

AN ANALYSIS OF PRESS COVERAGE OF THE GERMAN-
AMERICAN BUND BY SELECTED AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

GERALD JOSEPH McCARTAN

1976

THESIS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 00671 9128

LIBRARY
Michigan State
University



RETURNING MATERIALS:
Place in book drop to
remove this checkout from
your record. FINES will
be charged if book is
returned after the date
stamped below.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>5 AUG 20 1992 H 125 370016</p> <p>JAN 06 2003</p> | | |
|---|--|--|

ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF PRESS COVERAGE OF THE
GERMAN-AMERICAN BUND BY SELECTED
AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS

By

Gerald Joseph McCartan

Historians having an interest in the German-American Bund have credited the American press with advancing the importance and impact of that organization beyond its actual bounds and bringing about its downfall as well. The purpose of this study is to analyze the coverage and attitudes of selected publications in relation to the Bund during its rise in the 1930s to its downfall in the early 1940s.

The publications selected for review include: the New York Times, the New York Herald Tribune, the Chicago Tribune, and the San Francisco Examiner; two opinion magazines, the New Republic and the Nation; and two news magazines, Time and Newsweek. The sample newspapers were chosen to reflect differences existing in coverage between varying geographic regions while also representing, as closely as possible, the areas where Bund regional headquarters were located: New York,

Gerald Joseph McCartan

Chicago and Los Angeles. All the publications were examined at the Michigan State University Library, either on microfilm or in bound volumes.

The analysis of press coverage is divided into three different periods in the movement's development and demise. The first section reviews forerunners of the Bund and its founding as the Friends of New Germany. The second section details the movement in its rise as the German-American Bund and the third section deals with its downfall.

The study supports the view advanced by some historians of the period that the press, through its coverage of the organization, initially bolstered the image of the Bund, making it appear more powerful and dangerous than it actually was. It also supports the position that later press coverage helped expose the Bund and brought about the downfall of the movement.

The study does not support the contention that the press sensationalized its coverage of Bund activities. While there were a few instances of sensationalism by the newspapers, the study found that the overall coverage was responsible, with stories handled as straight news items. The study found that many of the newsworthy events related to the Bund and covered by the press were sensational in and of themselves.

AN ANALYSIS OF PRESS COVERAGE OF THE
GERMAN-AMERICAN BUND BY SELECTED
AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS

By

Gerald Joseph McCartan

A THESIS

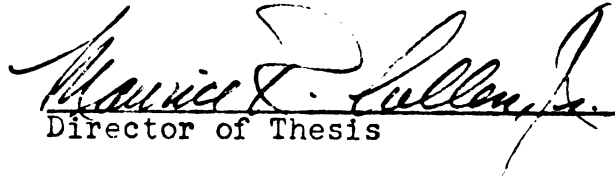
Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

School of Journalism

1976

Accepted by the faculty of the School of Journalism, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, Michigan State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree.


Director of Thesis

To Helen, in thanks for her
unending patience, support
and encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Maurice R. Cullen for the guidance and criticism he offered during the research and manuscript preparation of this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|------|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Chapter | |
| I. FORERUNNERS OF THE MOVEMENT AND THE FRIENDS OF NEW GERMANY | 7 |
| II. THE RISE OF THE BUND | 34 |
| III. THE DOWNFALL OF KUHN AND DECLINE OF THE BUND | 75 |
| IV. ANALYSIS OF PRESS COVERAGE AND CONCLUSIONS | 112 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 119 |

INTRODUCTION

A period of profound and protracted depression has followed in the wake of the World War. It has been world-wide. More than 15 years have elapsed since the ending of the war, but its blighting effect upon the economic life and the morale of practically all the peoples of the world still exists. During such a period of unrest, discontent with the existing order, and a wide-spread agitation for changes in the form, character, and substance of governments has spread over the world, overturning established governments and resulting in many new and radical experiments in government.¹

Rep. John W. McCormack
June 5, 1934

During the 1930s, the rise of demagogues and demagoguery promoting the political and economic concepts of fascism was widespread. Such European leaders as Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany and Franco in Spain, were changing the course of their countries and ultimately the world. In the United States, as well, a number of men and movements advocated Fascistic solutions to the economic ills of the nation. The radio oratory of Father Charles E. Coughlin and the writings of Seward Collins, Lawrence Dennis and Gerald B. Winrod brought the Fascist

¹U.S., Congress, House, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Report on the Investigation of Nazi and Other Propaganda, H. Rept. 153, 74th Cong., 1st sess., 1935, pp. 3-4.

gospel to the people. William D. Pelley's Silver Shirts, George W. Christians' Crusaders for Economic Liberty and George E. Deathrage's Knights of the White Camellia were all committed to employing the forces of fascism to defend the country from what they termed the Communist threat.

Among the men and movements adhering to the political right, one in particular stood out due to its alien name, and to some degree its alien nature: the German-American Bund.

As Sander A. Diamond points out in The Nazi Movement in the United States: "Many Americans believed that the Bundists intended to establish a Nazi dictatorship in the United States. In retrospect, this assertion seems ludicrous; in the context of the late 1930s, however--when a permanently Fascist Europe seemed possible--the belief that a Trojan horse was being readied by Hitler's supposed agents was not considered farfetched."²

As a result of this belief, the Bund was investigated by two Congressional committees during the decade. It was also watched and reported on by the Department of Justice, J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and assorted journalists.

²Sander A. Diamond, The Nazi Movement in the United States: 1922-1941 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 21.

Historians writing about the movement have stated that the press made the Bund appear far more important, powerful and dangerous than it was while also ultimately bringing about its destruction. Diamond notes: "The newspaper coverage and newsreels afforded the Bund initially aided the movement but eventually harmed it."³

Much the same sentiment was voiced by Ralph F. Bischoff in Nazi Conquest Through German Culture: "The Bund attracted much more attention than it warranted, and it received far too much free publicity. Nevertheless, it did illustrate the dangers which are inherent in the idea of a German cultural nation of one-hundred millions."⁴

Detailing his charges, Diamond said that the publicity afforded the Bund by the press reinforced the view held by "millions of Americans" that "Hitler had an undetermined but alarmingly large number of followers in the United States."

Even a cursory examination of several widely circulated journals published in the late 1930s suggests that the Bundists were catapulted into the national limelight at the very moment when the Fascist or fascoid regimes and Nazi Germany were threatening the already weakened international structure. The Bund's inner machinations

³Diamond, The Nazi Movement, pp. 208-209.

⁴Ralph F. Bischoff, Nazi Conquest Through German Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), pp. 178-179.

made for interesting reading--intrigue is inherent in oath-bound organizations owing allegiance to a foreign power--but few writers attempted to assess the movement's broader connotations.⁵

Bund "fuehrer" Fritz Kuhn exercised supreme authority over the organization during its rapid rise to notoriety between 1936 and its peak at the time of the Madison Square Garden rally in February, 1939. Diamond noted that Kuhn's overwhelming desire for publicity thrust both the man and the movement into the limelight after 1936. Newspaper and magazine writers attempted to provide the inside story on the Bund. In addition to acquainting the public with the Bund, the publicity also had an unintended effect:

Their articles were a reflection of the public's desire to know more about fascism and about what one writer referred to as the 'new barbarian invasion' The unintended result of this publicity was to attribute to the Bund a far greater influence than it actually exerted.⁶

The Foreign Policy Association in 1935 noted the role played by the press in building the Bund's image: "Having failed in its aim to unify the German-American societies on National Socialist principles, the Bund is today merely a small dissident element. Some observers believe that the spotlight constantly thrown on it by

⁵Diamond, The Nazi Movement, pp. 38-39.

⁶Ibid., pp. 206-207.

hostile politicians and newspapers now constitutes its only strength."⁷

This study will assess the coverage and attitude of selected newspapers and news and opinion magazines to the Bund during its rise in the 1930s to its downfall in the early 1940s. It will review chronologically, within the limitations of the paper, the activities of the Bund as reported and commented upon by the selected publications.

The New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, Chicago Tribune, and San Francisco Examiner were chosen to reflect differences existing in coverage between varying geographic regions and to examine press coverage in areas where Bund regional headquarters were located: New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

The Times was selected, additionally, due to its high reputation for fairness and accuracy.

The news magazines, Time and Newsweek, and the opinion magazines, the New Republic and the Nation, were selected to represent the national magazine press of the era.

The study is divided into four sections, each of the first three dealing with a different period in the movement's existence, and the fourth presenting

⁷New York Times, July 18, 1938, p. 5.

conclusions about press coverage of the Bund by the publications studied. The first section reviews forerunners of the Bund, the founding of the Bund itself and its activities as the Friends of New Germany. The second section will detail the movement as it grew after officially adopting the name German-American Bund to its peak at the time of the Madison Square Garden Rally in 1939. The bulk of materials from the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities investigation and the trials of Bund fuehrers Fritz Kuhn and G. W. Kunze will be dealt with in the third section on the downfall of the movement. The final section will analyze and present conclusions on press coverage of the Bund.

CHAPTER I

FORERUNNERS OF THE MOVEMENT AND THE FRIENDS OF NEW GERMANY

While, historically, the largest immigration of Germans to the United States occurred in the late 19th century, more than 411,000 German nationals came to the United States between 1922 and 1931.¹ As did all ethnic groups migrating to America, these individuals organized themselves into numerous religious groups, choral societies and athletic clubs in order to carry on the traditions and customs of the "old country." Among the ethnic organizations forming at this time was the "Teutonia Association," founded by Friedrich (Fritz) and Peter Gissibl, Alfred Ex and Frank von Friedersdorff on October 12, 1924, in Detroit.² With unofficial links to the National Socialist German Workers Party in Germany, "Teutonia's mission was to transplant the 'National Socialist idea' to America,--not to all America, not even

¹The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present (New York: Horizon Press, 1965), pp. 56-57.

²Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 92.

to all German-Americans, but . . . to newly arrived German national elements living in the United States."³

In an interview with the New York Times datelined Chicago, March 26, 1932, Fred (Fritz) Gissibl outlined the aims of Teutonia:

'We are working against the Versailles and other treaties which are responsible for Germany's present economic dilemma,' he said.

'We have no official connection with the Hitler party. Nothing we do or write is done in the name of the Hitler leaders. We are entirely independent.'⁴

Gissibl, who was identified as the leader of the Chicago group, reported Teutonia's total membership at "upward of 1,000 in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Rochester, Cleveland and Milwaukee."⁵ When disbanded later that year, Teutonia appeared to have made little headway in enlisting support from the German-American community.

In one respect, Teutonia did serve an important purpose, that of a nurturing ground for many of the future leaders of the Friends of New Germany and the German-American Bund. Among those were Walter Kappe, Fritz Gissibl, later a leader of the Friends; Sepp Schuster,

³Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 92.

⁴New York Times, March 27, 1932, p. 10.

⁵Ibid.

leader of the uniformed service of the Friends; and Heinz Spanknoebel, early leader of the Friends.⁶

During the intervening period between the end of Teutonia in 1932 and the founding of the Friends of New Germany in July, 1933, many former members of Teutonia joined "Gau-USA," the American division of Hitler's National Socialist Party.⁷

In an article on March 23, 1933, the New York Times quoted Paul Manger, identified as chief of the New York office of Gau-USA, as estimating the membership of the group at more than 1,000, two-hundred of whom resided in New York City. Manger noted that Gau-USA was limited to Germans who had not renounced their German allegiance. This was necessary, he said, "to avoid any criticism that the organization was interfering or even able to interfere through voting participation in American politics." Manger also identified Heinz Spanknoebel as leader of the organization.⁸

Gau-USA had a short life span, and the German National Socialist Party ordered the group to disband in April, 1933. The New York Times, on April 27, quoted the German Consulate in New York as saying that "it was

⁶Leland V. Bell, In Hitler's Shadow (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973), pp. 7-8.

⁷Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 101.

⁸New York Times, March 23, 1933, p. 11.

realized, and I think wisely, that political organizations should stay at home." But a local spokesman for Gau-USA underscored the possibility of another organization, unrelated to the Nazi Party in Germany, being formed.⁹

The founding of another pro-Nazi Germany group was not long in coming. The Friends of New Germany held its first annual convention in Chicago in late July, 1933. Addressing members of the Friends, Heinz Spanknoebel announced the beginning of the National Socialist movement in the United States.

With the formation of the Friends of New Germany, the Bund was born. Although the name of the group was not officially changed to the German-American Bund until 1936, the organizational structure and membership of the Friends provided the basic structure for the later Bund. It was at the founding of the Friends that members began referring to themselves as Bundists, a title which would survive the organization and be used until the downfall of the German-American Bund in 1941. Spanknoebel divided the nation into three administrative regions with a director for each, a structure which would be utilized later by the Bund. Finally, Spanknoebel adopted the title of "Bundesleiter," or national leader, and established the administrative procedure of the

⁹New York Times, April 27, 1933, p. 10.

"fuehrerprinzip," or leadership principle, as the Friends' guiding policy.¹⁰ This same leadership principle would become a crucial part of the defense in the trial of German-American Bund leader Fritz Kuhn. Almost from its beginning, the Friends of New Germany was the center of controversy and Congressional investigation.

The Friends became embroiled in their first conflict in mid September, 1933, when they attempted to interject Nazi German flags and speakers into the annual German Day celebration in New York City. Sponsored annually by the United German Societies of the city, German Day was an ethnic festival honoring the heroes, homeland and culture of all German immigrants. The dispute erupted at a meeting of the Societies on September 18, 1933, when a resolution which called for the raising of the Nazi flag was adopted. The New York Herald Tribune reported that twenty representatives of the Federation of German-Jewish Societies walked out of the meeting to protest the presence of thirty-five Nazi delegates, up from four delegates at the previous meeting. The additional Nazi delegates provided the margin for a favorable vote on the resolution regarding the use of the Nazi flag at the festivities.¹¹

¹⁰Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 115.

¹¹New York Herald Tribune, Sept. 19, 1933, p. 21.

While the Societies remained divided between the pro and anti-Nazi factions, the question of German Day was finally decided by New York Mayor John P. O'Brien on October 21 when he announced his decision to prohibit the meeting on the grounds that violence might erupt. In a letter to Dr. William Poepke, acting director of the Societies, O'Brien said he had been "advised the occasion would be seized by alien agitators . . . who in no way represent the sentiments of the great masses of citizens of German origin. . . ." O'Brien said that he had been warned of the possibility of violence by a delegation of the Jewish War Veterans of America: "New York is not the soil in which the Nazi weeds of intolerance and religious hatred can flourish."¹²

Reaction to the mayor's decision came two days later when the Societies decided to send representatives to attempt to persuade O'Brien that the celebration would not take the form of a Nazi propaganda meeting and there would be no violence on the part of the Friends. The Times quoted Heinz Spanknoebel as stating that "no one knew better than he that a Nazi state or storm troopers had no place in the United States and that he and his associated Friends of New Germany were not disturbers.

¹²New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 22, 1933, p. 1.

He charges that the disturbance came from the Jewish side."¹³

October 26 was a momentous day for both the Friends of New Germany and Spanknoebel. At a meeting that day, representatives of the Societies, with Spanknoebel noticeably absent, failed to persuade O'Brien to rescind his ban of the event. Spanknoebel had failed in his attempt to inject Nazi German flags and speakers into the annual celebration and furthermore had lost any support he may have been receiving from the Nazi Party in Germany.

In a short article following the story on O'Brien's decision, the Times said that it had received a disclaimer concerning Spanknoebel from Paul Joseph Goebbels, Nazi propaganda chief. The "emphatic disclaimer" denied Spanknoebel held any mandate from the Hitler government or from the National Socialist Party and stated he held no official commission of any kind. It also asserted that the German government had cabled orders forbidding Spanknoebel to indulge in any propaganda activities.¹⁴

No doubt the timing of this disclaimer was prompted, in part, by the uproar Spanknoebel and the

¹³New York Times, Oct. 24, 1933, p. 11.

¹⁴New York Times, Oct. 26, 1933, p. 8.

