

# TAFT BREAKS WITH ZELAYA

Secretary Knox Sends Passports to Nicaraguan Charge d'Affaires.

WARMLY ACCUSES DICTATOR

In Letter Holds Him Personally Responsible for Execution of Americans.

TREATY OFTEN VIOLATED

Majority of Central American Republics Have Appealed for Suppression of His Rule.

BOTH FACTIONS LIABLE

United States Will Hold Them Responsible in Districts They Control and Receive Agents of Both Unofficially.

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1.—The United States has broken off official relations with the Zelaya Government in Nicaragua and has opened unofficial diplomatic relations with Señor Castrillo, the accredited representative of the revolutionary Government of Estrada, at the same time offering to continue unofficial diplomatic relations with Señor Rodríguez, the Zelayan Chargé d'Affaires, to whom it sent his passports in the letter making this announcement.

This puts both the Nicaraguan factions on the same footing in case the Zelaya party desire to avail themselves of the privilege of being received unofficially at the State Department, and brings the crisis as near the status of war as it could be brought by Executive action without a definite declaration by both Houses of Congress, which will convene next Monday.

What further steps the State Department will take or is preparing to take is not announced. The cruiser *Prairie* is at Philadelphia ready to sail for Panama with a force of marines which will probably number 800. This is a much larger force than is to be relieved at the Isthmus, but whether the marines will be used in Nicaragua or not no Administration official would say to-night.

#### Knox Makes Letter Public.

The announcement of this new phase in the Nicaraguan situation was made to-night by the publication by Secretary Knox of the letter he had just sent to Señor Rodríguez, the Nicaraguan Chargé d'Affaires.

The text of the letter sent to Señor Rodríguez by Secretary Knox is as follows:

#### Secretary Knox's Note.

Department of State,  
Washington, Dec. 1, 1909.

Sir: Since the Washington conventions of 1907 it is notorious that President Zelaya has almost continuously kept Central America in tension of turmoil, that he has repeatedly and flagrantly violated the provisions of the conventions, and by a baleful influence upon Honduras, whose neutrality the conventions were to assure, has sought to discredit those sacred international obligations to the great detriment of Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala, whose Governments meanwhile appear to have been able patiently to strive for the loyal support of the engagements so solemnly undertaken at Washington under the auspices of the United States and of Mexico.

It is equally a matter of common knowledge that under the régime of President Zelaya republican institutions have ceased in Nicaragua to exist except in name; that public opinion and the press have been throttled, and that prison has been the reward of any tendency to real patriotism. My consideration for you personally impels me to abstain from unnecessary discussion of the painful details of a régime which unfortunately has been a blot upon the history of Nicaragua and a discouragement to a group of republics whose aspirations need only the opportunity of free and honest Government.

In view of the interests of the United States and of its relation to the Washington Conventions, appeal against this situation has long since been made to this Government by a majority of the Central American republics. There is now added the appeal, through the revolution, of a great body of the Nicaraguan people. Two Americans, who this Government is now convinced were officers connected with the revolutionary forces and, therefore, entitled to be dealt with according to the enlightened practice of civilized nations, have been killed by direct order of President Zelaya. Their execution is said to have been preceded by barbarous cruelties. The Consulate at Managua is now officially reported to have been menaced.

#### Further Delay Difficult.

There is thus a sinister culmination of an administration also characterized by a cruelty to its own citizens, which has, until the recent outrage, found vent in the case of this country in a succession of petty annoyances and indignities which many months ago made it impossible to ask an American Minister longer to reside at Managua. From every point of view it has evi-

dently become difficult for the United States further to delay more active response to the appeals so long made to its duty to its citizens; to its dignity, to Central America, and to civilization.

The Government of the United States is convinced that the revolution represents the ideals and the will of a majority of the Nicaraguan people more faithfully than does the Government of President Zelaya, and that its peaceable control is well nigh as extensive as that hitherto so sternly attempted by the Government at Managua.

