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AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Algiers, February 15, 1946

J.Y.H.

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Subject: Pilferage of Ship's Stores Aboard The Liberty
Ship SS Chief Osceola.

TO: HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SIR:

I have the honor to report that on February 13, 1946, there occurred pilferage of ship's stores aboard the War Shipping Administration's Liberty ship SS Chief Osceola. There is nothing unusual in such pilferage of American vessels here. However, in this case, it was possible to obtain some evidence of the Chief Steward's being directly implicated - Jose Advincula, a Filipino, Z-323735.

It is respectfully requested that the enclosed report on the case by Vice Consul John H. Randolph, and the testimony appended thereto, be passed on to the appropriate authorities. The Captain of the SS Chief Osceola has two copies of each enclosure to this despatch.

Respectfully yours,

Harold L. Finley
American Consul General

Enclosures:

One copy and original of the following:

- 1/ Report by Vice Consul J.H. Randolph
- 2/ Sworn statement by Capt. Frederick E. Coady dated February 14, 1946 in English
- 3/ Sworn statement by Capt. Frederick E. Coady dated February 14, 1946 in French
- 4/ Sworn statement by Alexandre Fabrikant dated February 14, 1946 in English
- 5/ Sworn statement by Alexandre Fabrikant dated February 14, 1946 in French

- 6/ Sworn statement by Walter A. Johnson dated February 14, 1946 in English
- 7/ Sworn statement by Walter A. Johnson dated February 14, 1946 in French
- 8/ Sworn statement by Chief Steward Jose Advincula dated February 14, 1946 in English.

Original and ozalid to the Department
J.H. RANLOLPH/gd

Fabrikant to lend him his military duffle bag to get some things off the ship. Later Fabrikant said that he had been on the pier with Johnson on two separate occasions, February 9 and February 13, but had not been on board the ship February 9. During the questioning Johnson referred constantly to Fabrikant as "my pal" (mon copain), and Fabrikant did not object. Questioning Fabrikant I referred to Johnson as "your friend"; there was no objection. Although Fabrikant claims that he is involved only as lender of the duffle bag, it was he that the Captain saw taking the duffle bag off the ship filled with supplies. Fabrikant claimed that he was acting then on behalf of Johnson. Fabrikant gave as his reason for returning to the ship after depositing the duffle bag in the automobile the fact that he had forgotten his gloves in the Chief Steward's cabin. It was then that Coady chased him off the ship. Fabrikant also said that he was amazed when a guard came to the Chief Steward's cabin with the message that the Captain wanted Johnson and Fabrikant off the ship, for he had not realized that there was anything irregular in his boarding the ship. The Captain, however, said that when ordered off the ship Fabrikant had challenged the Captain's authority, saying in effect "You can't order me off; I'm of the French Army". He got off nevertheless. Fabrikant's uniform was apparently his contribution to the deal, and the reason he was selected to take the stuff off - less likelihood of being challenged.

The Representative of the North African Shipping Agency told me that his company would prosecute anyone whom the Captain would certify as having taken stores off his ship. The Representative was particularly anxious to have Johnson prosecuted, who seems to be an old offender. However, the Captain could certify only Fabrikant as having been seen to take ship's provisions on shore. The Captain's sworn statement properly signed and executed was given the Representative of the North African Shipping Agency.

Regarding Chief Steward Advincula, it is my opinion that in this instance he is guilty of trading with the ship's provisions for personal profit. This opinion is based upon:

1/- The Testimony of Johnson, who had no apparent reason to speak falsely against Advincula, and who, in fact, appeared to try to modify his testimony to Advincula's advantage after Advincula's arrival by lowering the quantity of perfume involved from 5000-francs-worth to 2500-francs-worth, and by increasing the personal property element on Advincula's side from one shirt to two.

2/- The testimony of Fabrikant.

3/- The silence of Advincula before the Captain's questions on board.

4/- The slow and reluctant recognition of Johnson and Fabrikant by Advincula; and their immediate recognition of him. Advincula said at first that he had never seen Johnson in his life, and later admitted serving him slices of roast beef in his cabin the day before.

Report on Pilferage of Food aboard the SS Chief Osceola*
at the port of Algiers involving Chief Steward Jose
Advincula -

The following is an account of Captain Frederick E. Coady's troubles aboard his ship the "Chief Osceola" while lying at Algiers February 13, 1946, as told to me, which account lead to my investigation into the activities of Chief Steward Jose Advincula, suspected of trading ship's food for perfume with a certain Alexandre Fabrikant, who wore the uniform of a Sub-Lieutenant of the French Army and Walter Johnson, negro French citizen, operating with Fabrikant.

A brief outline of the investigation follows, and the sworn statements of Captain Coady, Fabrikant, Johnson, and Advincula are appended to this report, the last part of which contains my opinion of the case.