Friends had caused in relation to German Day. Probably an even greater factor had been increased Congressional interest in both Spanknoebel and the Friends displayed by a Democratic Congressman from New York, Representative Samuel Dickstein, one of the earliest and most vocal opponents of pro-Nazi Germany groups. On October 10, Dickstein had announced he would use his position as chairman of the House Committee on Immigration to launch an unofficial investigation of Nazi propaganda efforts in America. The Times gave front-page coverage to the announcement, quoting Dickstein's strongly worded reasons for conducting the investigation. The Congressman cited charges that German aliens were entering the country to form a brand of Hitler's government here, with racial and religious hatred and bigotry. He said that he had information that 300 persons, sent personally by German Minister of Propaganda Goebbels, had entered the United States as employees of the German Consulate. He continued:

. . . Information has reached me that the Nazi government maintains a propaganda bureau which is heavily financed by resources of the German government. The objective of the bureau and its activities consist of spreading Nazi propaganda in the United States, with the ultimate object of overthrowing our government and installing in its place a dictatorship on the Nazi model.¹⁵

¹⁵New York Times, Oct. 10, 1933, pp. 1, 11.

The Times reported that Bernard Ridder, a prospective witness against Spanknoebel and publisher of the German language newspaper Staats-Zeitung in New York, said that he had been visited by Spanknoebel, "who showed him credentials from the German government as leader in establishing pro-Nazi organizations in America."¹⁶

On October 17, the Times reported that Dickstein had visited Secretary of State Cordell Hull the previous day to discuss the proposed investigation and solicit the State Department's cooperation. The article also noted Dickstein's charge that 300 Germans had entered the country to work at German consulates had been received with some skepticism at the State Department: "Records there showed only ninety-one visas granted for the first eight months of this year for diplomats, consular agents and their servants. In the same period of 1932, 113 such visas were granted."¹⁷

Skepticism regarding the often overblown and sometimes preposterous charges of Dickstein became more common throughout his crusade against the German-American Bund. Such doubt, however, did

¹⁶New York Times, Oct. 10, 1933, p. 11.

¹⁷New York Times, Oct. 17, 1933, p. 17.

not silence the Congressman either in 1933 or later years.

Spanknoebel's disappearance was the cause of much speculation in New York City in late October, 1933. On October 27, the Times published a report which said: ". . . It was admitted definitely by several of his associates in private that he had been recalled to Germany to explain to Nazi headquarters the situation that led Mayor O'Brien to prohibit the annual celebration of German Day. . . ." The article went on to say that Spanknoebel had sailed from New York Wednesday night on the Hamburg American Liner "Deutschland," on orders from Berlin.¹⁸

The Herald Tribune printed a story the same day which challenged the Times' account. While noting that his friends were silent on the disappearance, it stated: "In the German American district it was doubted that Spanknoebel had hastened to Europe on the Hamburg American Liner Deutschland. . . ." ¹⁹

On October 27, one day after his disappearance, a federal warrant was issued for the arrest of Spanknoebel, charging him with "acting, or purporting to act, as an agent of the German government in

¹⁸New York Times, Oct. 27, 1933, p. 10.

¹⁹New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 27, 1933, p. 9.

the United States without notifying the State Department."²⁰ The following day, a federal grand jury convened to question witnesses in what had become known as the "Spanknoebel Affair." It finally indicted Spanknoebel on November 10, on the basis of Ridder's testimony regarding his use of German credentials. His whereabouts went undiscovered, however, until a New York Times dispatch on December 8, 1933, from Berlin placed him in Germany.²¹ The San Francisco Examiner carried a Universal Service dispatch datelined Berlin, October 28, in which Adolf Hitler repudiated Spanknoebel and emphatically disavowed charges that Nazi organizers were actively working in the United States:

In an exclusive interview with the Universal Service correspondent Chancellor Hitler said:

'There is no authorized representative of myself or the German National Socialist Party active in America.

'If any German national who is a member of our party is engaged in propaganda or political activity in the United States, I will expel him from the party immediately that proof is submitted to me.

'I have given strictest orders that not even lectures or speeches on National Socialism are to be given in America by members of my party.

'Violation of that order will be followed immediately by expulsion from the party.'²²

²⁰New York Times, Oct. 28, 1933, p. 1.

²¹New York Times, Dec. 9, 1933, p. 9.

²²San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 29, 1933, p. 1.

Despite denials from Hitler and Goebbels that any relationship existed between the Friends of New Germany and the German Nazi Party, Representative Dickstein went ahead in November with his informal investigation of Nazi activities in America.

Editorial comment regarding the investigation was sparse, with only the Herald Tribune and New Republic devoting space to the topic. The New Republic, in mid October, was wholeheartedly in support of the inquiry, outlining Dickstein's charges of excessively large contingents of German consular employees entering the country and recounting the Spanknoebel incident with Bernard Ridder. It then went on to outline evidence presented in the Daily Worker, the Communist Party paper published in New York City, alleging that a letter was sent by Spanknoebel to the address of the Berlin police. It purportedly requested Nazi agents be sent to America on a German liner. The New Republic, while admitting that the letter may have been a forgery as Spanknoebel contended, said that under the circumstances some substantiation was needed: "Obviously, a searching investigation by the United States government, such as Mr. Dickstein is planning, is imperatively necessary to find out just what the German Nazis are doing in this country and to what extent, if any, they are violating American law."²³

²³New Republic, October 18, 1933, p. 264.

The Herald Tribune, on November 1, published an editorial commenting on the disappearance of Spanknoebel, noting: ". . . Alien propagandists who believe it to be the 'duty' of all naturalized citizens to 'stand up for their native country should it be dishonored and boycotted' are plainly among those who will never be missed." It did not, however, see the need for a Congressional investigation of Nazi propaganda activities. The editorial noted that the last official German propaganda effort in this country had not been successful. It concluded with an example of the limitations of the propaganda technique:

. . . At the most, perhaps, propaganda might, if sufficiently clever, sway an opinion absolutely neutral, or attract an opinion ready, for reasons within itself, to take up something new. . . That is why people who go into a panic over the propaganda menace seem always to be confessing some weakness in their own position--or else a rather naive misunderstanding of what propaganda can really accomplish.²⁴

The committee opened hearings in Washington, D.C., on November 14, in what an Associated Press dispatch in the Examiner described as "crammed with all the elements of an oriental mystery story, even to a Mr. X who appeared in person to testify. . . ." The report further noted that Mr. X's testimony tended to confirm Representative Dickstein's earlier allegations regarding

²⁴Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, Nov. 1, 1933, p. 16.

the entry of numerous German nationals into the country, including seamen smuggling "inflammatory material urging an absolute dictatorship in the United States."²⁵

The remainder of the committee's inquiry was conducted almost exclusively in executive session with little or no press coverage until the release of the committee report. On January 20, 1934, the committee issued a majority report urging a full Congressional investigation of Nazi propaganda activities in the United States. Of this the Herald Tribune reported:

The committee said that the German government 'undoubtedly' was behind the activities of Nazi propagandists in this country, despite disavowals from Berlin.

The committee said that Nazi activities were concentrated on promotion of antagonism of racial groups in this country, 'particularly directing them all into one channel of hatred against the Jewish people.' 'Everything else is subordinate to this aim,' it said.²⁶

Response to the committee's recommendation came two months later on March 20, 1934, when the House voted to begin an immediate investigation of Nazi and Communist propaganda. The committee consisted of seven House members. The chairmanship was first offered to Representative Dickstein, who declined the post but did serve as a member of the committee. Representative John W. McCormack (Democrat, Massachusetts) was named chairman.

²⁵San Francisco Examiner, Nov. 15, 1933, p. 2.

²⁶New York Herald Tribune, Jan. 21, 1934, p. 13.

In response to the coming investigation, the Friends announced a leadership change on March 27, 1934, with the appointment of Reinhold Walter, an American, to replace Fritz Gissibl, who had assumed the position following Spanknoebel's disappearance. The Times reported that Gissibl explained the change by stating that the German government had issued a decree barring members of the German Nazi Party who were in America "from membership as well as leadership" in the Friends.²⁷ The change was purely cosmetic, however, and the McCormack Committee's final report noted that Gissibl remained the real head of the movement.²⁸

Executive sessions of the McCormack Committee opened in New York on June 17, 1934. Coincidentally, the Friends of New Germany held a rally that evening in Madison Square Garden to protest the boycott of German goods organized by Jewish groups throughout the nation. The Herald Tribune described the scene:

They reproduced in accurate detail a gathering of Nazi throngs in Berlin's Sportspalast with long lines of their own unsmiling ushers bearing the swastika armband, continued cries of 'Heil Hitler' accompanied by the upraised arm of the Nazi salute, and a thunderous roar of 'Ja' to a

²⁷New York Times, March 28, 1934, p. 19.

²⁸U.S., Congress, House, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Report on the Investigation of Nazi and Other Propaganda, H. Rept. 53, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., 1935, p. 5.

call for confidence in the leaders of the boycott against the Jews. . . . Madison Square Garden presented a military appearance with the concentration of police and the arrival of several hundred members of the Ordnungs Dienst (orderly service).²⁹

The Herald Tribune account noted, however, that the speakers emphasized that the rally was an American affair with no connections to foreign governments or political parties.

The Times account also mentioned the Nazi-German aura of the Garden and the speakers' denials of links with the German government. George Sylvester Vierech, pro-German writer and publicist, was quoted in the Times as saying that the boycott of German goods interfered with President Roosevelt's efforts to lift America from the depression.

We Americans of German descent are Americans before we are German sympathizers. We resent the boycott not merely because it harms Germany. We resent it primarily because it interferes with the revival of American prosperity and lays the basis for racial strife in the United States.³⁰

The Chicago Tribune ran a two-paragraph account of the rally while the Examiner gave it no coverage at all. Editorial reaction to the rally came solely from the Herald Tribune. Commenting on the Nazi policy regarding Jews, the lengthy editorial called the issue a

²⁹New York Herald Tribune, May 18, 1934, p. 1.

³⁰New York Times, May 18, 1934, p. 3.

"European affair." It noted that the American character of the rally was somewhat questionable, considering the Nazi German trappings in evidence. The editorial did, however, congratulate the organizers on the generally peaceful demeanor of the participants. It further stated:

There was no suggestion in any speech that the political and social system which Adolf Hitler has made the German national culture was in any way superior to American democracy, that any feature of Hitlerism should be introduced here, or that anti-Semitism should be an American or even German-American article of faith. Such ideas were, indeed, explicitly disavowed by several of the principal speakers. . . .³¹

In conclusion, the editorial questioned the concern expressed for the American economy, considering the plans to continue a Friends sponsored counter-boycott against the Jews: "It can yield this community and this country nothing but the acerbation of a feud for which we have no room on American soil."³²

The McCormack Committee hearings during June and July, 1934, were the main items of news interest in relation to the Friends that summer. Covering the opening session in Washington on June 6, all the publications included in the study ran Associated Press accounts of testimony which revealed that a former German consul

³¹Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, May 19, 1934, p. 10.

³²Ibid.

general in New York, Dr. Otto Kiep, had retained the firm of Carl Byoir and Associates for assistance in obtaining newspaper publicity.

Carl Dickey, a partner in the firm, testified that he had received \$4,000 over eighteen months for providing assistance with press releases and revealed that the firm had obtained a contract with the German Tourist Information Office for \$6,000 a month for "giving advice, counsel and getting together material for travel information."³³

The following day, the committee heard testimony which indicated the German consuls in New York, Chicago and St. Louis had allegedly assisted in the organization of the Friends. The highlight of the day was the testimony of Fritz Gissibl and Reinhold Walter acknowledging the existence of Friends chapters in twenty-one cities and estimating the total membership at 5,000.³⁴

On the final day of hearings, Frank Mutschinski, a former commander of the "Stahlhelm," a German veterans organization, testified that members had drilled in New York in smuggled German army uniforms and with rifles obtained from Germany and the New York National Guard. He also said that Nazi agents masqueraded as crew members

³³Chicago Tribune, June 6, 1934, p. 7.

³⁴New York Times, June 7, 1934, p. 13.

on German liners, avoided immigration officials and gained entry into the United States. In other testimony, Reinhold Walter admitted that he was "merely a straw man" in the Friends and that Fritz Gissibl was the real leader of the movement.³⁵

The McCormack Committee held public hearings in New York City on July 9 at which Hubert Schnuch, newly elected leader of the Friends, testified that the organization had grown to forty local units. With a banner headline reading "Nazi Efforts in U.S. Told," the Chicago Tribune recounted Schnuch's testimony:

He maintained that an American citizen of German origin properly could shout 'Heil Hitler' or salute the swastika flag as the Friends of New Germany do, without incurring the reproach of 'double allegiance.' He said the Friends had nothing to hide; that they were not affiliated with the Nazi Party in Germany, but were proud to say they are 'sympathizers. . . .' Mr. Schnuch said the example of the Nazi Party in 'excluding all of non-Aryan blood' from membership in Germany had been followed here by the Friends of New Germany.³⁶

Testimony revealed that Schnuch had no more power in the organization than his predecessor, Reinhold Walter. The Times coverage noted that Schnuch had been nominated by Gissibl and that immediately after Schnuch's election he had appointed Gissibl leader of the Middle West district. In defending the appointment from the

³⁵New York Times, June 8, 1934, p. 1.

³⁶Chicago Tribune, July 10, 1934, p. 1.

charge that members of the German Nazi Party were to stay clear of the Friends, Gissibl notified the committee that he had resigned from the party and had filed an application for American citizenship.³⁷

One of the most astounding revelations to surface during the hearings came on July 11 when testimony taken by the committee in executive session in May was read into the record. It revealed that Ivy Lee, the public relations adviser, had been retained at \$25,000 a year by the German Dye Trust. Lee had testified that within three months after Hitler came to power as German Chancellor his firm had been working continuously "giving advice and suggesting policies for the guidance of the German government in its relations with the American people."³⁸

The Universal Service report in the Examiner called Lee the "'master mind' behind some of the German government's most critical maneuvers." It stated: "He earned his fee, according to the deposition, by advising the Nazi government on the disarmament question, the Jewish problem and its handling of foreign debts."³⁹

The testimony given before the committee prompted the Examiner to run an editorial on July 12 blasting the Friends. It recounted membership and drilling activities

³⁷New York Times, July 10, 1934, p. 16.

³⁸New York Times, July 12, 1934, p. 1.

³⁹San Francisco Examiner, July 12, 1934, p. 2.

and called them amazing. Outlining the "absolute leader" principle of command, it noted the role played by Gissibl in Schnuch's election and his hurried application for citizenship during the committee hearings.

In conclusion it asked rhetorically:

Was ever anything attempted--so stupid as this organization of Nazi Friends?

Was there ever a more clumsy piece of alien vanity and self-assertion,--more offensive to American ideas, more clearly in violation of the duties implicit in permitted residence in this country, to say nothing of American citizenship.

The whole thing is almost unbelievable!

...
The Congressional Committee . . . has done a useful service in exposing this organization and the grotesque and vicious propaganda, carried on by it in our midst.

There should be no difficulty in putting an end to it and there should be no delay in doing so!

Apparently the lesson must be taught ONCE MORE that American soil is not to be used as a battle-ground for the conflicts of European or other foreign parties or factions.

Americans will not tolerate alien emblems and alien allegiances--whether the emblem be the swastika and disloyalty finds voice in Heil Hitler, or anything else of the same type or description.⁴⁰

After the July hearings, the committee turned to study other foreign influences until reopening hearings on the Friends in mid October.

Meeting in New York City on October 16, the committee heard from Fredrich Karl Kruppa, a former officer in the Friends. The Herald Tribune reported that Kruppa

⁴⁰Editorial, San Francisco Examiner, July 12, 1934, p. 16.

had testified that military units of the Friends were drilling on Long Island and in New Jersey and that the Nazi movement in this country had identical aims to that which swept Germany. The witness also testified on the disappearance of Heinz Spanknoebel, stating that Spanknoebel was kidnapped from the home of Dr. Ignatz T. Griebel by an attache of the German Ministry of Propaganda. According to the witness, Spanknoebel was abducted on October 27, 1933, by Hellmuth von Feldman and sailed to Germany aboard the liner Europa the next day. Kruppa said that both Von Feldman and Spanknoebel had become officials in Germany.⁴¹

The hearings closed the next day amid shouts of "Heil Hitler" when two hundred members of the Friends packed the hearing room and caused general uproar, cutting radio transmission wires outside the hearing room and nearly clashing with a group of Jewish spectators.

