

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Communicated to the  
Council and the Members  
of the League.

C.389.M.259.1937.VII.

Geneva, September 16th, 1937.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT.

Geneva, September 16th, 1937.

Translation

To the Secretary-General,

Sir,

With reference to my Note of August 21st last\* concerning the attacks on Spanish merchant vessels in the Mediterranean, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, requesting you to communicate it to the Members of the League, a French translation of the statements made by the master and various members of the crew of the tanker "Campeador" before the Spanish Consular and naval authorities.

I have the honour etc.

(Signed) J. NEGRIN

First Delegate of Spain.

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\* See document C.335.M.226.1937.VII.

TEXT OF THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE MASTER AND  
VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE CREW OF THE VESSEL "CAMPEADOR"  
BEFORE THE SPANISH CONSULAR AND NAVAL AUTHORITIES.

1. Statement made by Felix Garay Gorordo, master of the "Campeador", on August 13th, 1937, before the Spanish Consul at Tunis.

At 9 a.m. on the 11th instant, when the "Campeador" was about ten miles south of Lampedusa, heading for Cape Bon, a warship appeared from the north-west, flying the Italian flag. She approached the "Campeador", with which she exchanged the usual salutes, and came so close that it was possible to read clearly her name "SAETTA" on the stern and "S A" painted in large red letters on the bows. This vessel kept near the "CAMPEADOR" all that day. At 4.30 p.m. another warship of the same type and possessing the same characteristics as the first appeared, but her flag and name could not be ascertained as she did not come so close as the first vessel. The two warships joined company and manoeuvred together while still following the "CAMPEADOR" at a distance of four to five miles astern. At nightfall the Spanish vessel lit her navigation lights and the two warships following her did so likewise. A short time after, however, they extinguished their lights, moved forward and took up a position at a short distance to starboard of the "CAMPEADOR". Although it was already night their silhouettes could be clearly seen. At 7.50 p.m., when he was in his room, the master of the "Campeador" felt an extremely violent shock from a projectile which hit the engine room. All the lights on the vessel were extinguished, and the wireless was put out of order. He at once went up to the control-room, and seeing that the vessel was sinking by the stern, he gave orders for the boats to be launched and the crew went to that part of the stern where the boats were kept. When one of them had already been launched and another was being lowered, a second projectile struck the vessel, likewise in the engine-room, throwing up a column of water. He estimates that from five to seven minutes elapsed between the times at which the two projectiles were fired. When the second boat had been launched but the painter had not yet been cut, the vessel was struck a third time, in a similar manner and with similar results to those produced by the previous projectiles. The period of time between the second and third shots was about the same as between the first and second. The master and five members of the crew who were in the same boat at once got clear of the vessel. The first boat launched was already some distance away. When the master and his companions were barely a hundred metres away from the "CAMPEADOR" the vessel caught fire, and an explosion occurred immediately. They rowed in the direction of the coast of Tunis, and before reaching it met a fishing vessel, which towed them as far as the little port of Kelibia, where they arrived at 12.45 a.m. on August 12th. A few hours later the master returned in a boat to the scene of the disaster and found the vessel still burning. On the same day, after they had got into touch with M. Rafael Gubern, Spanish Vice-Consul at Tunis, who came to Kelibia, the shipwrecked

seamen were transferred to Tunis, where they were cared for by the French and Tunisian authorities and the Spanish representative mentioned above. Two members of the crew who were injured were taken to hospital. The master categorically affirms that the attack on the vessel under his command, the "CAMPEADOR", was made by the Italian warships which were following her and were near her when she was wrecked; nevertheless they rendered no assistance to the shipwrecked seamen - a final proof of their manifest guilt. Twelve members of the crew were lost, the other thirty being saved. The position of the "CAMPEADOR" when she was attacked was about 14 miles south-east of Cape Bon. - (Signed) GARAY".

