

10 The Nuremberg Ten

At the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (German spelling: Nürnberg) that sat between 20 November, 1945 and 1 October, 1946, 24 leading Nazis were tried for various crimes. 12 were sentenced to death, including Martin Bormann who was tried in absentia. The indictments were: (Count 1) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace, (Count 2) Planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace, (Count 3) War crimes, and (Count 4) Crimes against humanity. Not all defendants were charged with all four crimes, and not all were found guilty as charged. Since the men who were condemned to hang are not all equally well known – especially after 75 years have passed – here is for each of them a brief description of their respective functions in the Nazi regime.

Hermann Göring had quite a number of them. He was Marshal of the Reich, Commander-in-Chief of the German Air Force, Minister for Aviation, Prime Minister of Prussia, Reich Commissioner for the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan and Reich Master of Forest and Hunt. He was the leading war aggressor, both as a political and military leader, second only to Hitler. He was the director of the slave labour program and the creator of the oppressive program against the Jews and other races, at home and abroad. Göring was convicted on all four counts.

Joachim von Ribbentrop was appointed Ambassador to England in 1936 (where he earned himself the nickname “Brickendrop” due to his diplomatic ineptness). On 4 February 1938, he succeeded von Neurath as Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs. His diplomatic efforts were so closely connected with war that he could not have remained unaware of the aggressive nature of Hitler's actions. In the administration of the invaded territories, Ribbentrop also assisted in carrying out criminal policies, particularly those involving the extermination of the Jews. There is abundant evidence that Ribbentrop was in complete sympathy with all the main tenets of the National Socialist creed, and that his collaboration with Hitler in the commission of the crimes indicted at Nuremberg was whole-hearted. Like Göring, von Ribbentrop was convicted on all four counts.

Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel was Chief of the “High Command of the Armed Forces” which was basically Hitler's military staff. Upon Hitler's instruction, Keitel issued orders dealing with the invasion of European countries, and orders such as the Commando Order or Commissar Order which were nothing else but orders to murder. He claimed to have often protested to Hitler, but without effect, and that he finally gave in because, as a soldier, he had to obey “Superior Orders”. But (said the Tribunal) “Superior orders, even to a soldier, cannot be considered in mitigation where crimes so shocking and extensive have been committed consciously, ruthlessly, and without military excuse or justification.” He was convicted on all counts.

Obergruppenführer (SS Lt. General) Ernst Kaltenbrunner became leader of the SS in Austria in 1935. After the “Anschluss” (annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany, 1938) he was appointed Austrian State Secretary for Security and, when this position was abolished in 1941, he was made Higher SS and Police Leader. On 30 January 1943, following the assassination of Heydrich, he was appointed Chief of the Security Police and SD and head of the Reich Security Head Office (RSHA). In this capacity, he was responsible for (and frequently ordered himself) the execution of prisoners in concentration camps, the mistreatment and murder of prisoners of war, the execution of Commando troops and parachutists, of Jews, commissars, and others who were thought to be ideologically hostile to the Nazi system – in short: for the SS system of organized murder in all its forms, including the Holocaust. Kaltenbrunner was convicted on counts 3 and 4 of the indictment and count 2 was not proceeded with.

Alfred Rosenberg was the recognized party ideologist who wrote numerous books and edited several Nazi periodicals. In April 1933 he was made head of the Office of Foreign Affairs of the NSDAP (called APA). As head of the APA, Rosenberg was one of the originators of the plan for attacking Norway. In January 1940, he was designated to set up the “Hohe Schule”, the center of National Socialist ideological and educational research, and he organized the “Einsatzstab Rosenberg” in connection with this task. He transformed this into a system of organized plunder of both public and private property throughout the invaded countries of Europe. Rosenberg was appointed Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories

on 17 July 1941. In this capacity, he bore a major responsibility for the formulation and execution of occupation policies in the Occupied Eastern Territories. He directed that the Hague Rules of Land Warfare were not applicable in the Occupied Eastern Territories. Rosenberg was convicted on all counts.

Hans Frank was appointed Chief Civil Administration Officer for occupied Polish territory and, on 12 October 1939, was made Governor General of the occupied Polish territory. He instituted a reign of terror with public shooting of hostages, and liquidated thousands of Poles who were considered likely to resist German domination of Poland, including the leading representatives of the Polish intelligentsia. He transferred food produced in Poland to Germany to a level which brought starvation to the population of the occupied territory. He rounded up slave labourers and sent them to Germany, and provided for the extermination of all Jews he could find in his territory. Even though the slave labour program was under Sauckel and the SS under Himmler (thus diminishing Frank's responsibility to some degree), it remains that he was a willing and knowing participant in all the crimes described. Frank was found guilty of counts 3 and 4.

Wilhelm Frick was Reich Minister of the Interior until 1943, later Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. In connection with his duties at the centre of all internal and domestic administration, he became the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Reich Director of Elections, General Plenipotentiary for the Administration of the Reich, and a member of the Reich Defence Council, the Ministerial Council for Defence of the Reich, and the "Three Man College." The numerous laws he drafted, signed, and administered, abolished all opposition parties and prepared the way for the Gestapo and their concentration camps to extinguish all individual opposition. He was largely responsible for the legislation which suppressed the trade unions, the Church and the Jews. He performed this task with ruthless efficiency. He signed a decree which placed the Jews in the East "outside the law" and handed them over to the Gestapo. These laws paved the way for the "final solution," and were extended by Frick to the incorporated territories and to certain of the occupied territories. As the supreme Reich authority in Bohemia and Moravia, Frick bore general responsibility for the acts of oppression in that territory after 20 August 1943, such as terrorising the population, slave labour, and the deportation of Jews to the concentration camps for extermination. Frick was convicted of counts 2, 3 and 4.