After hearing several hundred witnesses and compiling over 4,000 pages of testimony in public hearings and executive sessions, the McCormack Committee released its final report in Washington on February 15, 1935. The findings detailed both Fascist and Communist propaganda efforts found to be underway in the country and recommended legislation to Congress to curb further

⁴¹New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 17, 1934, p. 6.

activities. In relation to German propaganda, the Herald Tribune reported:

Nazi propaganda included 'gigantic mass meetings, literature of the vilest sort' and use of short wave radio, the report asserted. It charged one 'transaction' involved the German Embassy itself, while there was 'indisputable evidence' that certain German consuls engaged in 'vicious and un-American propaganda activities.'⁴²

Recommendations of the committee included: empowering the Secretary of Labor to cut short visa permits for anyone engaged in propaganda, requiring all foreign propagandists to register with the Secretary of State, and passing legislation making it unlawful to advocate the overthrow of the government by force.

Editorial comment on the report was voiced by the Times, Herald Tribune and the New Republic, with none being congratulatory of the committee's work.

The Times, reflecting that the committee had found "that we are much exposed to 'foreign propaganda'," also noted that much of the evidence obtained in the investigation was of an "alarmist nature." Admitting that "a great deal of significant and ominous testimony" was presented, the Times faulted the committee's report for placing so much emphasis on foreign sources of propaganda, pointing to the abundance of American demagogues. It concluded that "a few doses of old-fashioned American

⁴²New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 16, 1935, p. 1.

prosperity would do the complaining patient a bit of good."⁴³

The Herald Tribune reacted to the report three days after its release in an editorial entitled "Big Guns for Small Game." Commenting that the committee had "secured much free publicity" for the movements under investigation, the editorial was critical of the recommended legislation:

This is not only superfluous, for the reason that there is no state in which the local authorities could not penalize subversive propaganda of a really dangerous character under the 'riot act,' but it is the kind of legislation that would dignify and advertise by outlawing what is certainly the least dangerous form of revolt against traditional democracy--Red soap-box oratory--and divert attention from the sugar-coated forms of subversion which all conservative Americans most fear and to which the committee has been most discreetly blind.⁴⁴

The New Republic described the committee's report as a "curious document." The article claimed the legislative recommendations "appear to be aimed almost entirely at curbing the activities of alien revolutionaries of the Marxian school. It sounds almost as though the men who wrote the proposed legislation had not read the report, or had done their work before the committee's hearings began."⁴⁵

⁴³ Editorial, New York Times, Feb. 16, 1935, p. 12.

⁴⁴ Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 18, 1935, p. 14.

⁴⁵ "The Week," New Republic, March 6, 1935, p. 86.

While the committee had uncovered Nazi German links to the Friends, no charges against any member of the organization were ever made and the legislative recommendations offered were largely ignored. The committee's work did, however, ultimately have an effect on the Friends and their ties to the German government.

As Sander Diamond notes, anti-German sentiment, prevalent to some degree since Hitler's rise to power, was intensified in the months following the report:

. . . Findings, by providing support for the allegations of the liberal community helped to make the word 'Bund' synonymous with German intrigue and treachery. 'All these elements which go to make up public opinion,' wrote Ambassador Hans Luther shortly after the appearance of the report, '. . . are, however, outweighed by the predominately hostile attitude toward Nazi Germany established here, especially in the press.'⁴⁶

With no legal action forthcoming, the Friends seemed to adopt an even stronger philosophical line when they met for their third annual convention in early September, 1935. The Times reported that newly-elected national leader Fritz Gissibl had declared that the Friends no longer needed the assistance of other organizations and were ready to begin "'a year of renewed battle for the purpose of uniting the German elements in the country into one block in support of the . . . (Nazi philosophy) which will preserve the nation in which we

⁴⁶Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 176.

live and in which most of our members are citizens."⁴⁷
This convention also marked the rise of Fritz Kuhn, future leader of the German-American Bund, to a position of power as Middle West district head.

Before the new battle was able to begin, however, the German government stepped in to initiate the collapse of the Friends. On October 6, the Times noted that the publicity resulting from the actions of the Friends had annoyed Nazi officials in Germany to the point where they issued another emphatic denial of links with the organization.

Finally, on December 24, 1935, the Friends acknowledged that the German Foreign Office, in October, had ordered all German nationals in the United States to give up membership in the organization. The Times reported that the order "was in accord with Hitler's earlier declaration that National Socialism is not a German export article," and with other statements by Nazi officials terming the Friends a nuisance to the National Socialist movement because of the hostility they created between the United States and Germany.

While the withdrawal of German nationals was not sufficient to put an end to German-American political

⁴⁷New York Times, Sept. 4, 1935, p. 13.

⁴⁸New York Times, Dec. 25, 1935, p. 2.



organizations, it did result in the end of the Friends of New Germany and apparently caused enough disruption within the organization to make it relatively inactive in its final months.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF THE BUND

Many men and movements appeared in these years, offering to solve the pressing and perplexing problem of privation in the midst of plenty in affluent America. These men were true demagogues. Stirring up the prejudices and passions of the population by tricks of rhetoric and sensational charges, by specious arguments, catchwords and cajolery, the demagogue tried to play on discontents and to intensify the original irrational elements within them. By doing so he sought to seduce his followers into an emotional attachment to his person that would effectively block any group awareness of either the real sources of unhappiness or the real means of solution.¹

This definition of the demagogue accurately reflects the character of Fritz Julius Kuhn, the first leader of the German-American Bund and the most famous German-American anti-Semite of the 1930s.

Sander Diamond notes: "For many Americans, Kuhn represented the essence of un-Americanism: his thick foreign accent, his Nazi-style uniform, his repeated statements of allegiance to Hitler, and above all, his apparent misuses of his recently acquired American citizenship."²

¹David H. Bennett, Demagogues in the Depression (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969), p. 4.

²Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 204.

But while he might have been the symbol of un-Americanism to some Americans, Kuhn was a true demagogue in the eyes of his followers. Whether attacking Jews and Communists, or degrading "President Rosenfeld and his Jewish Cabinet," Kuhn had a certain flair which appealed to a fringe element of the American populace and was not restricted solely to those of German heritage.

Describing Kuhn's manner, Diamond writes that Kuhn injected his own personality into the organization, with the result that "during the Fritz Kuhn years the American Nazi Bund changed from a factionalized and ineffective group to the instrument of an active movement."³

Born in Munich on May 15, 1896, Kuhn served in the German Army as a machine-gunner in France during World War I. Following the war he returned to Germany to fight against the Communists and Socialists in Munich, after which he studied chemical engineering at the university there. Kuhn emigrated to Mexico in 1923, and came to the United States in 1927, where he was naturalized in December, 1934.⁴

Kuhn first came to a position of power in the Friends when he was appointed Middle West leader by

³Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 205.

⁴Ibid., p. 211.

Fritz Gissibl at the 1935 convention. When Gissibl was forced to renounce his position as national leader in December, to comply with a German government order banning German nationals, he turned power over to Kuhn, an American citizen. The group held its fifth national convention in New York in late March, 1936. An Associated Press dispatch in the Times reported the only information to leak from the tightly guarded meeting was the re-election of Kuhn as national leader.⁵

On April 1, the Times reported that the Friends of New Germany had issued an official statement changing their name to the German-American League (Bund).^{*} The account stated that the league's official purpose was: "To combat the Moscow-directed madness of the Red world menace and its Jewish bacillus-carriers." The report also noted the group's objective of establishing a German-American voting bloc.⁶

On April 18, Kuhn outlined the policy of the newly-formed Bund at a rally in New York City. He called for the organization of labor groups, training schools for speakers, education for youth, an extension of the

⁵New York Times, March 30, 1936, p. 9.

^{*}The term "Bund" was derived from the German name of the organization, "Amerikadeutscher Volksbund," which literally translated means American-German Peoples League.

⁶New York Times, April 1, 1936, p. 22.

uniformed services and a greater interest in American politics. He told the Bundists that they must free themselves from the idea that they were guests in the United States and then he appeared to offer Americans a hand of friendship: "We do not want to Germanize America, we want to make friends with our Aryan-American fellow citizens." The sentiment, however, proved misleading, as Kuhn went on to declare:

'We cannot and must not deny our racial characteristics, because if we did we would be useless to America. National Socialism is an inner political affair of Germany and nobody outside the Third Reich must interfere with it. Our task over here is to fight Jewish Marxism and communism.'⁷

The next mention of Kuhn in the press came on August 4, 1936, when the Times carried a Berlin dispatch on his audience with German Chancellor Adolf Hitler. It reported that Kuhn had presented \$2,300 to Hitler for winter relief work in Germany and the signatures of 6,000 Bund members, symbolizing "the greetings of 'reawakened' German-Americanism to the German people and their Fuehrer."⁸

Little news coverage was afforded the Bund during the remainder of 1936. One explanation for this is the increased political coverage resulting during the

⁷New York Times, April 18, 1936, p. 7.

⁸New York Times, Aug. 4, 1936, p. 7.

presidential election year. In line with the heightened political climate and his earlier call for greater political activity, Kuhn announced the Bund's endorsement of Republican presidential candidate Alfred M. Landon on October 15, 1936.

Kuhn considered the most important question in the campaign to be "whether the tendency of the present Democratic regime toward the left would not easily lead through a sort of peoples front to communism and hence chaos." He also expressed hope that a Republican victory would result in a "more friendly position of the United States toward our old Fatherland."⁹

Reaction from the German Foreign Office came quickly in a communique stating that the election had not been a topic at the Kuhn reception with Hitler.¹⁰ The endorsement was totally ignored by both political parties as Landon was overwhelmingly defeated by Roosevelt.

Another reason for the scant press coverage of the Bund in its first year was skepticism on the part of the press regarding the movement's legitimacy as a threat or danger to the nation. The New York Times, which had thoroughly covered the Friends of New Germany, expressed

⁹New York Times, Oct. 16, 1936, p. 20.

¹⁰New York Times, Oct. 18, 1936, p. 29.

this doubt in a background piece on the Bund in March, 1937. The article placed the nationwide membership of the Bund at about 10,000 with 2,000 members of the uniformed service. It noted: "The Nazi movement in America is still struggling to amount to something more than just another of the numerous small societies in which Germans like to organize."¹¹

At about this time, the movement became better organized and began to receive increased attention from the press. The Nation took notice of the military garb of the Bund in an editorial in late March entitled "No Brown Shirt Armies!" While cautioning that the strength of the Bund must not be overestimated, it implied that the movement was identical to Hitler's programs in other countries. This included stirring up anti-Semitic sentiments and employing a private army for terrorist activities with the ultimate aim of establishing a totalitarian state. Claiming that it did not see any "immediate danger" to the United States, the editorial noted that "everything we have learned from the recent history of Europe shows that unless these cancerous growths within a society are excised at the very start they can eventually destroy the organism." It closed by urging

¹¹New York Times, March 21, 1937, Sec. IV, p. 11.

Congressional action to ban private armies such as the Bund.¹²

The Nation went one step further on April 10, 1937, by endorsing a resolution which called for another Congressional investigation of un-American activities. A warning about the movement's growth was repeated on June 5 in an article reviewing recent Bund activities and which closed, "Fascism in the United States is becoming stronger. Caveant Consuls!"¹³

Much of this enlivened anti-Bund sentiment was no doubt sparked by the renewed attacks made upon the organization by Representative Dickstein. In mid March, he had stated that Kuhn was "the leader of a well-organized Nazi movement in the United States" with \$20 million at his disposal. Dickstein had also declared that 100 spies worked "to foment a Fascist plot" and that "Nazi rats, spies and agents are recruiting and drilling armed groups in Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio and Michigan."¹⁴

Kuhn's response to the charges marked the beginning of an antagonism between Dickstein and the colorful

¹²"No Brown-Shirt Armies," Nation, CXLIV (March 20, 1937), p. 312.

¹³Ludwig Lore, "What are American Nazis Doing?" Nation, CXLIV (June 5, 1937), p. 637.

¹⁴New York Times, March 11, 1937, p. 15.

Bund leader that would last throughout Kuhn's reign. In typical Bund rhetoric, Kuhn said: "Dickstein, not I, is one of the country's biggest enemies. I think he is a spy for Soviet Russia. . . . Dickstein is a Jew born in Russia. I consider myself a better type of citizen than he is."¹⁵

As press attention to the Bund grew, there was a corresponding increase in public animosity toward the group. The Herald Tribune, on July 19, 1937, reported the opening of the twenty-first Bund camp in the nation at Andover, New Jersey. It described the opening ceremonies of Camp Nordland as including "plenty of marching, speech-making, beer drinking, bratwurst eating and an abundant display of swastikas and American flags." The account went on to compare the ceremony to mass displays in Germany.¹⁶

Immediately after the camp opening, members of the New Jersey Legislature and American Legion officials called for an investigation into the camp. The Times reported the Bund's reaction, saying that "it would welcome an investigation into the activities of the 150-acre project, but would brook no sleuthing by private groups opposed to Nazi ideology in all forms." Referring to an

¹⁵New York Times, March 12, 1937, p. 15.

¹⁶New York Herald Tribune, July 19, 1937, p. 13.

American Legion official who suggested that his post invade the camp and drive the Nazis out, August Klapprott, New Jersey Bund leader, threatened that "if there is going to be any physical action by any of these private groups, they would not get away alive."¹⁷

In late July, 1937, Representative Dickstein continued his attack on the Bund in Washington. Urging the House to approve the Dies Resolution, which would provide another investigation into un-American activities, Dickstein read into the Congressional Record the names of thirty individuals he contended were Nazi spies. He repeated the performance the following day by reading into the record the names of forty-six "German stool pigeons and spies," including Kuhn, Gissibl, Walter Kappe, Sepp Schuster, Hubert Schnuch, Ignatz Griebel and Heinz Spanknoebel. In a Universal Service report on Dickstein's charges, the Examiner said that he had over twenty "voluntary operatives" making an undercover inquiry into the Bund and reporting to the House Immigration Committee, which had launched another informal investigation.¹⁸

Reacting to the new charges, Kuhn was quoted in the Times as demanding a Congressional investigation to

¹⁷New York Times, July 25, 1937, p. 9.

¹⁸San Francisco Examiner, July 28, 1937, p. 6.

stop the "nonsense of Representative Dickstein once and for all." Commenting on the names Dickstein had read, Kuhn noted: "These are the same names he waved in the air when he last investigated us about three years ago. Many of them have since left the country. Can't Mr. Dickstein get something newer or more convincing?"¹⁹

An Associated Press story carried in the Chicago Tribune, New York Times and New York Herald Tribune on August 19, 1937, reported that Attorney-General Homer Cummings had ordered an investigation of the Bund camps by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to determine whether any federal laws were being violated in their operation.

The Times account was followed by reaction from Kuhn, who said that he welcomed the inquiry, asserting that the Bund had nothing to hide. "We are stricly an American organization, with no connections with Germany," he said. He did admit, however, that the Nazi emblem was flown alongside the American flag to show "the biggest respect for Hitler and his movement in Germany, fighting the world's madness, communism." Kuhn insisted that the Bund's aim was to unite Germans and Americans in a united front against the Red menace.²⁰

¹⁹New York Times, July 28, 1937, p. 4.

²⁰New York Times, Aug. 19, 1937, p. 40.

In late 1937, anti-Nazi sentiment in the United States was high and anti-Bund sentiment was growing rapidly. The Nation had been one of the earliest supporters of the renewed call for an investigation of the Bund's activities. In the November 13 issue, Oswald Garrison Villard wrote a column attacking both Nazi Germany and the Bund. Denouncing German deceit and treachery, Villard attacked Hitler's policies and actions: "I won the bitter opposition of the professional pro-Germans. I still desire their ill will." In conclusion, he scathingly reaffirmed his opposition to both Kuhn and the Bund:

As for Kuhn, I do not consider him a loyal American. He wears a foreign uniform, marches under a foreign flag, and upholds doctrines entirely inimical to the American Republic, although he is apparently an American citizen. I believe in the right of free speech as much as anybody . . . but I am hoping that the Civil Liberties Union will join some of us in the effort to get a law through Congress at the next session forbidding the wearing of a foreign uniform and the carrying of a foreign flag in the United States. . . . I would no more appear on the same platform with Fritz Kuhn than I would voluntarily associate with a rattlesnake.²¹

In January, 1938, the Federal Bureau of Investigation completed its inquiry into the Bund with little fanfare and turned the results over to Attorney-General Cummings and the Criminal Division of the Department of

²¹Oswald Garrison Villard, "Issues and Men," Nation, CXLV (November 13, 1937), p. 530.

