubt the persuading factors in the recognition of Esperanto by the International Telegraph Union, finally in October 1925, in Paris.[3] That same year, Privat made use of this recommendation to found Radio-Geneva, with weekly radio broadcasts in Esperanto.[4]

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1. E. Drezen, Analiza historio de Esperanto movado (Analytic History of the Esperanto Movement, op. cit; p. 74.

2. According to a letter from the Swiss Federal Department of External Affairs, to the League Secretariat, May 27, 1925, League Records, 44291, file 23516, Geneva.

3. Already in 1921, Brazil and Czechoslovakia had proposed to the International Telegraph Union that it officially permit the use of Esperanto as a clear language in international communications. The proposal had been narrowly defeated by 13 to 11.

4. Alice Rivaz et al; 'Edmond Privat', Revue Neuchâteloise, no. 43-44, summer-autumn 1968, p. 79.

Methods of Esperantist Persuasion

Esperantists went to great lengths to promote Esperanto and to press for its widespread adoption. This was done directly through the sponsorship of Esperanto language courses and through the publication of Esperantist journals and pamphlets. To reach the greatest number of people, these Esperantist journals usually contained parallel Esperanto and national language texts. The Universal Esperanto Congresses themselves, with their use of Esperanto as a working language, had great propaganda value. In a discussion on Esperanto by the Fifth Committee, the Finnish delegate, Mr. Voionmaa, pointed out that his government had been most impressed by the practicality of Esperanto for international conferences by the 1922 Universal Esperanto Congress in Helsinki.[1]

One might add that the sites of these annual Congresses were not accidental. The 1922 congress, for example, was held at Helsinki; both to recognize the support which the Finnish state had already given Esperanto and to persuade the government that that support should continue.

In addition to direct approaches to sympathetic organizations such as the League of Nations Union or to politicians

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1. League of Nations, Third Assembly, League Records, Fifth Committee, Minutes of the 5th Meetings, September 13, 1922, A.V./P.M.S. 1922.

like Lord Robert Cecil, less overt appeals were encouraged. Various Esperanto press clubs and propaganda Committees such as the French Society for the Propagation of Esperanto, urged at meetings, by letter, and in Esperantist journals, that individual Esperantists write to newspapers, local politicians, town publicity offices and tourist boards, radio societies, education authorities, members of Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs or Masonic orders, to any influential public figure in fact, to inform them of the movement's progress and to request their support as an aid to peace, travel, education and commerce.

In this way, commercial firms with international business and major trade fairs such as those of Paris, Lyons, Frankfurt, or Leipzig, were persuaded to make some use of Esperanto for international correspondence and advertising. For the businessmen arranging these fairs, this was a pragmatic means of reaching as many people as possible. For the Esperantists, it meant further advertising of the language.

Technical conferences were also used to bring attention to Esperanto. For example, to convince businessmen to give greater consideration to the use of Esperanto, the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Switzerland called a conference in 1923, to discuss the adoption of one common

language for commercial purposes. Over 2,500 invitations were sent out by this Chamber of Commerce.[1]

It is interesting to note that though the Italian Chamber of Commerce was the official sponsor of the conference, it was Privat who had proposed to the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Switzerland that, in view of the League motion for the practical use of Esperanto in telegraph communications, it hold a technical conference.[2] (Privat even had the Paris Chamber of Commerce send a supporting letter to the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Switzerland[3]). Like any wise pressure politician, Privat always tried to maximize the appearance of official support. Although he himself was a prominent member of the Esperantist movement, he appeared at international conferences in an official capacity, whether as a delegate of the canton of Geneva, or of the Persian delegation at the League.

News coverage for such events, it might be added, was then sought not only by providing journalists with information

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1. From a letter by Privat to E. Stettler, Jan. 28, 1923, Privat Papers.

2. From a letter by Privat in French to the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Switzerland, Oct. 9, 1923, and by the Chamber to Privat, Oct. 29, 1923, Privat Papers.

