

THE AGENCY'S GAZETTE

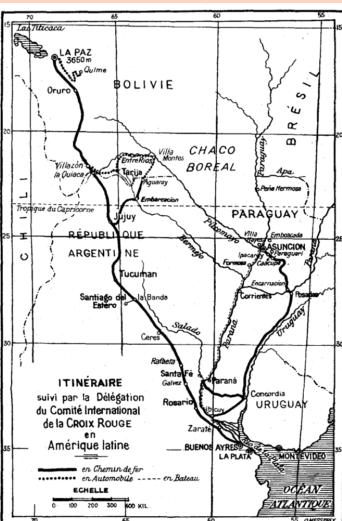
1870-2020

150 YEARS FIGHTING FOR MORE HUMANITY IN WAR

24 May 1933, the first time in...

... Paraguay

A remote and bloody conflict | The Chaco War (1932-1935) was fought between Bolivia and Paraguay over possession of the Gran Chaco, a disputed territory lying between the two countries that was thought to be rich in oil. In terms of the size of the armies involved, it was one of the bloodiest border conflicts in modern history.



Mission du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge au Paraguay (20 mai-4 juin 1933) et en Bolivie (1^{re}-20 juillet 1933).

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ICRC mission to Paraguay (20.05 - 4.06.1933) and Bolivia (1.07 - 20.07.1933)

Tensions began rising in the summer of 1932, but the ICRC did not respond straight away. It was not until March 1933, when the organization became aware that there were prisoners of war, that it decided to act. For practical and financial reasons, delegates were not sent to Latin America from Geneva but were instead recruited locally. The ICRC appointed Emmanuel Galland, a Swiss citizen based in Argentina and secretary of the South American Federation of YMCAs, and Rodolfo Talice, a Uruguayan doctor who specialized in parasitology.

A very long journey | The two ICRC delegates arrived in Asunción at the end of May 1933, having spent almost 50 hours travelling there from Buenos Aires by train. After the necessary official meetings, they visited their first prisoners of war on 24 May – five officers being held at a military academy and soldiers being held at various small military quarters spread across the capital. The delegates found that the Bolivian prisoners were being treated well: they were fed, housed and looked after in much the same way as members of the Paraguayan army. Even so, the delegates were pleased to note an improvement in the prisoners' living conditions after their arrival in Asunción. The delegates' assignment continued further inland, but they were not given permission to visit the front line or rear areas of the conflict.

Galland and Talice could not enter Bolivia directly because the border between the two countries ran through the Gran Chaco, where the war was taking place, so instead they returned to Buenos Aires in mid-June. This time they travelled by boat, a journey that took "only" 17 and a half hours! At the end of June, they travelled to Bolivia to visit Paraguayan prisoners held in camps across the country. In total, the delegates travelled, often in difficult conditions, around 6,000 kilometres in 22 days.

■ IIME, DPM & DGON



Emmanuel Galland (right), head of the ICRC mission, with three Bolivian caciques