

**January 4, 1954**  
**Letter, General J. E. Hull to General Thimayya of  
Custodial Force of India**

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**Summary:**

General J. E. Hull summarizes the United Nations Command views on the conclusion of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and release of prisoners of war to their destinations of choice.

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GENERAL HULL'S LETTER OF JANUARY 4, 1954  
COMMENTING ON THE TWO REPORTS  
TRANSMITTED BY THE MNRC DECEMBER 28, 1953

Dear General Thimayya:

I have read carefully the interim report concurred in by the Indian, Czechoslovakian and Polish delegations and the interim report prepared and signed by the Swedish and Swiss delegations. I have also read the accompanying communications indicating the manner in which failure to agree to a single point developed. Of the two reports, I find that prepared by the Swedish and Swiss delegations much more objective, factual and indicative of the operations of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission.

In view of the fact that the 90-day period for explanations has now terminated, and because the issues during this phase of Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission operations have been so clearly identified by both reports, I see little positive value to be gained by expressing detailed opinions on such issue. However, in order to clarify unmistakably the position of the United Nations Command on what I consider to be certain key elements, I am constrained to submit once more a reiteration of certain salient points:

A. The United Nations Command categorically denies any implication that we have attempted, in any way, to exercise control to the slightest degree over prisoners in the south camp by the introduction of agents provocateur, or that we have attempted to maintain any type of covert intelligence network.

B. The allegation that prisoners alone in the south camp were responsible for the failure to complete explanations I find totally unacceptable. Although the United Nations Command had no permanent representation in either the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission or custodian force, India, it appears clearly obvious from reports received from our duly authorized liaison observation and explainer personnel, as well as from official statements of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission itself, that the primary causes of failure were due to:

(1) The severe disappointment of the representatives of the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers at their inability to secure more than a nominal percentage of returnees from groups receiving explanations.

(2) The delaying tactics adopted by Korean People's Army and Chinese People's Volunteers including:

(A) Unreasonable



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(A) Unreasonable and changing demands for facilities.

(B) Refusal to accept reasonable numbers of willing prisoners for explanations during each day.

(C) Refusal of Korean People's Army and Chinese People's Volunteers to utilize available explaining time unless the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and Custodian Force, India conformed to all their demands which included the use of force and other impracticable actions.

C. The United Nations Command, on the other hand, supports fully the strong stand taken by the Indian, Swedish and Swiss delegations prohibiting the use of force against defenseless prisoners.

D. The terms of reference plainly specify that explanations would be terminated as of 23 December 1953. We therefore cannot accept any alternate proposal which may be made by any other agency on this point, just as shall not accept any other proposal which amends the date 22 January, the last day upon which prisoners in Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission custody can be denied their freedom.

E. The termination date of custody, 22 January 1954, 120 days after the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission originally assumed custody, is fixed and does not depend on the holding of any political conference, the holding of which was, by terms of the armistice agreement, to be recommended to their respective governments by the commanders of each side in the Korean conflict.

With specific reference to that part of your letter of 28 December 1953 (forwarding the aforementioned reports) which discusses the action to be taken by the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission now that the explanation period has ended and no political conference is in session, I believe the foregoing views are sufficiently clear to serve as a basis for a sound and logical course of action. As of 230001 1 January 1954, prisoners now in custody of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, having then become entitled to civilian status are free to move to destinations of their choice. For those who wish to be assisted by the United Nations Command, I suggest that they be moved south in orderly, manageable groups and according to a phased schedule, so that they may be received at a mutually agreed upon location along the southern boundary of the demilitarized zone. The United Nations Command is fully prepared to receive them and aid them to move to destinations of their choice to settle into peaceful civilian pursuits.

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For those who may apply to go to neutral nations, the United Nations Command (as previously outlined to you) stands ready to assist the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in care and disposition during the period 22 January - 21 February. Whether we can continue assistance after 21 February will depend upon the situation then prevailing; I can, however, assure you of our cooperation insofar as practicable in my capacity as a military commander.

With assurances of my continued esteem, I am,

Sincerely yours,

J.E. Hull, General,  
United States Army,  
Commander-in-Chief.