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LÉON BOURGEOIS AND THE REACTION IN FRANCE TO HIS RECEIVING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE IN 1920

It is a truism that the Nobel Peace Prize, too, is a historical institution and that it has developed through different historical stages. It has not been the same from the beginning to the present, just as the notion of peace has clearly had varying meanings, stressing different features of what may legitimately be called peace. We do not want to deal with the motives of the institutions awarding the prize. For instance, informally the German Emperor Wilhelm II was asked in 1912 whether he would accept such an honour, but he indignantly refused, so that the plan never became known to the public¹. What were the considerations of the Committee?

It is evident that prize winners belonged to at least four different categories: they were either pacifists and internationalists engaged in trying to prevent war; they were social reformers who tried to better social or political relations in national societies as well as in international society as a whole; some were active politicians who were concerned with diplomacy and conflict solutions. Finally, the Nobel Peace Prize was sometimes awarded to humanitarian institutions which contributed to improving the condition of mankind in general.

These standards were often contradictory, and what is more: the Nobel Prize decisions represented political acts in the international as well as national situations of the day. They were an honour for a certain person and his or her political beliefs, but they implicitly criticized others who had opposed the politics of prize winners. Had it been otherwise, that would be a sign of complete de-politicization of the prize. This was tempered only by the fact that in many cases nominees were honoured as old or retired persons for achievements several years or even decades earlier.

In this regard, Léon Bourgeois was a man who does not fit into any one category – or he belongs to more than one, a person whose life and achievements defied simple classification. Bourgeois was a social reformer in his country as well as in international society; he was an active politician and diplomat, and thus he may be even called an institution – although only in a metaphorical sense. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1920 when he was 69 years old and when his efforts at the First Hague Peace Conference lay 21 years in the past. But at the same time Bourgeois was still

1 Cf. Willibald GUTSCHE, *Wilhelm II. Der letzte deutsche Kaiser*, Berlin 1991, p. 148. – An earlier version of this paper was delivered at an international conference at the Norwegian Nobel Institute in June 1992 on »The Meaning and Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in the Prize Winners Countries«. – For a general introduction: Irvin ABRAMS, *The Nobel Peace Prize and the Laureates. An Illustrated Biographical History, 1901–1987*, Boston 1988.

active as president of sessions of the League of Nations council and as president of the third commission of the first League of Nations assembly in Geneva².

In the following remarks, we want to deal with Bourgeois's life and personality (I) as an institutional career and then (II) analyse his main convictions. In the next chapter (III) the acceptance of and reaction to the award in French newspapers in December 1920 will be presented, and afterwards (IV) explained. And finally (V), we will draw some conclusions about the subject of this article in the light of these remarks.

I.

Léon Bourgeois was born in 1851 and rose quickly in the French administration³. He was prefect of the department Tarn at the age of 31; four years later he served as prefect of the police in Paris for a short time. His political career was based on the radical movement, which became a party towards the end of the century. In 1888, for the first time, he was nominated as candidat for the national assembly in the department Marne, where he triumphed over General Boulanger. There he was reelected until he moved over to the Senate in 1905 for the same department. Bourgeois, finally, became president of the Senate in 1920. In the rapid change of governments during the Third Republic, he was able to serve in many governmental positions. He started in 1889 as Minister of the Interior, then of Education and three years later he was Minister of Justice. In 1895/96, he was Prime Minister for a short time, a position for which he was repeatedly regarded as an appropriate candidate in later years, but which he never held again.

During the First World War in the *Union sacrée*, he was entrusted with several other ministries and functions as *Ministre d'État* 1915–1916, *Ministre du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale* 1917, *Ministre d'État* and member of the *Comité de guerre* 1917.

In international affairs it was not so much his involvement in concrete questions of French foreign policy, which was typical for him, although he served for a short time as Foreign Minister in 1906. Rather the structural problems of a peaceful international system were his main interest. And here we are at the main point of interest.

2 In 1920, Bourgeois was the president of the first, the third and the ninth session of the League council (16 January; 12–13 March; 16–20 September 1920). The task of the third commission of the League assembly was the discussion of the organization of the Court of International Justice.

3 There exists only one older and insufficient biography for Bourgeois: Maurice HAMBURGER, *Léon Bourgeois (1851–1925). La politique radicale socialiste, la doctrine de la solidarité, l'arbitrage internationale et la Société des Nations*, Paris 1932. See also: *The Curriculum vitae of Léon Bourgeois*, *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, Paris (MAE), SDN vol. 209 (written after his death); Bernard WEBER, *Léon Bourgeois*, in: Warren F. KUEHL (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Internationalists*, London 1983, pp. 98–100; Marie-Renée MOUTON, *La Société des Nations et les intérêts de la France (1920–1924)*, *Thèse de doctorat d'État*, University of Paris I, (unpublished) 1988, pp. 34–39; Serge BERSTEIN, *Le Milieu genevois dans la France de l'entre-deux-guerres*, in: *Les Internationales et le problème de la guerre au XX^e siècle, actes du colloque organisé par l'École française de Rome (Rome 22–24 novembre 1984)*, Rome 1987, pp. 321–335, pp. 324–327; – Biographical sketches of Bourgeois are contained in: *Det Norske Stortings Nobelkomité* (ed.), *Redeglørse For Nobels Fredspris*, Kristiania 1919, p. 11–19 (Dr. Worm-Müller); 1920, p. 10–15 (Christian Lous Lange), cf. also: 1908 (Halvdan Koht), 1910–1912 (Ragnvald Moe).

Bourgeois was the first delegate of France at the two Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907, and afterwards never lost sight of the relevant problems⁴. In 1899 it was surprising and a singular fact among the great powers that an active and relatively young politician should take over the position of chief delegate, and it was all the more astonishing when the 48-year-old Bourgeois resolutely strove for the presidency of the arbitration commission and, when difficulties arose, also of a subcommittee, the comité d'examen. In this position he (and his delegation) played a decisive role in the creation of the first international organization of this rank, the Court of International Justice. It consisted only of a list of judges, of which each state could make use of in case of need. Although Bourgeois himself became one of the French members of this »Court«, the institution was used until 1914 only as a matter of diplomatic and tactical courtesy, not in cases of real danger to peace or for prevention of war⁵.

Therefore, in 1907, Bourgeois and his colleagues in France, as in many other states, concentrated on the principle of obligatory arbitration, the definition of questions, in which states should bind themselves to an arbitration process. Although the proposed areas had not much to do with politics, let alone with the question of potential wars, the German emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of great powers precluded success. In the following years Bourgeois remained a propagator of the work of the Hague, the newly founded Société des Nations as he called it⁶.

