

German-American Bund Rally in New York City (February 20, 1939)

Abstract

This short 2017 documentary by Marshall Curry titled *A Night at the Garden* consists entirely of archival footage documenting a German-American Bund rally that was staged at New York's Madison Square Garden in February 1939. The German-American Bund was one of many pro-Nazi copycat organization that sprung up around the United States and Europe after Hitler came to power in 1933. The largest in the U.S., the Bund was led by Fritz Kuhn (1896-1951), a German chemical engineer and veteran of World War I who had emigrated to the United States in 1928. Despite Hitler's government distancing itself from the Bund in order to maintain some semblance of good relations with the United States, Kuhn built up his organization on the model of the NSDAP, with bodyguards, uniforms, and political indoctrination family camps. The event that took place on February 20, 1939, on the birthday of, according to Kuhn, the "first American fascist" George Washington, saw 22,000 people fill New York's Madison Square Garden, where the audience was treated to a rally celebrating whiteness and denouncing Jews. At one point, a Jewish American rushed the stage, only to be beaten back by Kuhn's "Ordnungsdienst" (order guard) and escorted out by the police. The Bund was a clear expression of homegrown American fascism, which played off of widespread antisemitic tropes in Germany and the United States. Not long after this rally, Kuhn was jailed for tax evasion, he was detained as an enemy alien during the war, and his citizenship was revoked in 1943. After the war ended, he was deported to Germany. The German Bund movement saw a rapid decline after war broke out with Germany.

Source

Source: *A Night at the Garden*, 2017. Documentary, b/w, dir. Marshall Curry.
<https://vimeo.com/237489146>

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