

Strange Death of Bund Official Impedes Probe

By Ernest Moorer

Three days ago Mayor LaGuardia urged the State Department to keep a watchful eye on the leaders of the Nazi Bund, facing indictment for tax evasions, lest they attempt to skip the country. Yesterday it was revealed that one of the top leaders of the Bund was mysteriously dead and speedily cremated and that another had fled to Germany two weeks ago.

The two men beyond reach of the courts today are Richard J. Mettin, national treasurer of the Bund, and Fritz Schwiering, New Brighton Bund leader. A State Department announcement in Washington yesterday revealed that Schwiering skipped the country with his wife and one-year-old daughter aboard the German-American liner Hamburg on the night of May 3.

But strangest was the case of Richard J. Mettin, who besides his high position in Hitler's American branch organization, was also treasurer of the A. V. Publishing Co., publishers of the Weckruf and Beobachter, U. S. Nazi organ.

Here it should be noted that the missing Schwiering was business manager of this same Nazi sheet.

Mettin was allegedly taken critically ill on Saturday, May 6 at his home at 29 Norwood Ave., Clifton, Staten Island, where he lived with his wife and sister.

He was attended by Dr. H. Brig-

gin of 198 Broad St., St. George, who told the Daily Worker yesterday that he had not known Mettin prior to his illness. Mettin had been a resident of Staten Island for 10 years.

Three days later, Dr. Briggin advised his removal to St. Vincent's Hospital.

HURRIEDLY CREMATED

On Tuesday of this week the man listed as Mettin at St. Vincent's hospital died. Dr. Briggin said his death was caused by an infection of the blood stream.

Late Wednesday he was cremated at the Rose Hill Crematorium Linden, N. J., and his ashes were still at the crematorium yesterday.

Strangest of all was the fact that on the same day Dr. Briggin was called to treat Mettin on his deathbed this reporter saw and spoke to a man presented as Mettin and acting officially for the German-American Bund.

The occasion was the luncheon at the Hotel Astor, given by the American Defense Society at which U. S. Senator Robert R. Reynolds was the featured speaker.

The luncheon was attended by Fritz Kuhn and nine officers of the Bund who sat at table number two which was reserved in the name of RICHARD J. METTIN, "and guests."

During the luncheon a man who

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said he was Mettin and who was seated at Kuhn's table handed newspaper men a typewritten slip of paper which gave the names of the Bund officials seated there. This reporter asked the man to identify James Wheeler-Hill, secretary of the Bund, whose name was on the slip of paper. "Mettin" pointed out the ruddy-faced Wheeler-Hill sitting across the table from Kuhn.

Mettin, as national-treasurer of the Bund, was custodian of the financial records of the Nazi organization and it was upon these records that City Treasurer Almerindo Portfollo and later Commissioner of Investigation William B. Herlands based their inquiry into the Bund's tax dodging.

Yesterday the case against the Bund officials was turned over to District Attorney Thomas E. Dewey by the city officials for action.

What action Dewey intended to take concerning an investigation of Mettin's death could not be ascertained, but it was assumed that some investigation was in progress because the Mettin death certificate yesterday had been removed from the Staten Island health department and turned over to Thomas J. Duffield, registrar of records,