In the First World War, in 1917, the senator was nominated as the head of the French Foreign Office committee which developed principles for a future international institution⁷. His conception of the Société des Nations (SDN) took up on the one hand his prewar principles and on the other hand was influenced by the experience of the World War. The French public and the government gave their approval and agreement to a Société des Nations only rather reluctantly⁸. In essence it was like the United Nations, which emerged from the Second World War: it was another name for the wartime coalition which should be extended to the post war period in the interest of French policy, just as the United Nations was originally founded on 1 January 1942 as a war coalition against aggressors. The same was true of the SDN; it was to have a strong executive force. The committee's conception included a council of the League with real decision-making powers: it could establish the definite settlement of a political conflict between the members of the SDN, the juridical conflicts would be settled by the international court, and it could decide on

4 JOST DÜLFFER, *Regeln gegen den Krieg? Die Haager Friedenskonferenzen von 1899 und 1907 in der internationalen Politik*, Berlin 1981. For the role of France and Bourgeois especially: pp. 79f., 87–90, 160–183, 293–295, 298f., 301f., 307–309, 313–315.

5 *Ibidem*, pp. 205–226.

6 LÉON BOURGEOIS, *Pour la Société des Nations*, Paris 1910. This book is a compilation of speeches made by Léon Bourgeois 1899–1909.

7 The minutes and reports of the Committee are to be found in MAE, SDN vol. 1–5. Some of these reports were published in 1919: LÉON BOURGEOIS, *Le pacte de la Société des Nations*, Paris 1919, pp. 197–215.

8 Marie-Renée MOUTON, *L'idée d'organisation internationale en France et en Italie pendant la première guerre mondiale*, in: *La France et l'Italie pendant la première guerre mondiale. Actes du colloque tenu à l'université des Sciences Sociales de Grenoble les 28, 29 et 30 Septembre 1973*, Grenoble 1979, pp. 100–121.

sanctions to carry through its settlement or the decision of the court in case one member would not accept it. The military sanctions would be carried out by an international army, headed by an international military staff. This staff would also have the right to propose to the council to intervene in national military organizations to standardize the national contingents of the proposed army.

Although Bourgeois founded a »union internationale des associations pour la SDN«, as well as a French branch of it to propagate the new idea, his efforts to realize the French concept were an almost complete failure⁹. That was not so much due to his conflict with Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau¹⁰, who only grudgingly accepted the whole idea of an SDN, or to the fact that Bourgeois was not appointed to lead the French delegation to the peace conference in Paris, but was only named to head the French delegation for the League of Nations-Committee of the conference¹¹.

The main reason was the close cooperation of the United States and Great Britain. Their position was so strong, that they could force immediate acceptance of their draft of the Covenant of the SDN as the basis for negotiations and that they could maintain their control during the deliberations¹². Wilson and Cecil opposed the main elements of the French conception vigorously and prevented a system of obligatory pacific settlement of disputes and the organization of an international force. The greatest success of the French delegation in the committee was the disarmament article. While the Anglo-American proposal had provided for disarmament to a level which was consistent only with »domestic« security, i. e. meaning only police forces, the French together with Italy and Japan secured the acceptance of a disarmament which would be consistent with »national« security. That could include geographical and other special circumstances and would later become a vehicle to connect the security with the disarmament question. The other great success for the French delegates was the committee's acceptance of conditions for admission, which were designed to ensure that only a Germany which was thoroughly reformed, disarmed and had fulfilled the reparations requirements would be admitted to League membership.

The disappointment about the newly created League of Nations in France in general, as well as of Bourgeois himself, was great¹³. Still, he remains not only a propagator of the SDN, and also became the most prominent delegate of France for the sessions of the League council and chief of the French delegation for the first

9 Ibidem p. 115; Lloyd E. AMBROSIUS, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 70–71.

10 See for G. Clemenceau's position to the League of Nations: Jean-Baptiste DUROSELLE, *Clemenceau*, Paris 1988, pp. 723, 728, 731 f., 742 f.; AMBROSIUS (see n. 9) pp. 54, 71; David STEVENSON, *French War Aims and the American Challenge, 1914–1918*, in: *The Historical Journal* 22, 4 (1979) pp. 877–894.

11 The letter of Clemenceau to Bourgeois, 17 January 1919, MAE, *Papiers Léon Bourgeois* vol. 18. Bourgeois was also responsible for this question during the governments preparations for the Peace Conference: David French STEVENSON, *War Aims against Germany 1914–1919*, Oxford 1982, p. 152.

12 George W. EGERTON, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations*, Chapel Hill 1978, pp. 110–169; AMBROSIUS (see n. 9) pp. 51–79, 107–135.

13 The disappointment of Bourgeois: Comte DE SAINT-AULAIRE, *Genève contre la Paix*, Paris 1936, p. 22: »Il (Léon Bourgeois) ne la (S. D. N.) reconnaissait pas pour sa fille car elle n'était pas casquée et armée ainsi qu'il l'avait conçue. Il en parlait avec plus de scepticisme que de fanatisme et n'avait vraiment confiance en elle que pour caser dans quelque fromage genevois ... ses protégés et protégées.«

assembly of the League in November–December 1920. In December 1920 he was nominated together with Woodrow Wilson for the Nobel Peace Prize. Wilson's League of Nations policy had also failed, but in another way: the main features of the League's organization were based on Wilsonian proposals, but the United States Senate had refused to ratify the necessary treaties, thus refusing to join the League of Nations.

In the situation of December 1920 the Nobel Peace Prize was a homage to two vanquished political figures, who, as bitter opponents in the preceding year, had to be reconciled¹⁴. That gave the Prize an additional, although limited meaning¹⁵.

II.

