

Chapter 10

October 1945

After my first few days at Dachau, I visit the large facilities for the trials at Nuremberg, 70 miles north. The main trial there, originally scheduled to start four months before the trial at Dachau, has been delayed because of a weak courtroom floor needing considerable shoring. The Dachau trial thus starts five days earlier than the one at Nuremberg. The latter trial is nonetheless more heavily publicized because of its top Nazi defendants.

The indictment against the 24 defendants at Nuremberg contains four counts: Crimes against Peace, Waging Aggressive War, Crimes against Humanity, and Violations of the Rules of Land Warfare. Except for the latter violations, they are innovative charges *after the fact* and are based on treaties and assurances of nonaggression, some executed shortly before invasion of a country, to which Germany was a party. None spells out actions against individuals or their punishment.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson has worked out the Nuremberg indictment. According to the June 18, 1945, issue of *Time International*, the victors have very little written law to work with and so plan to remedy that deficiency by making law to suit the case. In the United States, crimes and their punishment against individuals must be spelled out by statutes *before* the offense is committed. The merit of prosecution for acts against laws made after the fact likely will be argued for years.

By contrast, all of the cases prepared and tried in the Dachau courtrooms come under two treaties to which Germany is a signatory. The 1907 Hague Treaty, as amended, prohibits ill treatment of civilians in conquered countries, and the 1929 Geneva Treaty, as amended, prohibits ill treatment of disarmed enemy prisoners of war. These long-recognized treaties, the basis for the Rules of Land Warfare, permit the prosecution and punishment of individual perpetrators. In addition, the crimes prosecuted at Dachau come under the criminal laws of Germany and of the conquered countries in which they have been committed. That is, the laws specified such crimes as assault, kidnapping, mayhem, murder, and their punishments *before* the criminal acts were committed.

On another trip, I go through several towns in Czechoslovakia, finding many subcamps, carbon copies of those in Germany. I interview some of the subcamps' inmates to obtain evidence of war crimes.

In Czechoslovakia, buildings and towns look poorer, more ill-kept than in Germany, but the people cheer us wherever we go, a refreshing change. Czech and American flags hang side by side in many places. The Czechs are thoroughly pauperized, but they are busy kicking the

Sudeten (southern) Germans out of the country with considerable spirit.

Our trip into Austria is more scenic. The Alps and the pine-rimmed lakes are breathtaking. I find the mother camp Mauthausen near Linz and interview some slave laborers who were beaten and tortured. I have names and descriptions of the long-gone staff members who tortured them. I keep careful records of all the evidence I find.

In my investigation of the Mauthausen concentration camp, I discover a subcamp of the Berlin mother camp, Sachsenhausen, where the Nazis made counterfeit money for most of the countries of Europe plus Great Britain (according to the natives). I later obtain a memo by American Capt. R. Hrbeck stating that after the official end of the war on May 7, 1945, affidavits were taken from Oska Skala and Dr. Franklin Klein, both prisoners of the Nazis who escaped execution. The affidavits detail the forging of foreign currencies and identity cards on direct order from Heinrich Himmler. Attached to the memo is a list of 29 people, describing the involvement of each and naming Bernhard Krueger as head of the counterfeiting projects at Sachsenhausen and its subcamps. The plates, plans, and production records were put in boxes and thrown into Traun and Atter Lakes near Salzburg, Austria.

Here, too, the owners of any of the phony currency are required to bring all they have to a bank. The bank issues deposit credits against which depositors may draw up to a certain amount each month in the new currency. The policy outlaws all the old money and minimizes inflation and the black market. The wealthy German natives cry “bloody murder” and “communism,” but there is no alternative.

Back at Dachau, we have many official visitors from the United States. The most serious is Sen. Claude D. Pepper, of Florida, who has two staff persons making notes during my tour of the camp. Some other members of Congress seem more interested in frivolity (liquor and women) than the history and horrors of the camp.

We lose a few prisoners every night. They escape by burrowing under the fence, which is no longer electrified. And there is no moat. The guard towers, searchlights, and guard dogs are all in use, but somehow a few prisoners manage to find a way out.

One day we discover a cache of gold teeth inside a mattress. The Nazis always knocked out the gold fillings and bridges from the mouths of killed slave laborers before taking their bodies to the crematory. We know that many slave laborers, especially Jews, converted their valuables into diamonds, then had dentists drill holes in their molars, place the diamonds in the holes, and cover the holes with silver fillings. The Nazi guards discovered this by accident while extracting gold from the prisoners, we hear. The American guards search everywhere for the diamonds, even in what appears to be freshly turned earth. Nothing is said of what they will do should they find any.

On one evening I take 40 Radio City Rockettes on a tour of the camp. Then they come to my living quarters for cocktails and dinner. Their chaperone, a woman of about 45, tells me many stories, in a coarse voice. I spend most of my time with her, laughing at her bawdy jokes—not so much for the content as for the way she tells them.

Witness to Barbarism

The Rockettes, all about the same size, have beautiful figures, but their faces don't match their bodies. After dinner they return to Munich to perform for the American soldiers.

My perquisites include an elderly housekeeper who keeps my large bedroom immaculate and is proud to show me how she has pressed everything, including my socks, and neatly placed my clothes in the drawers of a large bureau. One day I come home at lunch time to get documents and find her cleaning the bathroom. I ask her why the bathroom doesn't contain the commode, which is located in another small room down the hall, as in many German homes. She replies in broken English, "Suppose you shaving and you Frau come to sit. Romance goes out the vindow."



Hitler's home—Der Berghof Obersalzberg (also known as the Eagle's Nest) at Berchtesgaden, Austria, with underground bunkers. Here he could be with Eva Braun and dog Blondi.