

DW 11/30/40

'Front' Leader Tells of Link With Army

Cassidy Testifies at Front Court-Martial—Prout Denies Confession

By John Meldon

John F. Cassidy, recognized leader of the Christian Front, appearing in the court-martial of Capt. John T. Prout Jr., who is accused of giving 1,800 rounds of ammunition to Christian Front terrorist William Gerald Bishop, testified Thursday night that Bishop had told him he "was working through the Army organizing civilians to fight Communism."

The witness, who seemed to be perfectly at ease in the military-court atmosphere, last June stood trial under federal prosecution along with Capt. Prout and Bishop.

Cassidy, a smooth talking individual and an avowed follower of anti-Semitic Father Coughlin, was acquitted on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government and to steal government ammunition. Prout faces possible retrial in federal court on his admission of giving ammunition to Bishop.

POSED AS ARMY AGENT

Capt. Prout's defense counsel, Parnell J. T. Callaghan, called Cassidy as a defense witness at the Squadron A Armory, 94th St. and Madison Ave., where the nine-man military court is sitting in the case. Cassidy identified himself as the Brooklyn head of the fascist organization, and at "present unemployed and awaiting admission to the bar."

The fascist witness made the statement, while under cross-examination by Lieut. Alfred J. Mungo, trial judge advocate (the prosecution) that he had gone to the 165th Regiment Armory last October with Bishop where the latter said he would identify himself to Cassidy as an army agent, through one "Colonel Anderson." When they arrived, Cassidy said, "Colonel Anderson" was not present. Whether or not the identification was made at any later date was not brought out by either the defense or prosecution while Cassidy was on the stand.

The defendant Capt. Prout took

(Continued on Page 4)

(Continued from Page 1)

the floor for the first time in his own defense since the military trial started and read an unsworn statement to the court in which he denied the admissions which he made during the federal court trial, and to agents of the FBI when he was arrested earlier this year. In a signed confession, introduced into the military trial by the prosecution, Capt. Prout had admitted giving fascist Bishop the 1,800 rounds of ammunition.

DENIES CONFESSION

In the course of his unsworn statement Thursday night, Capt. Prout denied his earlier testimony in federal court and the contents of the confession, charging that it was obtained by the FBI agents under duress. He declared that at the time of his arrest, he was overworked and fatigued and that he was not responsible for what he said.

Under the rules of the Manual of Courts Martial, Capt. Prout was told by court president Col. H. Russel Drowne, that as an officer, he had the privilege of three alternatives: he could make a sworn statement to the court, under which he could be placed on the witness stand and examined by the prosecution, or he could present an unsworn statement, under which he could not be put on the stand, or "remain silent." He was also told by the court that an unsworn statement would not carry the weight of a sworn statement.

The military trial resumed again last night at the Squadron A Armory.

OFFICERS CRITICIZED

Meanwhile, a sharp echo of the military trial here sounded from Fort McClellan, Ala., where Capt. Prout's regiment is now stationed.

Major General William N. Haskell, commander of the Twenty-seventh Division, in a press conference Thursday publicly criticized two officers of Capt. Prout's regiment who had been sent to New York last week at the request of

Lieut. Mungo to testify.

The two officers, Major John J. Rhatigan and Lieut. Herman Lutz, after appearing to testify, were denounced by the military court as "hostile" witnesses and Major Rhatigan was held in contempt.

Major General Haskell, in his press conference, said he wanted the enlisted men and officers of Capt. Prout's regiment to know "I'm not going to stand for any stalling."

He declared, "I want officers to tell all they know about a subject unless it is something that might incriminate them. I don't want any officer in my outfit who can't get up in court and give full testimony."