

# Veterans' Clash With Nazis Stirs Tempest in City

## Acting Mayor Morris Sees 'No Place for European Hatreds, Orders Inquiry; Jew Defends Bund Youth

The sanguinary fracas between members of the German-American Bund and American war veterans on Wednesday night in Yorkville Casino had repercussions yesterday all over town, with everybody concerned denying responsibility for the melee that injured eight men and brought about the arrest of four persons.

At City Hall, taking the position that "European hatreds and prejudices have no place in our city," Acting Mayor Newbold Morris ordered Police Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine to make a thorough investigation. Mayor F. H. LaGuardia, on his way to Oklahoma and Texas for speaking engagements, telephoned from Chicago and asked for full details. More than once the Mayor has been outspoken in his dislike for the Nazis of Germany and their sympathizers over here.

"The Police Department will make every effort to prevent a recurrence of such a demonstration," Acting Mayor Morris said. "There is no doubt that the public recoils from such threats to our democracy, and the city administration has always responded to prevent occurrences of this kind."

Some of those who were ousted from the hall by pro-Nazi Storm Troopers and other strong-muscled members of the German-American Bund, boasted that they had gone to the Hitler birthday party as observers for the American Legion, but the state commander of the Legion, Jeremiah F. Cross, formally announced last night that "the attendance of these individuals at that meeting, for whatever purpose, in an official capacity was unauthorized." He condemned their use of Legion caps, too, but took occasion to repeat that the Legion was opposed to Nazism, Fascism and Communism and to denounce the German-American Bund as an un-American organization that "has no place in this country."

Thomas Dugan, Kings County commander of the Legion, and Joseph Burkard, New York County commander, reported to State Commander Cross that neither organization had authorized members to attend the German-American celebration, and each announced that investigations would be made by the Legion posts to determine whether members had violated the rules by wearing their Legion caps and declaring that their posts had delegated them to look in on the party at Yorkville Casino.

Neither the Jewish War Veterans nor the Catholic War Veterans offered comment on the presence of some of their members in the melee.

While the publicity iron was not

various other organizations ground out statements denouncing the local Nazis and insisted that the Federal government ought to take action "to clear out the spying and terrorist Nazi nest in New York." That sentiment, expressed by Stefan Heym, editor of the "Deutsches Volkstsch," 20 Vesey Street, was echoed by the Deutsch-Amerikanischer Kultur-Verban, 1476 Broadway. A. Alan Lane, chairman of the American Committee for Protection of Minorities, 11 Park Place, sent telegrams to Lamar Hardy, United States Attorney, District Attorney Thomas E. Dewey and Mayor LaGuardia demanding investigation of pro-Nazi activities in the metropolitan area.

On its side, the German-American Bund also protested to Washington authorities against the intrusion at their party to celebrate Hitler's forty-ninth birthday and the Nazi seizure of Austria. James Wheeler-Hill, national secretary of the Bund, which has headquarters at 178 East Eighty-fifth Street, sent the following telegram to Representative William B. Bankhead, speaker of the House of Representatives:

"According to press reports, Representative Samuel Dickstein, Democrat, of New York, recently declared in Congress that there would be bloodshed at the meeting of the German-American Bund planned for April 20 in New York City. We respectfully and emphatically request an immediate investigation to determine any connection between Representative Dickstein and the troublemakers who attempted to cause riots at this meeting, and we further request public censuring of Representative Dickstein for any remarks inciting riots he may have made."

Mr. Wheeler-Hill said his reference was to a speech Mr. Dickstein delivered in the House on April 13. Commenting on Wednesday night's somewhat sanguinary affair, the Bund chieftain remarked:

"The anti-Nazis, all Jews, wanted to cause trouble at our celebration. We knew that several dozens of men unknown to us had come in, but none of them wore legionnaires' caps when they entered. They pulled the caps out after they had started the demonstration.

"It was a deliberate attempt to disrupt an orderly meeting. This was not an open forum for discussion, just a celebration with a program arranged beforehand."

Otto Wegener, who was speaking in German when the tumult at the Yorkville Casino began, said he had not criticized President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, as the anti-Nazis reported.

He had merely remarked, he said, that "perhaps Messrs. Roosevelt and Hull will remember that the United States carried on a major war to safeguard the union of their country, that Germany, on the contrary, favored by conditions, managed to make the union with Austria without bloodshed."

Among the heroes at the Bund's headquarters yesterday was Otto Geissler, the seventeen-year-old Bundsman arrested during the fighting at the Casino on a charge of violating the Sullivan law by carrying a long knife in a scabbard.

Geissler, an \$18-a-week electrician's helper, three years in America, was arrested at the instance of Joseph Greenwald, of 3158 Grand

Concourse, the Bronx County commander of the Jewish War Veterans, whose testimony against him in Felony Court was corroborated by Abe Cohen, of 2927 West Twentieth Street, Brooklyn, Kings County commander of the Jewish War Veterans, who said that he was in the Casino when the trouble started and that "wrenches, hammers and backs of knives were used promiscuously."

Geissler was defended in court by a Jewish lawyer, Joseph Ellison, a member of the Voluntary Defenders' Committee of the Legal Aid Society. The youth had no counsel of his own when he appeared, in Youth Movement uniform with high boots, brown tunic and Sam Browne belt, before Magistrate Matthew J. Troy in Yorkville Felony Court. The prosecutor was also a Jew, Abraham Foretz, Assistant District Attorney.

In his own defense Geissler said that after marching into the Casino with other members of the German Youth Movement he had gone around the corner and drunk three beers, and when he got back Mr. Greenwald stopped him and called a patrolman. The young German said he did not suppose he was violating the law by carrying the knife.

