

CG-IOF-661

19 October, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR ADMIRAL CHALKER:

Subject: American S.S. BENJAMIN RUSH, crew trouble on voyage from 18 July, 1942 to 9 August, 1942.

Enclosure: (A) Complaint of crew member.

1. Enclosure (A) stated⁵ that after the Subject vessel loaded at Baltimore, it proceeded to Norfolk where the crew were denied shore leave by Navy Officers. This is said to have caused considerable dissatisfaction among the crew. The second cook applied to the Master for medical attention on leaving Norfolk, which was denied.
2. At Delaware Breakwater the second cook again requested to be put ashore for medical attention which was denied. The following night in New York, he again requested medical attention and the Master brought a doctor aboard about 1700. The doctor ordered the cook ashore to the hospital. The crew were informed that they would not be allowed shore leave and Coast Guard personnel were put aboard to enforce the order.
3. After two nights in New York, the vessel proceeded to Boston where the crew were again refused shore leave and Coast Guard personnel were again placed aboard to enforce the order.
4. The complainant endeavored to go ashore but was requested to return to the ship by the Coast Guard. This he refused to do and the Chief Mate of the vessel was asked to take the responsibility of locking up the complainant. As the Chief Mate refused to take the responsibility, the Coast Guard Shore Patrol was called but they could take no action. Subsequently an arrangement was concluded between the Coast Guard and the Police Department whereby the latter took the complainant to the Marine Hospital where he was refused admission as he did not have a release from the Master of the ship. He was then returned to the ship.
5. The following morning the Master brought two doctors to the ship who ordered the complainant and an oiler to the hospital. At the hospital, it was decided to hospitalize the oiler and the complainant was returned to the ship with a letter to the Master stating he was fit for limited duties. As the ship was preparing to leave the dock another seaman seeing no chance to get any medical attention, left the ship and was said to have been classed as a deserter.

*file
MAR.*

6. In response to individuals' inquiries sent to the DCGOs concerned regarding the above incidents, the COPT at Norfolk has reported that while the ship was in Norfolk all members of the crew were granted shore liberty. Nothing was known by the COPT about the second cook applying for medical attention and the COPT records show no request for medical aid from the Subject vessel immediately prior to sailing.

7. With reference to the request for medical attention at Delaware Breakwater, it does not appear the request reached the Coast Guard there as the Commanding Officer of the Lewes Station has reported that no member of the crew of the Subject vessel requested or was refused transportation by the Coast Guard there.

8. A report from the DCGO 3rd Naval District states that the men posted on the Subject vessel as guards received no complaint from the crew about not being allowed to go ashore while the vessel was in New York.

9. A report from the DCGO 1st Naval District, indicates that upon arrival of the Subject vessel at Boston, the Master went ashore for convoy instructions after advising the First Officer that the crew were not to go ashore. This action was apparently taken at the Master's own initiative.

10. The First Officer advised the Ensign in charge of the Coast Guard Shore Patrol of the Captain's orders and the Ensign informed the spokesman for the crew that no one could pass the gate without a pass signed by one of the ship's officers. The Executive Officer for the Captain of the Port concurred with the action taken.

11. John P. Lodge, a seaman, insisted upon going ashore for medical attention and the Shore Patrol arranged to have him taken to the Marine Hospital by the police. Lodge was returned to the ship by the police when hospitalization was not recommended.

12. Albert J. O'Neill, an oiler, who had refused to stand watch because of illness was discharged by the Master upon being pronounced fit by the doctors.

13. Levi Gagnon, seaman, deserted ship on 8 August, 1942 after being told by the doctors that he was fit for duty. Subsequent examination revealed the doctors were mistaken. On 9 August, 1942, Gagnon was denied access to the ship and charges were preferred against him by the Master. The Merchant Marine Inspector agreed to drop the charges against Gagnon if he would submit to an operation.

14. The report from Boston states that it is believed the crew's disgruntled attitude was caused by the nature of the ship's cargo, denial of shore leave enroute to Boston, and that the crew of a British ship at a nearby pier was permitted to go ashore. However, it does not appear from the reports from the other Coast Guard facilities concerned that the Coast Guard had any connection with the denial of shore leave to the crew until the ship reached Boston.