There is now added the fact, as officially reported from more than one quarter, that there are already indications of a rising in the western provinces in favor of a Presidential candidate intimately associated with the old régime. In this it is easy to see new elements tending toward a condition of anarchy, which leaves at a given time no definite responsible source to which the Government of the United States could look for reparation for the killing of Messrs. Cannon and Groce, or, indeed, for the protection which must be assured American citizens and American interests in Nicaragua.

In these circumstances the President no longer feels for the Government of President Zelaya that respect and confidence which would make it appropriate hereafter to maintain with it regular diplomatic relations, implying the will and the ability to respect and assure what is due from one State to another.

#### Both Factions Held Accountable.

The Government of Nicaragua, which you have hitherto represented, is hereby notified, as will be also the leaders of the revolution, that the Government of the United States will hold strictly accountable for the protection of American life and property the faction de facto in control of the eastern and western provinces of the Republic of Nicaragua.

As for the reparation found due, after careful consideration, for the killing of Messrs. Groce and Cannon, the Government of the United States would be loath to impose upon the innocent people of Nicaragua a too heavy burden of expiating the acts of a régime forced upon them, or to exact from a succeeding Government, if it have quite different policies, the imposition of such a burden.

Into the question of ultimate reparation there must enter the question of the existence at Managua of a Government capable of responding to demands. There must enter also the question how far it is possible to reach those actually responsible and those who perpetrated the tortures reported to have preceded the execution, if these be verified, and the question whether the Government be one entirely dissociated from the present intolerable conditions and worthy to be trusted to make impossible a recurrence of such acts, in which case the President, as a friend of your country, as he is also of the other republics of Central America, might be disposed to have indemnity confined to what was reasonably due the relatives of the deceased and punitive only in so far as the punishment might fall where really due.

In pursuance of this policy, the Government of the United States will temporarily withhold its demand for reparation, in the meanwhile taking such steps as it deems wise and proper to protect American interests.

#### Question of Guarantees Postponed.

To insure the future protection of legitimate American interests, in consideration of the interests of the majority of the Central American republics, and in the hope of making more effective the friendly offices exerted under the Washington Conventions, the Government of the United States reserves for further consideration at the proper time the question of stipulating also that the Constitutional Government of Nicaragua obligate itself by convention for the benefit of all the Governments concerned as a guarantee for its future loyal support of the Washington Conventions and their peaceful and progressive aims.

From the foregoing it will be apparent to you that your office of Charge d'Affaires is at an end. I have the honor to inclose your passports for use in case you desire to leave this country. I would add at the same time that, although your diplomatic quality is terminated, I shall be happy to receive you, as I shall be happy to receive the representative of the revolution, each as the unofficial channel of communication between the Government of the United States and the de facto authorities to whom I look for the protection of American interests pending the establishment in Nicaragua of a government with which the United States can maintain diplomatic relations.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my high consideration.

(Signed) P. C. KNOX.

To Felipe Rodriguez, Esq., Washington, D. C.

#### Letter Almost Unparalleled.

The letter of Secretary Knox has already aroused much interest in diplomatic circles, where it was read eagerly. No diplomat would commit the indiscretion of commenting on it, but others pointed out that the dismissal of a diplomat coupled with the declaration that the Government will yet be happy to receive him unofficially, is not a customary incident in foreign relations, nor is it usual for a Government to take official action on what it admits to be only an allegation.

Certain parts of the State Department letter, referring to the question of indemnity for the shooting of Cannon and Groce, were evidently dictated by President Taft himself.

An extraordinary feature of the letter is that it seems to evince a determination on the part of the United States to hold President Zelaya personally liable for the alleged torture and execution of the Americans Cannon and Groce, and exhibits the unique situation of one Government holding the Chief Executive of another responsible practically as a common malefactor.

