

Veterans Fight City's Nazis on Hitler Birthday

Yorkville Rally Ousts Men in Overseas Caps Asking for a Speech in English; 7 of Them Severely Hurt

Seven men were injured and four were arrested last night when a meeting of the German American Bund, a pro-Nazi organization, broke into a riot at Yorkville Casino, 210 East Eighty-sixth Street. Many in the crowd of nearly 2,000 Bund members became enraged when an American World War veteran took the floor while a speech was being delivered in German and loudly demanded to know whether there would be any addresses in the American language.

At the moment that the forty policemen outside the Casino heard a shout for help from inside, scores of persons on the sidewalk, both Nazi sympathizers and otherwise, staged independent fist fights that turned Eighty-sixth Street into a battleground. Within a few minutes more than 100 policemen arrived by radio call and emergency wagon, but it took more than a half hour to restore a semblance of order.

The Casino meeting had been called to celebrate the forty-ninth birthday of Adolf Hitler, which was yesterday, and the recent union of Germany and Austria. Sixty American war veterans, who said they represented the American Legion, the World War Veterans, the Jewish War Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, were sprinkled by twos and threes among the pro-Nazis. In an auditorium decorated with both American flags and Nazi swastikas, the meeting progressed peacefully from 8 p. m. until nearly 9:30, although more than 200 pickets from the German American Workers, of 1501 Third Avenue, marched before the Casino, shouting invectives at Nazi Germany and Hitler.

Soon after 9 p. m., the pickets, under the watchful eyes of policemen, dispersed and went to Third Avenue and Eighty-fifth Street, where they staged an impromptu anti-Nazi meeting.

At 9:30, a window of the Casino flew open and a voice yelled: "Help! Police! Immediately!"

Police who hurried into the Casino met frantically fleeing veterans, bleeding and battered. At the same instant the individual riots flared in the crowd outside. The police, split into two groups, began to hold back Bund members who were chasing the veterans, and to quell the fights outside.

Foremost of the fleeing veterans was Jean Mathias, suffering from multiple lacerations and contusions of the face. Mathias, who said he had been delegated to attend the meeting by his American Legion post, the Boulevard Park Post 159, reconstructed for police the turbulent scene inside the casino. After his

tening to many speeches in German, and one in particular which berated the foreign policy of President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, he rose and asked whether there would be any speeches in the American language.

He was told that there would be speeches in English and that he should sit down and be quiet. Then, he said, he asked: "Is this an American meeting or a German meeting?"

At that moment, Mathias said, some one slugged him from behind. He turned on his assailant and began to grapple as American war vet-

erans swarmed to his assistance from all over the place.

Mathias, who said he had received the Distinguished Service Cross and the Croix du Guerre in the World War, slowly fought his way to the door through crowds of vehement Bund members who, he later charged, whipped him with Sam Browne belts taken from their uniforms and slugged him with "instruments" which sprang up from somewhere. Other veterans slipped away in the confusion, and some remained obscure, while the call for police already had been sounded. The more than 100 policemen who arrived in a few minutes were under the command of Deputy Chief Inspector Louis Costuma.

The most seriously injured of the veterans was Cecil Shubert, thirty-eight years old, of 2927 Sixteenth Street, Brooklyn, who was taken to Beth David Hospital with a fractured skull. Six others, including Mathias, who lives at 7401 Nineteenth Avenue, Brooklyn, were treated at the hospital and sent home. They were Sam Rigir, forty-six years old, of 2918 West Twenty-Seventh Street, Brooklyn, lacerations of the face; Samuel Ginther, thirty-nine, of 1745 East Eighth Street, Brooklyn, bruises on the face; Leo Hoffman, forty-one, of 671 Vyse Avenue, the Bronx, contusions of the eye; Stanley Gottlieb, thirty-nine, of 559 West 186th Street, lacerations of the scalp, and Jacob Becker, thirty-five, of 388 East Tenth Street, contusions of the face.

The four men arrested and booked at the East Sixty-seventh Street station, represented both factions of the evening's dispute. Otto Geisler, seventeen years old, of 302 East Ninety-first Street, was arrested at the height of the riot outside the Casino by Patrolman Richard Collins, of the East 104th Street station, on a charge of violation of the Sullivan law. Collins alleged that the youth, who wore the khaki uniform of the German American Youth Organization, carried a trench knife in a holster at his side.

Walter Leister, eighteen years old,

of 1760 Jerome Avenue, the Bronx, police said was among those who ganged up on Mathias inside the Casino. He was charged with simple assault.

Jacob Zadick, forty-two years old, of 334 East Eighty-sixth Street, who said he was a member of the Jewish War Veterans, was charged with disorderly conduct on the basis of an attack on a uniformed Bund member outside the Casino. He was paroled in Night Court later by Magistrate Leonard A. McGee, pending efforts to find the man he was accused of having attacked.

William Gerke, forty years old, of 451 St. Anne's Avenue, the Bronx, was accused of disorderly conduct on the complaint of Alfred Camp, of 1501 Third Avenue, self-described anti-Nazi who said Gerke punched him. Gerke pleaded guilty and was sent to jail in default of \$5 fine.

After the turbulence inside and outside the Casino had been quelled, the Bund meeting proceeded. When it was over, at 11 p. m., police ordered the members to depart at intervals in groups of not more than twenty-five.

Benjamin Schnall, who described himself as a German Jew and the proprietor of the Casino, said last night that when he had taken over the place seventeen months ago, he had canceled an outstanding contract held by the Bund for three meetings. He said he had no desire for trouble in his establishment. On March 8, he said, Gustave Elmer, whom he described as national director of the Bund, rented the Casino from him for last night, saying the occasion was to be a musicale.

As Nazis and Their Foes Battled in Yorkville Casino



Herald Tribune photo—Acme

Nazi storm trooper comes to the aid of a fellow Nazi attempting to throw an unwelcome visitor down the stairs of Yorkville Casino during riot that broke up a Nazi meeting there last night.