It is not always easy to find the basis of Bourgeois's thinking and actions – and especially in questions of peace and war. He was a gifted orator and very skilled negotiator. In both roles he was able to carry people with him. He was a master of flattering speech to different people, often pronouncing high principles which were at stake when considering smaller questions. When adopting N. Ingram's typology¹⁶, Léon Bourgeois must be assigned to the 'pacifisme ancien style' which could also be described as an ideological pacifism. He supported the theory of peace through justice, a theory which could justify war if it was fought for the defence of the higher ideal of law and justice. That is why he could seek alliances with other pacifists as well as with people of the French military establishment. For this reason he could pronounce himself, on the last day of the war in 1918 against a certain type of pacifism declaring¹⁷: »Je ne crois pas nécessaire de nous défendre contre l'accusation de pacifisme. Ceux qui confondent les soldats du droit et les partisans de la paix à tout prix, ne savent ni ce que c'est que le droit ni ce que sont ceux qui luttent pour le droit.« That was not a question of a conversion of his political doctrine, but of inherent consequences of his war-and-peace theory. With some modifications in the course of time, some principles of Bourgeois's thinking stand out from his early

14 R. Poincaré reports about the increasing severity of the judgements of Bourgeois: »Wilson l'a frappé par son autoritarisme incroyable et sa mauvaise foi. Il conduit tout en vue d'une exaltation personnelle« (15 February); Wilson »... dirige »imperieusement« les discussions relative à la Ligue des Nations« (27 March); »... Bourgeois est arrivé à ne plus pouvoir sentir Wilson« (26 April); Raymond POINCARÉ, *Au Service de la France*, vol. 11, Paris 1974, p. 150 (15 February 1919); p. 282 (27 March 1919); p. 376 (26 April 1919).

15 A proposal for an award to Bourgeois had been made in 1908 by a certain M. Samadkhan (Paris), in 1910 by Henri d'Estournelles de Constant, in 1911 by Frédéric Passy, in the years to come up to 1916 annually by different persons, 1919 by N. A. Nilson (Ørebro), Norwegian Nobel Institute Archives.

16 Norman INGRAM, *The Politics of Dissent. Pacifism in France 1919–1939*, Oxford 1991, pp. 9–15. – This type of pacifism defined the essence of French pacifism in the twenties and is represented by the *Association de la paix par le droit* (A. P. D.): *ibidem* pp. 19–118.

17 Speech of Bourgeois in Paris, on 10 November 1918 at the *Assemblée générale constitutive de l'Association française pour la Société des Nations*, in: Léon BOURGOIS, *Le pacte de 1919* (see n. 7), p. 63. – Exactly the same position was taken by Th. Ruysen, president of the A. P. D. in a published letter to Clemenceau in October 1918: INGRAM (see n. 16) p. 32.

political career to the days of his old age and evolved from the same basic political convictions¹⁸.

He was a French radical, meaning he beared his belief on the results of the French revolution, especially the Declaration of Rights of Man. He believed in the importance of a »volonté générale« and in the development of mankind to a new status of democracy – and in France's role as a model. In this optimistic belief in human progress he was a true disciple of Auguste Comte. »Nous sommes dans un État laïque. Personne ... ne viendrait demander que la théologie prît aujourd'hui le gouvernail des sciences«, he argued in a speech in 1892, when he stressed the necessity of a reform of universities in France as a precondition for future democracy and the self-preservation of the French nation in an international context¹⁹. These principles of science had to be supplemented by solidarity, a principle between Christian charity, socialist collectivism and individual egotism. It was a solidarity which prepared the first features of a French welfare state. These conditions of peace inside a state corresponded perfectly to those between nations. »Les conditions de la paix sociale, ... s'applique[nt] ... exactement à l'ordre international: ›Pas d'harmonie sans l'ordre, pas d'ordre sans la paix, pas de paix sans la liberté, pas de liberté sans la justice««, was his formula in 1909²⁰.

That makes clearer why at the Hague Conferences he unhesitatingly claimed the leadership for himself and his country of the International Court and in the extension of international law to obligatory arbitration as a principle.

In some respects Bourgeois was as staunch a supporter of national sovereignty as were the Germans²¹: »L'idée de l'indépendance et de la dignité de la patrie est ... aussi sacrée que celle de l'indépendance et de la dignité de la personne humaine« (1910). It was no accident that he claimed the correct notion was »Société des Nations«, or better²²: »une société de droit entre les nations«. That differed, even after 1918, from the English word »league« or the German »Bund« for the new institution, because it aimed at a deeper community in international affairs. And it also differed (here in accordance with the English word) from the German *Völkerbund*. The *nations* as politically and emotionally established entities were part of the »Société des Nations« of the Hague already in 1899 and 1907. The institution of 1919 was to be, in his view, only a more mature and elaborate form of the already existing organization. It was a personal disappointment for Bourgeois that in the final version every link of the League of Nations with the Hague Conferences was deleted.

18 See the books and speeches of BOURGEOIS: *Solidarité*, Paris 1896; *L'éducation de la démocratie française, Discours prononcés de 1890 à 1896*, Paris 1897; *L'idée de Solidarité et ses Conséquences Sociales*, Paris 1902; *Pour la Société des Nations*, Paris 1910; *L'œuvre de la Société des Nations (1920–1923)*, Paris 1923. (It contains an extrait of the article »Les raisons de vivre de la Société des Nations«); *Le pacte de 1919 et la Société des Nations*, Paris 1919; *Les raisons de vivre de la Société des nations. Communication de M. Léon Bourgeois au Comité Nobel du Parlement Norvégien*, Stockholm 1923; *Speech of Bonthe 21 January 1922 at the Conférence faite à l'Institut des Hautes Études Internationales par M. Léon Bourgeois*, in: *Morale internationale*, Paris 1922.

19 *Les universités. La science de la démocratie*. In: *L'éducation de la démocratie française*, Paris 1897, pp. 9–56 (quote: p. 18).

20 *Speech of Bourgeois at Paris in 1909*, in: LÉON BOURGEOIS, *Pour la Société des Nations*, Paris 1910, p. 16.

21 *Ibidem*, p. 26.

22 *Speech of Bourgeois at Paris in 1908*, in: *ibidem*, p. 285.

