

Details Of How 11 Nazis Died—1 By Poison, 10 On Gallows

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Metal cylinder about two and a half inches long and three-quarters of an inch in diameter, plugged at either end and containing a glass vial with the potassium cyanide.

An identical poison container had been found in Goering's possession on his arrival at Mendorf last May. That vial had been concealed in a can of powdered coffee.

Less than two hours before Goering was scheduled to lead the band of surviving Nazi leaders to the improvised gallows erected in the Nuremberg prison gymnasium a security guard heard the prisoner make "a strange noise."

The cell was instantly opened and Goering was found dead, the crushed vial of potassium cyanide between his teeth.

One Chance In Million

How Goering had succeeded in what prison officials believed was a million to one chance of taking his life was not clear. He had gone to bed early.

The guard assigned to watch Goering reported he had not seen Goering's hands near his mouth.

Suspicion centered on Goering's last visitors since his cell had been repeatedly searched. One report was that Goering had declined to take exercise for the last three days, possibly as part of his plot to conceal the poison vial from disclosure.

A group of correspondents taken on an inspection of death row in Nuremberg prison 45 minutes earlier had seen Goering through a cell peephole, apparently sound asleep. He was dressed in pajamas and his hands rested on the blanket, the right fist clenched, and possibly at that very moment clenching the poison vial.

Goering's 11th hour suicide brought a drastic tightening of security precautions in the final hour or so before the condemned men were led, one by one, to the gymnasium in the prison courtyard where three black scaffolds had been erected.

10 Died In Hour and Third

The 10 surviving prisoners were shackled to guards.

Outside a cold drizzle of rain was falling. The bomb-shattered city of Nuremberg, once the show place of Nazism and the scene of Hitlerian pomp and ceremony, lay silent and dead except for the bustle of activity around the grim-walled prison.

The end of the Nazis—first men in history to pay with their lives by order of a world tribunal for crimes adjudged of global dimensions—was accomplished swiftly and with precision.

From the moment Joachim von Ribbentrop mounted the gallows and Executioner M. Sgt. John G. Woods, San Antonio, Tex., adjusted the noose around his neck until Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the tenth, was pronounced dead only one hour and 41 minutes elapsed.

The trap was sprung for Ribbentrop at 1:16 a. m. (6:16 p. m. Tuesday, Indianapolis time). Seyss-Inquart was pronounced dead at 2:57 a. m.

A moment later Goering's body was brought into the execution chamber where some 40 official witnesses, including eight men representing the press of the world, had witnessed the executions.

Saw Goering's Body
Selkirk Pantan, London Daily Express correspondent, described the scene:

"Two American soldiers entered the death chamber with its three unadorned purple-black scaffolds of rough wood, carrying a stretcher. On it was a body covered by a khaki American army blanket. Two bare feet, white and stiff, stuck out beneath the blanket. Soldiers put it on the floor and the witnesses and we eight allied reporters chosen by lot to report the end of the last princes of Nazism gathered around it.

"The blanket was whipped off. Goering, who had tricked the allies to the last, lay dead, wearing disarrayed black silk pajama trousers and a pale silk pajama coat. Doctors examined him.

"Then, an American colonel said: 'Okay—take him away!'

Sentences Are Read

Thus, at 3 a. m. ended the final chapter in the creation by the victors of world war II of the new doctrine that the men who launch their nations upon aggressive war shall pay for their guilt at the bar of world justice.

The drama began shortly before midnight when Col. Burton C. Andrus, prison commandant, proceeded to carry out the execution orders of the four-power allied control council.

Arthur Gaeth, Mutual broadcasting correspondent, described the scene:

"At 11:38 p. m. he (Col. Andrus) entered the first cell.

"I quote the colonel: 'I have been directed by the allied control council to again read to you your sentence.' Then followed the sentence for each. It was then that the prisoners first knew. Each bowed courteously and submitted to manhandling.

"Julius Streicher first glared at the soldier. When the colonel stepped in he turned and said 'Thank you.' Fritz Sauckel refused to change his clothes. When the cuffs were locked he screamed: 'I pay my respects to American officers and American soldiers but not to American justice!'

