

U. S. Deals Smashing Blow At 57 Leaders of Bund

Group Newly Indicted on Charges Of National Defense Conspiracy

By the Associated Press.

NEW YORK, July 7.—A smashing blow at the German-American Bund involving 57 of its highest officers and active members over the Nation was begun today by Federal agents on newly returned indictments charging conspiracy to evade national defense regulations and institution of denaturalization proceedings.

Twenty-six were named in indictments charging conspiracy to evade the Selective Service Act and conspiracy to counsel bund members to resist service in the armed forces of the United States and of conspiracy to conceal bund affiliations in filling out alien registration forms. Three more were accused of all but selective service violation.

P. E. Foxworth, assistant FBI chief, announced that all 29 were in Federal custody. He said four had been in internment camps.

To Put Bund Out of Business.

The balance of those sought—among them national and sectional officials and principal leaders of the bund—were the object of denaturalization proceedings.

"We intend to put the bund out of

business," said United States Attorney Mathias Correa.

Fritz Kuhn, former national Bund leader, now in prison, and Gerhard Wilhelm Kunze, a subsequent Bund chieftain, arrested recently in Mexico and returned to this country yesterday, were involved in the Federal proceedings.

Denaturalization Instituted.

Denaturalization proceedings were instituted against Kuhn, serving a term for larceny, and Kunze was charged with evasion of the Selective Service Act, a charge on which he was held in \$50,000 bail yesterday. Kunze is wanted also in Hartford, Conn., to answer a Federal charge of violation of the 1917 Espionage Act.

Nominally defunct since the outbreak of the war between the United States and Germany, the Bund was charged in the indictments with continuing certain acts which Mr. Correa said confirmed a belief that the Bund was operating with underground tactics.

Mr. Correa said that numerous singing societies in the Yorkville section of New York and elsewhere had taken over Bund activities and

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continued to foster Nazi beliefs. He said these would be the subject of further investigation.

Sought to Further Reich Aims.

Mr. Correa said that under the cloak of the name "A Militant Organization of Free Americans," the Bund organization sought to further the political and propaganda aims of the German Reich.

The indictments strike at leaders in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Washington State and California.

One indictment alleged that on October 1, 1940, a command was issued over the name of Kunze to all bundists which technically urged compliance with the Selective Service Act, but added:

"We represent the standpoint, however, that an induction in the military service is not justified as far as it concerns Bund members and American Germans, for in the selective service law the citizenship rights of Bund members and the defenders of Germanism are unconstitutionally severed.

"Every man, if he can, will refuse to do military duty until this law and all other laws of the country and of the States which confine the citizenship rights of bund members are revoked."

Two Witnesses Kill Selves.

Mr. Correa declined to say how many bundists inducted into the Army had followed the command, but did say that Army officials had arrested a number of men who said they would not fight against the German fatherland.

Another command, also issued in Kunze's name, advised members not to mention their connection with the bund when complying with alien registration requirements.

For the last several months investigations into the bund have been in progress, and at least two witnesses committed suicide rather than testify before the grand jury. George Froebese of Milwaukee jumped under a railroad train in Indiana, while George Schwindl, a prospective witness, took his life in New York by gas.

Others Indicted.

Among those named in both indictments were: Wilbur V. Keegan, counsel for the Amerika Deutscher Volksbund until last January, with offices at Teaneck, N. J.; August Klapprott, leader of the bund's Eastern department; William Luedtke of Saddle River Township, N. J., secretary of the bund; Gustav Elmer, national treasurer of New York.

Attorney General Biddle said in Washington that the Justice Department would "carry on a vigorous and unrelenting attack against the enemies of the United States, whether they attempt to land upon our shores from Nazi submarines or whether they attempt to destroy us from within."

"This is war," Mr. Biddle declared in a statement, "and we will fight with every weapon at our command."

He described the indictment of 29 national and sectional officers of the German-American Bund as "simply another phase of the department's intensified campaign against actual or potential saboteurs of America's war effort."

Indicted on Two Counts.

Others indicted on both counts were: Dr. Otto Willumeit, head of the Chicago division of the Bund, now awaiting sentence in Hartford on his plea of guilty to espionage conspiracy, and Herman Schwinn, interned leader of the Bund's Western district.

Another national leader, Hugo Richard Steimle, interned national youth leader, was indicted only on the selective service charge.

Others described as unit leaders and indicted on both counts, except where noted, were: Otto Fentske, 48; Max Rapp, Hugo Weiss, Bruno Clemens Knupfer, William C. Krause, John August Grill, Walter Borchers, Carl Bregler, all of New York City; Karl A. Bachmann and Karl Richard Wendlandt, both of Buffalo; Louis Schatz, Troy, N. Y.; Ernst Martin Christoph, Summit, N. J.

Also John C. Fitting, Union City, N. J.; Ferdinand Callsen, South

Bend, Ind.; Josef Belohlavek, Cleveland, Ohio; Carl Frederick Berg, Minneapolis, Minn.; Walter F. Schneller, Jr., Erie, Pa.; Joseph Bachmaler, also of Erie; Herman Agne, Philadelphia, who was indicted only on the selective service charge; William Ottersbach, Seattle, Wash.; Hans Diebel, Los Angeles, indicted only on the selective service count.

Besides Kuhn and Elmer, the following were named in the denaturalization action: John Olden, Franz Xavier Schneller, both of New York; Herbert Otto Finders, Scarsdale, N. Y.; William C. Kunz, Conrad Koehler, Ernst Solzek, Henry von Holt, all of New York; Herman H. Hoeflich, Nanuet, N. Y.; Otto Hief Fagle, Yonkers, N. Y.; Ernst Wald Fickau, Alfonse Rambacher and Urban Kugler, all of New York.

Also Richard Schmidt and his son Edward, both of Poughkeepsie, N. Y.; Justice Hommel, White Plains, N. Y.; Leo C. C. New City; Mrs. Lucy Baltrusch, Christian Auch, Werner Ulrich, Ernst Glas, Karl Boltrauch and Martin Heinrich, all of New York; William Heller, Poughkeepsie; Paul Benzenhofer and Kurt Sassenhagen, both of New York.