II. - Statement made by Raimundo Basarrate Iturriaga, engineer of the "CAMPEADOR", on August 14th, before the Spanish Consul at Gibraltar.

"Like all the other members of the crew of the Spanish vessel, he saw the Italian warship "SAETTA", which kept close to the "CAMPEADOR" throughout the day on the 11th of this month; at about 4.30 p.m. she was joined by another warship, which was undoubtedly Italian also, as she possessed the same characteristics, and they followed the same course, exchanging signals. At the moment when the Spanish vessel was attacked he was in the stern looking at the warships, and saw a bright red light appear on one of them and then gradually grow dimmer. A few seconds later he felt the shock of the projectile which had just hit the engine-room of the "CAMPEADOR". Like the rest of the crew he then made for the boats, and took his place in the one in which the master was seated, and which was the last to leave. That was why he was still on board when the second explosion occurred, and was in the boat, which was still attached to the ship, when the third projectile struck her. In the opinion of this witness, the interval of time between the projectiles was from six to seven minutes in each case, and four or five minutes after she was struck a third time the vessel began to burn. Seeing that any attempt to save the vessel was useless, the boat made for the Coast of Tunisia, and when she was near it she was taken in tow by a fishing-boat and brought to a point on the coast near Melibia. Signed: Bassarate."

III. - Statement made by Pascual Madariaga Salazar and José Vives Ramos, members of the crew of the CAMPEADOR, on August 15th, 1937, before the naval authorities of Cartagena.

"On the 4th instant, at 8 p.m., they sailed from Constanza (Roumania) at an approximate speed of 11 knots. On entering Italian waters, the ship was run at 12 knots, her full speed when carrying cargo. On the 11th instant, at 9 a.m., a warship appeared ahead of the CAMPEADOR and passed at a short distance, crossing her bows. "SA" in large letters could be clearly read on her bows. Having passed us, she sheered off and set a course parallel with that of the CAMPEADOR, keeping quite close to the latter, so that the name SAETTA in metal letters could be clearly seen on her stern.

The CAMPEADOR saluted her with the Republican flag, and the SAETTA replied. The SAETTA has the same characteristics as our destroyers of the CHURRUGA type, but is a little shorter and has only one funnel. The captain of the CAMPEADOR estimated the SAETTA's speed at from 30 to 35 knots. The SAETTA continued to cruise around the CAMPEADOR's stern until 5.30 p.m., when another destroyer appeared which had the same characteristics, though she kept at such a distance that her name was indistinguishable. This destroyer got into touch with the SAETTA, and they sailed together for an hour, afterwards disappearing in the direction of southern Italy for a quarter of an hour. At 8 p.m. they reappeared with all lights out, though they were recognisable in silhouette, and, taking up a strategic position approximately 1 mile distant (they were steaming in single file parallel to the CAMPEADOR on the starboard side, one level with her bows and the other with her stern), they were seen to show light-signals; immediately afterwards there was a violent detonation aft, in the engine-room, which was produced by a torpedo. The undersigned, seeing the after swing-doors collapse (these shut off the galley, eating-quarters, and berths of the engine-room hands), at once jumped into the water, and then heard another explosion which they suppose to have been caused by another torpedo, and afterwards a series of detonations which they assume to have been gunfire or explosions of petrol-tanks - probably the latter, since they corresponded to fires on the surface of the water, and the seamen had to keep constantly swimming to get away from the fire, which occasionally spread to the surface of the sea. Although they succeeded in getting a little away from the fire, they felt the temperature of the water steadily rise, and had periods of veritable anguish, because they also had to endure clouds of smoke from the burning petrol, which enveloped them and caused symptoms of asphyxia. They remained in this condition for about three hours - three hours of real horror, because, apart from all this, they heard the screams of their fellow-members of the crew who were caught in the fire and calling for help, and the cries of others who were maimed. They went on swimming until they caught sight of a ship, to which they called for help. She stopped her engines, and the undersigned had to swim to her, for she could not risk approaching the spot where they were for fear of the fire, which was now and then spreading to the sea. Once they were aboard, the crew of the ship took care of them and supplied them with food and clothing. It was a British ship, the CLINTONIA, whose port of registry is unknown to them. Just as they arrived on board, the ship received a call by Scott from another ship of the same nationality, which, according to one of the CLINTONIA's officers, stated that she had aboard three men picked up from the CAMPEADOR. On receiving this message, the CLINTONIA set her course towards Cape Bon, and thence, following the coast, towards Algiers, where she changed course towards Cape Palos. It was midnight when she started, and she reached Cartagena to-day at 8.a.m. The undersigned wish to express their deep gratitude to the crew of the CLINTONIA, all of whom, from captain to cookboy, treated them like brothers, - Pascual Madariaga Olazar, born at Bilbao, aged 21 years, able seamen. - José Vives Ramos, born at Alicante, aged 24, steward. - Having nothing to add, they now sign this statement at Cartagena, this fifteenth day of August nineteen hundred and thirty-seven. Signed José Vives - Pascual Madariaga - Cartagena, August 15th, 1937 - for the officer