On February 14, 1946, at about 11:30 a.m. Captain Frederick E. Coady, whose ship the "Chief Osceola" was in the port of Algiers, told me that food was being taken from his ship without his knowledge or consent and contrary to his orders; that he believed Chief Steward Jose Advincula, Filipino, was co-operating with those who were taking the food off; that he was receiving no co-operation from the crew either in maintaining a strict guard over the vessel or in obtaining information as to the facts of the case; and that, even if he should learn who the culprits were among his crew, he knew of no satisfactory disciplinary measures that he could take. Coady said that to punish a member or members of the crew for bad conduct is always resented by the whole crew who, unitedly, show their discontent by more or less refusing to attend to their duties on board.

Coady told me that Chief Steward Jose Advincula absolutely refused to discuss the disappearance of food from the ship, even after the Captain had been an eye-witness to the transfer of ship's provisions to an automobile on the dock made by a young man clad in a French military uniform, later identified as Alexandre Fabrikant (see sworn statement by Frederick E. Coady, Master of the SS Chief Osceola, enclosed). The refusal by Advincula to reply to his questions with even a "yes" or a "no", and the general unwillingness to talk among the crew, made the Captain strongly suspect that the food was being sold or traded by members of the crew; but the Captain was unable to place responsibilities on anyone other than Chief Steward Advincula, owing to lack of evidence. The Captain held Advincula responsible not only because of his position on board as Chief Steward but also because of evidence that he dealt with hucksters who boarded the ship to exchange perfume for ship's supplies. This evidence consists in the fact that when Coady saw Fabrikant taking a duffle bag off the ship, and was on his way to retrieve the duffle bag, he noticed a large valise

Standing ...

standing at the doorway of the Chief Steward's cabin. Upon his return from the automobile, and after chasing Fabrikant off the ship, he saw Fabrikant put the same valise in the automobile, the engine of which was running, and drive hurriedly off in spite of his call to stop. The valise that had been standing at the door of the Chief Steward's cabin was gone and nowhere to be found.

Coady told me that he gave the duffle bag that had been used to take off the provisions to a French police officer, and that Fabrikant's name and full military identification was written on it. He also told me that he understood Fabrikant had been accompanied on the ship by one Johnson, a negro notorious for his unauthorized trading with ships in port.

Captain Coady hoped that Chief Steward Advincula would talk if he were brought to the Consulate General for questioning, and that he would disclose the names of other members of the crew involved in trading with ship's provisions.

Accompanied by Coady, I went to the French police station having jurisdiction over the pier at which the "Chief Osceola" was docked. The police had already apprehended Fabrikant and Johnson. A representative of the North African Shipping Agency was there, and he went to the ship to pick up Advincula and take him to the Consulate General where we were all to meet. Coady, Fabrikant, Johnson, a gendarme, and I arrived at the Consulate first. Before Advincula arrived Johnson was thoroughly questioned. At first he said he had given Advincula 5000 francs worth of perfume, for which he received one shirt, and some cheese, butter, rice, and pepper. Later he revised this statement, estimating the value of the perfume at 2500 francs, and increasing the number of shirts from one to two. He did not admit taking any meat. *Johnson, Fabrikant and Advincula all agreed that Advincula had served them a little roast beef that was eaten on the spot in Advincula's cabin.

*though afterwards

When Advincula arrived at the Consulate General, immediately upon entry into the room I asked him whether he had ever seen Johnson before. He said that he had never seen him before. Johnson, however, identified Advincula as the man with whom he had been trading on board the "Chief Osceola" the day before. Advincula then said that he had seen a negro on board the day before, and, finally, that he had traded shirts for perfume with Johnson himself, but that no food was involved other than a couple of slices of roast beef. Johnson then said in broken English, that he believed in telling the truth and stuck to his statement that he had received cheese, butter, rice, and pepper. Fabrikant also identified Advincula as the man who had given Johnson these supplies.

Advincula showed no signs of indignation when confronted with these statements that so directly contradicted his own.

Fabrikant first of all stated that he did not know Johnson at all, that he had engaged a taxi to look for an apartment, that Johnson happened to be in the same taxi, and that their first stop was the pier, where Johnson asked

Fabrikant ...

5/- The absolute silence and lack of emotion maintained by Advincula when his statement that there was no food involved in the perfume deal was flatly denied by Johnson.

6/- The Testimony of the Captain about the large valise.

In short, the Captain points to Fabrikant and Advincula; Fabrikant and Johnson point to Advincula; and Advincula defends himself only by silence and hedging.

Chief Steward Jose Advincula bears the number 2-323735.

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul

JHRandolph/et
Original and ozalid to Department

Algiers, February 14, 1946

I, Frederick E. Coady, Master of the S.S. OSCEOLA, swear that on February 13, 1946, about 12:30 p.m., I saw Alexandre Fabrikant take stores from my ship lying in the port of Algiers.

He took a sack of food to an automobile parked on the Mole Louis Billiard. He then returned to the ship. I went to the car and got the sack, took it to my cabin, and chased Fabrikant from the ship. I gave the sack upon which was written Fabrikant's name and military identification to the French police.

Frederick E. Coady
Master

Subscribed and sworn
before me this 14th
day of February, 1946,
at Algiers, Algeria.