Justice. A three-paragraph report in the Examiner described the scope of the inquiry as "a sweeping investigation into Nazi organizations and their activities in the United States" in which "G-men visited more than a score of Nazi camps in all parts of the nation, talked with the members and tallied their numbers."²²

A week later, a Department of Justice official revealed that the Criminal Division had found no violations of federal laws in the report. The Times account stated that the official "added that subdivisions or 'departments' of the Bund were found throughout the country, but members apparently confined their activities largely to parading in gray and black uniforms, displaying the swastika and use of the Nazi salute." The report also said that Fritz Kuhn had estimated the Bund's membership at 8,299.²³

Despite the investigation which cleared the Bund of violations of federal laws, the knowledge that a uniformed group was marching under the swastika flag on American soil was enough to maintain anti-Bund and anti-German feelings among many citizens in the United States.

An example of these feelings was detailed in the Examiner on March 1, 1938, in a report on the American

²²San Francisco Examiner, Jan. 6, 1938, p. 1.

²³New York Times, Jan. 13, 1938, p. 4.

Legion Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Legion announced "a policy of determined opposition to the spread of German-American Bunds." The account quoted a Legion official: "We are fighting the Nazi movement in the same manner in which we oppose communism in this country. . . . These foreign organizations are all alike. They are all representatives of European dictatorships."²⁴

The antagonism toward the Bund, and the consequent negative reflection on Nazi Germany, was not unnoticed by German officials. On the same day the Legion story was run in the Examiner, the Times carried an account of German Ambassador Hans Dieckhoff's visit to Secretary of State Hull. At the meeting, the envoy said that the German government had again warned German nationals against membership in the Bund.

Alton Frye, in Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere, states that Dieckhoff had noted a worsening in the already unstable relations of Germany and the United States during 1937. He attributed this to the fact that many Americans believed Germany was attempting to "export nazism and the Bund was its Trojan horse in this country."

Frye quotes the Ambassador in a letter written to the German Foreign Ministry in January, 1937:

²⁴San Francisco Examiner, March 1, 1938, p. 3.

Things being as they are, any attempt to urge or force any pro-German political activity on the German-Americans would not lead to unification, on the contrary, it would rather intensify the existing differences. . . . Instead of arousing sympathetic understanding of the German cause among the masses, they engender antagonism. Moreover, the Bund's methods are likely to cause difficulties between the United States and Germany.²⁵

The final order warning German nationals to avoid the Bund, resulting from Dieckhoff's letter, was met with a strong response by the group. In a Times report on March 2, 1938, the Bund was quoted as replying to the order: "We take orders from no one, Germany or otherwise." Noting the declaration marked the formal independence of the group, the account reported that Bund leaders had stated that the movement would "devote itself to American nazism . . . based principally on a proposal to 'rescue' America from communism and Jews."²⁶

An example of American sentiment regarding the Bund was aptly expressed in the lead paragraph of an article in Time magazine dealing with the Dieckhoff order and the general state of the Bund in early 1938: "If a nationwide vote were taken to discover the most despised politico-social organization currently extant, the Amerikadeutscher Volksbund would stand at least

²⁵ Alton Frye, Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere 1933-1941 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 86-87.

²⁶ New York Times, March 2, 1938, p. 13.

a fair chance of winning."²⁷ The article continued for two and one-half columns on both the Dieckhoff order and a general history of the movement's growth and philosophy. The overall impression was that the Bund was generally unsuccessful.

Resentment toward the Bund was reinforced on April 21, 1938, when the front-page of every newspaper studied carried an article on a clash between Bundists and members of American veterans groups at the Yorkville Casino in New York City. The Bund gathering was a celebration of Adolf Hitler's forty-ninth birthday and the recent German takeover of Austria. According to the Times account, which estimated the crowd at 3,500 persons, the altercation broke out when a member of the audience stood up during a speech-in-German and asked if any of the addresses would be in English. The Times reported that the interruption caused an uproar among the Bundists as several storm troopers moved toward the man. At that point, a group of men, estimated to number 100, "stood up also, and as they rose donned the blue overseas caps of American Legionnaires." The article continued:

. . . a free-for-all fight developed, with men pressing so close together that details of the battle could not be seen. Observers, however, noted gray-shirted arms rising and falling, wielding blackjacks. Hard pressed, the group of men in Legionnaire caps gave way. In about

²⁷"Bund Banned," Time, March 14, 1938, p. 15.

half a dozen instances they half carried comrades from the hall. Those supported were observed to be bleeding about the face.

The Storm Troopers . . . also took off their belts, equipped with heavy buckles, and swung these as weapons, witnesses said.²⁸

There were minor discrepancies in the papers' accounts of the fight. The Times and Herald Tribune noted only seven injuries while the Examiner and Chicago Tribune reported ten. There were also discrepancies in the identification of the veterans. The Chicago Tribune stated that the men wore "overseas caps similar to those of the American Legion," as did the Times. The Herald Tribune and Examiner accounts said that the men represented the American Legion, Catholic War Veterans, Jewish War Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars. All the accounts agreed that the violence was started when Bund storm trooper ushers attacked the veterans.

The only magazine to note the incident was Newsweek, in a one-column story on the fight and a separate incident involving a Jewish-newspaper editor. The story followed the basic details of the newspaper accounts and carried a photo of four battered Legionnaires.²⁹

The Yorkville incident, and the resulting press coverage, served as a catalyst for renewed attacks on the

²⁸New York Times, April 21, 1938, pp. 1, 11.

²⁹"American Nazis," Newsweek, May 2, 1938, pp. 13-14.

Bund and the initiation of two separate investigations into the movement. In addition to the riot's damaging publicity, Fritz Kuhn sparked further controversy when he renewed the Bund's political involvement in American democracy with the proposal of a German voting coalition.

Quoting from the text printed in German in the New York Bund newspaper, Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter,* the Times reported that Kuhn stated: "The building of a German bloc is the fundamental work of the Bund . . . that means flatly the conscious rejection of the country-wide notion of the melting pot." The Times translation quoted Kuhn as saying that while the Bund was not attempting to import German National Socialism, the principles upon which it was based could have a practical application in America. Kuhn then outlined the three-point program proposed for the Bund: to deepen the German-conscious attitude of German-Americans, to create a German voting bloc to be a forceful political unit and finally the restoration of German-American economic and cultural importance in the nation.³⁰

The first legal attack on the Bund came on May 6, 1938, when the Times reported the arrests of six officials of Camp Siegfried at Yaphank, Long Island, on charges of

*The English translation is German Reveille and Observer.

³⁰New York Times, May 6, 1938, p. 1.

violating a New York state law requiring oath-bound organizations to file membership rosters with the Secretary of State. A grand jury indictment of the six officials and the German-American Settlement League, operator of the camp, was issued on June 2 with the recommendation that Congress launch an investigation of the Bund's un-American and subversive activities.³¹

The Times and Herald Tribune covered the four-day trial, held in mid July, 1938. At the opening session, the prosecution produced one witness, a former Nazi storm trooper and Bundist named Willy Brandt, who testified that "an oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler, accompanied by the Nazi salute and a chant of 'Heil Hitler' was a requisite to membership in the German-American Volksbund."³² In the following two days of the trial, however, the Times reported that more than twenty defense witnesses had denied the existence of any membership oath.

On July 12, when the jury found the Settlement League and six officials guilty after deliberating only fifteen minutes, front-page reports were carried in the Times and Herald Tribune; the Examiner ran a four-paragraph Associated Press account on page four. The

³¹New York Times, June 2, 1938, p. 46.

³²New York Times, July 7, 1938, p. 3.

Times reported that County Judge L. Barron Hill immediately imposed a one-year prison sentence on Settlement League president Henry Hauck and suspended jail sentences on the other five officials. Each individual was fined \$500 and the Settlement League was fined \$10,000.³³

Editorial reaction to the conviction overwhelmingly approved the action taken against the league. The Herald Tribune called the New York state law invoked "a handy weapon in dealing with organizations swearing allegiance to foreign dictators." Reviewing the Settlement League case, the piece closed by calling for "more such unveilings and without discrimination regarding foreign allegiance involved."³⁴

The Times also approved the law's use and the verdict, but was more impressed with the fact that the defendants had not been made martyrs for their principles. The editorial noted: "Their punishment was certainly not measured by the general public disapproval of their practices." In closing, the piece indicated the Times' feeling regarding the Bund's present and potential threat to America:

³³New York Times, July 13, 1938, p. 1.

³⁴Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, July 13, 1938, p. 18.

. . . They could not spread their doctrines even to the extent of their own racial lines. Since they could never be a menace, they remain only a nuisance.

As misled individuals, everyone is sorry for these men. Viewing them as a militant is another matter.³⁵

The final comment on the verdict came from the New Republic on July 23, 1938, in a column entitled "The Yahoos of Yaphank." Calling the verdict "a new stage in the movement against Hitler's Fifth Column in America," the editorial approved of the action of the court but called the statute inadequate: "We should prefer more direct legislation to combat the Nazis--legislation which would distinguish, above all, between organizations that operate through the political process and those that don uniforms and practice military drill." The piece closed by noting that the Bund must be allowed to work within the structures of democracy in propagandizing its programs, but must not be allowed to form private armies. The Nation had been expressing the same sentiment since mid 1937.³⁶

In the end, the judgment against the Settlement League and its six directors did little more than show the public's disapproval of the Bund. The Times reported on November 5, 1938, that the Appellate Court of Brooklyn

³⁵Editorial, New York Times, July 14, 1938, p. 20.

³⁶"The Yahoos of Yaphank," New Republic, CXLVII (July 23, 1938), p. 81.

"unanimously reversed the convictions, dismissed the indictment, remitted the imposed fines totalling \$13,000 and discharged the defendants from custody on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence on which to base an indictment, and lack of proper jurisdiction."³⁷

The growing anti-Bund sentiment was not limited to legal battles against the movement. On May 26, the United States House of Representatives passed the Dies Resolution providing for the appointment of a seven-man investigating committee to explore the actions of the Bund, other Fascist organizations and Communists. The Times reported that Representative Martin Dies (Democrat, Texas), named committee chairman, had emphasized the activities of the Bund during debate on the resolution, stating the movement had thirty-two camps with 480,000 members spread across the country. The report said that he went so far as to declare that one Bund speaker had advocated the assassination of President Franklin Roosevelt.³⁸

Before the Dies Committee opened hearings in August, 1938, the Bund was the subject of an investigation in late June by a New York State Joint Legislative Committee chaired by State Senator John J. McNaboe.

³⁷New York Times, Nov. 5, 1938, p. 2.

³⁸New York Times, May 27, 1938, p. 2.

Witnesses at the first day of hearings, covered by the Times and Herald Tribune, were James Wheeler-Hill, Bund national secretary; and Gustav Elmer, Bund national organizer. The Herald Tribune reported that each "painted the Bund . . . as an entirely American institution which believes in tolerance and the Constitution, although it opposed the Jews and calls its head, Fritz Kuhn, 'Fuehrer'." The account also detailed a statement which Senator McNaboe read from a Bund pamphlet stating that the organization's aim was:

. . . The dictatorship of a small racially and ethnically alien Jewish international minority, to which the mind of the nation is being rapidly subjected, may be broken, restoring true proportionate representation to the 100,000,000 Aryan-Americans in the vital fields of press, radio, stage. . . .³⁹

The highlight of the hearings came when Fritz Kuhn appeared before the committee. The Chicago Tribune joined the two New York papers in providing coverage of Kuhn's testimony with an Associated Press account. It stated that Kuhn had linked Jews and Communists in asserting that "the two groups sought to destroy the Constitution and that all Jews, without exception, are enemies of the United States."⁴⁰

³⁹New York Herald Tribune, June 23, 1938, p. 4.

⁴⁰Chicago Tribune, June 24, 1938, p. 7.

The reports suggest that most of Kuhn's testimony contained the usual anti-Semitic rhetoric vocalized by the Bund and a defense of the organization as an American group with no ties to the Nazi Party in Germany. The Chicago Tribune reported that Kuhn alleged both American political parties were controlled by Jews, who, he stated, were Jews first before they were Americans. He claimed that the Bund was only defending German-Americans from the Jews and he would not admit that the organization was anti-Semitic. When asked by McNaboe to admit that there were some good Jews, Kuhn replied: "I will tell you how it is, Senator. . . . If a mosquito is on your arm, you don't stop to ask if it is a good mosquito or a bad mosquito. You just brush it off."⁴¹

The inquiry held one further day of hearings on the Bund, at which a small number of lower-ranking officials refused to renounce the movement and insisted that it was organized to counter the Jewish boycott of German goods. After holding a week of hearings on the Communist movement, McNaboe released a statement on July 1, 1938, calling both the Bund and Communist movements "rackets" and outlining a seven-point deadly parallel between the two movements.

Among the parallels quoted in the Times were: preparing of youth in both movements for future membership

⁴¹Chicago Tribune, June 24, 1938, p. 7.

in senior organizations; publishing papers and spreading propaganda; visiting German and Russian capitals by national leaders; and the promotion of class hatred by both movements.⁴² The investigators, however, found no violations of law upon which a legal case could be built against the Bund and the task of further investigation was left to the Dies Committee.

Before the committee had even held its first public hearing, it was under fire from the Nation in what appears to have been a foreboding of future press reaction to the committee's investigation. On July 9, 1938, the Nation ran a short piece which again called for legislation to cope with the growth of private armies generally. Noting the composition of the Dies Committee, it stated: "Our prediction is that it will soft-pedal the Nazi groups and devote itself to more red-baiting."⁴³

The Dies Committee opened hearings in Washington, D.C., on August 12, 1938, with the testimony of John J. Metcalfe, a former Chicago journalist who had infiltrated the Bund with his brother James in 1937 to get material for a sensational exposé on the group for the Chicago Daily Times. The testimony was startling and received wide coverage in the papers studied.

⁴²New York Times, July 2, 1938, p. 28.

⁴³Nation, CXLVII (July 9, 1938), p. 30.

The Herald Tribune, with the headline "House Inquiry, Hears U.S. Has, 500,000 Nazis," opened:

The House committee investigating un-American activities heard testimony today that in the United States there was an organization of 500,000 Nazi sympathizers regarded as a reservoir for the training of spies, wreckers and propagandists, for use in case of war or in case of any upheaval within the United States, under the direct control of a foreign bureau in Stuttgart, Germany.⁴⁴

It was not until well into the story, on the second page, that the figures were explained as 25,000 direct members, 100,000 who attend meetings, and 400,000 "sympathizers" who could be counted on to work for the Bund in secret. The account also said that Metcalfe had described the Bund's purpose as building a vast spy network for sabotage with German-Americans as its nucleus. The testimony of James Metcalfe and former Chicago Bundist Peter Gissibl were also recounted.

The Times and Examiner devoted considerable space to Metcalfe's testimony on the Bund, with stories containing basically the same details as the Herald Tribune's. However, the Times and Examiner outlined the breakdown of "direct" and "indirect" Bund members in their lead paragraphs. The Chicago Tribune carried a comparatively short account of Metcalfe's testimony, concentrating more on the Silver Shirt organization's activities in Chicago and the testimony of Gissibl rebuking Kuhn's leadership

⁴⁴New York Herald Tribune, Aug. 13, 1938, pp. 1, 2.

and the Bund's direction. The Chicago Tribune article carried the 500,000 member figure at the very end of the story.

Newsweek was the only magazine in the sample group which devoted space to Metcalfe's testimony and that consisted of only two paragraphs, one of the witness's background and the other recapping his testimony concerning the Bund. The remainder of the article noted the Dies investigation's "abrupt switch" to communism and outlined that testimony.⁴⁵

As had been predicted by the Nation, the committee after only a single day of hearings on fascism and the Bund, had turned to Communist activities, which were viewed as a far greater menace than the Bund by Dies. While others may have expected or been critical of such a shift, the highly anti-Communist Examiner ran editorials on August 19, 22, and 27 warning of the Communist threat, while making only passing reference to Fascists and the Bund. An August 29 editorial in the Examiner called the Dies Committee "entirely competent" to investigate communism, again without mention of the Bund.

Unintimidated by the single day of hearings, Kuhn held the organization's national convention in early September and was re-elected leader. At a gathering at

⁴⁵"The War on 'Isms'," Newsweek, August 22, 1938, p. 12.

Camp Nordland on September 4, 1938, Kuhn announced the nine-point program to be undertaken by the Bund in the coming year.

