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CONFIDENTIAL

X-053668/B-5

SS CHURUBUSCO (US) - Defective repairs to oil heater at Aruba, N.W.I., and damage 11 September 1944 to vessel.

From: District Intelligence Officer, 3ND
To: Director of Naval Intelligence

Subject: SS CHURUBUSCO (US) - Defective repairs to oil heater at Aruba, N.W.I., and damage and delay to vessel.

Enclosures: (A) Conf. memo, 11 September 1944
(B) Lt. (jg) R. B. Dollheim, USCGR Conf. memo to Comdt., undated
(C) Chief Engineer's statement of damage to steam lines and drains caused by contamination of fuel oil, undated

1. The SS CHURUBUSCO is owned by the United States Maritime Commission and operated by the Texas Company. During a boarding of the vessel at New York on 11 August 1944, information was received disclosing that as a result of damage to a tubular oil heater while undergoing cleaning ashore at Aruba, vessel was delayed for a period of approximately seventeen days with a valuable cargo of aviation gasoline. As the Chief Engineer felt very strongly that there was a possibility that the damage to the heater may have been caused intentionally, and as it was claimed that a report of the incident by the Coast Guard at Aruba was ordered destroyed, Enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith for such action as may be considered appropriate.

2. Although an evaluation of the sources of the information would indicate that all three men interviewed were intelligent and reliable in their respective fields, the varied nature of the information given is such that it could not be evaluated here.

3. Federal War Shipping Administration, New York, has been made cognizant of information contained in Enclosure (A).

The Chief Engineer reported that in a conversation with a certain person, who had been applied to the cleaning fluid on the heater, the person had been off the cartons and sludge was being washed off the heater.

*Pls Index
File: 45 "Churubusco" 1st Lt
X - Naval Intelligence Office Corresp
X - Resells, Safety of Per. Merchant
X - Resells, delayed in sailing*

MR

*MW
10/5/44*

11 September 1944

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: SS CHURUBUSCO (US) - Defective repairs to oil heater at Aruba, N.W.I., and damage and delay to vessel.

1. This report is based upon interviews with S. O. Pedersen, Master, Raymond J. Collins, Chief Engineer, and Lt. (jg) A. H. Howell, USNR, Gunnery Officer. Inasmuch as Chief Engineer Collins was most particularly concerned in the incident, his facts were presented with the strongest feeling.

2. On 16 July 1944 the day after vessel arrived at Aruba from the United Kingdom, the paracoil tubular oil heater, which required cleaning but was otherwise in sound condition, was delivered to the Marine Department of the Lago Oil & Transport Co., Ltd., Aruba (said to be a subsidiary of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey) and was taken ashore for cleaning. The unit was returned to the vessel's engine room the following day and put into operation. Oil was soon noticed in the inspection tank, and it was realized that something was wrong. It was discovered that one of the pipes of the heater in the second line in a cluster had been damaged, the damage consisting of a hole in the pipe about 1-1/2" long and 9/16" wide. As a result, the steam lines and drains were contaminated by fuel oil. The oil heater was again sent ashore to the Lago Company in order that a new pipe could be installed, and was returned to the ship two or three days later. As a result of the contamination of the steam lines and drains, which resulted from a hole in the pipe of the oil heater, the vessel was delayed at Aruba for approximately seventeen days, which time was required in order to clean the lines and make the vessel fit to proceed to sea. The Chief Engineer asserted that, if the damage to the heater had not been discovered until after the vessel had put to sea, an extremely serious situation would have resulted as, in his opinion, the contamination of the lines, which would have resulted, could not be cleaned at sea, which would mean that the vessel would be unable to return to port under her own power.

3. The Chief Engineer reported that in a conversation with a Mr. Robertson (spelling?), Assistant Port Engineer for the Lago Company, it was learned that the pipes and heater were cleaned with a solution and that a heating torch had been applied to the cleaning fluid on the pipes in order to burn off the carbon and sludge which had accumulated. A welding torch was

(Page 1 of Encl. (A) of DIO-3 Conf. ltr. X-055668/E-5, 11 Sep 44)

(Page 2 of Encl. (A) of DIO-3 Conf. ltr. X-055668/E-5, 11 Sep 44)

used for this purpose. According to the Chief Engineer, it was not necessary to use any flame to clean the pipes. He stated that Robertson had first denied that the hole was caused by burning, but, after Robertson made a further inquiry and talked to the man who had done the cleaning, it was discovered that a torch had been used. According to the Chief Engineer, an examination of the hole in the pipe clearly disclosed, in his opinion, that a cutting torch rather than a welding torch had been used and applied to one spot for as long as thirty seconds in order to burn the hole. He stated that he endeavored, unsuccessfully, to ascertain the name of the employee who had done the work. The Chief Engineer was told by a foreman (name unknown) of the Lago Company that the man who did the work had been a subforeman and had been demoted to mechanic. The Chief Engineer said he could think of no explanation for the use of a cutting torch unless it had been done maliciously. He suggested the possibility that the damage might have been caused from spite in view of the fact that the worker had been demoted sometime prior to the incident.

4. When the vessel arrived at New York on 10 August 1944, Mr. Hooks, Assistant Superintendent of Construction and Repairs of the Texas Company, operators of this ship, came aboard and informed the Chief Engineer that the Texas Company had received a cable from the Lago people at Aruba stating that the tube in the oil heater had burst. It was not known if a subsequent report had been sent by the Lago people to the Texas Company stating that the tube had not burst but that the hole had been burned in the tube. The Chief Engineer, however, was under the impression that no such subsequent cable had been sent as Mr. Hooks appeared to express surprise that the hole had been caused by burning, and, upon examining the pipe on board ship, agreed with the Chief Engineer that the hole gave clear evidence of resulting from burning rather than bursting.

