

Hermann Goering Suicide Highlighted War Trials for Former Prosecutor

By Alice E. Morgan

To most of us the phrase "to stand trial" means a brief hearing in a traffic court following some infraction of the highway laws, in which we felt we were entirely blameless.

To DeWitt N. Travis, 1927 Forest, it means months of tension and strain. Months of hearing thousands of words which deal with the most galling horrors of modern civilization. Travis served during these Nuremberg trials as one of the assistant prosecutors for the United States Chief of Counsel.

He spent six months briefing cases against German suspects who were to be accused with violating the laws of international warfare, on which the trials were based.

The first trial, the International Military Tribunal, consisted of two judges each from the United States, England, France and Russia with a like number of prosecutors.

This court tried the top-ranking Nazi officials. It was the trial of Hermann Goering, Adolph Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Pappe, among several others. The trial lasted several months, and as everyone knows, the majority were found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.

Goering Suicide

"While a great deal of the testimony was so horrible as to be unforgettable, the most startling incident came after the trial. It was the prison suicide, by poison, of Hermann Goering, only a few hours before he was to go to the gallows. This created world wide interest, naturally enough, on many angles."

Following this first "blanket" trial, Travis explained, the four major countries began their own trials. They set up tribunals in their own zones, and testimony was given against high ranking Gestapo agents, industrialists, medical men and others suspected of being Nazi sympathizers.

The American tribunal spent many weeks listening to the testimony of thousands who had suffered at the hands of so-called "medical research." He said it was difficult for the average mind to accept the information which was given the court against these men.

Recital of Horror

Their attitude was that whatever they did in their "research" would be of benefit to the treatment of soldiers wounded in action. The one incident which Travis mentioned was the test on many of several young women.

"These girls," he said, "showed the scars of bone operations on their legs. The idea was to prove, through a series of bone removals, just how much could be taken away and still hold together under either normal life or in conditions of strain."

This particular trial was presided over by Judge Walter B. Beasly who was on leave of absence from the Washington State Supreme Court. The associate judges and one alternate judge were also in attendance.

The trial lasted from December, 1946, through August, 1947, at which time 16 of the 23 defendants were found guilty. Eight were sentenced to hang. Among these was Karl Brandt, personal physician to Adolph Hitler in Berlin.

Asked what the reaction of the "man on the street" was to these trials, Travis said he did not feel there was a great deal of resentment. At the first trial German citizens were not admitted, and did not attend. The American trials, however, were open, as court cases are here, to the public.

"The German people did attend," he said. "They felt it, of course. These were the people who had been their leaders. There must have been some resentment naturally, just as there must have been some shame in their reaction."

"However, they did not seem to hold it against any other country after the trials were uncovered. They had too many more important personal things to attend to. They had neither the time nor the capacity for much hard feeling."

Mr. and Mrs. Travis were quartered in Nuremberg, and from their home could look down upon the city. Nuremberg had been 80 per cent bombed, in retaliation for the unwanted bombing of Coventry, England.

An Easy Target

"It was easy to bomb Nuremberg," Travis said. "A river ran through the heart of the city, and with the slightest amount of night-light, stood out like a silver ribbon. A bombardier had only to make sure he dropped his load on either side of the river, to know he had made a hit."

since they can see how it will benefit their own homeland.

"Germany has always been a nation of many highways and is not confined solely with supplying food and clothing and work for them. We are supplying them with entertainment, too."

"There are concerts, operas, motion pictures, art exhibits and other forms of entertainment we can offer. We want to develop their social life and in so doing, their friendship. They will be grateful for material things, but their pleasure will create something deeper than gratefulness."

"At present, their incomes are low. However, the commercial life has been built enough that they can buy things—that is, the goods are there to be bought. This, also, gives them a feeling of friendliness and security."

Youth Movement Progresses

"Mrs. Travis, and the wives of other Americans working in the trials, were given opportunities to assist in this movement. They helped in the Youth Movement, which is making great progress with the boys and girls of the country."

"Travis said that these young people with books and entertainment. They worked with them, to show them the benefits which a country like ours could give them. They made friends of these children by doing for them, by seeing that they received the things they longed for."

"Travis said that at nearly every meeting of the American group, at the close of each trial day, at a restaurant, opera house or any place large numbers of Americans might attend, crowds of chocolate candy."

"They seem to crave chocolate," he said. "The wives of the Americans in Germany are doing everything they can to help them get it."

Easter Party

"One big event was their Easter party. The American women in Nuremberg managed to collect several hundred dozen eggs to color them. Using the annual White House party as a pattern, they arranged an Easter Egg hunt. Some of those children had never seen an egg before, let alone so many at one time."

"The American army did everything possible to create a normal life for these women. They conducted tours for them, and arranged entertainment. The wives were thus able to contact many German people and install even deeper the American way of living in them."

Travis said one of the outstanding changes he has seen in Germany is the flower boxes. Having lived in Europe a great deal before the war, he knew Germany as a nation of music- and flower-lovers.

"In nearly every flower box in Nuremberg today," he said, "you will find tobacco growing. Cigarettes are almost impossible to get, so the Germans are growing their own tobacco. To smoke them, they have to be a strong nation!"

Have You Met . . .

Mr. and Mrs. Palmer E. Bollinger, formerly of Detroit and now of 835 Yarmouth and their children, Palmer and Susan? Mr. Bollinger is a salesman with Reynolds and Reynolds Company.

Commission Adopts Several Traffic Recommendations

Several temporary changes in city traffic regulations became final Monday evening when they were accepted officially by members of the city commission.

Chief of Police W. Woodward has been extended south from Brown to George street on the west and from Forest to Highway on the east. In addition, the speed limit has been reduced to 25 mph, with an additional measure prohibiting U-turns.

Police Chief Ralph W. Moxley, in his report, said that while he felt parallel parking was much safer, present conditions did not make it feasible. This system lessens the number of cars which can be parked in a given area. Angle parking will have to continue until further facilities are available, he said.

No U-Turns

Chief Moxley also said enforcement would be rigid to prohibit U-turns between these two points. Maple avenue between Hunter and Southfield has also been included in the prohibited areas, due to traffic density.

Moxley pointed out that this ruling applies to those drivers who swing into intersection to make U-turns. He said this practice actually increases the accident hazard.

Traffic on 14 Mile road's west bound lane may now legally drive at 35 mph. This applies from the easterly to the westerly boundaries of the city. Motorists traveling east on this street are in the jurisdiction of Royal Oak, Moxley pointed out, and therefore should check their speed against the posted limits.

New Stop Signs

Moxley said stop signs had been erected at the intersection of Chester and Merrill streets, making the latter the through street. The Pierce school area came in for several traffic regulation changes as additional safety measures for school children.

The street area immediately adjacent to the school property will no longer have legal parking. This applies to the east side of the street where cars had formerly been parked for long periods, creating an extreme hazard.

Adopt New Formula for Assessments on Clinton Drain

The city commission learned Monday evening that the previous formula regarding Clinton Spillway assessments was abandoned at a recent hearing and a new one adopted by the inter-county drainage board.

City Manager Donald C. Egbert said this would mean that about 30.4 per cent of the costs would be assessed against Oakland county. The actual cost to the City of Birmingham, he estimated, would be in the vicinity of \$8,000.

He reported that a drainage district had been created on the Red Run question, but nothing more accomplished as yet. This drainage district serves approximately two-thirds of the county's population area.

Egbert said he felt there was some inequity in costs for Birmingham's east side drainage, but that they would be modified to secure greater equity for the city.

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