3. From a copy of a letter in French by the French Chamber of Commerce to the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Switzerland, Oct. 23, 1924, Privat Papers.

on which articles could be based, but also by Esperantists themselves contributing anonymous articles.[1]

Privat, in particular, had a stong appreciation of the value of good publicity. "The newspapers are of infinitely greater importance than the conference itself."[2] In September 1921, when Privat gave a formal breakfast in honour of the League sponsors of the resolution on Esperanto, he also invited the direction of the Swiss Telegraphic Agency, asking him to inform the major news services of the meeting without any mention of Privat's name. He explained to General Sebert that this was to give the public the impression that important men were sponsoring their cause.[3]

Privat's talent for orchestrating support for Esperanto, so that it appeared much stronger than was often the case, sometimes backfired. At the end of 1923, for example, Albert Thomas accused Privat of misleading him

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1. Privat, for example, wrote articles on Esperanto for the Journal de Genève, signed only by 'P' (ref: 'Le Congrès d'Esperanto,' Journal de Genève, August 25, 1921.

2. From a letter in French by Privat to André Baudet, Feb. 18, 1925, Privat Papers.

3. From a letter in French by Privat to Sebert, September 29, 1921, Privat Papers.

as to they sympathies of delegates to a recent Labour Conference, and concluded that a joint Labour-Esperantist conference would be a dead letter.[1]

While Privat never succeeded in establishing any Esperantists within the League, other than himself, the support of League delegates like Lord Robert Cecil, Henri Lafontaine or Eduard Benes added to the impact of the Esperanto pressure group. Benes, for example, not only gave advice to Privat on tactics to follow in the League, but personally lobbied for the Esperanto cause.[2]

Nevertheless, whatever their personal feelings about Esperanto, prominent League delegates such as Cecil or Benes seemed unprepared to pursue the question of language to what might be the detriment of the League itself. It is therefore regrettable that a caucus of supporters of Esperanto could not have been formed within the League. Not only could such a caucus have exerted greater influence

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1. From a letter in French by Albert Thomas to Privat, December 12, 1923, Privat Papers.

2. "Mr. Benes thinks it would be imprudent to bring up ...(the resolution in favour of Esperanto)...before being assured of a large enough following...I am redoubling visits and he himself is speaking of it to his friends," ref: from a letter in French by Privat to General Sebert, Dec. 7, 1920, Privat Papers.

on uncommitted delegates, but it might have focused and strengthened the individual support of sympathetic members.

Assessment

It is difficult to correctly weigh the success of various Esperantist efforts. In one instance, Privat sent a copy of the pamphlet 'Why I am an Esperantist' to the French historian, Alphonse Aulard, and asked for Aulard's support. Aulard wrote back a friendly letter, saying however that he was already in support of an international language -- French.[1] Yet, the following year, Aulard was a member of the Fifth Conference of the Union of Associations for the League of Nations which recommended the immediate introduction of Esperanto into schools.[2]

However, whether the deluge of League delegates by such pamphlets had any direct effect, is questionable. Even more doubtful was the practicality of deputations and petitions to the League by the Esperantists themselves.

On June 26, 1922, William Page of the British Esperantist Association, sent the League a petition signed by 1758 'influential people' on behalf of Esperanto. There was no response. As for Esperantist deputations, they

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1. From a letter in French by A. Aulard to Privat, July 14, 1920, Privat Papers.

2. Courrier de Genève, June 10, 1921.

were invariably graciously received, and they obtained as much as deputations usually do -- that is, nothing. As a group, Esperantists proved most successful with the League, when they worked indirectly through other interests such as the Paris Chamber of Commerce, the International Red Cross, or the League of Nations Union. Unfortunately, the movement was not strong enough to effectively link their own interests with those of such groups.

One must not overlook that the strength of the movement was not augmented by its greatest supporter -- Germany. Though Germans were by far the largest national supporters of Esperanto, Germany had been defeated in World War I, and was then barred from the League. Had Germany then been a member of the League, the Esperanto pressure group might have been much more effective.

