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Bombay, India, September 3, 1943.

Subject: Discharge of James O. Keene, Second Assistant Engineer, from the American m.v. CAPE ST GEORGE at Bombay on August 27, 1943.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON

Sir:

I have the honor to report the following incidents relating to the discharge of James O. Keene, Second Assistant Engineer, from the American m.v. CAPE ST GEORGE at Bombay on August 27, 1943.

- 1/ The vessel entered Bombay harbor on August 19, 1943, to obtain engine repairs. On August 21st this Consulate received a statement, a copy of which is enclosed, from the War Shipping Administration office at Bombay outlining certain charges made against the Chief Engineer by both the Second Assistant Engineer and the Electrician. Upon my request the Master called at the Consulate on the same day and these charges were discussed with him. The results of the discussion are summarized in the attached copy of a memorandum prepared by Vice Consul Wagner.
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On the morning of August 25th the Master, Chief Engineer and Second Assistant Engineer visited the Consulate. The Master stated that the friction between the Chief Engineer and the Second Assistant Engineer had passed beyond his control and remarked that he was not disposed to take the vessel to sea while this situation existed. The Chief Engineer stated that he would leave the ship and arrange his own transportation back to the United States if the Second Assistant Engineer remained on board. The Second Assistant Engineer initially stated that he desired to leave the vessel owing to the impossibility of continuing to work under the Chief Engineer, and later added that he had demanded a Consular hearing in order to bring the Chief Engineer's actions to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

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There are enclosed affidavits executed by both the Chief Engineer and the Second Assistant Engineer relating to the charges made against each by the other. To be properly interpreted, these charges must be studied with the following facts in mind:

- (a) The vessel entered Bombay harbor for repairs, and the three men named above acknowledged that the ship's engines had been permitted to reach a very poor condition.
- (b) The Second Assistant Engineer is only twenty-two years of age and apparently not sufficiently mature to appreciate the responsibilities incumbent upon a ship's officer. Conversely, it appeared that more constructive leadership on the part of the Chief Engineer might have increased the efficiency of the Second Assistant Engineer.

In short, the two engineers found each other's presence on board the vessel intolerable, and the Master confessed that the problem was insolvable insofar as he was concerned. After hearing the oral statements of the men and studying the affidavits presented by them, it was decided that the best interests of the war effort would be served by discharging one of them. It was suggested that the Second Assistant Engineer leave the vessel. He was discharged from the m.v. CAPE ST GEORGE by mutual consent on August 26, 1943, and was signed on the American s.s. CHARLES LUMMIS on the same date as Second Engineer, and is now en route to an east coast United States port.

The Bombay Office of the War Shipping Administration is handling the details incidental to the repair of the ship's engines, and at the present time it is not known whether the necessary repairs can be completed at Bombay. Therefore, should the appropriate authorities in the United States desire to investigate the charges set forth in the enclosed affidavits, it is suggested that the War Shipping Administration be consulted in connection with the report to be submitted by the Bombay office of that organization covering the technical aspects of the breakdown of the vessel's engines.

According to the vessel's articles, the Chief Engineer, Mr. Costas Thales, holds licence no. 47434 and the Second Assistant Engineer, Mr. J. O. Keene, holds licence no. L-72503. The Master of the m.v. CAPE ST GEORGE is Mr. E. A. Self, and the vessel is operated by the Waterman Steamship Company, Mobile, Alabama.

Respectfully yours,

Howard Donovan  
American Consul

Enclosures:



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Enclosures:

1. Copy of Statement Received from the Bombay Office of the War Shipping Administration Covering Complaint made against the Chief Engineer.
2. Copy of Memorandum prepared by Vice Consul Wagner on August 21, 1943, Summarizing the Details of a Conversation with the Master of the m.v. CAPE ST GEORGE.
3. Affidavit of Costas Thales, Chief Engineer.
4. Affidavit of James O. Keene, Second Assistant Engineer.

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Enclosure  
Declassified NARA Project NW 63684  
NA 1002 dated September 3,  
1943, from Howard Donovan, American Consul, Bombay, India,  
on subject of "Discharge of James O. Keene, Second Assistant  
Engineer, from the American m.v. CAPE ST GEORGE at Bombay  
on August 27, 1943".