Even in 1909 he had distinguished between two kinds of diplomacy, the politics of cabinets as a diplomacy of force, which was based on balance of forces and which created instability and the danger of a »conflagration générale compromettant la civilisation tout entière« and a diplomacy of law, which has already been explained²³. The world war was thus a just war for France and her allies – not only because of the violation of Belgian neutrality by the Germans in 1914, but also because of the structure of international politics since 1870. Of course, not every remark in war propaganda and speeches must be considered as a permanent conviction, but in 1916 in an introduction to a history of international relations, Bourgeois interpreted German foreign policy under Bismarck, Wilhelm II and Bethmann Hollweg as only different forms of the same thing: as a policy of force and power without regard to law and equity²⁴. On the other hand, Bourgeois saw the development of the alliances and ententes by France²⁵: »On va donc voir se dessiner, justement parce que l'Allemagne commence à s'engager dans cette action mondiale où se manifeste la solidarité des intérêts de tous les pays, une politique tissée de rapports juridiques et tendant à soumettre au droit les relations des peuples.« And this conviction was central in his support of a new order established by the victorious nations after the war. »C'est donc une autre politique, celle du droit, qui seule peut arriver à donner à la France et aux Nations qui ne cherchent pas leur avenir dans la violence, la sécurité et la paix. Il n'y aura pas de politique du droit si la Société des Nations n'est pas constituée.«

He left no doubt that France submitted to international law, which had been and would always be on her side. In this sense the divergence between the principle of national sovereignty and obligatory arbitration before 1914, or the possibility of the application of military force by the League after 1918, which Bourgeois propagated, can best be explained: international law stood above history and was only partially codified. It was developing further analogous to the individual human rights and was also binding in a broader sense²⁶. But, France would be always on that side of law and justice: »La défense du Droit, c'est l'image même de la France.« Or, in 1922²⁷: »Loin d'opposer l'idée de patrie à l'idée d'humanité, il faut en effet, affirmer avec force que les hommes qui servent le mieux la cause de la paix sont, en vérité, les plus patriotes. La patrie est, elle ne peut être que l'élément organique, par excellence, de toute la Société des Nations.« In this sense only, he would have preferred the creation of the new Société des Nations during the war, before the vanquished nations could have a word to say in the negotiations.

Bourgeois's last important contribution to the question of peace was an article he transmitted to the Nobel Committee in December 1922, two years after he received the Nobel Peace Prize²⁸. It was a kind of testament of his political philosophy,

23 Speech of Bourgeois at Reims in 1909, in: *ibidem*, p. 15.

24 *La paix armée et l'organisation du droit international* (30 May 1916) (preface to M. DEBIDOUR, *Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe*). In: BOURGEOIS, *Le pacte de 1919* (see n. 7) pp. 3 sq.

25 Speech of Bourgeois in November 1916, in: BOURGEOIS, *Le pacte de 1919* (see n. 7) p. 19.

26 *Ibidem*, p. 20.

27 BOURGEOIS, *Les raisons de vivre*. In: *L'œuvre* (see n. 18) p. 448.

28 Bourgeois expressed his thanks to the Nobel Committee on 12 December in a telegram, on 19 December 1920 in a three-pages letter from Geneva. On 4 August 1921 he excused himself for reasons of health for not to have delivered a speech at Oslo until then and announced this for August/September

starting with school education and extending to world politics in the future. »La victoire avait été, avant tout, une victoire du droit et de la civilisation. L'écroulement de trois grandes monarchies, principalement fondées sur la puissance militaire, avait donné naissance à de jeunes états, représentants du droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes«²⁹. The First World War was the war of liberation for new nations, which were on their way to democracy. Not all nations in the world were already liberated in that sense, not all unnatural movements, as the Pan-German example was called, which tended to reach beyond their borders were gone, but Bourgeois was confident »qu'il s'agisse surtout des convulsions dernières du cataclysme qui a bouleversé le monde«³⁰.

Nothing could be farther from the reality of international politics two months before the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, which brought the conflict between France and Germany to a new peak.

III.

The French public was not informed in advance about the intention of the Nobel Prize Committee to award the prizes for 1919 and 1920 to Wilson and Bourgeois respectively. But the Quai d'Orsay and Bourgeois himself were given notice of the intention³¹, while the politician at that time was staying at Geneva as chief of the French delegation to the first League of Nations assembly. For one week the award was to be kept secret. On behalf of Bourgeois, the French minister in Kristiania, Pralon, accepted the medal and the diploma and apologized that Bourgeois could not accept the honour in person. The minister praised Bourgeois's lifelong struggle for peace, from the Hague Conferences to the Geneva assembly, where he had worked »de tout son autorité, du meilleur de son cœur et de son intelligente bonté à l'apaisement des douleurs humaines, à la solution la plus équitable des conflits entre les hommes ou les nations«³². All Frenchmen were proud »qui apprécieront de toute sa grande valeur le choix que vous venez de faire d'une personnalité aussi représentative de leurs aspirations de fraternité meilleure et de justice plus complète«.

The reaction of French public opinion, or at least the press, was different³³. This

1922 (letter 20 August 1921). But, evidently he could only send a letter in December 1922, a »communication«, which was printed separately in Stockholm in 1923, Nobel Institute Archives Oslo; cf. *Les raisons de vivre* (see n. 18).

29 *Les raisons de vivre* (see n. 18) pp. 1–2; also: *L'œuvre de la Société des Nations* (see n. 18) pp. 441–453 (quote: 441).

30 *Ibidem*, p. 7.

31 Pralon to MAE, 3 December 1920; Peretti de la Rocca to J. Goût, 3 December 1920, MAE, Europe 1918–1940, Norway, vol. 52.

32 Pralon to Leygues, 24 December 1920, MAE, SDN vol. 209. – Bourgeois himself sent a telegram to the president of the Nobel Committee on 12 December 1920. He expressed his »sincère reconnaissance. Je reporte sur la France tout l'honneur de cette désignation en me parvenant ici au milieu des travaux de l'assemblée de la Société des Nations. Votre message est pour moi un précieux encouragement pour continuer à travailler à la grande œuvre commune dont le succès sera la garantie suprême du droit et de la paix« (cf. n. 18), Nobel Institute Archives Oslo.

33 The Paris newspapers: *L'Action Française*; *L'Avenir de Paris*; *La Bataille*; *Bonsoir*; *La Croix*; *L'Écho de Paris*; *L'Éclair*; *L'Ère Nouvelle*; *L'Événement*; *L'Excelsior*; *Le Figaro*; *La France*; *La France libre*; *La France militaire*; *Le Gaulois*; *L'Homme libre*; *L'Humanité*; *L'Information*; *L'Intransigeant*; *Le*

impression is based on 48 newspapers, 40 from Paris, 8 from the province. 9 of them did not report the news at all in the first two days, 11 and 12 December³⁴. But among them was no mass paper, and three of them, »L'Action Française«, »L'Humanité« and »Le Populaire« commented on it, often broadly. The other papers printed the news about the prize on the first page, those of 12 December mostly with a report of the awards ceremony in Kristiana. The League of Nations assembly paid homage to Bourgeois on 11 December, the French Senate on 14 December. Thereupon many papers printed the news mirroring of these three events, 15 papers reported about one ceremony, 22 at least about two of them. Two papers with mass circulation, »Le Journal« (1 million – a short report) and »Le Martin« (1,5 million copies) were among them. Le »Journal des Débats« and »Le Temps«, two papers with smaller circulations (25 000/75 000 respectively), but with great influence, wrote at greater length, with excerpts from the speeches given. On the whole³⁵ 9 papers reported extensively about the Storting ceremony, 10 about Geneva, 8 about the Senate. 11 of these reports were to be found on the front page, seldom accompanied by a photo of Bourgeois. »L'Excelsior«, a paper of the center, had on 13 December photos of all French Nobel peace laureates since 1901, »La Petite Gironde« and »Le Petit Journal« published a photo of Bourgeois on 11 December, as did »Le Radical« on 15 December and only »La France de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest« had photos of Wilson as well as Bourgeois. It is remarkable that two of these newspapers did not mention the prize for Wilson at all, 6 of them not in a headline. Only 6 papers took note of Wilson's telegram to the Storting; 4 reported on the congratulations of the League assembly also to Wilson³⁶.