The Times reported that the Bund would demand gentile leadership for the nation and labor unions, with no Jews being permitted to hold power in government, national defense forces, educational institutions or the Hollywood film industry. The Bund program also demanded "severance of diplomatic relations with Russia, the outlawing of the Communist Party in the United States, the prosecution of all known Communists for 'high treason,' aloofness from all foreign entanglements and severance of connections with the League of Nations."⁴⁶

The Dies Committee did not return to an investigation of the Bund until late September, 1938, when John Metcalfe again appeared to testify, this time outfitted in a Bund storm trooper uniform. The Times reported that Metcalfe testified that the Bund was an "un-American organization entirely dominated by the German government . . . that can muster a force of 5,000." The account noted that "Metcalfe said he was convinced that 90 percent of German-Americans 'definitely oppose it.'"⁴⁷

⁴⁶New York Times, Sept. 5, 1938, p. 10.

⁴⁷New York Times, Sept. 29, 1938, p. 5.

The following day, Metcalfe continued his testimony. The Examiner reported Metcalfe testified that Kuhn wielded power over German diplomats in the United States and had claimed credit for having former Ambassador Hans Luther removed from his post. Metcalfe also said that Kuhn had admitted to him that the Bund was offered financial aid from German Consuls, noting in particular the consul in San Francisco. Metcalfe stated: "Cooperative actions have been noted also between Bund officials and officials of German steamship lines."⁴⁸

Metcalfe's testimony before the Dies Committee sparked a number of denials to the charges by both German officials and Fritz Kuhn. On September 30, 1938, the Examiner reported that an "official spokesman" at the German Consulate in San Francisco denied offering financial aid to the German-American Bund. Calling the Bund an American organization, the spokesman noted the orders barring German nationals from the organization, adding that political and financial support was also withheld.⁴⁹

The next day, October 1, 1938, the Times carried an official statement from German Ambassador Hans Dieckhoff which said that the German government had always viewed the Bund as "a purely American affair." It

⁴⁸San Francisco Examiner, Sept. 30, 1938, p. 4.

⁴⁹Ibid.

continued: "There has never existed an open or secret understanding between the Bund and the German Ambassador, the German Embassy or the German Consulates."⁵⁰

The final rebuttal of Metcalfe's testimony came two weeks later from Fritz Kuhn. The Herald Tribune, on October 15, 1938, reported that Kuhn issued a notarized statement claiming that "his organization had no political or financial ties with the German government, was not subsidized by it, did not plan any measures against American institutions and had no connection with the 'so-called German spy ring.'" The statement also said that Kuhn had only spoken with Metcalfe once, for no more than two minutes, and called his charges unqualifiedly false. Finally, it reported Kuhn said he was forced to defend the Bund in this manner "because he had asked three times to appear before the Dies Committee only 'to learn . . . that the enemies of the Bund were to be heard, while witnesses of the Bund were to be excluded. . . .'"⁵¹

Following Metcalfe's testimony, the Dies Committee once again turned to investigate communism and the Nation renewed its criticism of the investigation of Fascist and Nazi activities. Calling the Metcalfe testimony "far

⁵⁰New York Times, Oct. 1, 1938, p. 36.

⁵¹New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 15, 1938, p. 3.

from incredible" in light of what Hitler had been doing in Europe, the Nation commented:

The way to deal with the Bund is not by vigilantism but by legislation against political armies and by thorough exposure--the kind of exposure which the Dies Committee is neither disposed nor equipped to make. We hope the new Congress will authorize a liberal and trustworthy investigation into Fascist activities.⁵²

Another criticism of the Dies investigation came from the New Republic, on February 15, 1939, after the House had passed a resolution to continue the committee's work. Stating that it had no quarrel with the purpose of the investigation, the New Republic based its criticism "on the demonstrable fact that Mr. Dies so far has shown no indication to expose un-American activities." The piece concluded by offering Dies several leads, including the German-American Bund, if he really meant "to gather testimony about Fascists and Nazis (of both foreign and native genus) as well as the Communists in the United States."⁵³

It was at about this time that the Bund was reaching its peak in terms of membership and publicity and consequently the organization held what was to be the most highly publicized event in its history--the Madison Square Garden rally celebrating George Washington's birthday.

⁵²Nation, CXLVII (October 15, 1938), p. 366.

⁵³"Memo for Dr. Dies," New Republic, XCVIII (February 15, 1939), pp. 29-30.

On February 21, 1939, the front page of each sample newspaper carried a story on the rally.

The most thorough coverage of the event came from the two New York papers. The Herald Tribune reported that "one of the heaviest police armies ever assembled in New York" guarded the 19,000 Bundists at "a rally devoted to violent denunciation of American Jewry and present heads of American government."

The report disclosed that an attempted attack on Fritz Kuhn was made by a young Jewish man, Isadore Greenbaum, noting: "Storm Troopers threw the man to the floor and beat and partially stripped him of his clothing before policemen rescued him. Trouserless, he was charged for disorderly conduct."⁵⁴

Considerable space was devoted to an incident involving Herald Tribune columnist Dorothy Thompson, who was ejected from the rally for laughing during the speech of G. W. Kunze, Bund publicity director. The Herald Tribune said police escorted Thompson to the lobby when Bundists cried "Throw her out!" in response to her laughter. When the writer explained her right to free expression to the police, she was allowed to return to the press section, where she again began to laugh. The report said Thompson left the rally shortly thereafter.⁵⁵

⁵⁴New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 21, 1939, p. 1.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 3.

The Herald Tribune described the speeches as being divided between "apostrophizing 'Christian Americanism' and denouncing American leaders deemed unfavorable to Germany." It reported that Kunze had denounced President "Rosenfeld" and American Jewry, and that Fritz Kuhn had placed the blame for many of the ills of the nation on the Jews. It quoted Kuhn's pledge to the audience: "'We are German-American citizens with American ideals,' he said in a deep German accent. 'We will not fail you in doing all in our power to break the grip of Jewish Communists in our schools, our universities and our very homes.'"⁵⁶

In addition to the coverage of the rally, the Herald Tribune also carried a column by Dorothy Thompson explaining her behavior. Thompson said that she attended the rally on the invitation of the Bund because she believed in Americanism. Describing the rally, she drew an ominous parallel to an earlier rally she had attended at the Berlin Sports Palast in 1931. Thompson said that the meeting was identical, "copied in detail, as though by blueprint, from the German Nazis." Her cause for alarm, she said, was the fact that three years after the Berlin meeting, "the people who were in charge of that meeting were in charge of the government of Germany."⁵⁷

⁵⁶New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 21, 1939, p. 1.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Thompson explained that her laughter during Kunze's address was meant to "demonstrate how perfectly absurd all this defense of 'free speech' is in connection with movements and organizations like this one." She noted that it was necessary to point out to the policemen who removed her that she had the same right to free expression as did the Bund speakers. Concluding on a more serious note she said:

As a matter of fact, it is no laughing matter. If this democracy allows a movement, the whole organization and pattern of which is made by a government openly hostile to the American democracy to organize, set up a private army and propagandize on this soil, we are plain saps. . . . The immediate object of the Bund is to deprive all non-Aryans . . . of their constitutional rights. This conspiracy--an open conspiracy--is protected, heaven help us, by the American Civil Liberties Union.⁵⁸

The Times ran a full column on the front-page under the headline "22,000 Nazis Hold, Rally in Garden, Police Check Foes." The account said that over 1,700 policemen had made the Garden an "impregnable fortress" to anti-Nazi demonstrators. While noting minor scuffles outside the Garden, the account called the gathering peaceful, "distinguishable from any other George Washington Birthday Celebration only by the anti-Jewish, pro-Nazi banners, the uniformed Bund members and Bund emblems and flags. . . ."59

⁵⁸New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 21, 1939, p. 1.

⁵⁹New York Times, Feb. 21, 1939, p. 1.

The Times reported that speeches were delivered by a number of Bund leaders including Fritz Kuhn, who declared that the Bundists were determined "to protect themselves, their children and their homes against those who would turn the United States into a bolshevik paradise." Kuhn also denounced the campaign of hate against the Bund in the press, radio and cinema, which he blamed on the Jews, who he called the driving force of communism. The piece detailed in words and pictures the interior of the Garden, noting American flags and a thirty-foot picture of George Washington bordered by Bund flags and anti-Semitic banners. It also commented on Greenbaum's unsuccessful attempt to mount the stage during Kuhn's speech and the incident involving Dorothy Thompson.⁶⁰

The Chicago Tribune gave the story a full column on page one under the banner headline "Fight Nazis in Big N.Y. Rally." The account said that 20,000 Bundists were in the Garden while "50,000 anti-Nazis milled around the streets outside trying to break up the rally." Also mentioned was the ejection of Dorothy Thompson from the rally. Much of the story described the interior scene of the Garden, noting the uniformed storm troopers, iron crosses and Nazi flags. The Chicago Tribune also reported

⁶⁰New York Times, Feb. 21, 1931, p. 5.

"wild applause for speakers denouncing Jews," and carried three photographs of the rally on its back page.⁶¹

The San Francisco Examiner devoted considerably more space to the story than did the Chicago Tribune, with an Associated Press account covering one column on the front-page and jumping inside. The Examiner report estimated that "100,000 persons, including idlers and theater-goers, were jammed around . . . the arena," with 20,000 Bundists inside.

The report detailed the Greenbaum episode: "He was felled immediately by six husky troopers, one of whom seized him by the hair and hurled him across the stage." The Thompson incident was reported in further detail in a separate one-third column account of the writer's ejection. The story devoted considerable space to a recap of the speeches in which Kuhn and others denounced Jewish Marxists. The report described the scene inside the Garden:

All the trappings of the spectacular mass assemblies familiar to Nazi Germany adorned the occasion. Storm Troopers strode the aisles. Military bands blared marshall airs and German folk songs. Young and old Bund members paraded and drilled in the glare of blue spotlights. Arms snapped out the Nazi salute.⁶²

⁶¹Chicago Tribune, Feb. 21, 1939, p. 1.

⁶²San Francisco Examiner, Feb. 21, 1939, p. 1.

Of the news magazines studied, only Newsweek covered the rally. The story, which ran approximately two columns on pages fourteen and fifteen with an overhead picture of the stage and audience, commented on the size of the crowd, the speakers and their speeches, and the incidents involving Thompson and Greenbaum. The overall tone of the article was of unalarmed commentary. Remark- ing that government sources placed the Bund's membership at 10,000, compared to the 1.6 million Americans born in Germany and the 5.2 million with one German-born parent, Newsweek said that "the meeting was something less than the catastrophe some commentators made it appear." It concluded: "Probably most Americans are inclined to agree . . . that neither the Communists or Bundists are likely to take over the government very soon."⁶³

Editorial response to the rally was considerable, but was far from being alarmist in nature. The Chicago Tribune was the extreme case in an editorial on March 3, 1939, entitled "Blatant Nazism and, Covert Communism."

The Chicago Tribune said that the rally was chiefly significant in exposing "the Communist efforts to start riots" outside the Garden. Noting that nazism had "no chance in America" and that such demonstrations only hardened resistance to it, the Chicago Tribune

⁶³"America's 'Isms'," Newsweek, March 6, 1939, pp. 14-15.

turned to the real menace facing the nation: "It is the hidden Communist movement that is feared, not because the solid body of Americans have any more toleration for it, . . . but because of Communist methods and the surreptitious favor it has enjoyed in high places."⁶⁴

The Herald Tribune featured two editorials on the rally. The first, on February 22, 1939, defended the Bund's right to free speech and assembly, however vile the movement may be to the public. But the comment also called for an examination of the "Bund enterprise," noting that free speech is a citizen's right and cannot be "claimed on behalf of aliens or citizens, who under color of it, seek to organize for the overthrow of the government by force or its subjection to the rule or policy of a foreign nation." The piece concluded by calling for legislators and prosecutors to solve the problem of the Bund while protecting free speech for those deserving the privilege.⁶⁵

The second editorial, "The Storm Troopers of Yorkville," noted that the rally had employed the "Hitlerian technique for exploiting all the best principles of democracy to democracy's own destruction." It stated that the function of the storm troopers was

⁶⁴Editorial, Chicago Tribune, March 3, 1939, p. 14.

⁶⁵Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 22, 1939, p. 18.

"to create and add to the general violence whereby democratic institutions are to be disrupted," but added that the Bund was still far from this stage.

The editorial contended that the rally, in outlining the technique of Nazi disruption and take-over, had "removed much of its danger" and "gave us some valuable pointers on how to meet it without departure from the normal democratic methods." Praising the police for maintaining order, the piece concluded:

. . . As long as the storm trooper is simply a uniformed usher he is relatively harmless; as long as he is simply a parade goosestepper he is relatively ridiculous. What democratic government must do is keep him from violence and . . . from assuming the functions which the community is thoroughly able to discharge through its own uniformed representative. That reduces the storm trooper to little more than⁶⁶ a nuisance, and that is not difficult to do.

The Times also carried two editorials on the rally, the first on February 22, 1939. Stating it had "no doubt" that given the chance the Bund would establish an American Hitler, the Times said that it saw "no occasion to worry about what happened in and around Madison Square Garden." While disdaining Bund rhetoric, the piece defended their right to free speech, commenting: "It would be folly to deny them for the Bund, functioning freely, is its own best argument against itself."

⁶⁶ Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, Feb. 23, 1939, p. 20.

The editorial also dismissed the concern of observers who viewed the rally as "ominous because it resembled the Nazi demonstrations in Germany before Hitler's rise to power," an obvious reference to Dorothy Thompson. The commentary stressed the confident strength of police, city government and the general public, concluding with its own expression of confidence:

We are not, to state the case mildly, afraid of the Bund. The limits to which this or any other group, including the Communists, may go are definite. If any group attempts to overpass those limits, ample and legal force exists to put them down--and let them have no doubt of the outcome: they will be put down.⁶⁷

The Times' second editorial concerned itself with the Bund storm troopers, stating that careful consideration was necessary to do something about the "uniformed private army." Commenting that a ban on the wearing of uniforms would only affect a "symptom" of secondary importance, the Times suggested "complete publicity concerning the doings of these organizations--their lists of members, their rules and regulations and particularly their finances." The piece concluded: ". . . Wholesome and vigorous publicity would make it more difficult for the sinister organization to operate successfully, and help to scotch at its inception the vicious institution of the private army."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Editorial, New York Times, Feb. 22, 1939, p. 20.

⁶⁸ Editorial, New York Times, Feb. 24, 1939, p. 18.

The final comment on the rally came in the Nation on March 4, 1939, in an article entitled "The Nazis Are Here." Calling the mass-meeting a "disgusting exhibition," the article briefly described the interior appearance of the Garden and the anti-Semitic, anti-Roosevelt tone of the speeches. It did not praise the actions of police, claiming that they "only protected the Nazis in their right of free speech; they interfered with demonstrators outside and inside to voice their opposition to the Nazi doctrine." The article said that Greenbaum "was beaten up not by the storm troopers but by the police who 'rescued' him, . . . This part of the incident was not reported in the press."⁶⁹

The Nation said the rally served notice that "the Nazi gangsters are among us, complete with uniformed storm troopers and the whips of anti-Semitism." It went on to advocate legal restrictions including a ban on uniforms and public recording of sources of support and membership. It asserted that any curb on freedom of speech would be directed at the left rather than the right.

The article closed with a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt stating that government relief programs were only

⁶⁹"The Nazis Are Here," Nation, CXLVIII (March 4, 1939), p. 253.

stop-gap measures used to "buy time to think." The Nation commented:

This is profoundly true. We are involved in a race between collapse and a genuine social and economic reform. The richness of America makes it capable of buying more time than was granted, for instance, to the Weimar republic. But the race is on. And the meeting of the Bund has given us a foretaste of what will happen if collapse wins.⁷⁰

With the exception of the Nation, the editorial response to the Bund rally was not one of great concern. The Times and Herald Tribune viewed the Bund as a nuisance whose mass meetings could easily be controlled by the police and the Chicago Tribune asserted that nazism had no chance at all.

But the rally and its consequent publicity sparked renewed interest in the Bund by the Dies Committee and William B. Herlands, New York City Commissioner of Investigations. Their resulting activity would ultimately expose the activities of the Bund and result in the downfall of Bund fuehrer Fritz Kuhn.

⁷⁰"The Nazis Are Here," Nation, CXLVIII (March 4, 1939), p. 253.