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COSTAS THALIS, Chief Engineer off m/v CAPE ST GEORGE,  
owned by Waterman Steamship Company Mobile, Alabama,  
operated by the War Shipping Administration.

THALIS is reputed to be an American citizen of Greek  
origin, born in Turkey and naturalized approximately 25  
years ago.

It has been reported, chiefly by the electrician  
and 2nd Engineer that the ship's engines are in such a  
condition that it will be necessary for them to undergo  
major repairs at this port. This condition, they state,  
is due to the engines having been operated by the Chief  
Engineer at the critical speed (speeds at which according  
to the instruction books aboard results in the highest  
degree of vibration and speeds which should be passed  
over as rapidly as possible). Because these critical  
speeds are clearly indicated in the instruction books  
aboard the men reporting this condition fail to understand  
why the Chief Engineer insists on running the engines at  
such critical speeds and can only contribute his action  
to a form of sabotage.

The electrician stated that the engineer is most  
familiar with Norberg engines having been through the  
Norberg plant which he points out makes the actions of  
the Chief Engineer still less understandable.

The ship is now on its second trip and is approximately  
one year old. Prior to this second trip the engines  
were taken down and inspected in accordance with the  
manufacturer's guarantee and found in satisfactory con-  
dition. Therefore, should the engines be in the con-  
dition reported above it would be indicative of incom-  
petence or misjudgment on the part of the chief engineer.

It has been reported that the Chief Engineer twice  
struck the Second Engineer with his fist, which blows  
were returned by the Second Engineer.

It is reported that the Chief Engineer followed a  
practice of secretly turning off various valves merely  
to check that the engineer on duty was actually paying  
attention to his duties, which procedure in some instances  
could have resulted in shut-down of the engines.

It was stated that on one occasion the Captain  
informed the Chief Engineer that he was sailing by dead  
reckoning and that any alteration in the engines' speeds  
should be immediately indicated to the bridge. It is  
reported that the engineer shortly afterward instructed  
that the engines' speeds be increased and did not report  
these alterations to the bridge.



Enclosure no.2 to Despatch No.1002 dated September 3, 1943 from Howard Donovan, American Consul, Bombay, India, on subject of "Discharge of James O. Keene, Second Assistant Engineer, from the American M/V CAPE ST. GEORGE At Bombay On August 27, 1943."

MEMORANDUM

August 21, 1943.

Mr. Goodwin presented the attached memo to Vice Consul Thurston this morning, and the Master of the M/V CAPE ST. GEORGE was immediately called in for discussion of the matter.

The Master stated that the Chief Engineer is perfectly competent, but that he demands good work from his men, with the result that several feel bitter towards him.

The Master stated that he personally knows the Chief Engineer does not run the engines at their critical speed (which in the case of this vessel is 77 R.P.M.) and that while running in one convoy where the speed of the convoy was based on 77 revolutions per minute the Chief Engineer asked the Master to be permitted to alternate between 75 and 80 R.P.M., (thus continually falling back and catching up with the balance of the convoy). This was given as one example of the careful attitude of the Chief Engineer.

Another complaint is that on one occasion the Chief Engineer neglected to report a change in the engines' speed while the Master was heading for a port by dead reckoning. The Master stated that what happened was that he was on the bridge when he noticed a decrease in the speed and started down to the engine room to ask the Chief Engineer why the change had not been reported. He met the Chief Engineer on the way, and the Chief Engineer told him that he was on his way to the bridge to report the change.

The Master stated that there is friction between the Engineers, and believes that it is all due to petty feelings and jealousy plus a good deal of incompetence on the part of the Assistant Engineers. As a matter of fact, the vessel is reported to be sadly lacking in competent officers, the Master evidently being the only one able to navigate.

The vessel was forced into Bombay for engine repairs and work is about to be started. The fact that the engines are in need of repair is definitely not attributed by the Master to the Chief's work.

I told the Master that in view of his statements concerning the capability of the Chief Engineer I would take no action in this matter but would expect him to endeavor to eliminate the personal frictions evidently existent on the vessel.