Get Pork and Pancakes

An hour still stood between the condemned men and the gallows. They were allowed to eat their last meal if they wished—canned pork, tomato and potato salad, pancakes and coffee.

Just before 1 a. m. the eight allied correspondents, accompanied by Dr. Wilhelm Hoegner, minister president of Bavaria, and Dr. Friedrich Lüssner, general prosecutor of the German high court at Nuremberg, entered the execution chamber where the official witnesses headed by American Brig. Gen. Roy V. Rickard, British Brig. Patton Walsh, Russian Maj. Gen. P. M. Molokov

and French Gen. Morel were waiting.

Kingsbury Smith, International News service correspondent, described the scene:

"The black-painted wooden scaffolds stood inside the gymnasium. Two of them were used alternately to hang the condemned men individually, while the third was held in reserve.

"The 10 once great men in Hitler's Reich that was to have lasted for a thousand years walked up 13 wooden steps to a platform eight feet high which was also eight feet square.

"Ropes were suspended from a crossbeam supported on two posts. Correspondents took their places at eight wooden tables and waited for Ribbentrop's appearance.

Basil Gingell of the British Exchange Telegraph agency described the scene:

"As the former foreign minister walked handcuffed to his guard through ranks of American security guards a chaplain walked beside him. The night was dark and a slight wind ruffled Ribbentrop's uncombed hair.

"Three sharp knocks sounded on the door. A colonel standing immediately inside wheeled sharply around and the door was opened.

Ordered to State Name

"Blinded in the sudden light, Ribbentrop held his head high. The handcuff was removed from his wrist and his hands were tied behind his back. Then, preceded by a colonel of the execution party and supported on either side by American soldiers he walked firmly to the scaffold. At the foot of the 13 steps at the top of which hung a noosed rope an American officer asked: 'State your name.'

"The request was translated into German but Ribbentrop made no answer. It was repeated and in a firm voice he answered: 'Joachim von Ribbentrop.'

"The American officer mounts the steps first. Slowly and between the two guards Ribbentrop steps up. He looks neither right nor left as his feet are bound though he must be conscious that in this chamber of death where 10 men are to die in the next two hours all eyes are on him—first to pay the penalty.

Wants 'Peace for World'

"Have you any last words to say?' asks the officer of the escorting party while the gray-haired Protestant chaplain, the Rev. H. F. Gerecke, stands on one side.

"Ribbentrop does not look at his questioner but keeps his eyes fixed on top of the improvised blackout that covers the window and in a ringing voice which echoes through the building cries: 'God protect Germany. My last wish is that German unity should remain and that an understanding between east and west will come about and peace for the world.'

"The black hood is then placed over his head by the American hangman. The noose is placed around his neck, and with a sound that seems something between a crash and a thunderous bump, the trapped doors spring open. Twenty minutes later the doctor pronounced life extinct."

Hear Rope Creak

The hour was 1:16 a. m.

"A strange quietness descends on the hall as the noise of the execution ends and the rope with 13 twists hangs down tauntly through the open trap," Mr. Gingell continued.

"Then through the building comes the most eerie of sounds—that creaking rope as it swings to and fro.

"It sounds like the moaning of a tormented spirit crying softly.

"The hangman and his assistant then move to the second scaffold. There comes a tramp of steps outside the door again—three knocks and the officer and guard spring to attention."

Wants 'Mercy for Germany'

The knocks signalled the arrival of 62-year-old Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the German supreme command, guilty on four counts of the international indictment now come to pay the supreme penalty.

Mr. Smith reported:

"The Prussian field marshal entered the execution chamber with his head held high and looked around while his hands, manacled behind his back, were being tied with leather cord. He walked with military bearing between two guards to the scaffold and mounted slowly but steadily. His last words, uttered in a full, clear voice, were:

"I call on God Almighty to have mercy on the German people. More than two million German soldiers went to their death for the Fatherland before me. I follow my sons—all for Germany."

The trap sprung at 1:19 a. m. and at 1:33 a. m. he was pronounced dead.

Duelling Scars Visible

Next came Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, of the Nazi security police and the lieutenant of Hitler held responsible for the death of millions of victims of gas chambers and other instruments of the Nazi extermination policy.