5. A report of the incident was prepared at Aruba by Lt. (jg) R. B. Dellheim, USCGR, addressed to the Commandant. A copy of this report is attached hereto as Enclosure (B).

6. The Gunnery Officer, Lt. (jg) A. H. Howell, USNR, stated that he discussed the matter with Lt. (jg) Dellheim. Dellheim told the Gunnery Officer that Comdr. F. I. Shaw, USNR, called him up and informed him that he had destroyed the report and instructed him to destroy his copy of the report. According to the Chief Engineer, Comdr. Shaw was formerly a ship captain in the employ of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, said to be in the parent company of the Lago Company.

7. The Chief Engineer admitted that Dellheim's report, which was the result of an interview by Dellheim with him, was misleading in that the reference to the cutting off of one end of the pipe and the reference to the wrench marks on the pipe might

U.S. Coast Guard Detail

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
have created the impression that some significance should be attached to these facts. The Chief Engineer pointed out that the end of the pipe was cut off and the wrench marks were caused after the hole had been burned in the pipe by the cutting torch, and the sawing of the pipe was a perfectly legitimate operation in connection with supplying and fitting a new pipe in place of the damaged one. Aside from this implication Dellheim's report was said to be correct.

Subj: S/S CHURUBUSCO; Incident Aboard.

1. While subject vessel was in San Nicholas it was necessary to send a "Paracell Tubular Oil Heater" unit ashore for cleaning. The unit was removed from the ship under the direction of COLLINS, Raymond J. Lic. No. 198128. the Chief Engineer.
2. When the unit was returned to the vessel, it was replaced in the heater and found to have been tampered with. An examination revealed that a pipe (seamless steel) had been cut with a torch. The hole was 6 1/2 inches from the end, 1 1/2 inches long and 3/4 inch wide. A tube to be effective in the unit must not be less than 80 inches long. The tube showing the hole had been cut with a saw and is only 76 inches long. There are also visible vice or wrench marks, on the pipe.
3. The damaged pipe was in the second line in a cluster, and the Chief Engineer stated that it could not have been reached unless withdrawn. In order for the pipe to be properly seated in the unit, the end would have to be expanded. The sawed pipe was not expanded and hence could not have been properly seated in the unit.
4. The Chief Engineer stated that he was told that the cleaning was done by soaking the unit in kerosene and then applying fire. On other occasions the unit had been cleaned by soaking in a chemical solution. The Chief Engineer also stated that no torch should have been used on the unit except with the intention to do harm and that the tube could not have been cut without withdrawing it from the cluster, and that the rupture would have shown on a test.
5. The unit was delivered to the Marine Department of the Lago Oil & Transport Co., Ltd., on Sunday, 16 July 1944 for cleaning. It was returned to the vessel on 18 July 1944.
6. The Intelligence Field Unit has been advised and this information is forwarded for whatever action is deemed necessary.

R.B. DELLHEIM, Lt. (jg)

U.S. Coast Guard Reserve

(Page 3 of Encl. (A) of DIO-3 Conf. ltr. X-055668/B-5, 11 Sep 44)

(ENCL. B TO DIO-350 CONF. LTR., X-055668/B-5, 11 September 1944)

U.S.Coast Guard Detail

CONFIDENTIAL

To: Commandant

Via: Commanding Officer, American Naval Force, ARUBA
U.S. Coast Guard Representative, CAFAC
District Coast Guard Officer, 10th Naval District

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2. When the unit was returned to the vessel, it was replaced in the heater and found to have been tampered with. An examination revealed that a pipe (seamless steel) had been cut with a torch. The hole was $61\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the end, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide. A tube to be effective in the unit must not be less than 80 inches long. The tube showing the hole had been cut with a saw and is only 76 inches long. There are also visible vice or wrench marks, on the pipe.
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R.B. DELLHEIM, Lt.(jg)
U.S.Coast Guard Reserve

(ENCL. B TO DIO-3ND CONF.LTR., X-055668/B-5, 11 September 1944)

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SUBJECT: SS CHURUBUSCO (US) - Defective repairs to oil heater at Aruba, N.W.I., and damage and delay to vessel.

STEAM LINES CONTAMINATED BY FUEL OIL

1. 1" steam line to fuel oil heaters from 2 1/2" 70#, steam line, 70# steam line from 70# regulating valve through evaporator, Gland seal to main generator, Gland seal to Auxiliary Generator, Gland exhaustor, 2nd. stage feed water heater, steam to fuel oil heating coils, steam smothering line to fire room bilges.

DRAINS CONTAMINATED BY FUEL OIL

2. Drains from fuel oil heaters through fuel oil condensate cooler, to contaminated inspection tank, through inspection tank to atmospheric drain tank.

Drain from 2nd. stage feed water heater to deaerating heater. Discharge from atmospheric drain tank pump to re-aerating heater. Combined drain and vent. from atmospheric drain tank. Drain from evaporator to atmospheric drain tank.

3. Deaerating heater, suction to main feed pump from deaerating heater. Discharge lines from main feed pump to boilers. Boiler steam drums and tubes. Atmospheric drain tank. Main Generator Turbine, main condenser, auxiliary Generator Turbine.