Internal Problems

Linguistic Differences

Another major problem was the tendency of dissatisfied linguists to leave the movement and support another auxiliary language, or to go off and invent their own. This not only meant internal division and the loss of such leaders as Louis de Beaufront, Otto Jesperson, or Courturet, but also the loss of credibility with the general populace. This was a factor France used to her advantage, even to the point of covertly supporting Ido, Esperanto's rival at the League.

Finances

To sustain the Esperantist campaign at the League, money was needed to publish tracts and periodicals, reports and documentation of Esperanto's progress. These had to be distributed not only to League delegates and officials, but also to other special interest groups such as the International Red Cross, as well as to national political and administrative leaders who might press the League to support his cause. However, like most pressure groups without the comforting support of vested political or commercial interest, the Esperanto movement was plagued by lack of money. Methods of financing were haphazard,

dependent upon donations,[1] membership dues, bequests,[2] and responses to appeals in times of financial crisis. The internal division and diffuse organization of the movement did not add to its financial stability.

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1. For instance, Sebert, with a wealthy blind friend, Dr. Javal, had financed the Paris Central Office, headquarters of the Language Committee and of the Congress Organizing Committee.

2. Hector Hodler, for example, left money to the Universal Esperanto Association in his will. Though the sum was not inconsiderable (Hodler was heir to the Swiss painter, Ferdinand Hodler), it was soon eaten up by publishing costs.

Internal Problems

Membership

By 1920, the movement had attracted an impressive number of people, particularly in Germany, Britain, France and Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to look only at the statistics, and to assume that this meant they were all actively concerned with international adoption of the language. The movement included not only linguistic purists more concerned about whether to have '_ujo' or '_io' at the end of country's names, but a large number of people mainly seeking social outlets. Like Legion centers, Esperantist clubs were very amical places to meet people of like sentiments. Støp-Bavitz, for instance, tells us that Esperantist groups also acted as a sort of travel agency, arranging trips to various countries, whether to attend Esperantist congresses, or for purely tourist reasons.[1]

In addition, many Esperantists cherished unrealistic expectations as to the intentions and powers of the League, believing for example, that 'by the adoption of the Third Assembly and the publication of the Report of the Secretariat on Esperanto, the League of Nations has placed that language in a commanding position as the international

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1. C. Støp-Bavitz, la Esperanto-movado, Oslo, p. 89.

auxiliary language, and it is only a question of time before it is taught in all schools of the world.[1]

Also, though Esperantist leaders were often exceptionally well-educated men (A significant number were professional educators[2]), Esperanto did not succeed in attracting enough people sufficiently committed or sufficiently well-placed to promote the movement. As Privat mourned, "the intellectuals approve, but do not learn (the language)".[3] Sympathizers like Lord Cecil, Henri Lafontaine, Benes, Albert Thomas or Inazo Nitobe offered some support, but did not learn the language.

Thus, Privat remained the only Esperantist active directly within the League. This weakness helped frustrate any attempt to organize an Esperanto caucus within the League. Such a group, however small, might have allied with other interest groups within the League to pursue common goals.

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1. From the editorial, International Language, vol. 1, no. 10, Oct. 1924, p. 209.

2. Carlo Bourlet, an early director of propaganda, was a professor of mathematics at the Conservatoire des arts et metiers. Theophile Cart, President of the Esperanto Language Committee, was a professor of German literature at the Lycée Henri IV in Paris. Emile Boirac, President of the Esperanto Academy was a philosopher and rector of the University of Grenoble. Privat himself taught at the University of Geneva.

3. From a letter in French by Privat to Sebert, Feb. 1, 1921, Privat Papers.

The Roots of Esperanto, Nationalism and Language Suppression

Esperanto is rooted in internationalism. Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto, believed that the spread of Esperanto, a neutral world language would lead to international understanding and brotherhood.

This ideal is closely related to pacifism, and with the political unrest and wars of the early twentieth century, culminating in the First World War, more and more people were attracted to Esperanto as a way to world peace. Often members of the Esperanto movement, such as Hector Hodler or Edmond Privat, also belonged to pacifist organizations.