CHAPTER III

THE DOWNFALL OF KUHN AND DECLINE OF THE BUND

Whether in reaction to the Bund rally or merely coincidental to it, a number of events took place in late February and early March, 1939, which indicated trouble for the Bund. On February 26, the Examiner reported that the House had extended the Congressional investigation into activities of the Bund and that a Dies Committee investigator had attended the Garden rally "to get the complete picture of Nazi activity here."¹

In an editorial the following day, the Examiner outlined the scope of the upcoming Dies investigation, noting in particular the addition of Rhea Whitley and "at least nine secret investigators" to the committee's staff. Always a defender of the investigation, the Examiner pointed out that a lack of investigative staff had been the greatest handicap in the previous phase of the inquiry. With the addition of new investigative staff, the Examiner noted: "The Dies Committee is at last in a position to expose un-American activity WHERE

¹San Francisco Examiner, Feb. 26, 1939, p. 14.

IT FINDS IT, which is exactly what the country wants it to do and expects it to do."² An editorial cartoon on the same page portrayed the American Nazi Bund and American communism as Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

While the Examiner was extolling the upcoming Dies inquiry, the Times carried two disclaimers regarding the Bund. The first, on February 26, was from the National Socialist government in Germany. The Times reported that officials disclaimed any connection with the Bund, noting that it would be contrary to the policy of the Third Reich regarding "interference in the internal affairs of another nation." German officials were reported, however, as admitting a "natural sympathy" for the Bund's aims.³

In an Associated Press account, the Times reported on February 27 that Father Charles Coughlin, whose name had been applauded at the Garden rally, had also repudiated the Bund in a radio address the previous evening. Coughlin was quoted as stating that "while we admit that nazism is a defense against communism, nevertheless, we Americans who are determined to sacrifice everything rather than accept communism will never

²Editorial, San Francisco Examiner, Feb. 27, 1939, p. 10.

³New York Times, Feb. 26, 1939, Sec. IV, p. 4.

be content to league ourselves with the Nazis in our nation."⁴

What eventually became the most devastating investigation of the Bund was announced in the Times on March 3, 1939. William B. Herlands, Commissioner of Investigation in New York City, revealed that an inquiry had been launched into the internal affairs of the Bund and three of its subsidiaries, the A-V Publishing Corporation, the German-American Business League, Incorporated, and the German-American Front, Incorporated. The Times reported that Kuhn, president of the four groups, had been served with a subpoena and would be questioned along with nine members of his staff. The account said that investigators had established that only the A-V Publishing Corporation had paid specially enacted New York City sales taxes. It said that the aim of the inquiry was to determine whether the other groups had evaded payment, which would constitute a misdemeanor.⁵

With both the Dies Committee and New York City investigators involved in separate probes of the Bund, the United States Department of Justice made public on April 3, 1939, an 800-page report with fourteen files of exhibits on the inquiry that it conducted of the group

⁴New York Times, Feb. 27, 1939, p. 5.

⁵New York Times, March 3, 1939, p. 8.

in late 1937. The Times account, which noted the report had been submitted to the Dies Committee in 1938, said that it pictured the group as one "of small size and generally restricted to some of the larger metropolitan areas of the Northeast, Middle West and Pacific Coast." The report cited Kuhn as having given the membership as 200,000 to one investigator and 8,299 to another. It said that figures gathered from local leaders totaled 6,617 members in forty-five posts.

The Times account also said that the report described officers of Bund locals to be mainly "mechanics, restaurant workers, clerks, odd job men and the like with a scattering of technicians such as draftsmen, chemists and so on." The report went into considerable detail on the seven Bund camps then in existence, describing them as highly anti-Semitic. The account continued:

The camp curriculum, the report said, includes study of German, which must be used exclusively, singing of German songs, drilling, heiling, calisthenics, and studying 'the menace of communism.' There was no evidence reported of training with firearms. The youth movement was said by its officials to have about 2,000 members.⁶

Shorter wire service accounts of the Department of Justice report were carried by the Herald Tribune and

⁶New York Times, April 4, 1939, p. 8.

Examiner, with the Chicago Tribune making no mention of it.

The downfall of Fritz Kuhn began on May 17, 1939, when New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia announced that he had sent a report, compiled by Herland's investigators, to District-Attorney Thomas E. Dewey outlining forty violations of the tax laws with a request that prosecution of Kuhn and the Bund be undertaken. The Times account detailed the charges, all misdemeanors, which included:

Ten evasions of the emergency relief tax laws involving \$871 in taxes and penalties . . . failure to file sales tax returns for various periods, as having failed to register as a vendor under the Sales Tax Law, of having filed a false business tax return, of having failed to file personal property tax returns and of failure to keep proper records under the Sales Tax Law.⁷

Many who had not known Kuhn's name earlier became immediately familiar with it on May 26, when the four newspapers in the sample ran front-page accounts of his indictment and arrest. Associated Press accounts were run by the Examiner and Chicago Tribune, with the latter carrying the banner headline, "Seize Bund Leader As Thief." The Herald Tribune and Times carried lengthy reports of the event, with the Times' being the most detailed.

⁷New York Times, May 18, 1939, pp. 1, 11.

The Times reported that Kuhn had been indicted the previous evening by a New York County grand jury, charged with the theft of \$14,548 of Bund funds. The account said that Kuhn, who had disappeared from New York before the indictment was handed up, was arrested by Dewey's detectives in a gas station near Krumsville, Pennsylvania. The report said that when arrested, Kuhn "insisted he was not in flight from arrest" but that he was on his way to Bund speaking engagements in Chicago and Milwaukee.⁸

The Times report continued, outlining the twelve-count indictment against the Bund leader which included six charges of grand larceny in the first degree, four charges of grand larceny in the second degree and two charges of forgery in the third degree. The report detailed the indictments which included the theft of nearly \$9,000 in proceeds from the Garden rally, embezzlement of nearly \$4,500 from the German-American Settlement League, Incorporated, and the theft of over \$700 used to transport the furniture of a Kuhn acquaintance, Mrs. Florence Camp.⁹

An Associated Press account in the Examiner the following day reported that Kuhn had pleaded innocent to

⁸New York Times, May 26, 1939, p. 1.

⁹Ibid.

all charges placed against him and had been released from jail "after bail of \$5,000 was provided anonymously." After describing Kuhn's arraignment, the Examiner account ran a paragraph on his relationship with Mrs. Camp, described as the former wife of a wealthy Long Beach oil man. It quoted her brother as stating that there had been a romance between the two, but that it "has been off now for several months."¹⁰

Reports of Kuhn's arrest were found in two of the magazines reviewed, Time and the Nation. In its June 3, 1939 issue, the Nation stated that "only the innocent" would be surprised by Kuhn's arrest as a thief, and wished the District-Attorney every success in his prosecution. Turning to speculate on German government reaction to the arrest, the Nation adopted a sarcastic tone in noting two possible forthcoming responses. The first response envisioned the German government hinting that Kuhn had spent the money "rightly for secret political purposes" which naturally had to be camouflaged. The second alternative satirized that "they will find out that Kuhn's real name is Kohn and that he is and always was a bolshevik agent of World Jewry."¹¹

Time, in a story entitled "Common Fox?", ran a straight news account of the arrest and outlined the

¹⁰San Francisco Examiner, May 27, 1939, p. 3.

¹¹Nation, CXLVII (June 3, 1939), p. 631.

dozen charges that were placed against Kuhn, quoting the Bund fuehrer as stating that "it's all nonsense." The article also carried a photo of Kuhn with Mrs. Camp.¹²

Although he had been indicted for stealing Bund funds, the organization unanimously re-elected Kuhn as national leader at the July, 1939, convention. The Times reported that preceding his re-election, Kuhn had addressed the 550 delegates, explaining and discussing the charges against him. The report said that the re-election vote "was accompanied by a vote giving him absolute power of attorney for the organization and a discharge of responsibility for 'past acts, utterances, expenditures. . . .'"¹³

In mid August, 1939, Kuhn again made front-page news when he testified before the Dies Committee and was nearly engaged in a fist fight with committee member Representative Joseph Starnes of Alabama. From this point on, all four newspapers studied gave daily accounts of testimony concerning the Bund before the committee.

An Associated Press account in the Examiner reported that Kuhn had testified that the Bund had 20,000 to 25,000 members with 100,000 organized sympathizers, but that membership records had been destroyed when the

¹²"Common Fox?", Time, June 5, 1939, p. 17.

¹³New York Times, July 4, 1939, p. 4.

McNaboe and Dies investigations of the group became apparent. Regarding the flare-up with Starnes, the Examiner reported that Kuhn had called Starnes' assertion that the Bund was working toward the establishment of a Hitler-like government in the United States "a flat lie."

Starnes jumped to his feet and lunged toward the witness, stumbling through photographers and newsmen. A big capitol policeman ploughed through after him, but seemingly could not overtake the irate Congressman. Another made for Kuhn, who, redfaced, was still placidly seated in the witness chair.

Don't you call me a liar,' he (Starnes) cried.

By that time an officer had gotten between Starnes and Kuhn. Many spectators were doubled up in laughter. Chairman Dies was thunderously pounding for order.¹⁴

The New York Times, the only paper which did not give the story front-page coverage, reported that Kuhn had frequently become excited during his testimony, describing the Bund's aims "as first to unite German-Americans into a politically conscious group, second to fight communism and third to build a political party which would seek to elect 'the best man.'" The account also said that Kuhn denied the Bund was "a money making racket" and admitted the group was anti-Semitic, claiming that "it believed Jews should not have more than four

¹⁴San Francisco Examiner, Aug. 17, 1939, pp. 1, 5.

percent representation in the government because they were only four percent of the population."¹⁵

Kuhn continued his testimony the next day in what the Times account described as "a session marked by much heat and little illumination of Bund activities." It reported Kuhn testified that he had ordered Chicago Bund officials to destroy correspondence with persons in Germany, fearing the committee would make "unfair use" of it. He revealed that the Bund had directed student exchanges with Germany and that a 1936 Bund convention in Detroit had been addressed by Attorney-General Frank Murphy. Kuhn concluded testimony stating that the group "never had pledged loyalty to any foreign government, never had supported dictatorship anywhere, favors free speech, . . . is against force or violence and is not affiliated with any group that does."¹⁶

The testimony of a 19-year-old girl, Helen Voroos, put the Bund back on page one on August 19, 1939. A former Bund Youth Movement member, Voroos told the Dies Committee of a trip to Germany with twenty-nine other youngsters arranged by the Bund and of widespread immorality within the group. During the trip to Germany, she said that "a group of young American men and women were

¹⁵New York Times, Aug. 17, 1939, p. 4.

¹⁶New York Times, Aug. 18, 1939, p. 3.

given a propaganda course . . . which included lectures on sex, sterilization, and instruction in spreading of racial and religious hatred in the United States." She reported that the training in Germany, which lasted six weeks, prepared the youths "to inculcate in the youth of the United States the principles of Adolf Hitler."

Voroos testified that she quit the Bund as a result of the immorality displayed by the men and boys. She said that the youths had been told "not to curb our natural instincts so long as only Germans were involved" and that "it was pure and noble to yield to your instincts then."¹⁷

In other testimony, she charged that two former Harvard University students, both Bund members, "maintained a short-wave radio station for exchange of communications with officials of the Foreign Institute in Stuttgart, Germany." Voroos also told of attending lectures in Germany at which Nazi Party officials boasted that Germany would recover its lost African territories, conquer Europe and turn its attention to the United States within 20 years. She said that crewmembers of German ships were serving as contact men between the Bund and Nazi officials in Germany.¹⁸

¹⁷Chicago Tribune, Aug. 19, 1939, pp. 1, 7.

¹⁸San Francisco Examiner, Aug. 19, 1939, pp. 1, 3.

Stories in the Times and Herald Tribune recounted the testimony on the trip to Germany and the Nazi teachings and plans. The Times also covered the statements regarding immorality, while the Herald Tribune generally played down that portion of the testimony, devoting only two brief paragraphs to the charges.

After more than a month of adjournment of hearings on the Bund, the Dies Committee received testimony on October 5, 1939, from Niel H. Ness, a former Bund member in California. An Associated Press report in the Examiner said Ness testified that Western district leader Herman Schwinn was in contact with every German vessel docking in Los Angeles and that on many occasions Schwinn and the boat captain exchanged "sealed packages" and "reports and instructions relating to Bund activities."¹⁹

The following day, the Examiner carried another Associated Press report on Ness' further testimony on West Coast Bund activities. He told the committee that the Los Angeles Bund "had plans for paralyzing the Pacific Coast by sabotage in event of a conflict between this country and Germany." This included the destruction of docks, waterworks, power plants, and aircraft factories from Seattle to San Diego, he said.

¹⁹San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 6, 1939, p. 5.

Describing himself as a confidant of Schwinn, Ness said that he heard sabotage plans discussed frequently during his membership in 1936. He also testified that he had once worked with Schwinn to help a German espionage agent photograph American submarine and destroyer bases in San Diego. The account concluded with a quote from Ness: "There's nothing American and nothing political about the Bund. . . . It's just an arm of the German government."²⁰

On October 20, 1939, with his trial less than a month away, Kuhn was again called to testify before the committee at a hearing covered by all four newspapers. The Herald Tribune reported that Kuhn steadily defended the alliance of Germany and Russia while still maintaining the Bund was opposed to communism. The account also noted another heated exchange between Kuhn and Representative Starnes on the topic, with the Bund leader defending Germany's newly formed pact with Russia:

'Germany,' said Kuhn, 'is a small country with high population, and begged Great Britain for years for raw materials in vain, and then begged the United States equally without success. That's where the Bund comes in. It sought to rally public opinion in this country in support of greater exports to the Reich which has been strengthened by the new government.'²¹

²⁰San Francisco Examiner, Oct. 7, 1939, p. 4.

²¹New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 20, 1939, p. 1.

The account reported that Kuhn had produced a list of Bund units in the United States which showed that of the seventy-one unit total, twenty-three were located in New York. It further noted that Kuhn had declared he was being persecuted by both Representative Dickstein and New York District-Attorney Dewey.²²

With the Dies Committee turned to an investigation of Communist organizations, Kuhn's attention shifted to his upcoming trial. In consideration of its possible consequences, Kuhn announced in mid October his choice of G. W. Kunze as his successor. The Times report, which identified Kunze as present vice-leader of the Bund, quoted Kuhn: "Whether I go to jail or not, this is going to be my successor."²³

When Kuhn's trial opened on November 10, 1939, in General Sessions Court in New York City, two of the original twelve charges had been eliminated, leaving the Bund feuhrer charged with ten counts of grand larceny and forgery involving Bund funds totaling \$5,641.

Daily accounts of the trial were provided by all four newspapers studied, in varying amounts. The Times and Herald Tribune ran staff reports while the Examiner and Chicago Tribune alternated between Associated Press

²²New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 20, 1939, p. 1.

²³New York Times, Oct. 26, 1939, p. 15.

stories and reports by Bob Considine for the Examiner and William Fulton for the Chicago Tribune.

The Times reported, on November 11, that the prosecution had called two of Kuhn's subordinates to the stand and that "the picture they drew of the Bund was that of a one-man organization under the dominance of Kuhn, who not only appointed them but performed all their duties except for the trivial ones." The account states that both witnesses, James Wheeler-Hill, national secretary, and Gustav Elmer, national organizer, had affirmed Kuhn's right under the "fuehrer prinzip" (leadership principle) to spend Bund funds for any purpose. However, Elmer noted a single instance when that was not true, in the case of women. Prosecutor Herman J. McCarthy, in his opening statement to the jury, said he was prepared to show that Kuhn had used Bund funds to transport the furniture of Mrs. Florence Camp "for no reason other than an 'intimate and personal one.'" The Times noted that it appeared the "fuehrer-prinzip" defense would strike a snag on the Camp affair.²⁴

On November 14, an Associated Press account in the Examiner reported that prosecutor McCarthy had entered into evidence three telegrams addressed to Mrs. Camp in California and signed "Love and Kisses, Fritzi," along

²⁴New York Times, Nov. 11, 1939, p. 1.

with cancelled checks signed by Kuhn out of the A-V Publishing Corporation's account. Defense attorney Peter L. F. Sabbatino admitted that the checks were written by Kuhn and used as payment to ship Mrs. Camp's furniture from California to New York and then to Ohio. The defense had contended that Kuhn assisted Mrs. Camp only because she was a Bund sympathizer.²⁵

A colorful account of the proceedings by Bob Considine was run in the Examiner on November 15. The report opened: "Though she has been blessed with nine husbands since that happy day in Atlantic City when an adoring constituency pronounced her Miss America, Virginia Cogswell depended on Fritz Kuhn to pay a \$60 medical bill, the 33-year-old beauty's physician testified today." The account detailed the testimony of Dr. Frances P. LaSorsa, who said that he had received a check from Kuhn for the 1928 Miss America's medical expenses. In other testimony, James D. C. Murray, a criminal lawyer who defended the six members of the German-American Settlement League in 1938, swore that he had not been paid by Kuhn for his services.²⁶

The Times reported on November 17 that the prosecution, before resting its case, had acknowledged a major

²⁵San Francisco Examiner, Nov. 14, 1939, p. 34.