#### Status of Our Consuls.

Just what is now the status of the Consular representatives of the United States in Nicaragua is not definitely explained to-night. It is expected, however, that Vice Consul Caldera, who

has been occupying the legation in Managua, together with the other Consuls in that country, will receive his passports to-morrow. This is the usual method of procedure in the case of such action between Governments.

#### Rodriguez Is "Paralyzed."

On the receipt of the letter of Mr. Knox through a State Department messenger, Señor Rodríguez notified his Government by cable. He is awaiting a reply and will remain here a few days. When seen to-night he was excited in manner, but his discussion of the situation was brief.

"We are stricken to the heart; we are paralyzed," was all he would say.

There was little evidence, however, at the Legation of so profound a feeling. On the contrary, it was the scene of much gaiety.

Mr. Castrillo, the representative of the provisional Government in this country, saw the Knox statement early to-night, and immediately sent off a telegram to Estrada apprising him of the action of the State Department. When seen at his hotel he seemed not at all excited over the new development. He answered questions in broken English. Speaking of the statement from the State Department, he said:

"Yes, I have seen it—the long paper. Long, very long." He held his hands far apart and contemplated the distance he had set between them.

"My Government and the Zelaya Government are now on the same footing—neither recognized. I am not recognized and neither is Rodríguez. I do not expect to be received right away. Some more victories will have to be won. Belligerency is easy—recognition not so.

#### Zelaya's Friends as Bad.

"I think the statement applies as well to any friend Zelaya might put up in his place as it does to him, and that is well. Any man he would put in the place would be after his own kind. Zelaya has all the bad qualities, but his friends might be worse than he in one or more of them. This man would be more murderous, that man would be more rapacious, another would be more immoral. But I think the State Department will not have anything to do with any of Zelaya's supporters.

"It is better for the Estrada Government that the United States should not recognize me right away. If we are treated as belligerents your Government can do us many acts of friendship which would not be possible if we were recognized officially."

#### Naval Force Available.

The available American naval force in Nicaraguan waters consists of the cruiser *Des Moines* and the gunboats *Vicksburg* and *Marietta*, besides these off the Canal Zone is the *Buffalo*, a transport, which might be used for carrying marines from the Zone should a landing be decided on. The *Albany* and the *Yorktown* have been held at *Magdalena Bay*, in Southern California, in readiness for trouble, but it would take several days for them to reach *Corinto*, where the *Vicksburg* is now the only American ship.

None of the fighting ships off Nicaragua have marines aboard, though they are all heavily manned with blue-jackets. The *Marietta* and the *Vicksburg* have each 135 bluejackets, while the *Des Moines* has 280.

In addition to the marines on the *Prairie*, there are some 400 on the Isthmus who are looking forward to being relieved by the new contingent. They will, of course, be held until the trouble is over, while others can be rushed across in a day or so from *Guantanamo, Cuba*. It has been persistently stated that no troops were to be sent south for Nicaraguan service, though a large cruiser, about to start for the Philippines was stopped at *San Francisco* to await developments.

So far as fighting ships are concerned, it is thought that the few American vessels already at *Port Limon, Costa Rica*, and *Corinto, Nicaragua*, are enough to blow anything Zelaya could send against them out of the water. The need of more men would arise only in case land operations should be decided on. Such drastic methods do not seem to be expected at present.

Dispatches continue to be received at the State Department indicating that President Zelaya is contemplating retiring from the Presidency of Nicaragua. The latest one came from *Bluefields*, and stated that Zelaya, it was rumored there, in all probability would turn over the Presidency to *Irias*, his present Minister General. Whether this is Zelaya's real intention or whether it is a play for time is not known here.

In order to place before Secretary Knox the explanation of President Zelaya concerning the trial and execution of Cannon and Groce, *Pedro Gonzalez* has arrived here as a private emissary of Zelaya. He bears no official credentials, but will make an effort to arrange an interview with Secretary Knox.

