



Report of the Inter-American Peace Committee on the  
Case presented by the Government of Venezuela

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REPORT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PEACE COMMITTEE ON THE  
CASE PRESENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA

The Government of Venezuela, in a note of February 17, 1960, signed by its Representative on the Council of the Organization of American States, requested the Inter-American Peace Committee to investigate "the flagrant violations of human rights by the Government of the Dominican Republic, which are aggravating tensions in the Caribbean" (Appendix A).

The Committee decided, first, that in view of the powers and functions which were given it in Resolution IV of the Fifth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, it was within its competence to consider the request of the Government of Venezuela. As will be recalled, that Resolution, in entrusting to the Committee the study of the questions that were the subject of the convocation of the Meeting of Consultation, provides in Article 1, paragraph (b), that the Inter-American Peace Committee shall examine:

"The relationship between violations of human rights or the non-exercise of representative democracy, on the one hand, and the political tensions that affect the peace of the hemisphere, on the other;..."

In this determination regarding its competence the Representative of Venezuela, who had withdrawn from active participation as a Committee member at the time when he presented his Government's request, did not take part. Colombia was designated as a substitute by the Council of the Organization, on March 1, 1960, in accordance with Article 11 of the Statutes of the Committee.

In order to gather as much reliable information as possible with respect to this case, the Committee requested information from the member states in a circular note of February 25, 1960 (Appendix B), sent to all the Representatives on the Council except those of the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, with whom the Committee has remained in contact.

The Committee considered that it would be desirable to visit the Dominican Republic in order to investigate on the scene the situation existing in that country. For that purpose the Committee decided to exchange points of view with the Representative of the Dominican Republic on the Council. The corresponding invitation was extended by means of a note dated February 19, 1960 (Appendix C), with which the Dominican Representative received a copy of the note from the Representative of Venezuela. The resultant conversations were initiated on February 24, 1960.

In the course of these conversations with the Dominican Representative, the Committee requested and obtained from him information regarding the case under study and, in accordance with the provisions of Article 2 of Resolution IV of the Fifth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, asked him if his Government would be prepared to give its consent for the Committee to visit the Dominican Republic in order to carry out the investigations that it considered necessary.

During the session held on March 8, 1960, the Representative of the Dominican Republic stated that his Government, in the exercise of its option provided for in Article 2 of the above-mentioned Resolution IV, did not give its consent for the Committee to visit the Dominican Republic. The reasons

given by the Representative of the Dominican Republic, on informing the Committee of the decision of his Government, were reiterated in a note which he sent to the Chairman of the Committee on March 24, 1960 (Appendix D).

In view of the interest which existed regarding its actions in this case, the Committee decided to issue a press release on March 18, 1960 (Appendix E) making public the negative reply of the Dominican Government.

In its conversations held with the Representative of the Dominican Republic, the Committee expressed its natural and particular interest in obtaining information regarding the arrests in his country of persons involved in the subversive movement put down by the Dominican authorities in January 1960. The Committee had received reports on this matter to the effect that there had been more than a thousand such arrests. In this regard, the Representative of the Dominican Republic said that, in accordance with official reports of his Government, the number of persons who had recently been arrested in his country for activities directed against the security of the state amounted to 222; he referred to the acts of clemency of the Dominican Government in favor of these persons, such as the release of the women who had participated in the movement and the reduction of some of the sentences imposed by the lower courts; he gave the Committee a memorandum containing a chronological account of the cases of amnesty and pardon of persons condemned in the course of the last 25 years for acts against the security of the Dominican State (Appendix F); and he suggested the desirability of the Committee's studying the question of violations of human rights in the Caribbean region in its general aspects and not in relation to only one

of the countries comprising that region.

In view of these statements of the Dominican Representative and taking into account various reports and documents which by then had been received by the Committee - for example, the second Pastoral Letter of the Dominican Bishops, dated February 28, 1960 (Appendix G) - the Committee believed that there was reason to hope that the Dominican Government would decree an amnesty for the political prisoners or would adopt some other measure of clemency in their favor, on the occasion of Easter, April 17, 1960. Desirous of avoiding any step which might adversely affect the fate of the political prisoners, the Committee deemed it desirable not to make any pronouncements on the case under study during the first days of April and decided in favor of issuing a report of a general nature, dated April 14, entitled "Special Report on the Relationship Between Violations of Human Rights on the Non-Exercise of Representative Democracy and the Political Tensions that Affect the Peace of the Hemisphere," in which, among other matters, questions related to the existence of political prisoners in the American republics are considered.

The Committee's hopes regarding an amnesty turned out to be unfounded. In fact, it was not until May 31 that the Committee received a note from the Dominican Representative, dated May 30, in which the Committee was informed that "within the Dominican Government's process of carrying out acts of clemency in behalf of persons involved in the subversive plots discovered at the beginning of the year, another group of 63 of the persons sentenced was set free on Saturday, May 28, 1960..." (Appendix H).

Despite the Dominican Government's having declined to give its consent for the Committee to visit its territory, the Committee decided to obtain, through means available to it, reliable information regarding the subject of the request presented by the Venezuelan Representative.