The upheaval of the First World War fostered sympathy to Esperanto not only in pacifists, but nationalists of small, weak or recently created countries. Esperantists contend that all nations are equal, that the language of one ought not have greater international influence than the language of another. It was not coincidental that Esperanto received most of its support at the League from small, weaker multinational countries,[1] for of necessity, these countries were also the greatest supporters of the concept of the equality of nations.

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1. See 'League Voting Pattern' in the Appendix.

However, any nation believing in the superiority of certain nations over others, is inherently opposed to egalitarian nationalism. For more powerful nations, acceptance of equality does not come naturally. It is easier to rationalize the will to dominate as a sacred mission to spread culture to nations less blessed. Thus fortified, large nations resist any diminuation of their power, whether by an attempt at international government or by a proposed international auxiliary language.

A Power may, for a limited time, lend official support to Esperanto. France, for instance, favoured Esperanto during the early 1900's and made Zamenhof a member of the Legion d'honneur. Russia too, seemed to approve during the early 1920's.

However, when the interests of a group such as the Esperantists conflict with national interests, state support invariably turns to opposition. In this, France was not alone. In Russia, Esperanto was formally forbidden in 1933. In fact, Esperantists were among those 'anti-Soviet elements' Stalin had liquidated in the Great Purge of 1936-39. Stalin's orders were to eliminate any groups with extra-national loyalties, "all people who had lived abroad and knew by their own experience the pre-war period, and all people who had friends and

relatives living abroad and maintained correspondence with them; the stamp collectors and the Esperantists."[1] The existence of these groups, it was believed, diminished control by the State, and threatened Soviet nationalism.

In Germany, where Esperanto was most widespread, the National Socialist party repeatedly warned the nation against Esperanto, "...this nationless and anti-state creation of international Jewry.[2] Not for nothing is there a resemblance between the Green Star emblem of Esperanto and the Soviet badge (the Red Star). Behind the Green Star lies control by international Socialism and Communism."[3]

In Mein Kampf, Hitler himself had cautioned: "As long as the Jew does not rule other peoples, he must speak their languages...as soon as these people are in his power, they must all learn a World language (i.e. Esperanto)."[4]

When the National Socialists actually did come to power, they too took increasingly strong measures against

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1. Quoted by Alexander Weissbert, Conspiracy of Silence, London, Hamis Hamilton, 1952, p. 504, from V. Sadler and U. Lins, op. cit; p. 212.

2. Zamenhof, the author of Esperanto, was Jewish.

3. From a 1928 speech by a National Socialist of the Bavarian Parliament, quoted in German by the Germana Esperantisto (Berlin, 1932), p. 130.

4. Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, Munich, 1941, p. 337, quoted in German by Victor Sadler and Ulrick Lins, A Case Study in Linguistic Persecution, from Man, Language and Society, ed. by S.K. Ghosh, Mouton, 1972

Esperanto. In 1935, the Nationalist Socialist Minister of Education, Bernhard Rust, decreed that to teach Esperanto in the Third Reich was henceforth illegal, for "the use of artificial languages such as Esperanto weakens the essential value of national peculiarities."[1] Later, in occupied territories like the Netherlands, Esperantist organizations were liquidated along with various other cultural or international bodies.[2]

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1. Quoted by F. Bodmer, the Loom of Language, op. cit; p. 462.

2. V. Sadler and U. Lins, op. cit; p. 211.

Conclusion

This study may seem to have depicted France as the villain, who at critical moments, blocked League recommendations of Esperanto to state schools and prevented the adoption of the language by the League. Yet it is undeniable that France notwithstanding, League recommendations on school curricula were not binding, and even had they been passed, would have received scant attention from individual governments. Nor was it probable that a majority of League delegates would have voted to adopt a language which they did not understand.

