

8,000 ALIEN SEAMEN HUNTED FOR CREWS

Deserters' Round-Up Ordered
by Biddle to Aid Arms Flow
—Many Picked Up Here

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WASHINGTON, March 23—Attorney General Biddle has ordered a nation-wide round-up of about 8,000 alien seamen who have deserted their ships and are thus hampering the shipment of war supplies to the Allies.

The round-up, which has been urged for months by several United Nations governments, has been undertaken because of the serious situation that has arisen in getting the necessary crews to sail United Nations ships.

Several hundred of these seamen were picked up in New York in the last few days and they are being apprehended at a rate of fifteen to twenty a day elsewhere in the country, it was stated at the Department of Justice today.

The official plan, drafted by an interdepartmental committee with members from the State and Jus-

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tice Departments and the Maritime Commission and approved today by the Attorney General, calls for the seamen to return to their ships or face deportation. There was, however, nothing in the plan which explained how seamen could be deported to Norway and Greece, which are in German hands.

Higher Pay Here a Factor

It is understood that the problem has been greatly complicated by the activity of the Pan-American Division of the National Maritime Union, a Congress of Industrial Organizations affiliate, which has had a number of Greek and Norwegian sailors placed on United States and Panamanian ships at pay rates higher than they were able to command under their own flags.

These higher salaries have led to a steady drift of sailors from United Nations ships toward unionized jobs on American-controlled ships and the men thus induced to leave, added to those who have come into the country without permits and taken jobs in war industries, have created a situation which has now affected the efficiency of the Allied shipping pool.

Of the 8,000 sailors illegally in the country, about 3,000 are Norwegian and 3,000 Greek, and the rest mostly Danes, Swedes, Dutch and British.

A spokesman for the Pan-American Division of the National Maritime Union said tonight that the union had made proposals to the State Department for solution of the problem. These proposals included creation of a United Nations Sailors' Pool, whose members would receive more or less equal wages. Members of the pool would receive special passports and, under the union plan, the Greek au-

thorities here would have first call on Greek sailors and the Norwegian authorities first call on Norwegian sailors.

Norwegian Officials Differ

These proposals differ from the proposals of the Norwegian authorities, who suggest merely that the United States Government enforce its law against Norwegian seamen inside the country and turn the seamen over to the Norwegian shipping authorities. The Norwegians do not approve the efforts of American unions to organize their men, taking them onto other ships at higher wages and thus not only reducing the crews of the Norwegian ships but damaging the morale of the remaining Norwegian sailors, who often have to sail with partial crews.

An official of the government said that the Administration would certainly not countenance any attempt by one nation to raid the shipping personnel of an ally, but at the same time pointed to the fact that the situation was naturally complicated because the sailors of different countries were naturally sailing under different terms and different rates of pay.

Consequently, while the Administration plan approved by Mr. Biddle today calls for rounding up the seamen, no decision has apparently been reached as to how the problem of varying pay is to be settled.

The official plan is divided into three parts, the first designed to get all the seamen in hand, the second to prevent future desertions, and the third to work out some form of equal compensation.

As a result of this plan, efforts are now being made to arrange for better identification of all visiting seamen. Each country may arrange for uniforms for their merchant seamen, and a system of checking the men on and off the ships will be put into operation.

Moreover, it is understood that the Coast Guard will arrange for a much closer watch on alien seamen while they are ashore, and presumably efforts will be made to warn industrial employers throughout the country against employing any man, no matter how capable, who is illegally in the country.