F. E. POLLIO.

By: *MaRansom*

nmud
e. r.

I shipped on this ship at the Pratt Street Yard of the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company, Baltimore.

Immediately after leaving the Pratt Street Yard, we shifted to Locust Point to load. Before the ship had even started to load cargo, they brought the Commissioner aboard ship on July 18, 1942, and we signed on foreign articles, which had not been done as a general rule on ships of American flag going foreign. It has been the practice to sign on coastwise articles to the last loading point and then sign on foreign articles from there. They had not mentioned before we signed on foreign articles that we would not be allowed to go ashore in American ports.

After loading 3 or 4 days in Baltimore, we proceeded down the Bay to Norfolk where we first got word that we would not be allowed to go ashore. This was told us by Navy officers. The crew raised a lot of fuss about this at Norfolk.

We finished loading at Norfolk after laying there about three days and started out in convoy along the coast, as usual to make a foreign voyage to north and east. On leaving Norfolk, at convoy anchorage, the second cook applied to the Master for medical attention, having an abscess on his knee and being in very severe pain. He was denied medical attention.

We left there the next morning, and the following night got into Delaware breakwater and anchored there. The second cook asked to be put ashore at Delaware breakwater for medical attention which was also denied. We left Delaware breakwater the following morning and arrived in New York that night.

The following morning the second cook asked the Captain to put him ashore for medical attention, and the Captain brought a doctor aboard ship around 5 p.m. The doctor then ordered the second cook ashore to the hospital. We were also told that we would not be allowed to go ashore in New York. An armed guard of the Coast Guard was put on the ship to prevent us from going ashore.

After laying in New York for two nights and a day, we proceeded to Boston. At Boston we were taken immediately to a dock and there a guard was put on and we were forbidden to go ashore. We laid at this dock for about 25 hours.

At this dock I forced the issue by defying the guard and walking ashore to see a doctor. The Coast Guard stopped me at the end of the dock and would not allow me to leave the yard, but tried to force me back on the ship. When I refused to go back aboard the ship, he tried to get the chief mate to take the responsibility of locking me up. But the chief mate would not take the responsibility so they called the shore patrol of the Coast Guard. A Mr. Waters answered the phone. He would not take the responsibility of locking me up. The Police Department was called and refused to take the responsibility of locking me up, but offered to do it providing the Captain would take the responsibility. Finally Mr. Waters of the Coast Guard Shore Patrol agreed that the Police could take me to the Marine Hospital, and the doctor at the Marine Hospital told me he could not admit me to the hospital without a release from the Captain of the ship. The Police brought me back to the ship.

The following morning the Captain brought two doctors to the ship to examine all those who needed medical attention. I was the first, and two other men came up to be examined also. The doctors decided that the oiler and myself were to be taken to the hospital for further examination. At the hospital the doctor decided the oiler must be hospitalized, and that I was fit only for limited duties, so he gave me a letter back to the Captain explaining this situation. This letter was delivered to the Captain about 2 p.m. on Saturday.

The ship was being prepared to leave the dock to go to anchorage, and one man, an ordinary seaman, seeing no chance of getting any medical attention through the set-up that had been prepared, left the ship and was classed as a deserter. The crew on the ship was told that this man had been locked up.

The Captain had made no arrangements to pay me off Saturday night. Sunday

morning they called me about 9 o'clock to get my clothes to go ashore.

The Captain had come back early Sunday morning and said he had replacements coming out for the men who had got off. The convoy was making up to go out and the Captain had the pilot and a Navy officer who were to pilot him out of Boston aboard the ship.

After about an hour of talking with these people he decided to pay me off, the Commissioner already being there. When he called me up to pay me off he found that his payroll was full of errors, and there was argument over the amount of money due me. Through the mistakes in the payroll, the Captain, with his other troubles, blew up and said he would not go in the convoy, to take the ship back and anchor it. Then after the ship came back to anchor they allowed me to go ashore in a Navy boat.

