

I. O. F.

1942 SEP 9 PM 1 45

Habana, Cuba, August 27, 1942

No. 839

Subject: Conduct of certain members of the crew of the American vessel "Horace Luckenbach".

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that the American vessel "Horace Luckenbach", operated by the War Shipping Administration, entered this port with cargo on August 13.

In accordance with the provisions of a communication of June 30, 1942 addressed to Naval Attachés by the Vice Chief of Naval Operations (which is discussed in the Department's circular instruction of July 18, 1942, file No. 195.2117), the office of the Naval Attaché of this Embassy requested the master of the "Horace Luckenbach" to report to the appropriate consular authority in this office concerning the conduct of certain members of the crew of his vessel; and the subject

matter

matter of this despatch was prepared in collaboration with the Naval Attaché.

The master reported that on August 14 and 15 the first mate, Arvid H. Hansson, was so intoxicated that he could not perform his duties, and that he was under the influence of liquor on succeeding days; that on August 21 he left the ship at noon without notice or permission and returned intoxicated at 1 o'clock A.M. on August 22, although it was his duty on the afternoon of August 21 to arrange certain heavy cargo handling facilities of the ship for use in discharging cargo at 7 o'clock on the morning of August 22; that at that time on August 22 the first mate was asleep in his bed, which delayed by two hours the cargo discharging operations of the vessel; that the first mate gave the crew time off when he himself was too intoxicated to work; that he used abusive language to the master when the latter remonstrated regarding delay in shifting the vessel in the harbor and delay in discharging cargo because of the intoxication of the first mate.

The master reported that on August 14 Boatswain Carl Matzinger was so intoxicated that he was unable to perform his duties and direct the crew in discharging operations; that he left the ship without permission; that on August 21 he left the ship at noon without permission and failed to return until the night of August 22.

Two officers of the staff of the Naval Attaché visited the "Horace Luckenbach" on August 14 and reported that the first mate, Arvid H. Hansson, was too intoxicated to perform his duties, and that Boatswain Carl Matzinger was not aboard the vessel at the time. The naval officers reported that a state of utter disorder prevailed aboardship at the time of their visit.

The superintendent of the dock (an American citizen) at which the "Horace Luckenbach" discharged cargo in this port has confirmed reports of the intoxication of the first mate and the boatswain, and the delay in discharging cargo as a result of their intoxication. He stated that he could not understand how a chief officer on an American vessel, in view of his responsibilities and the salary he receives and in view of wartime conditions now prevailing, could conduct himself as First Mate Hansson has done, unless he is absolutely unfitted for such a position or is deliberately determined of his own volition, or upon the instigation of others, to sabotage shipping operations by delays and the effect of his flagrant misconduct upon subordinate members of the crew.

Because past experience has definitely demonstrated that certain members of the crews of American vessels, if granted unlimited shore leave at night, tend to congregate at waterfront bars where they become intoxicated and indulge in conversations with persons who are suspected of seeking information regarding our vessels for the benefit of enemy agencies, the office of the Naval Attaché of this Embassy issues in writing instructions to every American vessel as it enters Habana harbor, that no shore leave is to be permitted after midnight. This is a prudent measure, based upon past experience, intended to safeguard the American interests involved, including the members of the crews of American vessels to whom it applies.

As the above reports indicate, first mate Arvid H. Hansson and Boatswain Carl Matzinger of the crew of the "Horace Luckenbach" violated this instruction, and their action in this regard had an adverse effect upon other members of the crew of the "Horace Luckenbach".

The master of the vessel has been requested to enter in his log a true account of the misconduct of the members of the crew mentioned above and I emphasize the importance of appropriately penalizing such misconduct. It is recommended that Arvid H. Hansson be deprived of his certificate as first mate and that Carl Matzinger be reduced to the grade of able seaman, in addition to forfeiting wages for such periods as they were incompetent to perform their duties because of intoxication. The misconduct of these men, and their deliberate and brazen violation of instructions, with consequent delay to the operations of a vessel operated by an agency of the United States Government as a wartime measure, and the consequent adverse effect of their behavior on other members of the crew (to say nothing of the unfortunate impression created among various Cuban dock employees who observed their behavior) cannot be passed unnoticed because of the effect upon others and because it indicates disloyalty, desertion of duty, and an utter lack of responsibility in view of prevailing critical conditions due to the operations of the enemy against our merchant shipping.

The "Horace Luckenbach" left Habana on August 27 for Philadelphia, but shortly before clearing First Mate Hansson complained of a sore throat (believed to have been contracted while sleeping in the draft of an electric fan in his cabin) and was ordered to the hospital by the physician who was consulted. When he is released from the hospital he will be paid off from funds deposited by the master at the Consular Section of the Embassy, deduction having been made by the master for the period Hansson did not perform his duties because of intoxication.

Respectfully yours,
For the Ambassador:

Harold S. Tewell
American Consul General

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(Copy to Naval Attaché, Habana)