

OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES.

WAR OF THE REBELLION.

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HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES  
In the Field, Culpeper Court-House, April 17, 1864

Maj. Gen. B.F. Butler,  
Comdy. Dept. of Virginia and N. Carolina, Fortress Monroe, Va.:

General:

Your report of negotiations with Mr. Ould, C.S. agent, touching the exchange of prisoners, has been referred to me by the Secretary of War with directions to furnish you such instructions on the subject as I may deem proper.

After a careful examination of your report the only points on which I deem instructions necessary are:

First. Touching the validity of the paroles of the prisoners captured at Vicksburg and Port Hudson.

Second. The status of colored prisoners.

As to the first, no arrangement for the exchange of prisoners will be acceded to that does not fully recognize the validity of these paroles and provide for the release to us of a sufficient number of prisoners now held by the Confederate authorities to cancel any balance that may be in our favor by virtue of these paroles.

Until there is released to us a sufficient number of officers and men as were captured and paroled at Vicksburg and Port Hudson not another Confederate prisoner of war will be paroled or exchanged.

As to the second, no distinction whatever will be made in the exchange between white and colored prisoners; the only question being, were they at the time of their capture in the military service of the United States. If they were, the same terms as to treatment while prisoners and conditions of release and exchange must be exacted and had in the case of colored soldiers as of white soldiers.

Non-acquiescence by the Confederate authorities in both or either of these propositions will be regarded as a refusal on their part to agree to the further exchange of prisoners, and will be so treated by us.

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

U.S. GRANT  
Lieutenant-General.

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City Point, Va., August 18, 1864.

Major-General Butler, Commanding, etc.:

I am satisfied that the object of your interview had the proper sanction and therefore meets with my entire approval. I have seen from Southern papers that a system of retaliation is going on in the South which they keep from us and which we should stop in some way. On the subject of exchange, however, I differ from General Hitchcock. It is hard on our men held in Southern prisons not to exchange them, but it is humanity to those left in the ranks to fight our battles. Every man we hold, when released on parole or otherwise, becomes an active soldier against us at once either directly or indirectly. If we commence a system of exchange which liberates all prisoners taken, we will

have to fight on until the whole South is exterminated. If we hold those caught they amount to no more than dead men. At this particular time to release all rebel prisoners North would insure Sherman's defeat and would compromise our safety here.

U.S. GRANT  
Lieutenant-General.

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HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,

October 1, 1864.

Lieut. Gen. U.S. Grant, Commanding Armies of the United States:

General:

With a view of alleviating the sufferings of our soldiers, I have the honor to propose an exchange of the prisoners of war belonging to the armies operating in Virginia, man for man, or upon the basis established by the cartel.

With much respect, your obedient servant,

R.E. LEE,  
General.

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HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,

October 2, 1864.

General R.E. Lee, Commanding Army of Northern Virginia:

General:

Your letter of yesterday proposing to exchange prisoners of war belonging to the armies operating in Virginia is received. I could not of a right accept your proposition further than to exchange those

prisoners captured within the last three days and who have not yet been delivered to the Commissary-General of Prisoners. Among those lost by the armies operating against Richmond were a number of colored troops. Before further negotiations are had upon the subject I would ask if you propose delivering these men the same as white soldiers?

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

U. S. GRANT,  
Lieutenant-General.

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HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA.

October 3, 1864.

Lieut. Gen. U. S. Grant,  
Commanding Armies of the United States.

General:

In my proposition of the 1st instant to exchange the prisoners of war belonging to the armies operating in Virginia, I intended to include all captured soldiers of the United States of whatever nation and color under my control. Deserters from our service and negroes belonging to our citizens are not considered subjects of exchange and were not included in my proposition. If there are any such among those stated by you to have been captured around Richmond they cannot be returned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE,  
General.

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HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES.

October 3, 1864.

General R. E. Lee, Commanding Army of Northern Virginia.

General:

Your letter of this date is received. In answer I have to state that the Government is bound to secure to all persons received into her armies the rights due to soldiers. This being denied by you in the persons of such men as have escaped from Southern masters induces me to decline making the exchanges you ask. The whole matter, however, will be referred to the proper authority for their decision, and whatever it may be will be adhered to.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

U. S. GRANT,  
Lieutenant-General.

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City Point, Va., August 25, 1864. 7:30 P.M.

Maj. Gen. H.W. Halleck, Chief of Staff:

I see by the Richmond Examiner of today that General Canby is about exchanging the prisoners captured at Fort Gaines. I hope General Canby will be instructed to make no more exchanges. It is giving the enemy re-enforcements at a time when they are of immediate importance to him.

U. S. GRANT,  
Lieutenant-General.