All of this could have been settled Saturday night and prevented all the trouble and the ship missing the convoy. These things seem to be common on the Atlantic Coast. All that one has to do is talk to the seamen from other convoys and you will find that this is not only a single case but is an every day practice.

3. After two nights in New York, the vessel proceeded to Boston where the crew were again refused shore leave and Coast Guard personnel were again placed aboard to enforce the order.

4. The complainant endeavored to go ashore but was requested to return to the ship by the Coast Guard. This he refused to do and the Chief Mate of the vessel was asked to take the responsibility of locking up the complainant. As the Chief Mate refused to take the responsibility, the Coast Guard Shore Patrol was called but they could take no action. Subsequently an arrangement was concluded between the Coast Guard and the Police Department whereby the latter took the complainant to the Marine Hospital where he was refused admission as he did not have a release from the Master of the ship. He was then returned to the ship.

5. The following morning the Master brought two doctors to the ship who ordered the complainant and an oiler to the hospital. At the hospital, it was decided to hospitalize the oiler and the complainant was returned to the ship with a letter to the Master stating he was fit for limited duties. As the ship was preparing to leave the dock another seaman seeing no chance to get any medical attention, left the ship and was said to have been classed as a deserter.

uopwa #27
cio

LMO W.R.

Memorandum to Captain Derby

Subject: American SS BENJAMIN RUSH; Complaint of Seaman attached thereto.

Inclosure: (A) Investigation predicated on Headquarters letter to District Coast Guard Officer, First Naval District, CG-IOF-661-CONFIDENTIAL, dated 21 August 1942.

1. The American SS BENJAMIN RUSH arrived at Pier 41 at 1404 E. W. T. Captain E. F. Colburn went ashore for convoy instructions. He advised First Officer Agnew that the crew was not to go ashore. An investigation conducted by this office failed to accurately reveal by what authority, other than his own, the Captain issued this order.

2. First Officer Agnew advised Ensign Waters of the Coast Guard Shore Patrol that Captain Colburn's orders were that no one was to leave the ship. Ensign Waters, on his own initiative, advised the spokesman for the members of the crew who were bent on going ashore that no one would be allowed to pass the gate without a pass signed by one of the ship's officers. Lieutenant Commander Stober, Executive Officer for the Captain of the Port, Boston, was contacted by Mr. Waters and concurred with the action taken.

3. John P. Lodge, a seaman aboard the BENJAMIN RUSH, insisted upon going ashore for medical attention. The Coast Guard Shore Patrol did not resort to physical force in restraining Lodge. Because of Lodge's attitude and First Officer Agnew's disinterest, the Coast Guard Shore Patrol arranged to have him taken to the Marine Hospital, Brighton, Massachusetts, by the Police. The Police returned Lodge to the ship when hospitalization was not recommended.

4. On 8 August 1942, two doctors from the Marine Hospital, Brighton, Massachusetts, examined the entire crew. Although several crewmen claimed to be ill, only David Wheeler needed medical attention.

5. Albert J. O'Neill, an oiler, who had refused to stand watch claiming that he was ill, was discharged by the Captain when he was pronounced fit for duty by the doctors.

On 8 August 1942 after being told by the doctors that he was fit for duty. Subsequent examination revealed the doctors to be in error. On 9 August 1942, Gagnon was denied access to the ship and charges were preferred by the Captain. Captain F. S. Walker, Merchant Marine Inspector, agreed to drop the charges against Gagnon if he would submit to an operation.

7. It is thought that the crew's disgruntled attitude resolved itself around the ship's cargo, denial of shore liberty at ports en route to Boston, and the fact that the crew from the British LORD BYRON at Pier 44 was permitted to go ashore.

C. J. A. Wilson
C. J. A. WILSON

District Coast Guard Officer, Naval District
Commandant
Subject: *Aspirin on board ship*
Person alleged there
Reference: (a) Headquarters letter to District Coast Guard Officer, Naval District, CG-107-451-CONFIDENTIAL, dated 21 August 1942.
Enclosure: (a) Investigation conducted as reference (a).
Forwarded, approved.