In any case, French opposition to Esperanto during the early 1920's is understandable as the reaction of a nation who felt its interests threatened. A quarter-century later, when the United States was the most powerful nation within the U.N., they too moved to block Esperanto.[1]

To conclude, though Esperanto did not achieve the full international auxiliary language recognition it

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1. In 1953, when U.N.E.S.C.O. was considering the Esperanto petition for U.N.E.S.C.O. sponsorship, the U.S. protested that it was 'not appropriate...because of the demands already made on U.N.E.S.C.O.'s resources.' (ref: U.S., Department of State, Memorandum of Esperanto in the U.S.A., dated May 18, 1953, a copy of which was found among the Privat Papers, Geneva). Whether this represented American concern for U.N.E.S.C.O. or for national American interests is debatable.

sought between 1920-1925, Esperanto did effectively shut out competitors like Ido or Interlingua, receiving League recognition as a 'clear language' in telecommunication. However limited the success of the Esperantists at the League may be credited with giving the movement incentive to continue. As recently as 1969, the Universal Esperanto Association was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

situation today?

APPENDIX I

League Voting Pattern[1]

Dec. 11, 1920	Dec. 17, 1920	Sept. 13, 1921
Assembly vote on recommendation that the League prepare report on the teaching of Esperanto)	(Second Committee vote of 10 to 1)	(Assembly vote on resolution that the League encourage the teaching of Esperanto and to prepare a report)
Belgium (Lafontaine)	Belgium (Lafontaine)	Belgium (Lafontaine)
South Africa (Cecil)		South Africa (Cecil)
Czechoslovakia (Benes)		Czechoslovakia (Benes)
Brazil (Octario)		
Columbia (Restrepo)		Columbia (Restrepo)
Chile (Huneeus)		
Haly (Schanzer)		
China (Wellington Koo)	China (Tang Tsai Fu)	China (Tang Tsai Fu)
India (Maharaja of Navangar		India (Maharaja Khen-jari)
Persia (Zoka-ed-Dovleh)	Persia (Zoka-ed-Dovleh)	Persia (Zoka-ed-Dovleh)
	Denmark (Forchhammer)	Japan (Adatci)
		Rumania (Ionnescu)
		Albania (Fan Noli)
		Finland (Enckell)
		Haiti (Dovet)
		Venezuela (Escalante)
		Poland* (Askenazy)
		*(provisionally)
VS	VS	VS
France (Hanotaux)	France (Hanotaux)	France
Britain (Barnes)		

1. The names of delegates and countries for or against Esperanto is incomplete, for the names could only be obtained when they signed a resolution, or spoke out in the Assembly or in committee. Thus, in some cases, vote results are given, but not a detailed list of who voted how. Also, one must remember that delegates favourable towards Esperanto were not always members of committees voting on Esperanto (i.e. the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation.)

APPENDIX 2

Voting Pattern (Cont'd)

Sept. 18, 1922	Sept. 21, 1922	Sept. 21, 19
(Fifth Committee vote of 18 to 8 on acceptance of the resolutions of the 1922 report on the teaching of Esperanto	(Assembly vote on acceptance of the modified 1922 report)	(Assembly vote whether to ref the question o Esperanto to t Committee of I tellectual Co-operation).
South Africa Czechoslovakia (Benĕs) China (Chao Hsin Chu) Persia (Privat) Japan (Ariyoshi) Finland (Voiomaa)	UNANIMOUS ADOPTION	TWO
VS		VS
France (Reynald) Britain (Coombe-Tennant) Denmark (Forchhammer) Sweden (Löfgren) Norway (Bonnevie) Poland (Sokal) Rumania (Vacarescu) Serbia (Avramovic) Cuba (de Bethancourt) Brazil (Rio Branco)		TWENTY-SIX

APPENDIX 3

Voting Pattern (Cont'd)

Aug. 2, 1923	Sept. 17, 1923
(Within the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation, on recommendation of Esperanto)	(Assembly vote on whether to accept French motion to adopt the report of the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation, and to support 'living languages,' as opposed to Esperanto)
One	everyone except France
either South Africa (Murray) or, more likely, Spain (Torres de Quevedo)	
VS	VS
France (Bergson, Luchaire) Denmark (Forchhammer) Norway (Bonnevie) Switzerland (Reynold) Belgium (D'Estree)	France

