

C. J.

No. 7

1943 JAN 25 AM 7 58

AMERICAN CONSULATE,

Port Said, Egypt, January 12, 1943.

incl. 1

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Difficulties Aboard the S.S. James Duncanson, an American Merchant Vessel at this Port.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that on January 4, 1943, the Consulate received a call from Captain Allen E. Wyndham, of the American merchant S.S. James Duncanson, who stated that he was becoming alarmed at the discord amongst certain members of his crew, and feared that a serious situation might develop unless measures were taken.

The trouble arose after the ship left Alexandria, bound, so it was thought, for a home port. Upon arrival at Port Said, the vessel was boarded by representatives of the British Ministry of War Transport, who notified the captain that the ship was being taken over for special service, and therefore would remain in the Mediterranean for the time being. Since the officials of the Ministry of War Transport showed nothing in the way of authority or consent of the American Maritime Commission, the crew apparently took this to mean that the original articles signed by the crew on September 5, 1942, before the Shipping Commissioner in San Francisco were no longer in force, and that the W. R. Chamberlin Steamship Co. was no longer the operating agent of the ship. They then held several meetings with a view, so the captain thought, to petitioning their release from further service on grounds of breach of contract. It should be added that the crew's uneasiness was intensified by news of the death at Alexandria on January 1, 1943, of diphtheria of W. W. JOHNSON, former third mate of the vessel, with whom they had been in recent contact, and in the absence of what they considered to be proper medical precautions.

A representative of the crew later delivered a petition setting forth various grievances, a copy of which is attached as enclosure No. 1 to this despatch.

On the strength of the foregoing I communicated with Mr. B. P. ROBINSON, Representative of the War Shipping Administration in Cairo via long distance telephone, pointing out that an immediate clarification of the status of the

To safeguard the security of the information contained herein, please initial and return to Intelligence for filing when it has served its purpose.

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vessel would be desirable. I also notified Lieutenant M. J. FAHRBER, U. S. Army Assistant Provost Marshal having jurisdiction over this area.

2/ On January 8, Mr. Robinson came down from Cairo, and with Lieutenant Faerber and myself boarded the vessel. It was explained to a deputation of the crew that the special voyage that the ship was about to make in no way impaired the operation of the articles of agreement which they had signed. On the basis of this explanation and under the terms of second petition which they had submitted the day before, (See Enclosure No. 2), they agreed to go back to work.

The whole trouble might have been avoided if a more timely explanation had been made of the authority under which the British Naval Control were taking over the vessel, and the necessity for making certain structural changes thereon.

The state of discipline aboard this ship appears to be very poor. During her stay in this port, the Consulate received several calls from officers complaining of general insubordination on the part of the crew, and from members of the crew who made complaints against the officers. The Captain was evidently very alarmed at the prevailing state of affairs and grateful for the intervention of the Consulate. He unfortunately appears to have been in a state of such complete intoxication when the ship left for Suez that officials of the Divisional Sea Transport Office were unable to obtain his signature on certain necessary documents.

In recent weeks, hardly an American ship has called at Port Said without complaints of insubordination and personnel difficulties.

Respectfully yours,

David Lehreton, Jr.,
American Vice Consul.

Make copy for misc.

Enclosures:

- No. 1. First petition.
- No. 2. Second petition.
- No. 3. Copy of letter from B.P. Robinson dated January 4, 1943.

Distribution:

- Original and hectograph to Department.
- Copy to Legation, Cairo.
- Copy to Suez Branch.

File No. 586.3
DLEB/gds

Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 7 dated January 12, 1943, from the American Consulate, Port Said, Egypt, entitled "Difficulties Aboard the S.S. James Duncan, an American Merchant Vessel at this Port".

C O P Y

COPIED NY: gds

4 January 1943.

Due to the existing circumstances - namely:

- 1.- We understand that the ship has been taken over by the British Transport Service. (Said service in the U.S.A. being voluntary)
- 2.- The ship being short handed through desertion, death, and sickness in both the merchant and armed guard crews.
- 3.- The ship being short on food and that only inadequate supplies can be obtained.
- 4.- The ship being short on supplies and tools for the engine room.
- 5.- We understand that all safety devices are being cut off. (In strict violation of the steamboat inspection rules and regulations)

NAMELY:

- A. General alarm bells.
- B. Degaussing equipment.
- C. Pathom-meter.
- D. Fire detecting system for the holds.
- E. Communication system - both forward and aft.
- F. Battle phones.
- G. Electric lights in both fore and aft magazines and steering engine room.
- H. Running lights forward and aft.

6.- Alterations that have been ordered by the British War Shipping Administration do not in any way comply with the United States steamboat inspection rules and regulations.

7.- Continued trouble with the crew which has resulted in general disorganization. (This has been brought to the attention of the American Consul at Alexandria. However, no action was taken, because, to quote the words of the Consul, "The important thing to consider was that the ship was to be taken home". On this word the charges were dropped and all parties agreed to work together to take said ship home.)

