

LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

Geneva,

13th. March, 1922.

DISPUTE BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND POLAND.POLISH PRISONERS DETAINED IN LITHUANIA .

Note by the Secretary-General.

The following telegrams from the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, dated February 23rd, and 25th, and letters from M. Hymans to the Lithuanian and Polish Ministers for Foreign Affairs, are circulated for the information of the Council and the Members of the League.

Telegram from the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

Warsaw,

February 23rd. 1922.

Translation.

We learn that the Poles in custody for political offences in prisons at Kovno have been attacked by typhus. In view of the appalling sanitary conditions in the prisons - 117 prisoners are accommodated in a prison where there is only room for 96. The prisoners lack disinfectants, medicines. The doctors have not access to the patients - the epidemic is spreading with alarming rapidity. We have heard of 5 deaths namely: Alexandrowitch, Zolnicz, Ciborowski, Konstantyngwicz, Niekrasz. More than 30 prisoners have contracted typhus, including Lewgowt, Skirgajlo, Sipowitch, Kowala, Kalina, Hopon, Rudzewicz. Young Polish prisoners who have been in custody for the last year are all doomed to die if prompt relief is not forthcoming. I have the honour to beg you, Sir, to insist, for humane reasons, that the Lithuanian Government shall effect immediate improvement in sanitary conditions in Kovno Prisons and, should the Lithuanian Government not possess sufficient quantities of medicines and disinfectants, to obtain consent of Lithuanian Government to allow sick prisoners to be supplied forthwith with medicines, disinfectants and medical relief by Polish Government.

(Signed) SKIRMUNT.

TELEGRAM FROM THE POLISH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE LEAGUE OF
NATIONS.

WARSAW.

25.2.1922.

With reference to my telegram dated February 23rd I beg to inform you of further details recently received regarding situation of Polish prisoners at Kovno. On January 6th Jan. Lukruss died in prison. The following prisoners have just contracted typhus: Jan Cybulski, Kasimierz, Sipowicz, Josef Paszun, Stanislaw Winkler, aged 15. Jan Lukasiowicz and Stefan Giejsztor. Despite appeals and entreaties, Lithuanian Authorities do not even allow nearest relatives admission to the dying. The prisoners who have not yet recovered, among others Winkler and Lewdant, have been transferred from the infirmary to the prison, which is contributing to the appalling spread of the epidemic among the prisoners. I beg to appeal to Your Excellency for speedy assistance in effecting a change in the attitude of the Lithuanian Government towards the Polish Prisoners and immediate improvement of sanitary condition of sick Polish prisoners at Kovno, and primarily their transfer to hospital.

(Signed) SKIRMUNT.

translation.

LETTER FROM M. HYMANS TO THE LITHUANIAN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, KOVNO.

Geneva,

March 4th. 1922.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit herewith copies of two telegrams from the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, regarding the health conditions of the persons detained in the prisons at Kovno. These telegrams have been communicated to the Members of the League of Nations, for their information.

Before the Military Commission of Control was dissolved, Major Keenan, I believe, discussed this question with you, and urged upon you the importance of taking all possible steps to improve the treatment of these prisoners.

The Council of the League of Nations has constantly represented, both to the Polish and Lithuanian Governments, the desirability of pursuing a liberal and moderate policy towards national minorities, in order to allay animosities and promote international goodwill. Measures of clemency would appear all the more necessary in this case as they are recommended by mere considerations of humanity in addition to those of a political nature.

Owing to the active part which the League of Nations has taken in the campaign against typhus in Eastern Europe, I can, of course, fully understand the material difficulties with which the Lithuanian Government is confronted owing to the epidemic; but if it is really impossible to provide satisfactory hygienic conditions for the prisoners, I should consider that as an additional reason for asking you if it would not be possible to release them.

I am sure that I am interpreting the feelings of the Council in saying how profoundly that body would be gratified by the news that the political prisoners had been set at liberty.

I am sending a copy of this letter to H.E. the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I have, etc.

(Signed) PAUL HEMANS.

LETTER FROM M. HEMANS TO THE POLISH MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WARSAW.

Translation.

Geneva, March 4th, 1922.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge your telegrams to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, dated Warsaw, February 23rd. and 25th., regarding the health conditions of the Polish prisoners at Kovno. These telegrams will be communicated to the Members of the League of Nations.

The President of the Military Commission had already informed me that you had applied to the Commission in the hope of securing better treatment for these prisoners. An enquiry has been made at Kovno by one of the members of the Commission, who has further been instructed to approach the Lithuanian Government with a view to the immediate adoption of measures for the above object.

I have the honour to enclose a copy of the letter on this subject which I am sending to-day to H.E. the Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I have, etc.,

(Signed) PAUL HEMANS.