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Letter, General J. E. Hull to Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission

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Summary:

General Hull responds to the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission request for assistance with repatriation of prisoners of war.

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English

Contents:

Original Scan

CONFIDENTIALAPPROVED TEXT OF GENERAL HULL'S REPLY TO
SECRET LETTER SENT TO BOTH SIDES BY NNRC ON JANUARY 2.THIS MUST REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL UNTIL RELEASED BY NNRC OR BY GENERAL HULL.

Chairman, NNRC:

Reference is made to your letter of January 2, 1954 in which you request the UNC to assist the NNRC in reaching decisions on questions enumerated therein and to which you have attached a copy of a memorandum approved by a majority of the commission. It is my feeling that the position of the UNC on each of the issues has been clearly stated in previous correspondence with you, particularly in my letter of January 3 commenting on interim reports made by certain members of the commission relative to NNRC operations. However, in order to remove any possibility of doubt or misunderstanding of UNC views, I now reiterate the firm position of this command on the question posed in your letter:

A. The UNC cannot, in view of the express provisions of the terms of reference, consider under any circumstances a reopening or continuance of explanations to POW in NNRC custody.

B. As a military commander, I am not in position to speak authoritatively on the convening of the political conference. However, the attitude of representatives of the North Korean and Chinese governments during the preliminary talks recessed recently at Panmunjom has made it extremely improbable that a political conference will be in session prior to January 22.

C. The convening of a political conference was, under terms of the armistice agreement, only a recommendation of the commanders of both sides to their respective governments, and has no determining relationship to the question of POWs in NNRC custody. Moreover, UNC can see no justification for entering into any discussion with any agency to consider further the disposition of prisoners, since paragraph 11 of the terms of reference constitutes agreement between the two sides settling the question. This was clearly indicated in armistice negotiations which resulted in the terms of reference for the NNRC. The plain intent of that paragraph is to prevent either party to the agreement from frustrating the basic purpose of avoiding indefinite captivity, simply by refusing to appear at a conference or to agree to any alternative disposition at a conference.

D. Under the terms of reference, the responsibility of Custodian Force, India for holding POWs in custody ceases as of 12:01 A.M. Jan. 23, 1954. As of that time, there remains the express responsibility for the commission to release prisoners to civilian status and within the ensuing 30-day period to assist those who choose to go to neutral nations. The UNC recognizes that under the terms of reference there is authority for an appropriate number of Indian troops to remain in the demilitarized zone to assist in carrying out its remaining functions and responsibilities. As you have already been informed, we are prepared to receive and assist all ex-prisoners who move south of the demilitarized zone. After February 21 the NNRC will be dissolved and the presence of Indian troops in the demilitarized zone will no longer be authorized or required.

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Within the limitations expressed above, the United Nations Command stands, as always, fully prepared to assist the commission until the time of its dissolution.

Since you have classified your communication as SECRET, the UNC will not release either its text or the contents of this letter to the press without prior notification to the commission. However, in view of the steadily mounting interest and speculation in the world press, and because there appears to be no valid reason for withholding this correspondence from the public, I recommend strongly that such publication be delayed no longer.

J. E. Hull, General
U.S. Army, Commander-in-Chief

To Lieutenant General K.S. Thimayya,
Chairman, NIRC.

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