²⁶San Francisco Examiner, Nov. 15, 1939, p. 5.

error by one of the District-Attorney's accountants. Benjamin Blattner testified that he had made a \$4,000 error, overestimating the funds Kuhn was accused of stealing. The defense opened its case with the testimony of James Wheeler-Hill, West Coast leader Herman Schwinn and New Jersey leader August Klapprott, all asserting the Bund's allegiance to the leadership principle. The account also noted that it was Sabbatino's intention to call District-Attorney Dewey and Mayor La Guardia to testify.²⁷

The Herald Tribune reported that Dewey denied that any "animus" on the part of his office was responsible for bringing Kuhn to trial: "He admitted, cheerfully, however, that he regarded Kuhn and his Bund as community nuisances and the 'bundesfuehrer' as a common thief." The report said that mayor La Guardia took the stand, but stepped down without answering a question when Judge James G. Wallace would not allow questioning regarding the Mayor's feelings toward Kuhn.²⁸

The Times account of Dewey's testimony said that Sabbatino outlined a "plot" against Kuhn in his opening statement. He alleged that investigators and accountants for the District-Attorney's office had illegally seized

²⁷New York Times, Nov. 17, 1939, p. 1.

²⁸New York Herald Tribune, Nov. 18, 1939, pp. 1, 5.

Bund records in a raid on May 2, 1939, and had also stolen \$1,300 belonging to Kuhn and the Bund. The article stated that Sabbatino linked the mistake by the District-Attorney's accountant to the plot.²⁹

Both the Examiner and Chicago Tribune carried an Associated Press report on the November 20 session. The account said that Willie Luedtke, a subordinate of Kuhn's, had testified that he paid James D. C. Murray \$500 for services he rendered in the Settlement League trial.

The Chicago Tribune reported that Wallace, at the end of the session, told prosecutor McCarthy that he had not shown beyond a reasonable doubt that Kuhn had stolen Bund funds. Wallace said: "Merely because he didn't deposit all this money does not prove that he stole it. You must prove it was done with intent to defraud, and if any of the money was spent for legitimate Bund purposes, that expenditure does not constitute larceny."³⁰

On November 21, Kuhn took the stand for the first time in his own defense. The Times, in a detailed report, said that Kuhn gave an entirely new explanation of the \$717 the indictment charged he spent moving Mrs. Camp's furniture. He claimed that it was his own money,

²⁹New York Times, Nov. 18, 1939, pp. 1, 2.

³⁰Chicago Tribune, Nov. 21, 1939, p. 6.

"owed to him by the Bund on a drawing account." Kuhn, after an explanation of the Bund accounting, testified that the organization had taken in \$16,136 during the period covered in the indictment and that every penny was accounted for. He also said the money spent on Mrs. Camp had been repaid by her. In further testimony on the drawing account, Kuhn stated that while he had full control over all Bund funds under the leadership principle, the drawing account, established in 1937 at the rate of \$300 per month, was money owed to him by the Bund. At the time of Mrs. Camp's move, the Bund owed him \$2,000, he testified, so even though the money used to pay the bill came from Bund funds, it was also his own. Turning to the Bund books, Kuhn pointed out an entry dated July 28, 1938, which he claimed was payment to Murray for his services. While remembering receiving a receipt for the payment, Kuhn claimed that it could not be found.³¹

Interesting testimony was heard the following day when McCarthy cross-examined Kuhn. The Chicago Tribune reported that Kuhn admitted lying to the jury regarding his relationship with Mrs. Camp after three love letters that he wrote to her were admitted as evidence: "Blushing furiously as his fervent love letters to his 'Golden

³¹New York Times, Nov. 22, 1939, pp. 1, 2.

Angel' were read to the jury, Fuehrer Fritz Kuhn . . . today gave several conflicting versions of his romantic activities." In earlier testimony, Kuhn had asserted the relationship was only platonic and based on Mrs. Camp's interest in the Bund. After the letters were read, however, the report said Kuhn changed his story, admitting that he had proposed to Mrs. Camp, telling her he was divorced.³²

The Examiner carried an Associated Press account on November 25 reporting the dismissal of five counts against Kuhn, due to what Judge Wallace termed the "highly indefinite" nature of the indictments. The report said that Wallace was further considering the dismissal of two other counts relating to Kuhn's use of Bund money in the Camp affair. The three counts that were sure to go to the jury involved the disputed payment of \$500 to the Murray law firm. The account also detailed the previous testimony of Mrs. Camp, who insisted that Kuhn had both proposed to her and had given her a platinum engagement ring. The article noted that she did give support to Kuhn's assertion that the money used to move her furniture had been paid back, testifying that on various occasions she had given him a total of \$600.³³

³²Chicago Tribune, Nov. 23, 1939, pp. 1, 4.

³³San Francisco Examiner, Nov. 25, 1939, p. 3.

When the attorneys began their summations, Judge Wallace had ruled that the five charges relating to the Murray transaction and the Camp affair would go to the jury. The Times reported that defense attorney Sabbatino, in his summation, described Kuhn as a "strutting little fellow who ought to be destroyed," but told the jury that it should not be done with a guilty verdict in the trial. He said that Kuhn's effectiveness had been destroyed by the love-letters and other revelations of the trial: "He pleaded that Kuhn was innocent of the charges . . . and urged that Kuhn had been made a victim of 'political persecution' intended to destroy him and the Bund." The Times also reported that during the summation, Sabbatino compared Kuhn to Dreyfuss as a victim of political persecution and alluded to Cleopatra and Mark Antony in relation to the fuehrer's love affair with Mrs. Camp. He closed, invoking the Biblical warning: "Let him who is without sin amongst you, cast the first stone."

The Times further noted that while refusing to grant Sabbatino's request for a mistrial on the grounds of prejudicial publicity, Judge Wallace had expressed his displeasure at the press coverage of the trial. Wallace was quoted as stating that "some newspapers in writing what they know as human interest, had produced copy of interest only to readers whose intelligence

was less than that of a moron!" He did not name any specific papers.³⁴

Fritz Kuhn was once again front-page news when the jury convicted him of all five charges on November 29, 1939. The four sample newspapers carried accounts of the verdict, outlining the charges that Kuhn was convicted on and the maximum thirty year sentence that was possible. The Times outlined the charges as two counts of grand larceny in the first and second degree in the Camp affair and one count of second degree larceny and two counts of forgery in the Murray transaction.³⁵

On December 6, the Times reported that Judge Wallace had sentenced Kuhn to two and one-half to five years on each of the counts involving the Murray transaction, with sentences to be served concurrently. Wallace had suspended sentence in the two counts involving Kuhn's affair with Mrs. Camp. It reported that Wallace said he was not sentencing Kuhn because he was a hate dispenser but as a common thief. The account also noted Wallace's additional remarks on the newspaper coverage of the trial, saying that he was displeased by it. Referring to the Bundists as "a small fry aggregation of bus boys, locker-room attendants, bartenders and other small fry," Wallace

³⁴New York Times, Nov. 28, 1939, p. 1.

³⁵New York Times, Nov. 30, 1939, p. 1.

charged that the newspapers had built up Kuhn and the Bund, resulting in "an exaggerated importance in everybody's mind, including their own."³⁶

Coverage in the two news magazines was considerably restrained. Time and Newsweek ran accounts of the trial on December 4, 1939. The Newsweek story outlined the charges against Kuhn, the dismissal of the five counts and the testimony on his love life and the leadership principle.³⁷ The story in Time, covering almost a full page with photos of Mrs. Kuhn, Camp and Cogswell, also recounted the charges against Kuhn and the testimony given, mainly regarding the Camp affair.³⁸ Both noted the conviction in two-paragraph accounts in later issues.

Editorial response to the conviction came from the two New York newspapers. The Times, on December 1, called the verdict sound and the trial fair, commenting: "We believe that the overwhelming mass of Americans of German birth or descent will agree that they will benefit along with the rest of us as he [Kuhn] disappears from public view."³⁹

³⁶New York Times, Dec. 6, 1939, p. 1.

³⁷Newsweek, December 4, 1939, p. 17.

³⁸Time, December 4, 1939, p. 18.

³⁹Editorial, New York Times, Dec. 1, 1939, p. 22.

In a longer piece on December 6, the Herald Tribune praised both the trial process and sentence, noting that "the defendant was convicted as a common thief and sentenced therefore precisely as any other beginner in larceny would have been." In conclusion, the piece commented on the Bund in general:

The sordid conduct of the Bund's affair which the trial revealed will hardly be forgotten by its members. We hope the moral which impressed the public and the jury will impress these misguided followers. That is that the fuehrer principle, . . . is as vicious in practice as it is un-American in principle.⁴⁰

The only dissent on the Kuhn trial came from the New Republic in an article entitled "Fair Trial" by Wendell L. Willkie. Pointing to the growing disapproval of the Bund preceding the Kuhn trial, Willkie said that the charges against Kuhn "finally came down to a matter of \$500 of Bund funds which he had unlawfully taken-- although the Bund gave him unrestricted power over expenditures and apparently did not care about the \$500." Noting Kuhn's two and one-half to five year sentence, Willkie commented that "the most notorious defaulter of recent years received only five to ten years in the same penitentiary for stealing several million dollars."

Questioning the motives for the trial, he concluded:

⁴⁰Editorial, New York Herald Tribune, Dec. 6, 1939, p. 28.

Now, you may hate nazism as much as I do. But even a Nazi is still entitled--in America--to fair treatment under the law. If a member of the chamber of commerce, for example, had misappropriated \$500, there would have been no such punishment. In other words, in the Kuhn case, one wonders whether legal processes were abused for political purposes. One naturally asks whether technical violations of the law were not an excuse for removing from society a man whose social tenets were undesirable.⁴¹

Reaction to Kuhn's conviction by the Bund was initially supportive of their downfallen leader. The Times, on December 1, 1939, reported that at a rally of Bundists in the Bronx new national leader G. W. Kunze had declared: "We will carry the battle through until Kuhn is free again. . . . This isn't the end of this case. . . ." ⁴² While issuing public statements of support, Kunze was privately disowning Kuhn. Leland Bell writes:

This entire display of unity, however, was a facade. On December 6, 1939, . . . the Bund's executive committee met in special session at national headquarters to depose Fritz Kuhn from office and to expel him from Bund membership. His past actions were called 'dishonorable and disgraceful.'⁴³

The conviction of Kuhn was the beginning of the Bund's rapid decline. The group lost its national leader and its members became divided over support for Kuhn.

⁴¹Wendell Willkie, "Fair Trial," New Republic, CII (March 18, 1940), p. 371.

⁴²New York Times, Dec. 1, 1939, p. 18.

⁴³Bell, In Hitler's Shadow, pp. 96-97.

National secretary James Wheeler-Hill was charged with perjury relating to discrepancies in testimony before the grand jury investigating Kuhn, at the McNaboe Committee investigation and at the trial. Wheeler-Hill eventually pleaded guilty to falsely testifying that he was an American citizen. He was sentenced to one-to-three years in prison on February 22, 1940.⁴⁴

The Dies Committee released its first report on January 3, 1940. The Times reported it said that testimony before the committee "establishes conclusively that the German-American Bund receives inspiration, program and direction from the Nazi government of Germany." The committee recommended strict enforcement "of all laws applying to organizations whose obvious objectives can be no other than to destroy the American form of government at the direction and in the interests of foreign powers."⁴⁵ All four newspapers carried stories on the Dies report. Both the committee report and the newspaper accounts dealt heavily with the investigation of Communist activities and provided a comparatively minor portion of space to Bund or Fascist activities.

Editorial response regarding the committee report came solely from the Chicago Tribune, which was

⁴⁴New York Times, Feb. 22, 1940, p. 10.

⁴⁵New York Times, Jan. 4, 1940, p. 14.

generally supportive of the findings, stating that no one could accuse the committee of conducting a "witch hunt."⁴⁶ Another source of comment was Walter Lippmann, who reviewed the committee's work in his "Today and Tomorrow" column in the Herald Tribune on January 11, 1940. Commenting on the report, he noted that the committee was precluded from recommending legislation prohibiting a belief in nazism or communism. He then turned to what he believed was the committee's main source of power, exposure:

. . . It is, I think, evident that the remedy in which they put their faith is . . . 'the right to focus the spotlight of publicity' upon revolutionary activity. In other words, the remedy is not in what the Dies Committee will eventually recommend to Congress but in what the Dies Committee are now exposing in the newspapers.⁴⁷

With the Bund on the decline and the United States moving closer to war with Germany, G. W. Kunze appeared before the Dies Committee on October 2, 1940, to defend the Bund. The Herald Tribune reported that Kunze represented the group as misunderstood, claiming it was not anti-Semitic and did not want Hitlerism in the United States. His testimony also revealed the decline in the Bund since Kuhn was jailed. The account said that Kunze disclosed the Bund had "only forty units with a membership

⁴⁶Chicago Tribune, Jan. 5, 1940, p. 12.

⁴⁷Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow," New York Herald Tribune, Jan. 11, 1940, p. 21.

of 10,000, as compared with an estimate of sixty-nine units and 20,000 members that was made a year ago by Fritz Kuhn, . . . "48

The following day, the Herald Tribune reported that Representative Starnes had said that a secret check of 1,500 license plates of cars belonging to frequent visitors at Camp Nordland indicated that over 600 of the car owners were employed in defense plants on the East Coast. Commenting on the hearings, Starnes said that he believed that the Bund was not an American organization "either in concept or in practice," calling it an "alien representative of a foreign government."⁴⁹

A week later, on October 11, 1940, the Times reported that Kunze and eight other Bund officials "were indicted by a Sussex County grand jury for violating a 1935 New Jersey statute prohibiting the incitation of racial or religious hatred by persons making speeches or permitting speeches to be made." The account said that the alleged violation took place during activities at Camp Nordland.⁵⁰ On February 15, 1941, Kunze and the other eight officials were sentenced to twelve-to-fourteen months at hard labor after they had filed

⁴⁸New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 2, 1940, p. 9.

⁴⁹New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 3, 1940, p. 8.

⁵⁰New York Times, Oct. 11, 1940, p. 12.

demurrers admitting the fact but questioning the constitutionality of the law. Kunze and three other Bundists were immediately released pending an appeal of the conviction.⁵¹

On May 24, 1941, the Dies Committee released a 200-page report on the Bund that claimed it was formed as a militarized organization for the take-over of the United States. The committee said the report showed that the Bund, "without doubt, was the vanguard of a Hitler Blitzkrieg in this country," stirring up enthusiasm through the denunciation of "the red Jewish pestilence in America." The report concluded that the committee's activities "thoroughly discredited the organization" and resulted in the imprisonment of Kuhn and Wheeler-Hill. The final two claims were somewhat undeserved, since the committee had nothing to do with either conviction. The Times' story noted that the committee took further credit at the conclusion of the report when it stated that "by our exposure . . . we smashed the Nazi movement even before it was able to get underway."⁵²

One of the final blows against the Bund came on June 16, 1941, when President Roosevelt ordered the

⁵¹New York Times, Feb. 1, 1941, p. 18.

⁵²New York Times, May 25, 1941, p. 3.

closing of all German Consulates and agencies in United States territory and ordered the Treasury Department to freeze all funds and assets of the Bund and other Nazi and Fascist organizations.⁵³

Sander Diamond writes that G. W. Kunze, in light of the fund freeze, attempted to step down as leader of the Bund at the August, 1941, convention. The delegates refused to accept the resignation and Kunze disappeared sometime in early November. Middle West leader George Froboese was appointed acting national leader following Kunze's disappearance and continued to rule until the organization ceased to exist in December, 1941.⁵⁴

Historians interested in the movement disagree as to what officially became of the Bund. Leland Bell states that the day after Pearl Harbor, the executive committee of the Bund unanimously adopted a motion disbanding the organization.⁵⁵ Sander Diamond, however, said Froboese issued the last Bund command on December 22, 1941, urging the members to brace themselves for hard times ahead: "We all wanted to fight, we have therefore the obligation to persevere . . . we must carry on, comrades!" Diamond states that the organization was

⁵³San Francisco Examiner, June 17, 1941, p. 1.