#### Story of Violated Treaty.

Just what Secretary Knox meant in his letter to Señor Rodríguez by the reference to the Washington agreement of two years ago is disclosed by reference to that convention. Through the efforts of Mr. Root, then Secretary of State, representatives of all the Central American republics at the moment on the point of a general warfare, even then, owing, it was alleged, largely to the overweening ambitions of President Zelaya to become the dictator of Central America, were brought to this capital and induced to enter into a solemn compact to refrain from exploitation of the territories of one another and to observe the rules of civilized intercourse. Especially were they pledged, to submit to arbitration instead of putting to the test of warfare any differences that might arise between them. The neutrality of Honduras was guaranteed.

Now Secretary Knox practically

charges that each and every one of these stipulations were violated by President Zelaya. He has dominated Honduras, whose President is declared to be only his mouthpiece, and Zelaya has not hesitated to violate the laws of neutrality by sending his troops, without warrant or permission, into Salvador and Costa Rica. That he would have done the same in the case of Guatemala had the revolution extended to the northern frontier of Nicaragua there is no doubt.

#### Moral Suasion Ineffective.

It was well understood, though never reduced to the form of a treaty, that not only the United States, but Mexico would undertake to see that the provisions of this treaty were effective, though purely moral suasion was supposed to be the main reliance to accomplish its purpose. This has utterly failed, after a trial of nearly two years. Reports to the Department of State from its diplomatic and Consular agents have shown that during that period President Zelaya has been stirring up discontent in the neighboring Central American republics; giving substantial aid to would-be revolutionists, and doing everything possible to bring about a state of affairs that would warrant him in invading the territory of his neighbors.

But the internal conditions in Nicaragua revealed by these reports have never been told to the public because the moral turpitude involved is almost beyond belief. While these reports are still withheld from publication, officials of the Department of State have disclosed enough of their contents to show that a condition of absolute despotism has existed in Nicaragua with such accompaniments as rapine, murder, extortion, and barbarous treatment of political prisoners such as has been unknown since mediaeval times.

#### Zelaya the Only Law.

As Secretary Knox says in his letter, the other Central American republics have protested in vain against the existence of the conditions in Nicaragua, but the State Department has felt loath to violate its old traditions of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, and probably would have refrained even now had not Zelaya gone to the length of killing two Americans engaged in honorable warfare. In answer to the department's demands for an explanation his agents simply stated that the executions were in accordance with the law of Nicaragua.

But the State Department finds that that law is Zelaya, and that the action was in violation of all the rules of civilized warfare. Reasoning that there is no actual Government in Nicaragua, the department necessarily arrived at the conclusion that Zelaya is nothing more or less than an international brigand and must be so treated; and that he must be held responsible for the killing of these two Americans as if he were a private individual. It is probable that he will be captured in Nicaragua or reclaimed from any country to which he attempts to escape, if an extradition treaty can be invoked, and tried as a common malefactor.

It is believed that President Diaz of Mexico was the deciding force in this matter, and that it was owing to a straightforward and energetic declaration by him of the guilt of Zelaya and the necessity for intervention that was received in Washington within the last twenty-four hours that the State Department reached its decision.

### HOW THE TROUBLE STARTED.

#### Zelaya's Continued Offenses Culminated in Execution of Americans.

Zelaya, "the menace to Central America," has never been friendly to this country, and, it is said, has frankly admitted that he despised Americans. For fourteen years he has ruled, putting down revolutions, carrying things with a high hand, and disregarding the rights of other countries.

Back in September the mutilation of official dispatches from Nicaragua to the United States Government stirred Washington and convinced the officials that it was purposely done to cover up some unusual military activity. It was then predicted that this country in the end would have to take steps to preserve peace. It was the killing of the Americans, Cannon and Groce, that stirred the Washington officials into immediate action.

The present revolution began early last month. When the revolt broke out in Bluefields it was thought that it would be speedily crushed as many others had been. Instead it has gained in strength until to-day the insurgents have established an effective blockade of Greytown. Zelaya has been beaten again and again, and it is now said to be only a question of time when he will have to flee the country.