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul

Alger le 14 Fevrier 1946

Je, Frederick E. Coady, Capitaine du S.S. OSCEOLA, jure que le 13 Fevrier 1946 vers environ 12:30 je vis Alexandre Fabrikant enlever des provisions de mon bateau amarre dans le port d'Alger.

Il emporta un sac de provisions qu'il mit dans une automobile stationnant Mole Louis Billiard. Puis il revint sur le bateau. Je me rendis a l'automobile, pris le sac, l'emportai dans ma cabine et renvoyai Fabrikant du bateau. Je donnai le sac sur lequel etaient inscrits les noms et matricule de Fabrikant a la police Francaise.

Frederick E. Coady
Capitaine

Signe et jure
par devant moi
ce 14 Fevrier
1946 a Alger
Algerie.

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul

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Algiers, February 14, 1946

I, Alexandre Fabrikant, swear that I boarded the S.S. Osceola on February 13, 1946, about 12:15 p.m. to look for my friend Walter Johnson who had boarded the vessel three-quarters of an hour previously. I found him in the cabin of the Chief Steward, Filipino, Jose Advincula, and before Johnson and I left the cabin, I saw Advincula give Johnson some butter and some boxes which I supposed to contain food. These were put into a sack that Johnson had borrowed from me.

Alexandre Fabrikant

Subscribed and sworn
before me this 14th
day of February, 1946,
at Algiers, Algeria.

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul

COPY

U. S. FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Alger le 14 Fevrier 1946

Je, Alexandre Fabrikant, jure que je me rendis a bord du S.S. Osceola le 13 Fevrier 1946 vers environ 12:15 a la recherche de mon ami Walter Johnson qui etait monte a bord du bateau trois quart d'heure avant. Je le trouvai dans la cabine du Maitre d'hotel, Filipino, Jose Advincula, et avant que Johnson et moi-meme ne quittames la cabine, je vis Advincula donner a Johnson un peu de beurre et quelques boites que je supposais contenir des provisions. Ces boites furent mises dans un sac que Johnson m'avait emprunte.

Alexandre Fabrikant

Signe et jure
par devant moi
ce 14 Fevrier
1946 a Alger,
Algerie

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul

Algiers, February 14, 1946

I, Walter A. Johnson, swear that on February 13, 1946, about 12:30 p.m., I boarded the S.S. Chief Osceola, and traded 2500 francs worth of perfume for 2 shirts, 8 pounds of cheese, 4 pounds of butter, 2 boxes of rice, and some pepper. The Chief Steward said he put a pound of pepper in the sack I was using to carry these things. I made the trade with the Chief Steward, Filipino, Jose Advincula.

Walter A. Johnson

Subscribed and sworn
before me this 14th
day of February, 1946,
at Algiers, Algeria.

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul

Alger le 14 Fevrier 1946

Je, Walter A. Johnson, jure que le 13 Fevrier 1946, a environ 12:30 me rendis a bord du S.S. Chief Osceola et échangeai 2500 francs de parfum contre 2 chemises, environ 4 kilos de fromage, environ 2 kilos de beurre, 2 boites de riz et un peu de poivre. Le Maitre d'hotel dit qu'il mettait une livre environ de poivre dans le sac que j'utilisais pour transporter ces choses. Je fis l'echange avec le Maitre d'hotel Filipino, Jose ADVINCULA.

Walter A. Johnson

Signe et jure
par devant moi
ce 14 Fevrier
1946 a Alger,
Algerie.

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul

C O P Y

Algiers, February 14, 1946

I, Jose Advincula, Chief Steward of the S.S. Osceola saw Walter Johnson on February 13, 1946, about noon on board the S.S. Osceola when he entered my room with a box of perfume. He asked me if I wanted to buy some. I replied that I had no money, but offered him two shirts, my personal property. He accepted, and I took the perfume.

I have seen no food leave the ship while docked at Algiers up to now (February 14, 1:00 p.m.). However, about 2:00 a.m. February 10 on returning from shore leave accompanied by the Second Cook, I saw evidence that someone had entered my room through the porthole. I found the keys to all the ship's stores lying on my bed instead of in a pocket of a pair of trousers where I had left them. First I checked my personal belongings and saw that none were missing. I went to the linen locker and saw nothing missing. Then I went to bed without checking the food. Next morning the Chief Cook told me that three hams were missing. The Chief Cook later found one of the hams in the alleyway. There was no evidence that the ice box had been forced.

There are two sets of keys, and I allowed one set of keys to hang in the Galley at all times. I do not know who had custody of the duplicate set of keys at night.

After this robbery the Captain ordered both sets of keys to be delivered to him early in the evening so that he would have custody of them during the night. The Galleyman from then on collected the keys in the morning gave me one set, and the duplicate set was hooked on the wall in the Galley during the day.

Jose Advincula
Chief Steward

Subscribed and sworn to before me
this 14th day of February, 1946,
at Algiers, Algeria.

John H. Randolph
American Vice Consul