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CIVIL RIGHTS

U. S. Refuses to Aid In Release of Steward, Arrested in Germany

(Special to the Voice)

WASHINGTON, D. C. — The State Department today refused to act upon the demand of the National Maritime Union, presented on behalf of the Union by Charles Lombard, its representative here, that it procure the release of George Roth "from a n imprisonment imposed with such gross arrogance and disregard for the United States' concern with the protection of its nationals."

George Roth, steward, was arrested by the German police on board the United States liner, S.S. WASHINGTON, as it lay in Hamburg, November 29th, a few hours before departure on the home trip. The only charge at that time preferred against Roth was a vague reference to "criminal charges," and when the consul was queried by the crew for detailed information, he stated that he did not know anything about t.

The Maritime Union, incensed by the form of the arrest which they regard as a violation of Roth's rights as an American citizen, and by the fact that the trial date was set for a day when the S.S. WASHINGTON would be in New York harbor, and Roth's shipmates would therefore be unable to testify on his behalf, stated:

"We would point out that we are not demanding in any wise that U. S. seamen in foreign ports should be permitted to break laws with impunity; but we do demand that the State Department see to it that no seaman, in the pursuit of his legitimate employment, must run unnecessary hazard of loss of liberty and worse upon the irresponsible accusations made to authorities who are not accustomed or required to scrutinize and check the authenticity of the accusation or the responsibility of the accuser."

"THEREFORE, in the name of the future safety of all American seamen in foreign ports, we protest

Roth's arrest, and demand that the State Department procure his release from an imprisonment imposed with such gross arrogance and disregard of the United States' concern with the protection of her nationals."

Roth is to be tried on January 14th upon the specific charge of "preparation of treason," based on his alleged distribution of "communistic" literature on board ship. The literature in question was a single copy of the "Volkes Zeitung," defined by Kurt Sells, German correspondent in Washington, also as "communistic" but which he concedes is not an official communistic paper."

The refusal of the State Department to act on the demand of the National Maritime Union that Roth be released because of the form of the arrest was, they said, based on their belief that Roth would receive a fair trial in Germany. They also insisted that their refusal to interfere, or its neglect to take stronger action than they had, was not influenced by the existing status of German-American feeling.

The Maritime Union would question the propriety of the Department of States' decision not to interfere on the further ground that the charge upon which Roth is to be tried—"preparation of treason"—would appear to be non-recognition on the part of the German government of Roth's American citizenship.

The dictionary defines treason as "the offence of betraying the state or subverting the government of the state to which the offender belongs." Germany has already intimated that it may not recognize transference of allegiance from Germany to another country, and this arrogant preferring of charges of "treason" against an American citizen causes grave concern to the National Maritime Union on behalf of other members of the Union who are also naturalized citizens.

The formal protest against the arrest of Roth by the Gestapo was read into the Congressional Record today by Congressman Celler of New York.

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