The revolutionists are well organized. Gen. Juan J. Estrada, Governor of the Department of Zelaya, on the Atlantic Coast, was appointed Provisional President by the revolutionists, and Gen. Emiliano Chamorro assumed command of the army in the field.

The revolutionary army won victory after victory. Zelaya's troops carried on the war without regard to the existing Central American treaty. It was reported on Nov. 9 that his army had invaded Costa Rican territory by crossing the San Juan River.

From his dirty little castle at Managua Zelaya, hard pressed, was sending out each day accounts of his "victories," when through some mistake the news got out that his forces had captured and summarily executed two Americans. This awoke this country to action, and again troubled Nicaragua was the most prominent question with which the State Department had to deal. Following this development the rebels got a good foothold, and news began to come from other than Zelaya sources. The American Consular Service, which had been gagged by Zelaya, got Managua through Vice Consul Caldera at Managua that he had been threatened by the President. He is a Nicaraguan by birth. He had to leave the Consulate and seek shelter in the legation.

Leroy Cannon and Leonard Grace, the two Americans who were captured, were officers in the insurgent army. They were taken to El Castillo, an old fort on the Colorado River. There, according to the story of the revolutionists, they were tortured and then shot within twenty-four hours of their capture. The Consul at Managua appealed to President Zelaya. He was promptly told that the sentence was final.

As soon as this news was received here the Government took prompt action. The Vicksburg was ordered to proceed at once to Corinto, and within an hour after the sending of the Vicksburg the cruiser Des Moines was ordered to the scene.

### TERMS OF PEACE TREATY.

#### Declares Honduras Neutral and Provides for Arbitration.

The treaty of peace and amity which was signed by the representatives of five Central American countries was the result of a conference which was held in Washington in November, 1907. The bringing together of the representatives of the five countries was accomplished by Elihu Root, then Secretary of State. After many

negotiations the representatives at Washington of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua on Sept. 17 signed the agreement to meet, and it was in accordance with this protocol that the convention was held.

The treaty was the outgrowth of efforts to find a way to put an end to anarchy in Central America, in which both Mexico and the United States were interested. They acted jointly in the matter. Secretary Root took the ground that with the completion of the Panama Canal these republics would be "in our front yard," and that some practical action must be taken to put an end to revolutions.

Under the treaty the five republics bound themselves to maintain peace, to preserve complete harmony, and to arbitrate their differences before the Central American Court of Justice, a tribunal established under the new agreement. Some of the leading articles are as follows:

Article II.—Desiring to secure to the republics of Central America the benefits which are derived from the maintenance of their institutions and contribute at the same time in strengthening their stability and the prestige with which they ought to be surrounded, it is declared that every disposition or measure which may tend to alter the constitutional organization in any of them is to be deemed a menace to the peace of said republics.

Article III.—Taking into account the central geographical position of Honduras and the facilities which, owing to this circumstance, have made its territory most often the theatre of Central American conflicts, Honduras declares from now on its absolute neutrality in event of any conflict between the other republics, and the latter, in their turn, provided such neutrality be observed, bind themselves to respect it and in no case to violate Honduran territory.

Article XVI.—Desiring to prevent one of the most frequent causes of disturbances in the republics, the contracting Governments shall not permit the leaders or principal chiefs of political refugees, nor their agents, to reside in the department bordering on the countries whose peace they might disturb.

Those who may have established their permanent residence in a frontier department may remain in the place of their residence under the immediate surveillance of the Government affording them asylum, but from the moment they become a menace to public order they will be included in the rule of the preceding paragraph.

Article XVIII.—Every person, no matter what his nationality, who within the territory of one of the contracting parties shall initiate or foster revolutionary movements against any of the others, shall be immediately brought to the capital of the republic, where he shall be submitted to trial according to law.

The treaty was signed on Dec. 20, 1907.