"Appearing sleepily, disturbed, pale, his duelling scars very much in evidence, Kaltenbrunner, climbed the stairs and made his last pronouncement:

"I served the German people and my fatherland with willing heart. I did my duty according to my laws. I am sorry that in her trying hours she was not led only by soldiers. I regret that crimes were committed in which I had no part. Good luck, Germany."

The trap was sprung at 1:38 a. m. and 11 minutes later he was pronounced dead.

Next came Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi philosopher, arch-priest of Nazi theory and the man who welded the doctrine of the "master race" into a Hitler religion.

Mr. Gaeth reported:

"From him there were no last words. He only cleared his throat. He waited to pray. The chaplain merely stood by. The trap was sprung only a minute after he entered the room at 1:47 a. m. Thirteen minutes later he was

carted off to a nameless grave."

Hans Frank, who was Hitler's gauleiter for Poland—the man who master-minded the German effort to scorch the Polish earth and destroy the Polish people was fifth to die.

Mr. Gaeth reported:

"A penitent soul with a smile on his face entered the room as guards brought in the bound Hans Frank. He climbed the stairs followed by the Catholic Franciscan father, In Crakow, Poland, several months ago Cardinal Sapieha, who had much to do with him during the occupation, told me that Frank found religion four years too late.

"This morning the smile never left his face until the hood covered it. The tall Frank quietly remarked: 'I am thankful for the kind treatment which I received during this incarceration and I pray God to receive me mercifully.'

He died at 2:08 a. m., eleven and a half minutes after the trap was sprung.

Dr. Wilhelm Frick, once reichsminister of interior and "protector"

of Bohemia and Moravia, went to the gallows at 2:08 a. m. and was pronounced dead at 2:19 a. m.

He wore into the execution chamber the same sports coat he appeared in every day during the trial and his face bore, a puzzled, bewildered expression. From the scaffold he said only: 'Let live eternal Germany.'

Julius Streicher, Germany's No. 1 Jew-baiter, came next and went to his death with a screaming, hysterical performance that included the only "Heil Hitler" of the execution.

Mr. Smith reported:

"Streicher appeared in the chamber at 12 1/2 minutes after 2 a. m. A warning knock by a guard preceded Streicher's entry. Streicher was stopped immediately inside the door by two army sergeants who closed in on each side of him and held his arms, while another sergeant who had followed him from behind removed the manacles from his hands and replaced them with a leather cord.

"Streicher's scream of 'Heil Hitler'

sent a shiver down the back of this correspondent. As its echo died away another American colonel standing by the steps of the scaffold said sharply: 'Ask the man his name.' Streicher answered: 'You know my name well.' The interpreter repeated his request and the condemned man shouted: 'Julius Streicher.'

Glares at Executions

"Guards then started moving Streicher up the steps. As he mounted to the platform the bearded Jew-baiter called out: 'Now I go to God.'

"Streicher was swung around to face the audience in front of him. He glared at the allied officers and the eight correspondents representing the world's press who were lined up against a wall behind small tables directly facing the gallows.

"With burning hatred in his eyes, Streicher looked down at the witnesses and shouted: 'Purim fest 1946! (Purim is a Jewish holiday celebrated in July recording the hanging of Haman, a Jew-baiter

of Groom in Hurd Biblical days). 'An American officer near the scaffold then asked the man if he had any last words and Streicher snarled: 'The Bolsheviks will hang you one of these days.'

"Just as the black hood was about to be placed upon his head, Streicher said: 'I am with God. And as it was being adjusted Streicher's muffled voice could be heard to say: 'Adele, my dear wife.'

"At that moment the trap was sprung with a loud bang. When the rope snapped taut and the body swung wildly a groan could be heard distinctly from within the dark interior of the scaffold."

At 2:28 a. m. Streicher was pronounced dead.

Sauckel Proclaims Innocence

Fritz Sauckel, Hitler's boss of slave labor, was the eighth to die.

Mr. Gaeth reported:

"From previous observations it was thought generally around here that Sauckel would have to be carried in. But he had pulled himself together. He spat out the name hanging of Haman, a Jew-baiter

of Groom in Hurd Biblical days). 'An American officer near the scaffold then asked the man if he had any last words and Streicher snarled: 'The Bolsheviks will hang you one of these days.'

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