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The Deepwater Bunds

How Nazi cells operate on our United States Line boats. Using American ships to spread propaganda.

NAZI agents have been uncovered at various points between the beer parlors of uptown Manhattan and the Indian reservations of Oregon and Washington, but comparatively little has been said about their operations in one of the most strategic of all espionage bases—the merchant marine.

Yet on four of our fanciest ocean liners—the *Washington*, *President Harding*, *President Roosevelt*, and *Manhattan*, all of the United States Line—are men working in smoothly organized cells spreading the gospels of German fascism and the anti-union propaganda of the shipowners. With immunity from all but the progressive unionists with whom they work, the Nazis serve their two masters by smuggling in Nazi propaganda, spreading anti-Semitic literature to their fellow seamen, and working against the National Maritime Union, to which, by contract, they must belong.

The Nazi cells are organized into the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterschaft, Auslands Organization (National Socialist Labor Front, Foreign Division). Each unit has an official insignia to identify it and its work. All material passing through the unit, all reports to the home offices, are stamped with the insignia.

SHORE GANGS

The ship units have counterparts in the "shore gangs" of the Industrial Union of Maritime and Shipbuilding Workers of America. Shore gangs are painters and ship repair men who board vessels in port for minor repairs and paint jobs. Because of their comparative freedom of ingress and egress, shore gang workers are in a position to smuggle contraband through the piers.

Ship units, shore gang units, and the units aboard Nazi ships sailing into New York keep in touch with each other through joint meetings held weekly in New York and in Hamburg. On this side they meet either on board a Nazi ship or in one of Hoboken's waterfront bistros; in Hamburg the Auslands Organization maintains a special hall for the meetings.

Long before Hitler was ever heard of there were German sailors working on the United States Lines. For some reason the great German trade-union movement never had much effect among the seamen, and the American bosses were glad to employ men who did not know the power of organization. For the most part, the German seamen did not become American citizens; they considered Hamburg their home port, and seldom went ashore in New York. If they planned any large-scale binges, they planned them for Hamburg and the money they earned was spent back home. This, of course, was no cause for complaint before the curse fell on Germany in 1933, when Nazi seamen, who saw little of their

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fatherland and had no roots in workers' movements, became potential menaces to the security of other countries.

GANG LEADERS

The seagoing bunds and the shore units are led by trusted Nazis. In the ship unit it is usually someone high in the stewards' department. Shore gang workers are divided into inside and outside gangs—depending on the work each does. Bund leader for the inside gangs on the United States Line ships is the notorious Martin Wunderlich, who testified for the Yaphank, Long Island, Nazis when they were on trial last July. The outside gang is led by Max Fiolka. Both Fiolka and Wunderlich are American citizens.

Contraband is carried off the vessels and through the piers by shore gang workers. It is usually concealed in their clothes, in paint buckets carelessly covered with an oily rag, or in bundles of old papers. The literature is the familiar anti-Semitic stuff supplied by such Goebbels agencies as the World News Service of Essen. Supposedly factual and always hortatory, it differs little from the agitational literature of the American fascist outfits.

These activities are not unknown to the United States Lines. Official recognition of this surreptitious literature distribution was made in a notice posted on bulletin boards of the *Manhattan*, *Washington*, *President Harding*, and *President Roosevelt*. It was signed by Capt. A. B. Randall, commodore of the fleet, and read: "Any member of the crew found distributing literature which tends to incite discontent to any race aboard this ship will be instantly dismissed."

That is the only recognition which has been accorded this condition either by the company or by the United States Navy.

Why the navy can't be bothered, nobody seems to know. The tremendous need for army transports in case of war is obvious to anyone acquainted with the government's shipbuilding program during the World War—a program which is still costing the people of this country millions of dollars.

POWER OF SABOTAGE

Nazi units aboard American ships seem to command the same immunity from molestation by supposedly alert authorities that their bund counterparts enjoy on shore. Members of the National Maritime Union and members of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers are aware of the activities of these units. Their potential power for sabotage is, naturally, tremendous. Four of America's biggest transports could easily be put out of commission the day that war broke out or was threatened.

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