

FEAR SHIP BRINGS GERMAN FUNGUS TO KILL OUR WHEAT

Passengers and Cargo of Nieuw Amsterdam Are Under Tests with Acids and Glasses.

EVEN FACE POWDERS SEIZED

No Passenger Allowed to Take Soap, Tooth Paste, or Paper of Any Sort from Vessel.

HALIFAX WORK TAKEN OVER

Returned Engineer Reports Krupp Works Are Being Put Under Ground Rapidly.

The Holland-America liner Nieuw Amsterdam arrived at her pier yesterday morning, bringing more passengers than any neutral vessel since America entered the war. She did not stop at Halifax, as has been the custom, and because of that and rumors that some of those on board might be here to give aid and comfort to the enemy, passengers, crew, and cargo are being searched thoroughly.

From the moment the ship made her way through the fog to Quarantine in the early morning and the Government officials boarded her she was practically in the possession of the Government. Last night, when the work of examination was suspended for the day and guards had been posted about the vessel, very few of her passengers had been allowed to go ashore. It was said that the last of the 1,500 passengers she brought over from Holland might not get off before tomorrow. Then will come the more leisurely, but no less thorough, examination of the cargo.

Great precautions were taken by the Intelligence Department of the Army and Navy and the customs officials to prevent any one not authorized from boarding the Nieuw Amsterdam and very few persons were authorized to go up her gangplank. One reason for the extraordinary precautions taken was, according to statements on the pier, that the Government had reports of a plot to bring in from Germany a poisonous pollen, or fungus, or some other plant life or chemical, meant to cause damage to American wheat and grain crops. Whether this was true or not is unlikely to be known until Washington lifts the veil of secrecy, for even the minor officials refused absolutely even to discuss the arrival of the vessel. It was also said that the officials took the steps they did to prevent the landing of spies or the delivery in this country of enemy communications.

Direct Orders from Washington.

Federal agents here evidently acted under direct orders from Washington. On Tuesday the customs officials were willing, with the permission of the Holland-American Line, to issue passes so that newspaper men could board the vessel at Quarantine. Later word went out from the Custom House that not only would no coast guard cutter passes be issued, but that permission for any one to enter the baggage inclosure on the pier had been withdrawn.

When the Nieuw Amsterdam came alongside her pier her decks were alive with passengers. There were 681 in the first cabin, 612 in the second cabin, and 263 in the steerage. About fifty Americans were on board. Many of those in the cabins were Dutch officials here on business or bound for the Dutch West Indies. The passengers gathered at the bow, and there was an exchange of greetings between some of those on board and some who lined the bulkhead on shore.

About 150 persons had gathered at the entrance to the pier. Many had been there for hours, for the vessel made a slow trip up from Quarantine through the fog. No one was allowed on the pier until the vessel had been made fast, and several hundred custom men had mounted guard at the rail separating the passenger inclosure from the pier space open to the public. As an extra precaution two barriers were stretched about ten feet apart, thus separating those arriving from communication with those who came to meet the vessel. Beyond that barrier no one was allowed to go, even though business ordinarily required the presence of many on the pier.

The landing agent of the line had been allowed to board the Nieuw Amsterdam down the bay. When the pier was reached he wanted to go ashore to attend to some business and was warned by the officers that if he left the ship he could not return. He elected to go. Even the agent of the line was not allowed on board, it was said.

Immigrants to Ellis Island.

No sooner was the steamship alongside her pier than an immigration station barge appeared through the fog and manoeuvred alongside. It was said that the steerage passengers were taken off and that their inspection would take place on Ellis Island. The passengers were gathered in the saloon and there questioned and their papers examined. Each, it was said, was subjected to a search that in some cases was most thorough. The officers were assisted by eighteen women of the Naval Auxiliary and the women inspectors of the Custom House. Not only were papers most closely scrutinized, but the questions asked covered a wide field. Each had to tell where he came from, his reason for coming across the Atlantic, and just

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what he expected to do, where he was going, and where he intended to stay.

This took time, and it was a long wait for those at the street end of the pier. Word went out that it would be hours before the first batch of passengers would be allowed to go ashore, so most of the crowd sought comfort on the benches or went out to sit in their automobiles.

The only persons who were not detained by the searchers were August Phillips, the New Netherlands Minister, his family, and W. F. Gobius, his Secretary. Under diplomatic courtesy their baggage came ashore without examination, and they left in automobiles for the Ritz-Carlton.

It was not until well along in the afternoon that the first of the passengers were allowed ashore. These were Americans. After that the travelers came to the pier at long intervals. No one was allowed to go back on board under any pretext. The first arrivals told of the thoroughness of the search being made on board. The officers, it was said, took from all passengers all liquids found in their baggage, and all powders, even those marked tooth powder, face powder, or medical preparations. The officials also took all soaps, and in some cases other small articles. One report had it that every member of the crew had been photographed.

All Papers Seized.

