

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1943

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Attorney General Francis Biddle announces that a Federal Grand Jury in Newark, New Jersey, today returned an indictment charging the German-American Vocational League, Inc., with headquarters in New York and branches in 11 principal cities, one of its subsidiary corporations and 27 of its officers and members with illegally conspiring to act as agents of the German Reich without proper notification to this government.

Those named in the indictment are:

GERMAN-AMERICAN VOCATIONAL LEAGUE, INC., also known as DAB (Deutsch-Amerikanische Berufsgemeinschaft), a New York corporation directly affiliated with the German Labor Front;

DAB RECREATIONAL RESORT, INC., a New York corporation owned by DAB and consisting of Camp Bergwald at Pompton Lakes, New Jersey;

FRITZ SCHROEDER, New York, National Leader of DAB and President of Recreational Resort, Inc;

FRED BUTTIG, former National Leader of DAB, now employed by the German government in Germany;

JOSEPH LIEBLEIN, New York, National Vice-president, Treasurer and Youth Leader of DAB, recently inducted into the Army and now stationed at Camp Ripley, Minnesota;

OTTO GREINER, Chicago, National Deputy Leader in charge of the Middle West District;

HANS FLOHR, Rochester, New York, an official of the Rochester branch of DAB;

EMIL SOCHA, New York, editor of the official DAB magazine, "Der Deutsche in Nord-Amerika";

THEODORE KOEHN, New York City, editor of the official DAB English language magazine, "In Retrospect";

GUSTAVE SCHMIDT, Chicago, member of the national board of directors and District Leader of the Middle West District;

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HERMANN GASTREICH, Kansas City, Missouri, official of the Kansas City branch;

ALBERT KIESLER, member of the national board of directors, formerly of New York he was barred from the Eastern Defense Command and now lives in Detroit;

KARL T. MARX, New York City, contributor to DAB publications;

JOHN KOBBE, Rochester, New York, Treasurer of the local branch of DAB;

KARL KRANZ, Rochester, New York, Leader of the local branch of DAB;

OTTO BREITNER, Philadelphia, Leader of the local branch of DAB, now interned as an alien enemy;

WALTER SCHALL, officer of the San Francisco branch, formerly a resident of that city he has been barred from the West Coast by the Western Defense Command and now lives in Salt Lake City;

HENRIAN WARTH, Guttenberg, New Jersey, member of the national board of directors;

FRITZ ZEGLIN, American representative of the German Labor Front and an employee of the German consulate in New York, he is now in Germany;

KURT BEYER, a former officer of DAB in San Francisco, an employee of the German consulate there, and local manager of the German Railroads Information office; he is now in Germany;

HANS NISSEN, Chicago, an officer of the local branch;

EMIL SCHNEIDER, San Francisco, an officer of the local branch, excluded from the West Coast by the Western Defense Command, he now lives in Denver;

HANS MEISSNER, Philadelphia, an officer of the local branch;

GUENTHER GIBBE, San Francisco, an officer of the local branch, now interned as an alien enemy;

FRANZ K. FERNZ, Los Angeles, an officer of the local branch, now in San Quentin Penitentiary for violation of the California sedition law;

HANS W. BJOERNSSEN, Los Angeles, an officer of the local branch of DAB;

ALBERT ROBERT BERTRAM, New York, National Secretary of DAB;

EMIL ROEDEL, San Francisco, active participant in affairs of the local branch of DAB and former secretary of the German-American Chamber of Commerce, and

PAUL F. L. SIEVERS, San Francisco, an officer of the local chapter, now living in Denver after being barred from the West Coast by the Western Defense Command.

The return of this indictment marks the culmination of one of the most complex and widespread investigations undertaken by the FBI. Presentation to the Grand Jury was made under the direction of Tom C. Clark, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division.

Directing the case for the government before the Grand Jury were Richard Hughes, and Howard M. Lawn, Assistant U. S. Attorneys for New Jersey, and Victor Woerheide, Edith Lowenstein and Jerome Simmons, Special Assistants to the Attorney General.

The indictment charges the defendants under Section 88, Title 18, U. S. Code, with conspiring (1) to violate the Notification Act of June 15, 1917, by acting as the agents of a foreign government without prior notification to the Secretary of State, and (2) to violate the Foreign Agents Registration Act of June 8, 1938, as amended, by acting as the agents of a foreign principal without proper registration with the Department of Justice. Penalties prescribed under the conspiracy statute are imprisonment for not more than two years or a fine of not more than \$10,000, or both.