Journal des Débats; Le Journal; Le Journal du Peuple; La Justice; La Lanterne; La Liberté; La Libre Parole; Le Matin; L'Œuvre; La Patrie; Le Petit Journal; Le Petit Parisien; La Petite République; Le Populaire de Paris; La Presse; Le Radical; Le Rappel; La République Française; Le Soir; Le Temps; La Victoire.

The province newspapers: Le Petit Marseillais; Le Petit Provençal; La Petite Gironde; La Liberté du Sud-Ouest; La France de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest; Le Courrier du Centre; Le Populaire du Centre; Le Télégramme du Nord.

For the classification of these newspapers: Pierre MIQUEL, *La Paix de Versailles et l'opinion publique française*, Paris 1972, pp. 19–36.

34 L'Intransigeant; La Liberté; La Patrie; La Presse; Le Soir; La France militaire.

35 Storting Ceremony: La Bataille (12 December); Bonsoir (12 December); L'Ère Nouvelle (12 December); Le Journal des Débats (12 December); La République française (12 December); Le Temps (12 December); La France de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest (12 December); La Liberté du Sud-Ouest (13 December). – Geneva: L'Avenir (12 December); L'Ère Nouvelle (12 December); L'Excelsior (12 December); L'Information (12 December); Le Journal des Débats (13 December); Le Radical (12 December); Le Rappel (12 December); Le Temps (12 December); La Petite Gironde (12 December); La France de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest (13 December). – Senate: La France Libre (15 December); Le Journal des Débats (16 December); Le Petit Parisien (15 December); Le Radical (15 December); Le Temps (15 December); Le Courrier du Centre (15 December); La Liberté du Sud-Ouest (15 December); La France (15 December). – Photo of Bourgeois: La Bataille (12 December); L'Ère Nouvelle (12 December); La République française (12 December); Le Temps (12 and 13 December); La Petite Gironde (12 December); La France de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest (13 December); La Liberté du Sud-Ouest (12 December); Le Radical (15 December); Le Journal des Débats (13 December); Le Petit Parisien (15 December).

36 No mention at all: La France militaire; La Lanterne. – Not in headline: L'Avenir; La France libre; Le Petit Journal; Le Journal du Peuple; Le Radical; Le Populaire du Centre. – Wilson's telegram: La Bataille; L'Ère Nouvelle; La République française; Le Temps; la France de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest;

Only 10 newspapers reported more than superficially. On 12 December »L'Excelsior« also published the news of the awards ceremony and the homage of the League and brought an article about Alfred Nobel and his foundation. That provided an opportunity to portray all 18 French prize winners in all areas. Similarly, »La France de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest« published a list of all French Nobel prize winners. There were only 7 editorials about the Nobel Peace Prize award. On the political right in »Le Gaulois« (»Journal de la Défense sociale et de la réconciliation nationale«) a person named le Coq argued on 11 December³⁷: »Le précédent lauréat, on s'en souvient, était un Allemand qui avait inventé un effroyable gaz asphyxiant. Les distributeurs des prix de la paix, cette année, ont renoncé au paradoxe et nul ne pourra blâmer leur choix judicieux.« In »L'Action Française«, which gave no information on the award itself, Charles Maurras characterized Wilson and Bourgeois as »deux hommes de sang«, »deux ennemis de la mise en défense des peuples«³⁸. Especially Bourgeois had been responsible for the neglect of French armaments before 1914. »C'est certainement par lui qu'un million ou douze cent mille jeunes Français ont livré leur vie innocente au canon, à la mitrailleuse et à l'avion boches dont, par sa faute, nous n'avions pu préparer les équivalents«, while Wilson was responsible for the peace of 1919 with its predictable catastrophies to come. The only policy which could keep peace consisted in military strength, the balance of power, and realism, meaning that a lasting or eternal peace was impossible on earth. Wilson and Bourgeois were »professeurs doctrinaires, des lanceurs de formules qui n'en mesurent pas la portée«. Their real motive was personal vanity.

Some authors stressed the difference between the League-of-Nations concepts of Wilson and Bourgeois. Among them were Abel Hermant and Paul Ginistry in »L'Information« (a paper of the center) and Maurice Genestre in »L'Avenir«. According to Hermant, neither Nobel nor the Nobel Prize Committee had had a clear idea of what they wanted when they had honoured a chemist who invented gas as a weapon, Romain Rolland, who had been only »à côté du mêlée«, or d'Estournelles, »apôtre de la concorde universelle«³⁹. The selection for 1919 honoured the League of Nations, but it was »une façon ingénieuse de ne point se prononcer entre la thèse de M. Wilson et la votre (Bourgeois), qui sont opposées diamétralement«. Even more outspoken was Ginistry's criticism of Wilson⁴⁰: the Committee »ne réclame pas la perfection dans les conceptions de ses lauréats«. Wilson, according to Genestre⁴¹, was a man of religious sentiment and university education, while Bourgeois was »plus pratique et plus réaliste«, »un représentant authentique de l'esprit français«, because he knew about the necessity of strength and power for the maintenance of peace and justice. Wilson's and Bourgeois's ideas collided at the Peace Conference, where Léon Bourgeois had been defeated, and

La Liberté du Sud-Ouest. – League congratulation to Wilson: L'Œuvre, Le Petit Journal; Le Temps; La Victoire.

37 Le Gaulois, 11 December 1920, p. 1.

38 L'Action Française, 11 December 1920, p. 1.

39 Editorial of Abel Hermant, L'Information, 15 December 1920, p. 1.

40 Commentary of Paul Ginistry, L'Information, 15 December 1920, p. 3 (column »Chronique Parisienne«).

41 Editorial of Maurice Genestre, L'Avenir, 12 December 1920, p. 1.

collided that day at Geneva where Bourgeois and Viviani were against German membership.

