

Star
1/10/40 - p 5



CAPT. FRITZ WIEDEMANN.
—A. P. Photo.

Wiedemann Here To Help Plan Return Of 400 Nazi Seamen Columbus Crewmen of Military Age to Be Sent Home Via Pacific

By the Associated Press.

Capt. Fritz Wiedemann, German consul general at San Francisco, flew here today to discuss with Embassy officials how to return military-age seamen of the scuttled liner Columbus to Germany, via San Francisco and Asia.

Hans Thomsen, German Charge d'Affaires, summoned Capt. Wiedemann, who was Corpl. Adolf Hitler's captain in the World War, to talk over plans for housing the 400-odd officers and men in the California city until passage over the Pacific could be arranged. The officers and men of military age go from Ellis Island, where they are now being held, with some 175 others too young or too old to fight, to San Francisco, there to take boats to some point on the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

Herbert Scholz, German consul at Boston, was to arrive later in the day to talk to Dr. Thomsen. Mr. Scholz is expected to be asked for help on arranging transportation to the West Coast.

State and Labor Department officials, the German Embassy and officials of the North German Lloyd Line, who have been working together on how best to get the stranded seamen home, decided on a plan which, essentially, would call for sea transportation on Japanese or other foreign vessels.

To evade British attempts to capture the Germans at sea, the planners decided to scatter the men, a few to each vessel used. The North German Lloyd Line, which owned the Columbus, would pay for transportation.

No specific time was set, but it was said that departure from Ellis Island had been arranged for "within a few days." The plans were subject to change at any time.

No guarantees as to the German sailors' safety at sea was sought from the British, presumably on the ground that the British could not be expected to pledge it. In the present European War, as in the World War, the British Navy has been taking Germans off neutral vessels.

As for the boys and older men not of military age, detained at Ellis Island, it was arranged to send them to the Mediterranean or Europe aboard neutral vessels, whenever it might become feasible.