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The indictment sets forth in extensive detail the close working relationship between the German-American Vocational League (DAB) and the National Socialist Workers (Nazi) Party in Germany from January, 1933, to January, 1942, the period covered by the conspiracy. Describing the essential anti-democratic philosophy of Nazism, the indictment states:

"National Socialism in the German Reich . . . is the very antithesis of democratic forms of government. Its main ideological basis is its claim of German racial supremacy . . . It asserts the natural right on the part of this superior community of people to use its military strength in the subjugation of those nations coming within its concept of Lebensraum ('living room'), making use of propaganda for the purpose of acquiring economic, political and cultural dominance. . . .

"National Socialism in Germany lays claim to the loyalty and inclusion within its racial framework of all persons throughout the world of German blood and descent . . . despite intervening citizenship acquired (in other countries) or naturalization, thus proclaiming the existence of a racial 'Volk-community' encompassing the nations of the world and indissolubly joined with the destiny of National Socialism and of the German Reich . . ."

The immediate origins of the DAB are alleged in the indictment to stem from the "Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfen Verband" (German Commercial League) of Hamburg, a society of German workers, employers and professional men which, in 1934, had dues-paying branches in many parts of the world, including the United States. In that year the organization together with its foreign branches was incorporated by decree within the official German Labor Front. In 1936 the American branch changed its name to German-American Vocational League, Inc., and entered into a formal contractual relationship with the parent organization, the German Labor Front. This agreement provided for certain reciprocal benefits and for the remittance of a percentage of DAB membership dues to the central organization in Germany. In addition to national headquarters in New York City,

DAB maintained active branches in Rochester, Newark, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle.

Through its affiliation with the German Labor Front, the indictment charges, DAB also gained official status with the "Hitler Jugend", the Nazi youth organization; the Reich's Ministry for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, the Reich's Authority for Tourism and the German Railroads Information Office, all agencies for the dissemination of German propaganda; the "Volksbund fuer das Deutschtum im Auslands", which exercised political control over Germans residing outside Germany, and similar official bureaus of the German government.

Throughout the period of the conspiracy, the indictment alleges, "the said Vocational League, for and on behalf of, and under the direction of the Government of the German Reich . . . served the interests of the same by making use of its local chapters for the purpose of spreading and disseminating the propaganda issued by the Government of the German Reich . . ." The principal objective of this propaganda was to secure acceptance of National Socialism in the United States and to prevent American participation in the war.

The conspiracy was carried out, the indictment charges, by the following means.

1. The Vocational League published various newspapers and periodicals which persistently praised National Socialism and urged their readers to help "keep America out of war". Although this was proffered as an honest isolationist viewpoint, the indictment alleges, "its real purpose was as an instrument of the Nazi party" to delude the American people "until so late that any help they might render to the enemies of Germany would be ineffectual".

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2. Through its members and branches, DAB distributed large quantities of propaganda literature and motion picture film prepared in Germany and arranged for lectures by propaganda speakers assigned to this country by the German Reich.

3. The League assisted actively in recruiting workers of German descent in America to return to German war industries. Financial assistance was offered these workers and they were assured that their membership in DAB entitled them proper status in the German Labor Front.

4. Certain of the individual defendants including Lieblein, Kiesler and Schmidt were sent to Germany at the joint expense of the League and the German Labor Front for training in "leadership schools" operated by the German Reich at Danzig and Lahr-Baden. These schools provided instruction in the tactics required to bring about the world domination of National Socialism.

5. The Vocational League made regular use of the facilities of the various German consulates to communicate in code with its headquarters in Germany and to get instructions. It also turned over its membership rosters to the consulates as an aid in recruiting workers to go to Germany.

6. The League received approximately \$13,000 during 1937 and 1938 from the German Labor Front with which to set up DAB Recreational Resort, Inc., and to purchase and equip Camp Bergwald at Pompton Lakes, New Jersey. This was used as a recreational and educational center by the league for the dissemination of propaganda, for the development of its youth organization and as an attraction for prospective members.

7. The League concealed its true character as an agent of the German government by assuming the false front of a fraternal and recreational

society. In the furtherance of this aspect of the conspiracy, a meeting was held at Camp Bergwald on June 22, 1941, attended by Schroeder, Lieblein, Koehn, Kiesler and others where it was decided to abandon "certain outward and notorious activities of the League", but "to continue in secrecy and disguised form their newspaper, 'In Retrospect' and their other propaganda activities".

3. Throughout the period of the conspiracy, the League "wilfully and feloniously" failed and refused to advise the Secretary of State of its character as an agent of the German Reich or to file with the Secretary of State any statement whatever showing its character as an agent of a foreign principal.

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