

THE MINISTRIES CASE

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War Crimes Case
15/49

In 1944, when the German High Command realized that it could not win the war, Otto von Stuelpnagel was said to have been entrusted with the task of preparing a memorandum on steps to be taken to win the next struggle. Dispatches based on information gathered by the French underground and made available in Washington quoted him as follows:

"What does a provisional defeat matter to us, if, because of the destruction of manpower and material which we will have been able to inflict on our enemies and neighboring territories, we have obtained a margin of economic and demographic superiority greater than before 1939?"

Von Stuelpnagel's plan is recalled with extraordinary pertinence as we examine the exhaustive material brought to light at the trials of Nazi war criminals held in Germany since the end of the war.

Of special import as concerns the Jewish phase is "the Ministries Case" now taking place in Nuremberg before an American Military government tribunal. In this case a number of high ranking officials of the Nazi government and party have been indicted on eight counts including crimes against humanity, as a result of which "millions of people were murdered, tortured, starved, enslaved and robbed." The importance of this case from the Jewish point of view is the fact that it demonstrates clearly how the entire Nazi hierarchy and every facet of Nazi life played a part in the great conspiracy against the Jews of Europe. Involved were the Foreign Office, the Ministries of Interior, Finances, Food and Agriculture, the Chiefs of the Presidential and Reich Chancelleries, the Reich Press Chief and the Reichsbank. These cooperated with the SS, the police, "private" banking and industry to "comb through Europe from West to East" and commit all Jews under their dominance to the crematoria, including those of Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Spain and Portugal.

This aim is clearly defined in a captured Nazi document, the minutes of a secret meeting held on January 20, 1942 to prepare the master plan for the final solution of the Jewish problem. This meeting decided: "Under proper directions, the Jews should, for final solution, be brought East for use as labor. In big gangs, with separation of the sexes, the Jews capable of work are employed in roadbuilding, in which a greater part will fall out through natural diminution. The surviving remnant, with strongest resistance, must be treated accordingly, as these people are the germ cell of a new Jewish problem." Each of the Nazi agencies had its part to play and each fulfilled its role.

On March 20, 1942, State Secretary Weizsaecker, a defendant, wrote that the German Foreign Office "had no objections" to the deportation of 6,000 French and stateless Jews to Auschwitz. Viesenmayer, another defendant, reported to the Foreign Office from Yugoslavia on December 10, 1941 that "quick and draconic settling of the Jewish question in Serbia is the most urgent and expedient necessity." On April 23, 1944, he reported from Budapest that "starting May 15, 3,000 Jews will be sent weekly ... to Auschwitz." Steengracht, another employee of the department, held up the evacuation of thousands of Jewish children in July, 1944, until "the end of the month when the action against the Jews in Hungary will be concluded for the most part and the intervention will have become pointless."

The Ministry of Interior is represented by Wilhelm Stuckart, State Secretary from 1934 to 1945. As Frick's deputy he was equally responsible with the former for the introduction of the infamous Nuremberg Laws, and the supplementary decrees which he personally drafted. At the conference of January 20, 1942, he suggested compulsory sterilization of all Jews. Three years later he wrote: "One can consider the aims of the racial legislation as already achieved... it has brought about a preliminary solution of the Jewish problem and, at the same time, substantially prepared the final solution."

The Ministry of Finance is included through Count Schwerin-Krosigk, Hitler's Finance Minister, who was charged with collecting the billion mark fine levied against the Jews following the pogroms of November, 1938. His Ministry was the center of Jewish spoliation and a collection point for loot, including that taken from the victims of the extermination centers. In close liaison with the Ministry of Finance was the Reichsbank which, inter alia, received 76 shipments of valuables from Lublin and Auschwitz valued at 60 million Reichmarks. This latter institution financed the so-called "SS-industries" which were operated through the use of slave labor exclusively. In all these activities and, particularly in the over-all "organization" of Jewish assets in all occupied countries through organization, sequestration and outright confiscation, the SS were supported by "private" banks, particularly the Dresdner Bank.

The Ministry for Food and Agriculture expelled Jews from every phase of German agriculture, and instituted a starvation program extending to the occupied territories, particularly Poland.

The heads of Hitler's two important chancelleries, defendants Lammers and Meissner of the Reich and Presidential Chancelleries, also contributed their share to the successful "solution" of the Jewish problem. The former was involved in the organization of the Criminal Jurisdiction against the Jews in the Eastern territories while the latter misused his power in such a manner as to condone all the crimes of the regime.

It was the task of defendant Dietrich, Reich Press Chief and sovereign ruler over more than 3,000 German dailies and periodicals, to condition public opinion for the persecution and liquidation of the Jews.

The United States Government has played an important role in bringing Nazi war criminals to justice. However, some weeks ago German newspapers in Berlin reported a "strong suspicion" among Americans themselves that German defense attorneys were being assisted by members of the War Crimes Prosecution Staff. In the trial of 12 leading officials of the Krupp Armament Works it was found that after a careful check of motions submitted by defense attorneys that they had been first written in English and then translated into German. Affidavits have been turned over in advance to German lawyers who are often found to be familiar with supposedly secret rebuttal material. In some cases the defense has obtained photostats of material which could only have come from the United States.

This trend of events has created a sense of uneasiness in many quarters. It is being interpreted in the light of military government directives which have turned over more and more power to the Germans until they have come to consider themselves as co-belligerents with the United States against the Soviet Union, a notion which has received impetus from the fact that the European Recovery Program has been predicated upon the rebuilding of Germany's industrial potential. It has led to the conclusion that the concept of Germany's guilt as an aggressor nation is being relegated to the heap of discarded ideals along with the concept of One World, the struggle against world reaction and the solidarity of all peoples.

Such a trend does not take account of the menace to world peace which still lurks within the fascist fabric of present day Germany. To those who doubt the correctness of this view, a careful reading of General von Stuelpnagel's famous memorandum is strongly recommended.