"It is a strange situation that confronts us here," remarked Magistrate Troy, who was in the World War. "The defendant is defended by a Jewish lawyer and before an American war veteran. Most of the Jewish war veterans here are close and dear friends of mine and I have been associated with a number of Jewish veterans. This all demonstrates the worthwhileness of Americanism."

Magistrate Troy said his personal opinion was that "a knife should not be carried by any one except by uniformed legionnaires or others who have a right to carry one," but, after saying he was going to rule as "every American veteran would want me to rule," he held that Geissler's "alleged offense does not fall within the meaning of the law and the defendant is discharged."

Geissler's defendant, Mr. Ellison, then took occasion to remark that "as a Jewish lawyer, and knowing full well that Jewish lawyers are disbarred in Germany, I, as a public defender, was very glad to render my services to this defendant, because I felt he was wrongfully accused of a crime. I want him to take this back to his organization."

For yesterday's arraignments growing out of the Casino fracas, Yorkville Court was heavily policed, but there were no demonstrations. Two defendants were arraigned before Magistrate Anthony F. Burke. He held in \$500 bail for hearing on Wednesday German-born Walter Leiste Jr., eighteen years old, of 1761 Jerome Avenue, the Bronx, charged with simple assault on Jean Mathias, thirty-nine, an American legionnaire, of 7401 Nineteenth Avenue, Brooklyn. The magistrate paroled for a hearing on Tuesday Jack Zadik, forty-two years old, of 334 East Eighty-sixth Street, an officer of the Army dredge Navesink, charged with disorderly conduct. Appearing as complainant, Mathias had a black eye, a bruised right temple and puffy jaws as an aftermath of the Wednesday night brawl.

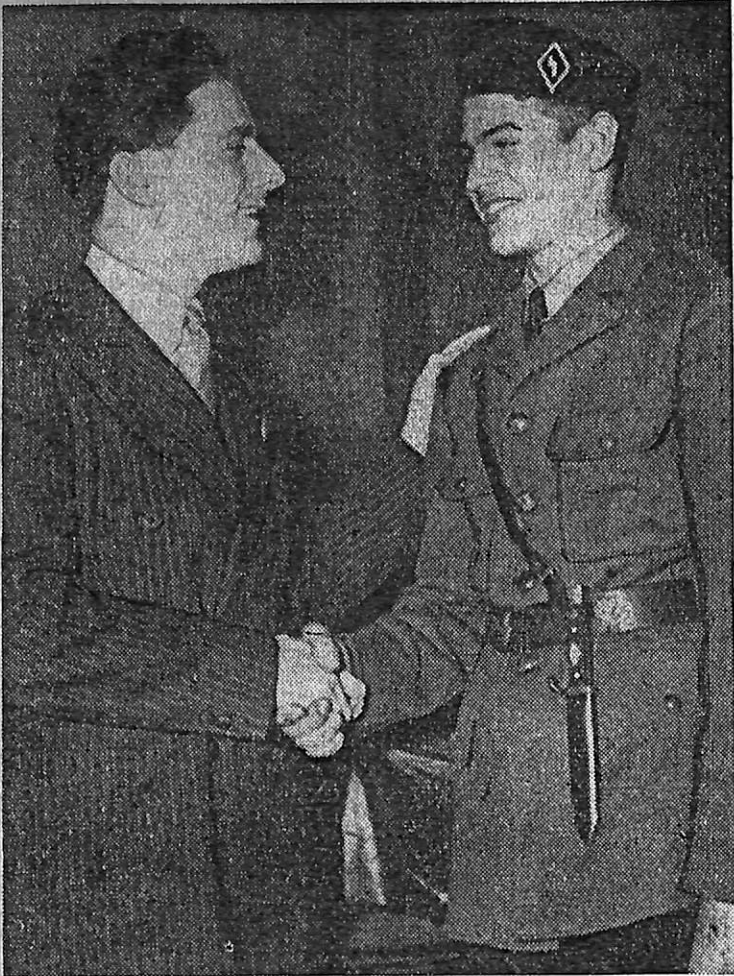
The most seriously injured of all the casualties, Cecil Schubert, thirty-eight years old, of 2927 Sixteenth Street, Brooklyn, whose skull was fractured, was reported last night

at Beth David Hospital to be in critical condition.

While the hearings drew crowds to Yorkville Court, Benjamin Schnall, co-lessee of the Yorkville Casino, was having more troubles. Three men who said they were Nazis called at the Casino to take away two pictures of Hitler and some swastika banners that had been installed for the celebration. He refused to let them in, saying that his chairs, spotted carpets and other furnishings had been damaged in the fighting to the extent of \$300. Nor would he permit the driver for a florist to take away pot plants which had been installed for the party. The florist then got a summons returnable today before Magistrate Burke, accusing Mr. Schnall of unlawfully withholding property.

Mr. Schnall, a Jew, said he had rented the Casino on Wednesday night for \$80, not knowing the nature of the celebration, which he said had been presented to him as a musical. Had he known it was a Nazi boy wow, he wouldn't have leased the hall for \$8,000, he said.

**Jew Wins Freedom for Nazi Arrested in Riot**



Associated Press photo

**Joseph Ellison, a Jewish lawyer (left), yesterday won dismissal for Otto Geissler, seventeen-year-old member of the German-American Bund, whose meeting Wednesday night in the Yorkville Casino celebrating Adolf Hitler's forty-ninth birthday ended in a riot when American war veterans at the meeting asked that speeches be made in English, not German. Ellison was appointed counsel for Geissler when the latter appeared without an attorney.**



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