in charge: Pedro Victoria - There is an ink-stamp reading: Principal Naval Base, Cartagena - General Staff - Intelligence."

IV. Statement made by José Palacio Carrasco, member the crew of the CAMPEADOR, on August 16th, 1937, before the Spanish Consul at Gibraltar.

"On August 11th, at 8.30 a.m., he saw a destroyer approaching the CAMPEADOR's bows, but could not be sure of her nationality. When she came nearer, she was seen to be an Italian warship, flying the Italian flag at her stern. In reply, the CAMPEADOR hoisted the Spanish flag, with which she saluted the warship, and which was then lowered. The ship in question sailed in sight of the CAMPEADOR all day. Between 6 and 7 p.m., another warship appeared. Her nationality cannot be stated with certainty, but she also presumably was Italian, because she joined the first one and they proceeded together, throwing out smoke-screens, which were interpreted aboard the CAMPEADOR as warlike manoeuvres. At nightfall the two ships lit their navigation-lights and proceeded to a distance from the CAMPEADOR; afterwards, however, those lights were extinguished. In view of this suspicious behaviour, the officer of the watch ordered the boats to be made ready for lowering and while this was being done two dark masses appeared astern, being without doubt the Italian destroyers. On seeing them, we began to lower the boats. At that moment a red light was seen, and immediately afterwards an explosion took place in the engine-room. The deponent then picked up a lifebelt and jumped into the sea. While he was swimming away from the ship, which had caught fire, he heard two more detonations, but cannot say whether they were caused by torpedoes, as he believes the first one was, or by gunfire. Seeing the British ship DIDO, he signalled her to pick him up. A boat was put off, took him aboard, and patrolled the scene of the disaster in the hope of saving more men. They succeeded in picking up the greaser Martin (or Martinez) and the cookboy Juan Risueno, but could not find any more of the crew of the CAMPEADOR. All they saw was a few lifebuoys. The deponent desires to state that he was treated with great consideration aboard the DIDO."

V. Statement made by Juan RISUENO, Member of the Crew of the 'CAMPEADOR', on August 16th, 1937, in the presence of the Spanish Consul at Gibraltar.

"Juan Risueno, of Seville, aged 43: On August 11th, about 8.30 a.m., saw a warship approaching the 'CAMPEADOR', head on, so that it was impossible to make out its nationality. As it drew nearer it was seen to be an Italian warship flying the Italian flag. I cannot say whether it was a cruiser or a destroyer. The vessel continued manoeuvring