The editorial of »Le Petit Journal« (11 December) emphasized Bourgeois's contribution at the Hague Conferences to keeping peace »où s'enfantait laborieusement la future Société des Nations«⁴². And the same paper quoted a delegate from Uruguay, saying that during the war Bourgeois »mieux inspiré que d'autres pacifistes, a servi de toutes ses forces la cause de la France, certain de servir ainsi la cause de la Justice et de la Paix.« The greatest praise for Bourgeois was in »L'Homme Libre« (10000 copies), originally Clemenceau's paper on 12 December, when Saint-Geours mentioned his modesty in applying for high offices (e. g. Présidence de la République), his notion of solidarity as well as his knowledge of »le problème compliqué des relations internationales«⁴³. But Bourgeois's concrete achievements were not mentioned at all.

On the political left »Le Populaire« and »L'Humanité« both criticized Bourgeois's idea of a league as well as the existing organization. It was a »caricature d'une internationale« (Paul Louis, 10 December) incapable of keeping peace, for which disarmament was a prerequisite⁴⁴. For Jean Longuet (16 December – »Le Populaire«) the French government, which in Geneva was against any kind of disarmament, was »le plus solide rempart du militarisme internationale et le plus redoutable ennemi de la paix du monde«⁴⁵. Thus it was a strange irony that Bourgeois was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize, and André Pierre added (20 December), that France »a proposé les solutions les plus retardataires, les plus réactionnaires«⁴⁶. The prize for Bourgeois was a »dérision suprême«.

It is evident that the extreme right and left had other concepts of peace and war than did Bourgeois. While Maurras pleaded for national military strength as the only means to preserve peace, left-wing socialists regarded the League as a »organe contre-révolutionnaire, instrument des grandes puissances et de l'oligarchie possédante dans chacune de ces puissances«, which was in absolute contradiction to the »Internationale prolétarienne et révolutionnaire«, the only organization capable of creating and preserving peace (Paul Louis)⁴⁷.

Such clear tendencies were not to be found in most of the other left-wing or center papers. But it is interesting that »La Bataille«, »L'Ère Nouvelle« and »La République Française« quoted extensively from Wilson's telegram to the Storting. »Le Temps« reported a quote by Wilson but mainly concentrated on the speech of Pralon, while »L'Excelsior« and »Le Journal des Débats« only quoted Pralon. The center papers preferred different quotes from Bourgeois's response to the Geneva homage. »Le Journal du Peuple«, »Le Rappel«, »Le Radical«, »L'Ère Nouvelle« mentioned the laureate's encouragement »à continuer de fonder sur une base solide l'édifice de la paix et de la concorde internationale«, while »L'Information«, »Le Journal des Débats«, »Le Petit Journal«, »L'Avenir« and »L'Homme Libre« cited Bourgeois

42 Editorial in Le Petit Journal, 11 December 1920, p. 1.

43 Editorial of Saint-Geours, L'Homme libre, 12 December 1920, p. 1.

44 Editorial of Paul Louis, Le Populaire, 10 December 1920, p. 1.

45 Editorial of Jean Longuet, Le Populaire, 16 December 1920, p. 1.

46 Editorial of André Pierre, Le Populaire, 20 December 1920, p. 1.

47 Editorial of Paul Louis, Le Populaire, 20 December 1920, p. 1.

who expressed his opinion that the prize was devoted to France for having played an important role in the preparation of the League and having had »consenti des sacrifices peut-être supérieurs à ceux des autres nations« for the victory of justice and liberty. The press of the provinces in general followed the trends of the press in the capital and need not be cited here.

In the comments of »L'Avenir«, »L'Information« and »Le Petit Journal« a fundamental reserve towards the League of Nations was to be found when Bourgeois' ideas were praised, compared to Wilsonian concepts. »Le Petit Journal« judged the Hague Conferences as the beginning of the development to the League of Nations and identified French war aims with peace and justice⁴⁸. »L'Information« especially mentioned the missed opportunities for the provision of military force for peace-keeping⁴⁹, an idea which »L'Avenir« expressed as follows: »Le meilleur moyen de faire tenir tranquilles les fauteurs de discorde, c'est encore une bonne trique dans la main des meilleurs parmi l'élite des peuples«⁵⁰. The same paper was equally opposed to admitting Germany to the League, proponents of that idea were »démagogues, germanophiles, pécheurs de lune«.

The most remarkable event in honour of the Nobel Peace Prize for Bourgeois in France was the congratulations expressed in the Senate on 14 December 1920, which, as its president, Bourgeois attended after he had left Geneva for two days. Vice President Boudenoot offered high praise in vague terms; the minister of Justice joined the congratulations in the name of the French government. On 24 January 1921, the president of the foreign affairs committee of the Senate joined the applause for Bourgeois in the name of his committee⁵¹. This was hardly more than courtesy.

IV.

In 1920, in the League of Nations politics, contrary to what one might expect, Bourgeois had a very narrow scope of freedom for political action of his own⁵². He was closely bound to instructions from Paris. In Geneva he was the chief of a delegation, consisting also of other elder statesmen, Viviani and Hanotaux. Nevertheless it seems correct to say that the main points of French League policy were carried out by Bourgeois in accordance with his own conviction at that time. This has to be seen in the context of general French sentiment towards the League. At the beginning of 1919, the creation of this new institution was at the center of French public interest, as Pierre Miquel has aptly analysed⁵³. A vigorous debate took place about what kind of a league could contribute to French security as well as to the preservation of world peace. After the signing of the Covenant, rejection, often coupled with bitterness, prevailed in France in the political center, while liberal and radical newspapers were more moderate because of the proposed Anglo-American

48 Comment in *Le Petit Journal*, 11 December 1920, p. 1.

49 Comment in *L'Information*, 15 December 1920 (Abel Hermant) p. 1.

50 Comment in *L'Avenir*, 12 December 1920, p. 1.

51 Minutes of the session of the foreign affairs committee of the Senate, 24 January 1921, MAE, SDN vol. 209.

52 MOUTON (see n. 3) p. 40.

53 MIQUEL (see n. 33) pp. 62–94.

guarantee pact with France and the possibility of amendments to the Covenant which Article 26 offered. Marie-Renée Mouton summarizes French attitudes towards the League from 1920–1924⁵⁴: »Largement méconnu, voire inconnu en France, la SDN ... n'y fut jamais populaire ... Mal informée, peu soucieuse de l'être – la conduite de la politique extérieure, ne regarde-t-elle les seuls gouvernants – elle n'exerça sur leur action aucune influence décisive ... Le silence officiel contribua, le plus souvent, à entretenir l'incompréhension, la méfiance et les sarcasmes des Français.«