APPENDIX 4

Voting Pattern (Cont'd)

Sept. 19, 1924

(Second Committee vote on acceptance of Esperanto as a 'Clear language')

13 : 9

Rumania
Czechoslovakia (Benes)
Italy
China (Tcheou-Wei)
Persia (Privat)
Japan (Sugimura)
Finland
Hungary
Bulgaria
Austria
Holland (Haas)
Australia (Charlton)
New Zealand

VS

France (Georges Bonnet)
Britain (Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith)
Poland (Strasburger)
Brazil (Montarroyos)
Venezuela (Zumeta)

Sept. 20, 1924

(Assembly vote on Acceptar of Esperanto as a 'clear language')

UNANIMOUS

APPENDIX 5

ATTENDANCE AT THE UNIVERSAL ESPERANTO CONGRESSES[1]

1905	Boulogne-sur-mer	658 delegates
1906	Geneva	818
1907	Cambridge	680
1908	Dresden	1368
1909	Barcelona	1287
1910	Washington	357
1911	Antwerp	1733
1912	Cracow	946
1913	Bern	1013
1914	Paris	3739 delegates registered; the Congress never actually took place due to the outbreak of World War I
1915	San Francisco	163
1920	the Hague	408
1921	Prague	2561
1922	Helsinki	820
1923	Nuremberg	4963
1924	Vienna	3400
1925	Geneva	953

1. Figures of attendance taken from Joseph W. Dubin, The Green Star, Philadelphia, 1944, p. 272.

APPENDIX 6

Membership in the Universal Esperanto Association

	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925
TOTAL	3894	5579	6189	6332	8265	9424
Britain	677	708	714	659	722	
Germany	456	744	915	871	1741	
Austria	43	163	172	166	253	
France	408	457	472	466	511	
Czechoslovakia	325	535	634	793	1015	
Spain	193	191	228	228	274	
Holland	160	233	243	241	250	
Finland	143	144	162	167	144	
Poland	131	312	344	239	311	
Switzerland	125	189	210	203	227	
Sweden	121	156	142	144	141	
Italy	106	166	168	171	226	
Hungary	95	189	144	143	183	
Belgium	72	67	74	77	83	
Denmark	71	70	75	77	75	
Rumania	8	90	122	246	382	
Europe	3350	4870	5478	5603	7411	
U.S.	244	261	245	213	264	

APPENDIX 7

Membership in the Universal Esperanto Association[1] (Cont'd)

	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925
Latin America	82	125	113	117	133	
Australia	57	120	194	115	142	
Asia	54	96	157	205	230	
Canada	22	23	24	20	21	

1. (Universala Esperanto-Asocio, Kongreso Libro, 17 Universala Kongreso de Esperanto, Geneve, 1925, 84 p.)

APPENDIX 8

ESPERANTIST CENSUS - 1926

During this period, the only attempt at making a complete census of Esperantists was in 1926, by the German Esperanto Institute. It counted a total of 126,576 authenticated Esperantists in over 100 countries. A breakdown of some of its figures show:[1]

Germany	30,868
Czechoslovakia[2]	8,967
Britain	7,855
Austria	7,696
Japan	6,903
Holland	6,649
Italy	5,341
France	5,237

and by continents:[3]

Europe	109,690
Asia	7,832
America	7,331
Australasia	1,417
Africa	306

1. Figures quoted by Lajos Kökeny, V. Bleier (eds) Enciklopedio de Esperanto, vol. 2, op. cit; p. 548

2. The Czech Esperanto Association had not even been founded until 1920. Thus, the rise in membership is quite significant.