in sight of the 'CAMPEADOR' throughout the day. Its name was the 'SAETTA'. About 6 or 7 p.m. another warship appeared; its nationality could not be made out, but it was believed to be Italian as it joined the other warship and followed the same course; both vessels then threw out smoke-screens, a proceeding which on board the 'CAMPEADOR' was interpreted as indicating hostile intentions. At nightfall the two vessels lit their navigating lights and steamed away from the 'CAMPEADOR'. Soon afterwards, however, the lights were extinguished, and as soon as this was observed on board the 'CAMPEADOR' the officer in charge ordered the lifeboats to be got ready. While this was being done, two dark masses, showing no lights, were seen ahead; it is impossible to say whether these were the two vessels mentioned above or two submarines; the crew at once began lowering the lifeboats, when suddenly a red flare was seen, immediately after which there was an explosion in the engine-room; the violence of the explosion and the fact that it was not accompanied by any flash show, in my opinion, that it was caused by a torpedo. The deponent ran towards one of the lifeboats, but fell into the sea; while he was swimming away from the 'CAMPEADOR' he heard two further detonations, though he cannot say whether they were caused by the firing of guns or torpedoes. The 'CAMPEADOR' settled down rapidly, and the petrol floating on the surface of the water took fire over a large area. He was picked up by the boat of a British merchantship, the 'DIDO', which had already picked up two of his shipmates, José Palacio and Manuel Martinez. The boat which had picked him up cruised backwards and forwards for some time in search of survivors, but in vain. The deponent desires to mention the great consideration with which he was treated on board the British ship."

VI. Statement made by Manuel Martin Iglesias, Member of the Crew of the 'CAMPEADOR', on August 16th, 1937, in the presence of the Spanish Consul at Gibraltar.

"On August 11th, about 8.30 a.m., deponent saw a warship sailing towards the 'CAMPEADOR'. At first he took it for a French destroyer, but as it drew near to the 'CAMPEADOR' it was seen to be showing the Italian flag and coat-of-arms; at the same time, it was seen to reduce speed so as to remain level with our stern. During this time the 'CAMPEADOR' saluted by hoisting its flag, which was hauled down a few moments later. Throughout the day the other vessel followed the same course as the 'CAMPEADOR' sometimes on its starboard side, which enabled us to see its name, which was the 'SAETTA'; it then drew astern of the 'CAMPEADOR' and remained in this position for the rest of the day. At 6 p.m. another destroyer whose name I do not know was seen to be drawing near to the first. The two vessels subsequently sailing the same course side by side; the second destroyer threw out an enormous quantity of smoke, which led us to expect hostile action of some kind. At nightfall, the destroyers lit their navigation lights which enabled us to observe their position; both lay astern of the 'CAMPEADOR' on the course she was following."

Five minutes later both ships extinguished all their lights, and the undersigned completely lost trace of them on account of the darkness and their distance from the 'CAMPEADOR'. During this respite the deck hands suggested to the officer in charge that he should consult the captain about making the lifeboats ready. The officer accepted the suggestion and began to carry it into effect. The port lifeboats were at once got ready; but before the work on the starboard boats was completed, a dark mass showing no light was seen approaching the 'CAMPEADOR' at top speed. It sent up a flare and immediately afterwards a terrific explosion was heard in the 'CAMPEADOR's' engine-room. The deponent, who was wearing his life-belt, at once flung himself into the sea, and saw a large quantity of smoke escaping from the 'CAMPEADOR'; a few moments afterwards other detonations were heard and flames, undoubtedly caused by the ignition of the petrol, shot up to a great height. As it was thus possible to see to a considerable distance, he was able to distinguish on the starboard side of the 'CAMPEADOR' a destroyer, identical with those observed during the day; it was standing by the wreck in complete indifference. Being now in danger of our lives by burning, we were obliged to get away as fast as we could. About half an hour later a merchant ship passed and did nothing to help us; a British merchantman, the 'DIDO', then appeared on the scene, hove to, and quickly picked up the 'CAMPEADOR'S' survivors. We were taken on board and treated with the utmost consideration, and the captain informed us that another English vessel had picked up two other members of our crew."

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