⁵⁴Diamond, The Nazi Movement, pp. 343-344.

⁵⁵Bell, In Hitler's Shadow, pp. 105-106.

never technically declared defunct but rather pronounced bankrupt by the courts.⁵⁶

Whether dissolved officially or unofficially, the Bundists appear to have heeded Froboese's final command, "We must carry on," as became evident during two trials in 1942 involving Kunze and a number of other Bund officials.

Kunze again made news on June 10, 1942, when a federal indictment of espionage accused him of conspiring to send military information about the United States to Germany and Japan between January and December, 1941. All the sample newspapers except the Examiner covered the story, running Associated Press accounts. The Times reported that Kunze was indicted with four others, including Chicago Bund leader Dr. Otto Willumeit. The indictments charged that "the five conspired to collect and deliver to the German and Japanese governments information 'relating to the numbers, personnel, disposition, equipment, arms, . . . and other establishments essential to the national defense of the United States.'"⁵⁷

Less than a week later, the Chicago Tribune reported that George Froboese, who was on his way to New York in answer to a federal subpoena, committed suicide

⁵⁶Diamond, The Nazi Movement, pp. 344-345.

⁵⁷New York Times, June 11, 1942, pp. 1, 12.

by placing his head under the wheels of a New York Central passenger train in Waterloo, Indiana. This was probably coincidence, since there was never any intimation of Froboese being linked in the espionage ring.⁵⁸

On July 3, 1942, wire stories in the four newspapers reported that Kunze was said by Federal Bureau of Investigation sources to be in custody in Mexico City. The Herald Tribune on July 5 reported that Kunze had been turned over to the Department of Justice by Mexican officials for prosecution on the espionage charges. The account quoted private sources in outlining the intrigue surrounding Kunze's attempted escape from American and Mexican authorities. It was reported that he was living in the fishing village of Boca Del Reo, under an assumed name, purportedly because he was suffering from heart trouble and had to live at sea level. The account further described Kunze's preparations for his escape, including the purchase of a twenty-foot fishing boat and "enough supplies for a long voyage."⁵⁹

With Kunze under indictment for espionage, the Department of Justice on July 7, 1942, announced a "nationwide campaign to put the Bund out of business." The Herald Tribune reported that United States Attorney

⁵⁸Chicago Tribune, June 17, 1942, p. 1.

⁵⁹New York Herald Tribune, July 4, 1942, p. 4.

Matthew F. Correa had obtained two indictments naming twenty-nine national, sectional and unit Bund officers and charging a conspiracy, "conducted illegally underground since the attack on Pearl Harbor, to have its members secretly instructed how to evade and disregard the Selective Service and Alien Registration Acts of 1940." The account said that Correa had also filed denaturalization petitions against twenty-seven Bundists including Fritz Kuhn. At the time, the former Bund leader was imprisoned at Clinton Prison in Dannemora, New York, after having his conviction upheld by an Appellate Court and his bid for parole rejected by a State Parole Board in June, 1941.

The Herald Tribune said Correa explained that the indictments found that the Bund, supposedly dissolved at the outbreak of the war, had carried on its activities through singing societies and sports organizations which "continue to foster the fuehrership ideology." G. W. Kunze, who was named in the two indictments and singly in a third which accused him of not notifying his draft board of an address change, pleaded not guilty to charges before being turned over to Hartford, Connecticut authorities in the espionage case.⁶⁰

The Times reported on July 22, 1942, that Kunze, along with three others, pleaded guilty to the conspiracy

⁶⁰New York Herald Tribune, July 8, 1942, pp. 1, 10.

charges, quoting the former Bund leader: "I had to plead guilty. . . . The trial would have been nothing but a circus and I would have no chance of acquittal under the circumstances of these times." When the trial of the fifth conspirator closed with a guilty verdict, the judge sentenced Kunze to fifteen years and Willumeit to five years.⁶¹

The trial of twenty-five Bundists for obstructing the Selective Service program opened in New York City on September 18, 1942. It was covered in staff accounts by the two New York newspapers and in short, wire service accounts by the San Francisco Examiner and Chicago Tribune.

The Times reported that the opening defense statement portrayed the Bund as a group fighting discrimination against Germans in America. The prosecutor insisted that the defendants were principally interested in avoiding the draft and were involved in a plot to persuade Bund members to "evade, resist and refuse service" under the draft law through the issuance of Bund Command Number 37, issued about October 1, 1940. The account said that the command contained "an admonition to Bundists to refuse to do military service until laws restricting 'their rights' had been repealed." The law in reference was a clause of the Selective Service

⁶¹New York Times, July 22, 1942, p. 1.

Act which stated that it was the intention of the enacting Congress to bar Bundists or Communists from filling civilian positions of drafted men.⁶²

During the trial, which lasted through late October, a number of witnesses testified that Bund Command Number 37 was meant to provide a "test case" of the section of the Selective Service Act to which the Bund objected. On September 29, 1942, witness William Luedtke, a former Bundist who testified in Kuhn's defense regarding the Murray transaction, testified that the Bund leaders had never said that Bundists were to resist the draft aside from the test case. Another former Bundist also testified that he heard Kunze remark in reference to the act that "I must make a test case of this." Other testimony in the trial indicated that the Bund continued to function after Pearl Harbor, organized as singing societies. One witness testified Kunze had said that "the Bund would be kept going even if it had to adopt the outward form of singing societies, hiking societies or even knitting societies." Witnesses for the prosecution testified that Command Number 37 had been read at Bund meetings, with one witness stating that Kunze had laughed at him when he suggested it was a patriotic duty to defend the United States. Another witness, however, testified Kunze had said that Bundists

⁶²New York Times, Sept. 19, 1942, p. 6.

would have to defend this country if it were attacked by Germany.⁶³

On October 19, 1942, a verdict of guilty was returned against twenty-four of the Bundists. The prosecution had admitted that the case was loaded with spurious issues, but noted that the judge had simplified the question of guilt or innocence when he told the jurors that verbal agreement on the part of the defendants was not necessary to find an agreement and confederation under the conspiracy law. The judge also destroyed the defense of a "test case" when he said that the question was not a material issue.⁶⁴ Maximum sentences of five years were imposed on all the defendants two days later, effectively ending any Bund movement that may have still existed in the United States.⁶⁵

The Times followed developments in the life of Fritz Kuhn, reporting that his citizenship was revoked on March 18, 1943.⁶⁶ When he was paroled in June, 1943, after serving three and one-half years of his sentence, he was interned until the end of the war at which time

⁶³New York Times, Sept. 19, p. 6; Sept. 23, p. 42; Sept. 24, p. 11; Sept. 25, 1942, p. 7.

⁶⁴New York Times, Oct. 20, 1942, pp. 1, 12.

⁶⁵New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 22, 1942, p. 3.

⁶⁶New York Times, March 10, 1943, p. 21.

he was deported to Germany.⁶⁷ Upon his arrival at Bremerhaven, Kuhn was immediately arrested by American occupation forces and again interned, this time as an undesirable native.⁶⁸

Kuhn was released by occupation authorities on April 25, 1946, and returned to private life as a chemist in Munich. Diamond writes that Kuhn was arrested by Bavarian de-Nazification officials in July, 1947, charged with having close ties with Hitler and attempting to transplant nazism to America. In April, 1948, he was sentenced to ten years at hard labor, but was set free in 1950. Kuhn died in Munich on December 14, 1951.⁶⁹

⁶⁷New York Times, May 19, 1945, p. 4.

⁶⁸New York Times, Oct. 5, 1945, p. 25.

⁶⁹Diamond, The Nazi Movement, p. 349.

CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF PRESS COVERAGE
AND CONCLUSIONS

Coverage of the German-American Bund by the sample newspapers and magazines reviewed varied in both the amount of coverage provided and the prominence of display of the stories. Of the four newspapers reviewed, the New York Times and New York Herald Tribune provided the most thorough and greatest amount of coverage of the Bund, which is why they have been extensively quoted throughout this paper.

A number of explanations lend themselves to the New York papers' superior coverage of the movement. During the early years of the Bund, when it was officially known as the Friends of New Germany, much of the newsworthy material involving the group was generated in New York City. Examples are the Friends' take-over of the United German Societies, the resulting cancellation of German Day in 1933 and the disappearance of Heinz Spanknoebel. All of these events were mainly local news, not of great interest to readers outside the New York metropolitan area.

During the mid 1930s, when Representative Samuel Dickstein was the foremost anti-Nazi in Congress, news of his charges were of particular interest to New York City residents whom he represented in the House. Further, New York became the national headquarters of the Bund during the Fritz Kuhn years and a number of the major events during that period took place in the city, giving the New York papers a distinct advantage in covering the events rather than being forced to use wire service stories.

The most complete coverage of the Bund was provided by the Times. While the Herald Tribune normally equalled the Times in reports on major events, the latter more often carried stories of minor nature in relation to the Bund. Examples include the Times' coverage of Bund national conventions, speeches and festivities at the New York area camps and the follow-up articles on Fritz Kuhn after his conviction and deportation.

The San Francisco Examiner and Chicago Tribune offered less space to stories on the Bund and placed them in less prominent positions as compared to the New York papers. For instance, while the Times and Herald Tribune usually gave front-page space during the Dies Committee investigation and the Kuhn trial, the Examiner and Chicago Tribune often provided comparatively abbreviated wire service accounts, placing them on an inside page.

Again, this may be partially explained as news of no great local consequence to Chicago and San Francisco residents. Another reason, borne out by the editorial policies of both newspapers, is the fact that the Examiner and Chicago Tribune were both greatly concerned with the Communist menace and never became particularly worked-up by a potential threat from the German-American Bund.

While the Chicago Tribune provided inconsistent coverage, it was not immune to occasional sensationalism with an appropriate story relating to the Bund. Examples are the banner headlines and front-page play given to stories on the testimony of Hubert Schnuch before the McCormack Committee, the Yorkville incident involving American Legionnaires and the arrest of Fritz Kuhn.

The national news magazines, Time and Newsweek, never gave a great amount of space to stories dealing with the Bund, even at the time of the 1939 Madison Square Garden rally or the Kuhn trial. While both noted the major events, neither appeared to view the Bund's activities as particularly newsworthy.

Editorially, none of the papers studied viewed the Bund with great alarm. As previously mentioned, the San Francisco Examiner and Chicago Tribune were more concerned with the Communist menace. In one instance, the Chicago Tribune went so far as to declare that the Nazis

"had no chance in America." Editorials in the Examiner warned of the Communist threat, while making only passing reference, if any, to the Bund.

The attitude purveyed by both New York papers was that, while a nuisance the country could do without, the Bund posed no serious threat to American institutions. This attitude was best reflected in commentary following the 1939 Madison Square Garden Rally. In two editorials, the Herald Tribune called for legislators "to solve the problem of the Bund" and praised the police for not allowing the Bund storm troopers to usurp the powers of the appointed authorities. It stated: "That reduces the storm trooper to little more than a nuisance, and that is not difficult to do."

The Times was less intimidated, saying that "it saw no occasion for worry about what happened in and about the Garden." It concluded that there was no need to fear the Bund, there being "ample and legal force" to put them down. Even earlier, the Times commented regarding the Camp Siegfried trial verdict that "since they could never be a menace, they remain only a nuisance."

The only real concern regarding the Bund came from the two opinion magazines studied, the Nation and the New Republic. Since both might be described as "liberal/left" leaning journals, their apprehension

concerning the growth of a right-wing movement is understandable.

The New Republic, for instance, was among the first to support Representative Dickstein's call for a Congressional investigation of the Friends. When the McCormack Committee made its final report, the journal criticized it for concerning itself too much with "revolutionaries of the Marxian school." Both magazines made similar criticisms of the later Dies Committee investigation, all the while warning of the threat posed by an organization with a private army--the Bund.

Of the two opinion magazines, the Nation was the most vocal in denouncing the Bund. The Kuhn Bund was only a year old when the Nation called for another investigation of it in April, 1937, warning that fascism was becoming stronger. It was also the most outspoken proponent of banning the Bund's uniformed service division. The Nation was the only sample publication that became greatly alarmed by the 1939 Garden rally, proclaiming that "Nazi gangsters are among us, complete with uniformed storm troopers and whips of anti-Semitism."

The conclusions reached by this study support the historians who claimed the press provided publicity which made Americans perceive the Bund as being more powerful and dangerous than it actually was. In unnumbered cases, residents of New York, San Francisco, Chicago and outlying

areas who would never see a Bundist in the flesh became acquainted with the movement through newspaper accounts of its rallies, the investigations of the Bund and the trials of its leaders.

Findings of the study also support the role historians attribute to the press in bringing about the downfall of the Bund. Through its coverage of the movement, the press did much to discredit the organization and its leaders in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Much as Walter Lippman said of the Dies Committee investigation: "The remedy is not in what the Dies Committee will eventually recommend to Congress but in which the Dies Committee are now exposing in the newspapers."

The study does not support the contention that the press sensationalized its coverage of Bund activities. No doubt, the Bund was the subject of sensational articles during its existence, even among the sample publications reviewed. Occasional instances of sensationalism were discovered, such as the Chicago Tribune headlines previously noted. Also, the commentary on the Bund by the opinion magazines was at times alarmist in nature, such as the Nation's article on the 1939 Garden rally.

The study found the tone of the newspapers to be generally restrained. Editorially they viewed the Bund as un-American in character, but skeptically in relation to its potential as a threat to the nation. The study

found that the overall news coverage was responsible, with stories handled as straight news items. It was found that many of the newsworthy events related to the Bund and covered by the American press were sensational by and of themselves.

The purpose and responsibility of newspapers is to report newsworthy events, which is what the sample publications did. They did not invent the rallies, investigations and trials for the benefit of their readers and circulation. They merely reported the activities of Congressional investigators and courts of law, both of which fall within what is commonly regarded as news.

Perhaps the best description of the attitude of the sample publications was described in the Newsweek article on the 1939 Madison Square Garden rally:

Cartoonists and editorial writers had a field day dilating on such horrors as the Bund's anti-Jewish placards; the Nazi uniforms, salutes and songs, all obviously borrowed from Berlin With few exceptions, however, the journalistic tone ranged from amused tolerance to nausea, with very little alarm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Fredrick Lewis. Since Yesterday. New York: Harper and Row, 1939.
- Bell, Leland V. In Hitler's Shadow. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973.
- Bennett, David H. Demagogues in the Depression. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969.
- Bishchoff, Ralph F. Nazi Conquest Through German Culture. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942.
- Carlson, John Roy [Arthur Derounian]. Under Cover. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1943.
- Chicago Tribune. Sept. 1, 1933-Oct. 22, 1942.
- Daniels, Jonathan. The Time Between the Wars. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966.
- Diamond, Sander A. The Nazi Movement in the United States: 1922-1941. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974.
- Dies, Martin. The Trojan Horse in America. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1940.
- Frye, Alton. Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere: 1933-1941. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967.
- High, Stanley. "Star Spangled Fascists." Saturday Evening Post, May 27, 1939, pp. 5-7, 70-73.
- Nation. September, 1933-October, 1942.
- New Republic. September, 1933-October, 1942.
- Newsweek. September, 1933-October, 1942.
- New York Herald Tribune. Sept. 1, 1933-Oct. 22, 1942.

New York Times. March 1, 1932-Oct. 5, 1945.

Ogden, August R. The Dies Committee. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1945.

San Francisco Examiner. Sept. 11, 1933-Oct. 22, 1942.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. The Politics of Upheaval. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1960.

Smith, Arthur L., Jr. The Deutschum of Nazi Germany and the United States. The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1965.

Strong, Donald S. Organized Anti-Semitism in America. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1941.

The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present. New York: Horizon Press, 1965.

Time. September, 1933-October, 1942.

U.S. Congress. House. Special Committee on Un-American Activities. Report on the Investigation of Nazi and Other Propaganda. H. Rept. 153, 74th Cong., 1st sess., 1935.

U.S. Congress. House. Report of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities. H. Rept. 2, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 1939.

U.S. Congress. House. Report of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities. H. Rept. 1476, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., 1940.

U.S. Congress. House. Special Committee on Un-American Activities. Appendix-Part IV: German-American Bund. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES



31293006719128