

International Law Studies—Volume 42

International Law Documents

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VI. Negotiations for Relief to American Prisoners of War Held By Japan

(Dept. of State Bulletin, September 19, 1942, Vol. VII, No. 169)

Immediately following the Japanese occupation of the Philippine Islands, efforts were made by the American Red Cross to locate a neutral ship of sufficient cargo capacity and cruising radius for the carriage of prisoner-of-war supplies to the Far East, including the Philippine Islands.

In the spring a suitable vessel was located, the Swedish ship *Vasaland*, then at Gothenburg. Efforts made by the American Red Cross through the International Red Cross to secure the assent of the German authorities to the departure of this ship from the Baltic proved fruitless, following which the *Kanangoora*, a Swedish vessel now on the Pacific coast, was chartered with the expectation that it could be used for this purpose.

Supplementing the repeated efforts of the American Red Cross, made through the intermediary of the International Red Cross, to obtain from the Japanese Government a guaranty of safe conduct for this ship to carry relief supplies for American prisoners of war and civilian internees in Japanese custody, messages dated July 30, August 29, and September 18, 1942, respectively, were sent by the Secretary of State to the Japanese Government through the Swiss Government representing American interests in Japan. The message dated August 29 was printed in the

Bulletin of September 5, 1942, page 741. The texts of the other messages read as follows:

“JULY 30, 1942.

“Please request that Swiss Minister Tokyo be instructed to press for consent of Japanese Government to voyage from San Francisco to Manila via Kobe, Shanghai and Hong Kong of Swedish motorship *Kanangoora* which is being chartered by American Red Cross and operated by the International Red Cross to carry supplies for prisoners of war and civilian internees in the Far East. Please expedite report.”

“SEPTEMBER 18, 1942.

“The Government of the United States has noted the Japanese Government’s statement that it has never refused and will not refuse in the future to accept and to deliver parcels containing foodstuffs and clothing as provided for under Article 37 of the Geneva Prisoners of War Convention and is gratified to have official confirmation that supplies sent by the American Red Cross on the exchange ships will be distributed to American prisoners of war and civilian internees in Japan, in the Philippines, and in other areas under Japanese occupation.

“The Government of the United States also has noted the statement of the Japanese Government that it must maintain for the moment its refusal to allow, for strategic reasons, any vessel to cross the western Pacific and that the Japanese Government has no intention of sending to Lourenço Marques Japanese ships other than the exchange vessels.

“The Government of the United States desires, however, to point out that the supplies already sent to the Philippine Islands are insufficient in quantity adequately to satisfy the continuing needs of American prisoners of war and civilian internees detained by the Japanese authorities there. Furthermore, sufficient cargo space is not available on the exchange vessels to permit the shipment of sufficient supplementary supplies to serve the continuing needs of American nationals detained by the Japanese authorities in the Philippine Islands and in other areas under Japanese occupation.

“The Government of the United States, therefore, proposes again that the Japanese Government consent to the appoint-

ment of a neutral International Red Cross Committee delegate in the Philippine Islands to whom funds might be sent from the United States to be used in the purchase of local produce for distribution among American nationals in Japanese custody there. This Government confidently expects that as soon as the strategic reasons which the Japanese Government states are at present influencing it in refusing to permit neutral vessels to cross the western Pacific are no longer controlling, the Japanese Government will give safe conduct for the shipment of supplementary supplies from this country. Until that time, however, it is only by opening a means whereby funds may be provided to and used by a neutral Red Cross representative in the Philippine Islands that American nationals in Japanese custody in the Philippines may be furnished on a continuing basis the supplementary supplies which prisoners of war are entitled to receive under the Convention, which both Governments have agreed reciprocally to apply and to extend to civilian internees. In this connection, this Government desires to point out that the dietary habits of Americans are different from those of the Japanese people and that this Government is accordingly anxious to supplement the basic Japanese rations by supplies of a type more characteristic of the usual American diet.

“The attention of the Japanese Government is drawn to the fact that International Red Cross Committee delegates are permitted to function freely in the continental United States and the Territory of Hawaii in the distribution of relief among persons of Japanese nationality detained in the United States and Hawaii.

“The Government of the United States desires to know urgently whether or not the Japanese Government will henceforth grant full reciprocity in these respects.”