All the papers belonging to passengers were taken for future examination, even reading matter and personal and business papers. Each passenger's property was placed in a long envelope or made up into a package and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Each trunk and bag was tested for a false bottom or space in which any object could be concealed. It was only after the searchers were satisfied that each piece was harmless that it was released. Every article seized is to be examined with glasses and chemicals before being returned to the owner.

"I have arrived in many countries," said an American passenger, "but I have never been subjected to such a thorough search. Everything I had on and everything I carried was gone over. I do not know whether any one had his skin rubbed with chemicals to see whether he carried invisible ink writing on his body; I know they did not do that in my case."

Dr. Phillips, the new Netherlands Minister, is a lawyer and not a professional diplomat. To him will fall the

difficult task of convincing this Government that Holland should receive freely of our food supply, for he said the situation at home was acute. Other passengers predicted that Holland would come to actual starvation by the middle of next month unless we gave her food. Dr. Phillips said there was very little of interest to mark the voyage. No German craft was seen. A Dutch torpedo boat was near at the beginning of the trip and off Heligoland the vessel fell in with nine British torpedo boats. There was an exchange of signals, and that was all.

"Holland is now in need of food," said the new Minister. "There is an acute scarcity, especially of bread and coal. We have some eighty ships, or about 600,000 tons of shipping, held up here, and that is one of the reasons for the present situation. The withdrawal of these vessels from our trade has caused all this trouble. The coal scarcity is so bad that some of our great industries have been forced to close down. Holland's position just now might be termed as being between the deep blue sea and a certain gentleman."

Seeks America's Friendship.

"My one great object in coming here is to make the relations between my country and this one pleasant and amicable. There is no reason why the two countries should not be held together by bonds of friendship."

Reports that reach Holland from Germany show that Germany is in fear of air raids, and for this reason, F. C. Murdock of 630 Seventy-ninth Street, Brooklyn, said, some Krupp works at Essen have been constructed underground. Mr. Murdock was in Germany thirteen months. He said there was great anger in Germany against America because of the feeling that we came into the war just at the time when Germany was winning success. The German people are tired of the war, he said, and this is indicated by the fact that German deserters are crossing into Holland at the rate of about a dozen a day.

Mr. Murdock said that just before he left Holland it was reported that an American prisoner had killed the officer in charge of a prison train and made his way across the border after being a prisoner in Germany about forty-eight hours. He said the Germans were working the Rumanian oil fields to the limit and now had gasoline to sell to others.

While Robert Fileston, member of the Belgian Relief Commission in Holland, would not discuss his mission or the work among the 400,000 Belgians in Holland, he was not averse to giving his personal opinion that we ought to give Holland some of our food. Bread is the chief want, as it forms a large part of the food of the people. The Government has taken measures to keep food prices down. Because of this lack of food, conditions are becoming desperate, he said, and the limited rations and the hardships of wartime are telling on the people.

"We do not understand conditions in

Holland," he said. "The people over there have to sell to Germany as a means of national existence. The country has to get from Germany iron and coal or their industries would all be forced to close."

Hollanders Dislike Us.

In this connection, he pointed out, the people of Holland do not understand the action of this country. As an indication of their change of feeling he said that when he went to Holland the American flag always aroused enthusiasm. It is not so now. He said that the exchange of articles between Holland and Germany was thoroughly understood by England and France. It was a three-cornered agreement, and now comes America, and it will have to be a four-cornered agreement, with a thorough understanding on all sides.

This scarcity of food in the Netherlands was spoken of by others, and H. L. Bebker said that Holland might through necessity have to throw in her lot with Germany. J. English, an engineer, said that a citizen of Rotterdam had bet 5,000 guilders that there would be a popular uprising in Germany before the Nieuw Amsterdam reached this side.

Dr. Hendrik W. van Loon, lecturer in history at Cornell University, author and newspaper correspondent, said that Holland was being drained of Americans, and there were fewer than a dozen in that country now, exclusive, however, of the diplomatic staff.

It was reported by an arriving passenger that Germany was getting ready for intensive submarine warfare in March, and was building a fleet of giant submarines. These will be of about 2,000 tons, it was rumored, and will mount guns that will enable them to fight torpedo boats and submarine chasers. Some observers said the discontent of the Germans could not be relied upon.

A passenger on the Nieuw Amsterdam was Adrian Gipps, Managing Director of the Holland-America Line. It was reported that he was on his way to Washington to make arrangements for the sailing of the Nieuw Amsterdam and other vessels of the line tied up here.

Baron O. Mackay, Burgomaster of Meden, Sumatra, arrived with his wife. He, too, spoke of food scarcity in Holland, and said he hoped the country would not be drawn into the war.

Captain L. Stuit, who commanded the Dutch steamship Gaasterland when she was torpedoed a year ago, and the Captains of six other vessels torpedoed at the same time, were aboard. They are on their way to the Dutch East Indies to take command of German vessels interned there under an arrangement between Germany and Holland.

The Nieuw Amsterdam brought 2,000 boxes of flowers and 4,000 cases of bulbs. These must, it is said, pass under the scrutiny of experts of the Agricultural Department.