In December 1920, two questions were especially important for French interest in the Geneva agenda⁵⁵: the acceptance of Germany and disarmament. In disarmament questions, as early as 1908, Bourgeois had argued that at first a stable peace had to be achieved by the setting-up of justice and the guaranteed respect for justice, and only then could disarmament be realized⁵⁶. The French committee in 1917/18 had said almost nothing about this problem, and after the failure of the French concept of military security provided by the League, it was in fact clear that France was against all disarmament proposals. Bourgeois had received instructions on this question, elaborated by the Quai d'Orsay together with the departments of the Army and the Navy, fixing the actual situation of French security and the preconditions for disarmament⁵⁷. When the League assembly decided to give each delegation the possibility to explain in a public session her country's position in this question, he informed the Foreign Minister about the declaration he intended to give⁵⁸. It fulfilled exactly his instructions.

After enumerating the three most vital preconditions, he added⁵⁹: »Enfin, il est indispensable que le représentant de la France ... renouvelle devant l'Assemblée les deux amendements appelés amendements français qui furent unanimement approuvés par notre Parlement et notre opinion publique ...: l'une relative au contrôle nécessaire et l'autre à l'organisation des contingents internationaux qui permettront à la Société de faire respecter ses décisions.« That collided with the Norwegian proposal calling for a two-year freeze of military budgets. Christian Lous Lange introduced this proposal in the sixth commission and was able to make it part of its draft for an Assembly resolution, while the French delegate, L. Aubert »n'avait malheureusement pas su ou pas pu adopté dès le début une attitude, qui eût empêché la motion Lange de se transformer en résolution ou même d'être portée devant

54 MOUTON (see n. 3) p. 887.

55 For the first League assembly: F. P. WALTERS, *A History of the League of Nations*, Oxford 1952, vol. 1, pp. 115–128; George SCOTT, *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations*, London 1973, pp. 67–77.

56 Speech of Bourgeois at Paris in 1908, in: BOURGEOIS, *Pour la Société des nations* (see n. 18) p. 272: »Le désarmement progressif sera la conséquence d'un état de paix de plus en plus stable; mais le seul moyen d'arriver à cet état de stabilité dans la paix, c'est l'établissement du droit et le respect assuré de ce droit entre les États.«

57 Notes of the 11 November 1920 and 19 November 1920, MAE, SDN vol. 706; Leygues to Bourgeois, 11 November 1920 and 20 November 1920, MAE, *Papiers Léon Bourgeois* vol. 22.

58 Bourgeois to Leygues, 19 November 1920, MAE, SDN vol. 706.

59 The three vital preconditions were: 1. the complete execution of the disarmament stipulations of the peace treaties; 2. the strict exercise of the right of investigation by the Council of the League; 3. the preparation of a study on the problem taking into account the geographical situation and the special conditions of each state.

l'Assemblée»⁶⁰. Bourgeois received the firm instruction to reject the proposal in a public declaration because it was absolutely unacceptable for France⁶¹. It was the only situation when Bourgeois was critical of the tactical side of this question, not the principle. He would have preferred a gesture to world opinion in the way Great Britain and Belgium had done it⁶². »Situation isolée de la France sans avantage pratique. On n'a pas évidemment, à Paris, compris la portée de la question«, reads a personal note in Bourgeois's papers⁶³. In his letter to the Nobel Committee two years later, Bourgeois noted further requirements when he pleaded for »moral disarmament« which had to be realized before material disarmament could take place⁶⁴. That was a thin disguise for the French quest for security, which dominated large parts of European international politics in the following years.

The second important subject for the general assembly in Geneva in 1920 was the question of German accession, »une des plus importantes et des plus délicates« according to the Quai d'Orsay⁶⁵. And in this question, too, Bourgeois was instructed to veto admitting Germany until it had carried out all the Versailles treaty provisions⁶⁶. The Quai d'Orsay early started efforts to avoid a discussion of Germany's joining the League in Geneva. Bourgeois was instructed to approach his colleagues in connection with a session of the League of Nations Council⁶⁷. He explained his British, Belgian, Italian and Spanish colleagues⁶⁸ »en termes très nets qu'à nos yeux, l'Allemagne ne pouvait pas être admise, tant que ne seraient pas réalisées ces conditions et garanties qu'avaient, à maintes reprises, formulées le Gouvernement. Notre attitude, fondée sur l'accord unanime de la nation, ne saurait varier.«

On 23 October 1920, the Quai d'Orsay instructed the ambassadors to the member states of the League to explain to their government the French position⁶⁹. The main aim of Paris was to reach an agreement with London which they achieved⁷⁰. At the 16 November 1920, Bourgeois wrote to Leygues:⁷¹ »Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire que je suis tout à fait d'accord avec vous et sur le fond de la question de l'admission de l'Allemagne dans la Société des Nations et sur les motifs que nous devons donner...« and he added, that the same was true for Viviani and Hanotaux. »Je dois ... vous indiquer que l'entente qui s'est toujours maintenue

60 An undated letter of J. Goût, MAE, Papiers J. Goût vol. 9.

61 His instructions: Leygues to the delegation, 11 December 1920; Peretti de la Rocca to the delegation, 11 December 1920, MAE, SDN vol. 72. – The proposal was also rejected by Brasil, Chile, Greece, Romania, Poland and Uruguay.

62 The English and Belgian delegations accepted the proposal leaving the complete liberty of decision to their governments.

63 MAE, Papiers Léon Bourgeois vol. 37 (undated).

64 Cf. *Les raisons de vivre de la Société des Nations* (see n. 18) p. 7.

65 Circulaire of the MAE to all posts, 23 October 1920, MAE, Papiers Bourgeois vol. 22.

66 See for the instructions for the delegation: Note »Admission des États qui ne figurent pas dans l'annexe du Pacte«, sent to Bourgeois on 11 November 1920, MAE, Papiers Bourgeois vol. 22.

67 Paléologue to Bourgeois, 16 September 1920, MAE, Papiers Bourgeois vol. 22.

68 Bourgeois to MAE, 27 October 1920, MAE, Papiers Bourgeois vol. 22.

69 Circulaire of MAE to all posts, 23 October 1920, MAE, Papiers Bourgeois vol. 22.

70 Fleuriau to MAE, 8 November 1920, MAE, Papiers Bourgeois vol. 22; Leygues to Bourgeois, 20 November 1920, MAE, SDN vol. 49.

