

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Communicated to
the Council and
Members of the
League.

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Geneva, May 14th, 1934.

DISPUTE BETWEEN BOLIVIA AND PARAGUAY

Communication from the Bolivian Delegation.

Note by the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General has the honour to circulate to the Council and Members of the League, two notes, dated May 10th and May 11th, 1934, respectively, which he has received from the Bolivian Delegation to the League of Nations.

I.

Translation.

Geneva, May 10th, 1934.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 8th instant, with which you were so good as to enclose a copy of the letter addressed to you by the delegate of Paraguay on May 5th.

This document specifies:

(1) that Bolivian aircraft have bombarded the ports of Guarani and Mihanovich, on the river Paraguay, which, according to its signatory, are not garrison centres, and serve no military purposes;

(2) that the Government of Paraguay informs the League of Nations that on this ground it considers itself relieved of the obligation to respect the rules of international law in regard to Bolivia.

In reply, I have the honour to make the following statement on behalf of my Government.

Paraguay is on very uncertain ground in seeking from the League of Nations, whose Covenant (Article 12) she has violated and whose mediation she has rejected, a moral protection that no delinquent can claim. Moreover, it is not for her delegate, who, even before the Council, has dared to extol the military prowess of his country, to contest Bolivia's legitimate right to disturb the tranquillity of an illegal occupation of her territory when the Paraguayan army, proclaiming the law of war, is advancing towards the populous centres of Bolivia.

The ports of Guarani and Mihanovich are situated in the Chaco, which Paraguay has occupied by force. Failing pacific means, which my country has always sought, to put an end to the conflict, it is quite natural that to-day, faced by such an adversary, and while awaiting the League's last word, Bolivia also should use force to destroy, by every

means at her command, the centres of military concentration and transport and the sources from which the enemy derives his supplies and his offensive power.

M. Benitez, the Paraguayan Minister for Foreign Affairs, who delivered an astonishing pacifist oration at the Pan-American Conference at Montevideo, has lately published a book in which he no longer conceals his country's designs. He now considers it logical, necessary, and legitimate for Paraguay to occupy Bolivian territory as far as Santa Cruz. International opinion can therefore no longer cherish any illusions as to this policy of force and conquest.

To remain inert and passive before such a menace would be a dereliction of duty of which no Government could be guilty.

Paraguay, who is advancing daily further along a path diametrically opposed to her international obligations - deliberately violated, as I have stated on October 10th and December 8th and 14th, 1932, January 23rd, July 18th, August 14th, August 28th, and December 21st, 1933, January 6th, 7th, and 27th, and February 6th, 1934 - has thus no more pacts or laws left to violate. It is, therefore, to say the least of it, surprising that she should claim to release herself from humanitarian obligations which have never existed so far as she is concerned.

At the very moment when she is complaining to the League (whose existence she remembers only when it can serve her purpose), Paraguay is announcing on the other hand that she will put the captive Bolivian officers to the sword, because the war which she desired and prepared is no longer localised in an area convenient to her.

President Ayala had already said to the Council's Commission on January 12th, 1934: "at this juncture my country cannot trust in the formal virtue of juridical formulae". This singular statement now finds its corollary in the violation of international law, openly avowed in the face of civilised nations. This means war without quarter, in all its cynicism and horror.

It is therefore with profound sorrow - which does not mean, however, that we have yet lost confidence in the co-operation of the associated States - that I desire to observe that there is a convention which condemns such methods: the Hague Convention.

I would ask you to bring this note to the knowledge of the members of the Council and the Chaco Commission, and I have the honour, etc.,

(Signed) A. COSTA du REIS,

Permanent Delegate to the
League of Nations.

II.

Translation.

Geneva, May 11th, 1934.

Sir,

I have the honour to confirm my note of yesterday, and to bring to your notice the following cable which I have just received from my Government:

"La Paz, May 10th, 1934.
8.7 p.m.

"The Asunción correspondent of La Nación, of Buenos Aires, reports that inhuman reprisals against the Bolivian prisoners have been initiated on the pretext of the air bombardment of ports in the Chaco. They consist in reducing the prisoners' rations and stopping their letters home.

"We also know from reliable sources that Bolivian prisoners - officers of high rank and men - have been obliged to draw lots to decide which of them should be shot on the same pretext, should the question arise.

"We denounce these crimes against civilisation, and make it known that, should they be officially confirmed, Bolivian aircraft will bombard Asunción.

"ALVESTEGUI,

"Minister for Foreign Affairs."

I would ask you to bring this note to the knowledge of the members of the Council and the Chaco Commission, and I have the honour, etc.,

(Signed) A. COSTA du RELS,

Minister Plenipotentiary,
Permanent Delegate to the League of
Nations.