The Committee received testimony from Dominican exiles who had recently left that country, as well as from nationals of other American countries who had been in the Dominican Republic during, or just after, the events which gave rise to the arrests that occurred beginning in the month of January 1960. Among the Dominican exiles interviewed by the Committee were representatives of different social and economic spheres of the country, such as educators, workers, former members of the armed forces, industrialists and businessmen. These interviews were held in closed sessions and the Committee does not consider it desirable to make public the names of the witnesses or the text of their statements.

In addition to the testimony of actual witnesses of the situation existing in the Dominican Republic, the Committee examined extensive and reliable press material and also made use of valuable information provided it by certain Representatives of member states.

On the basis of the evidence which it has been able to gather, the Committee has reached the conclusion that international tensions in the Caribbean region have been aggravated by flagrant and widespread violations of human rights which have been committed and continue to be committed in the Dominican Republic. Among these violations, mention must be made of the denial of free assembly and of free speech, arbitrary arrests, cruel and inhuman treatment of political prisoners, and the use of intimidation

and terror as political weapons. Some of the victims of these grave acts appeared before the Committee and made statements. These acts constitute the denial of fundamental rights set forth in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, as well as of principles of the Charter of the Organization of American States.

The relationship between the systematic violation of human rights and international political tensions that affect the peace of the Hemisphere was analyzed by the Committee in its above-mentioned Special Report of April 14, 1960 (Doc. CIP-2-60). The case which is the subject of the present report confirms, in the judgement of the Committee, the conclusions which it reached as a result of the above-mentioned analysis since it is evident that the violations of human rights in the Dominican Republic, just alluded to, have increased the tensions existing in the Caribbean region.

In the above-mentioned Special Report some observations were also made regarding the problems confronting the governments which give territorial asylum to the citizens of the countries governed by dictatorial regimes that do not respect the fundamental rights of the human individual. Those observations are particularly applicable to the situation created by the presence, at the current time, of many Dominican exiles in the countries of the Caribbean region, by the circumstance that in recent months there has been an increase in the number of Dominican nationals seeking refuge in foreign countries, and by the appreciable intensification of the activities of the exiles directed towards effecting a change in the government of their native country. Likewise, it should be mentioned that these groups of Dominicans, as well as numerous persons and organizations of different nationalities,

are requesting, through the press and in public demonstrations, the adoption of international measures against the present Government of the Dominican Republic. This situation is the cause of serious concern, and has created difficult problems, for the governments of the countries receiving the refugees, where public opinion has for some time been aroused over the state of affairs in the Dominican Republic.

Regarding the foregoing, the Committee must also refer to the repercussions resulting from the circumstance that public opinion has linked certain violent acts which have occurred in different American countries with illegal activities of agents of the Dominican Government abroad. The Committee has received and continues to receive reports concerning these cases, but, independently of any conclusions which it may reach on the matter, it considers it to be its duty to point out that existing tensions in the Caribbean have been heightened in an exceptional manner by this public reaction.

The Dominican Government has reacted very adversely to these developments. Among the manifestations of the foregoing are the attacks in the press, by radio and other means of propaganda of the Dominican Republic against those governments and Chiefs of State who have shown sympathy for the cause of the Dominican exiles. As this subject exceeds the limited scope of the present Report, the Committee will not analyze it at present. It must, however, express its opinion that this course of action, in turn, constitutes an additional element of disturbance in international relations in the Hemisphere.

In view of all that which has been stated above, the Committee stresses the fact that international tensions in the Caribbean area, far from diminishing, have been increased and that, in its view, these tensions will continue to increase so long as the flagrant violations of human rights in the Dominican Republic persist.

6 June 1960

John C. Dreier  
Ambassador, Representative of the  
United States  
Chairman of the Committee

Hector David Castro  
Ambassador, Representative of El Salvador

Vicente Sanchez Gavito  
Ambassador, Representative of Mexico

Carlos A. Clulow  
Ambassador, Representative of Uruguay

Santiago Salazar Santos  
Minister, Representative of Colombia

NOTE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF VENEZUELA TO THE  
CHAIRMAN OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PEACE COMMITTEE

February 17, 1960

OAS 135

Mr. Chairman:

In compliance with instructions from my Government, I have the honor to address Your Excellency for the purpose of requesting that the Inter-American Peace Committee investigate the flagrant violations of human rights by the Government of the Dominican Republic, which are aggravating the tensions in the Caribbean. Such investigations would be directed toward the later adoption by the Committee of the measures that it considers appropriate to eliminate the cause of that aggravation.

I enclose herewith a copy of the note that I addressed to the Chairman of the Council of the Organization of American States with respect to this matter, and also a copy of the Resolution approved by the above-mentioned body at the special meeting that it held on February 15, 1960, in which it is pointed out that the Committee is an appropriate organ to give consideration to the said matter.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest and most distinguished consideration.

MARCOS FALCON BRICENO  
Ambassador, Representative of Venezuela

The Honorable  
John C. Dreier  
Chairman, Inter-American  
Peace Committee  
Washington, D.C.