71 Bourgeois to Leygues, 16 November 1920, MAE, Papiers Bourgeois vol. 19.

entre la délégation anglaise ... et moi n'a jamais été un seul instant troublée.» The relevant speech to the assembly in this case was made by Viviani, and not by Bourgeois.

V.

Finally some general remarks are appropriate.

1. That the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Léon Bourgeois in 1920 honoured an institution was said at the beginning, but that was meant in a metaphorical sense. In reality the prize seems to have been for a real institution: the League of Nations. That is underlined by the fact, that the honours for Wilson and Bourgeois were announced simultaneously in December 1920, although the two laureates received the prize for 1919 and 1920. Evidently the institution itself was too young to be named, but the intention was presumably to give it worldwide attention and thus encouragement for its work. That, indeed, it urgently needed.

Whether this aim was achieved, cannot be determined on the basis of our information from only French sources. But part of the French reaction to the Nobel Prize of 1920 reflected correctly the fundamental difference between two concepts: the existing League differed in decisive points from France's (and Bourgeois's) intentions. That meant that the notions of peace were different in many regards and were derived from somewhat contradictory visions of a world order and the steps to be taken in that direction.

2. In the beginning of this article it was argued that Bourgeois was also a social reformer. But that role played no part in the awarding of the peace prize to him. Only the role Bourgeois played between day-to-day diplomacy and peace movements in a narrower sense can characterize this type of laureate adequately. He had often held government offices. But in the question of a peaceful order of the world he carried out ad-hoc-mandates. This »ideologue« of the Parti Radical, whose elder statesman he had become at least in the second part of the first World War (when he was dismissed from a Briand Cabinet), might be called a visionary with a somewhat idealistic belief in the progress of mankind towards a more peaceful world⁷². It was his fundamental belief that stable peace could be created through justice which had guided him since 1899. He wanted to create an effective organization for the protection of codified and uncodified international law.

The only important change which his concept underwent was the change in intended effectiveness: in the first decade of this century Bourgeois mainly stressed the role of an (ever growing) world public opinion for achieving peace. But even before the war he was convinced that military power was needed⁷³. »La gendarmerie internationale sera la force dressée par l'unanimité des peuples contre le peuple qui troublerait la paix du monde. Le projet ... prévoit à ce dessein la constitution d'une armée au service du pouvoir exerçant la contrainte internationale«, was the essence of his belief expressed in a press interview at the beginning of the peace conference⁷⁴.

72 Serge BERSTEIN, *Histoire du Parti Radical*, vol. 1. La recherche de l'âge d'or 1919–1926, Paris 1980, pp. 35–37, 63–67, 100f.

73 Speech at Paris in 1908, in: BOURGEOIS, *Pour la Société des nations* (see n. 18) pp. 281f. 286.

74 Interview of Bourgeois in *L'Eclair* on 20 January 1919, in: BERSTEIN (see n. 72) p. 100.

And precisely that failed. Bourgeois in a characteristic way interpreted the failure as a success with prospects for the future: the vague principle was upheld regardless of a disappointing present. Thus it was important for him to convince his party to support ratification of the peace treaty and the Covenant⁷⁵.

3. Bourgeois was a French patriot and could not see any possible conflict between his nation and international order, because both were based on law and justice, the respect for which was considered in France a consequence of democracy. They should be protected internationally against all violators. »La cause française s'identifie avec celle de la justice et du bon droit dont ne saurait se réclamer une Allemagne agressive, militariste et despotique. Il ne conviendrait cependant point de pousser trop loin une analyse du comportement radical fondé sur cette sorte de candeur naïve«, wrote Serge Bernstein with regard to the radical party in war⁷⁶. Thus the peace of 1919 and the League were instruments of the victors, in Bourgeois's intentions, too. The explanation by Martin Ceadel is therefore applicable also to Bourgeois's notion of peace⁷⁷: »Just as people rarely choose a domestic ideology because of a wholly disinterested belief in its explanatory power, so they often choose a war-and-peace theory partly because it is to their advantage to do so.« That is evident to the historian, but it was in complete contradiction with everything which Bourgeois himself wrote on this question. He tended to overestimate the value of unselfishness and morality in the course of human history. Looking back, it was a politically relevant position common to him as well as many of his followers in his day, and also in many other eras. But this belief is not a metahistorical position.

4. The reaction to the 1920 award in France was surprisingly low-key. The news itself was printed in almost all newspapers. The rejection of Bourgeois and the League of Nations by the extreme right and left in France could not be surprising: they had different ideas on peace and used the opportunity to stress their political distance from an opponent, although he was a compatriot. But the lack of comments by journalists, the vague words of praise by politicians, e. g. in the Senate ceremony, the tendency more to cite the praise of others (e. g. in the Storting, the Senate or at the League assembly) instead of finding one's own words, point in the same direction: it was no important affair.

One explanation is the low esteem in which the League of Nations was held in France at that time, the other is that Bourgeois was a respected but no longer an important man for his fellow countrymen. The dominant trend in French policy at the end of 1920 was not designed for peace, but for day-to-day-problems which had more to do with the interests of a nation that felt herself to be in relative decline in Europe and in the rest of the world and tried to protect her national interest mainly by means of traditional power politics.

The other explanation for the lack of enthusiasm was that the Nobel Peace Prize itself was not so popular at that time: the world war had not been a suitable time for awarding a peace prize. In the last six years the award had been given only once, in 1917 to the International Committee of the Red Cross. One could have expected that after »the war to end all wars« the Nobel Peace Prize would immediately receive

75 See *ibidem*, p. 102.

76 *Ibidem*, p. 91.

77 Martin CEADEL, *Thinking about Peace and War*, Oxford 1987, p. 6.

great attention. But the Great War was already two years in the past, and in many other countries – especially in the international system as a whole – things had developed not only in a peaceful way. World order and a new kind of lasting peace seemed farther away at the end of 1920 than in the preceding year. That was reflected in the reaction to the awarding of the peace prize to Bourgeois and Wilson.

Apart from all the considerations mentioned above, the selection of the two laureates was a solution for the Kristiana Committee which indeed better promoted the prize idea itself internationally than almost all other conceivable possibilities. This was no small merit of the Nobel Committee's decision to give the honour to Léon Bourgeois.