

LASRY CASE

BAINBRIDGE, *Commissioner* (for the Commission) :

This claim is submitted upon the following documents:

First. Two letters of claimant, both dated May 16, 1901, addressed to the Department of State, in which he sets forth that he is a naturalized citizen of the United States, domiciled in Venezuela; that on November 11, 1899, the troops of General Colmenares, a detachment of General Castro's army, entered Belen, where claimant resided and was engaged in business as a merchant and farmer, took away his cattle and horses, and looted the better part of the goods and provisions in his business establishment; and he summarizes his alleged losses as follows:

	<i>Gold</i>
29 head of cattle, at \$ 20 per head . . . . .	\$ 580
Merchandise . . . . .	15,000
2 saddle horses, at \$ 125 each . . . . .	250
Cash . . . . .	50
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Total . . . . .	15,880

Second. A statement signed by various parties claiming to be residents of Belen before the jefe civil of the parish to the effect that on the 11th day of November, 1899, the cattle Mr. Lasry had in his pasture were taken by the forces of General Colmenares and that the better part of the goods stored in his establishment was looted by said forces; and furthermore that Mr. Lasry had always attended to his business without mixing himself in the politics of the country, or in anything else which could affect his condition as a neutral tradesman.

Third. A statement signed on October 3, 1901, by J. Benody and J. A. Parmente in the presence of the secretary of the United States legation at Caracas to the effect that Isaac J. Lasry was, during the revolution existing in Venezuela in November 1899, practically ruined by the sackage of his

<sup>1</sup> See the German - Venezuelan Commission (Faber Case) in Volume X of these *Reports*.

mercantile house established at Belen, a village in the State of Carabobo, and the confiscation of all his material goods — such as money, beasts, cattle — by the forces of the Government of Venezuela.

Fourth. Copy of certificate of naturalization of Isaac J. Lasry in the court of common pleas for the city and county of New York, on October 26, 1893; and copy of passport issued to Isaac J. Lasry on March 22, 1898, by the United States legation at Caracas.

It is to be observed that no legally competent evidence under the rules of municipal law is here presented, either as to the fact or amount of the alleged loss. The learned counsel for Venezuela urges that the facts upon which the claim is founded are not proved as the common law requires, and that it should therefore be disallowed.

Article II of the protocol constituting this Commission provides:

The commissioners, or umpire, as the case may be, shall investigate and decide said claims upon such evidence or information only as shall be furnished by or on behalf of the respective Governments.

The Commission, then, is not limited in the adjudication of the claims submitted to it to only such evidence as may be competent under the technical rules of the common law, but may also investigate and decide claims upon information furnished by or on behalf of the respective Governments. It has indeed been found impossible in proceedings of this character to adhere to strict judicial rules of evidence. Legal testimony presented under the sanction of an oath administered by competent authority will undoubtedly be accorded greater weight than unsworn statements contained in letters, informal declarations, etc., but the latter are under the protocol entitled to admission and such consideration as they may seem to deserve.

The information furnished as to this particular claim is both meager and unsatisfactory. The statement of the claimant that he suffered some loss, and the manner thereof is corroborated by the declarations of various residents of Belen, but none of the latter gives an estimate of the amount of the loss sustained by Mr. Lasry. Belen is referred to by the declarants as a little town or village in the State of Carabobo. Lasry states that "the better part" of his stock of merchandise was taken by the soldiery, and he gives the value of the part taken as \$ 15,000 gold, manifestly an exaggeration.

The Commissioners regarding the fact as shown that Lasry sustained some loss, but unable to accept his uncorroborated estimate of the value of the property taken, have agreed to make an allowance in this claim of the sum of \$ 2,000, without interest, as being under all the circumstances the nearest approach possible to an equitable determination.

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