3. Figures quoted by E.D. Durrant, the Language Problem, Heronsgate (England), p. 118.

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To look back over the events of the past is the task of the historian and the analyst, contributing to the store of knowledge of the human race. The author of this text, Margaret Huber, has undertaken the obviously strenuous task of taking one facet of the history of the international language, Esperanto, the obstacles it met at the League of Nations in the nineteen twenties. She has explored in depth, to an astonishing measure, the manner in which Esperanto failed to triumph. These obstacles prevented its success then. The consequences? At all international conferences and discussions, the interpreters and translators do their best to overcome what the lack of understanding, foresight and idealism caused to humanity.

Had the League of Nations pounced upon Esperanto, enthusiastically ensured its teaching in the schools and immediately given it recognition as an additional language for international use, two advantages would have been obtained. There would be no "language problems" in the world today and the cultural heritage of all individual nations would have been made available to all peoples. If Margaret Huber's effort brings fruit, so much the better, even if it comes half a century late.

Margaret Huber's work takes up 146 pages. It has been done with extreme care and attention to detail. It follows the traditional style of historical analysis, with copious footnotes. She tells what people said, and also who they were. She gives her authorities, in eleven pages of reference notes, apart from the footnotes in the body of the work. The language style is clear and easy to follow, showing a fine appreciation of the niceties of the English language. There are relatively few (and minor) points, mainly of a typographical or copying nature, to be corrected in the final text.

The author cites the Japanese officials recognition of the essential neutrality of Esperanto, saying that this would mean "the Japanese will henceforth have nothing to fear or complain about in international conferences."(p.34 At the present time (in the 1970's) the Japanese still suffer in political and economic internationalism. The Esperanto-speaking Japanese (still a tiny minority) now provide links in some sixty towns and cities in Japan, open to Esperanto-speakers all over the world.

The author cites the International Red Cross resolution (1921) recommending Esperanto as the most powerful means of obtaining international understanding. (p.42) In the past fifty years, be cause of non encouragement of Esperanto, many fatalities have occurred on land, sea and in the air.

Those fatalities which were due to language difficulties could have been avoided, and the blame for them must rest squarely on the shoulders of the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations Organization, and not on the Esperanto Movement, which has repeatedly pleaded with the U.N., even to the extent of millions of signatories. Recent responses have followed the same pattern as that of the 1922 response mentioned by the author: a petition was sent, "there was no response." The representatives of any Country at the U.N. (including Canada) could ask why millions of dollars are wasted there, when the adoption of Esperanto as a "favoured language" would save that money and, what is more, end the long delays for translations. Countries submitting documents in Esperanto could have them distributed immediately, without translation, to the 100plus nations, where they would be readily understood by those familiar with the subject matter. Not only was the International Red Cross resolution spurned, common sense was abandoned, too.

On page 57 the author emphasizes: "It was not to France's advantage to allow furtherance of what might become the new diplomatic language." This French objection seems to have been the main cause of Esperanto's claim being left in abeyance. Yet the French delegate "deplored the League's exorbitant cost of translation."(p.59) Until Esperanto succeeds, these costs will continue. Economics alone should dictate an immediate re appraisal.

Margaret Huber is dealing with one particular point. She expects the reader to be aware of the general subject and gives no information on the language itself or its present position. Therefore, it follows that, in presenting this, some addition might be made. Esperanto, the international language, compiled in 1887, stems from sixteen rules of grammar, possesses an international dictionary of some 1500 pages, with a word treasury unmatched by any national language. It is the ideal language for scientific and cultural progress. There are speakers listed in over 3000 cities and towns throughout the world (including over 20 cities in each the Soviet Union, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, the United States, and in over 70 places in Canada). Speakers include parliamentaries, professors, business men, professional and technical men, clergy, manual workers, and the unemployed. It opens a new world to the diligent seeker after world understanding. Information may be had from public libraries anywhere. The Canadian Parliamentary Library has, at least, a dictionary. Today, China is the foremost publisher, Pekin turning out a monthly magazine, which is supplied for 2 years for $3.00.

The author deserves generous commendation for her effort and for the doggedness of her pursuit of the truth. Her work merits publication and widespread diffusion. National Library and Esperanto Libraries throughout the world should receive copies. We wish her well.