8.- We have been informed that the W.R. Chamberlain Co. is no longer the operating agent for the ship and that the British War Shipping Administration has taken over the ship and its operation. (In as much as one party to the original shipping articles is no longer in charge of the ship or its operation, the articles become null and void.)

9.- We further wish to bring to the attention of the authorities

Internal - to Marine Inspection

- 2 -

authorities that a member of the crew (Mr. W. W. JOHNSON) passed away at the hospital in Alexandria on January First from an attack of diphtheria, and no adequate protection has been given the rest of the crew, and none seems to be forthcoming.

We request, therefore, that all members of the crew of the S/S James Duncan be given the right of free men of either signing new articles, or be released from articles and given transportation home.

Should the ship be allowed by the U.S. Authorities to continue on her voyage home as promised by the U.S. Consul at Alexandria, the undersigned will stand by the original articles and take her home.

Signed. W. E. Schell, Chief Mate.

Nelson W. Hibbs, Chief Radio Officer.

Richard E. Jett, 3rd Asst. Engineer.

E. O. Coffey, 2nd Mate.

Don Robertson, Yeoman.

Object to #4 R. W. Boldt, Chief Eng.

In favor of #8 only Sam Jaeger

Enclosure No. 2 to despatch No. 7 dated January 12, 1943, from the American Consulate, Port Said, Egypt, entitled "Difficulties Aboard the S.S. James Duncan, an American Merchant Vessel at this Port".

G O P Y

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4 January 1943

To:

The American Consul,

We the undersigned understand that the W. R. Chamberlin Steamship Co. is no longer the operating agent of the S/S JAMES DUNCAN. We also understand that the ship is being taken over by the British Transport Service.

In as much as one of the original parties to the original articles is no longer in charge of the ship or its operation, the undersigned feel that the articles have been broken and are therefore nullified. Also, as the U. S. Transport Service is voluntary, we request the same privilege of the British Transport service in regard to this point.

If the S/S JAMES DUNCAN is to continue under the U. S. Maritime Commission's rules and regulations, we the undersigned will continue in our present capacities as were signed to in the original articles.

Under these circumstances we are requesting some immediate clarification.

Hoping that the matter can be cleared up to the satisfaction of all parties concerned,

SIGNED -

Nelson W. Hibbs, Chief Radio Officer.	O. W. Enig, A.B.
Richard E. Jett, 3rd Asst. Engineer.	O. H. Dunn, A.B.
W. E. Schell, Chief Mate.	Manuel Alvarado, Oiler.
E. O. Coffey, 2nd Mate.	Louis Gilbert
R. W. Boldt, Chief Eng.	William Volk
A. P. Hughes, 2nd Asst. Eng.	C. R. Josephson
Donald E. Kortick, Eng. Cadet.	John J. Gazzano
Floyd W. Rosch, Eng. Cadet.	O. T. Carlson
Jun Van Dyke, Acting 3rd mate.	Irvin C. Learned
Albert Balevre - cadet (deck)	Wm. Graham, Steward.
Don Robertson, Yeoman.	Curtis F. St. Bannud
V. Fore, A.B. Deck Delegate.	R. F. Bates
B. Wilcox, Deck Eng. Eng. Room Delegate.	B. G. Pedersen
J. E. Roberson, Carpenter.	S. W. Jaeger, 1st Asst.
I. Thomas, Bush.	L. J. Hartman
K. T. Baker, A.B.	Lester Cooper, 3rd Cook
Lee Ryer, O.S.	John P. Schewman
L. D. Burch, A.B.R. O. Massey	John Steve McCarthy
R. O. Massey.	
T. M. Studley, O.S.	

Enclosures No. 3 to Caspach No. 7 dated January 12, 1943,
from the American Consulate, Port Said, Egypt, entitled
"Difficulties Aboard the S.S. James Dugan, an American
Merchant Vessel at this Port".

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C/o U.S. Army Headquarters,
5 Sharia El Walda,
Cairo.

January 4th, 1943.

The Master,
S/S "JAMES DUGAN"
Port Said.

Dear Sir,

Negotiations have been in progress regarding the use
of your vessel for an operational voyage for account of
the British Principal Sea Transport Officer, and I would
advise you that I have today received a cable from Washington
(War Shipping Administration) signifying agreement that your
vessel could be used for this voyage.

It will be in order therefore for you to proceed in
accordance with the instructions you will receive from the
Sea Transport Officer.

Wishing you a successful voyage,

Yours faithfully,

(sgt) B. P. Robinson

B. P. ROBINSON
REPRESENTATIVE,
U.S. MARITIME COMMISSION.

RPR/la

cc. Mr. LaBretton, Jr.,
American Consulate,
Port Said.