Julius Streicher was the publisher of *Der Stürmer*, an anti-Semitic weekly newspaper, from 1923 to 1945 and was its editor until 1933. He incessantly preached the extermination of the "Jewish race" root and branch, and continued this instigation while knowing perfectly well that mass murder was already being committed. The Tribunal found that this incitement clearly constituted persecution on political and racial grounds in connection with War Crimes, and constituted a Crime against Humanity. Streicher was only found guilty of Crimes against Humanity.

Fritz Sauckel was appointed by Hitler to Plenipotentiary General for the Utilization of Labour. Under the authority which Sauckel obtained by various decrees, he set up a program for the systematic exploitation, by force, of the labour resources of the occupied territories. He made the governing authorities in the various occupied territories issue decrees establishing compulsory labour service in Germany, and under the authority of these decrees Sauckel's commissioners, backed up by the police authorities of the occupied territories, obtained and sent to Germany the labourers which were necessary to fill the quotas given them by Sauckel. All in all five million human beings were subjected to slave labour, many of them under conditions of cruelty and suffering. Sauckel was found guilty of counts 3 and 4.

Colonel General Alfred Jodl was Chief of the National Defense Section in the High Command from 1935 to 1938, and from August 1939, Chief of the Operations Staff of the High Command of the Armed Forces. He reported directly to Hitler on operational matters. In the strict military sense, Jodl was the actual planner of the war and responsible in large measure for the strategy and conduct of operations. Jodl was involved in the planning of the attacks on Norway, Greece, Yugoslavia and Albania. His signature is on the Commissar Order and on an order which forbade the acceptance of offers of surrender from either Leningrad or Moscow. In 1944, he ordered the evacuation of northern Norway and the burning of 30,000 houses. As in the case of Keitel, the Tribunal refused to hear Jodl's defense of "Superior Orders", citing Article 8 of the Tribunal's Charter which prohibited it. Jodl was found guilty on all four counts of the indictment.

Arthur Seyß-Inquart was instrumental in the incorporation of Austria into the German Reich ("Anschluss"). Made Reich Governor of Austria in March 1938, Seyß-Inquart instituted a program of confiscating Jewish property. Under his regime Jews were forced to emigrate, were sent to concentration camps, and were subject to pogroms. At the end of his regime he co-operated with the Security Police and SD in the deportation of Jews from Austria to the East. While he was Governor of Austria, political opponents of the Nazis were sent to concentration camps by the Gestapo, mistreated, and often killed. In September 1939, Seyß-Inquart was appointed Chief of Civil Administration of South Poland; one month later, Deputy Governor General of Poland under Frank, and in May 1940, Reich Commissioner for the Occupied Netherlands. In these positions, he took part in terrorizing the population e.g. by the shooting of hostages for offenses against occupation policies, by the pillage of public and private property, by sending forced labourers to Germany, and by deportation of six sevenths of the Dutch Jews to Auschwitz. Seyß-Inquart was convicted of counts 2, 3 and 4.

Of course it was no surprise for anybody that death sentences were handed down at Nuremberg, the question had just been: how many and on whom. Therefore the US Army had taken the precaution to plan the hangings well in advance. Lieutenant Stanley Tilles remembers that it was in August of 1946 when the Provost Marshal Third Army, Colonel Philip Clayton, sent for him. The colonel told Tilles that he had information that the Nuremberg trial was coming to a close, that death sentences were expected, and that it was time to get ready for the executions. Since Tilles had been the man who organised the hanging of 28 war criminals at Landsberg in May, he was the obvious person to coordinate the arrangements for Nuremberg.

The colonel was well aware that this was a duty that could only be requested, not ordered. As an incentive he therefore offered to make sure that Tilles could return to civilian life as soon as the work was done. Tilles accepted, and immediately received his briefing: Army intelligence expected that the death sentences, and their execution, would raise protests from German citizens. Therefore all preparations were to be top secret. Tilles would remain, on paper, doing the same work as before i.e. vehicle registration at Heidelberg, receive no written orders or authorisations, but all supply and transport depots would receive verbal orders to do whatever Tilles requested, and do it pronto.

Three gallows were to be constructed at the Landsberg prison shops. They should be dismountable so that they could be taken apart or assembled in a short time, and would fit on trucks. John Woods, assisted by five hand-picked MPs, would supervise the construction.

The next morning, Tilles met the five MPs. Pfc Malta, who seemed to consider himself the spokesman of his comrades, assured Tilles they could handle the job without problems.

At Landsberg, Tilles found that the prison workshop was reserved for the use of Woods and his guys, and that of the soldiers at Landsberg only the commandant of the guard company knew what they were doing there. Woods said that he estimated 25 to 30 days for the construction.

At this point in his 1999 memoirs from which we are taking his story, Tilles explicitly mentions something which should be remembered later: Woods showed him something looking like an elaborate door latch. He explained that in May the gallows trap doors had swung back and injured one of the prisoners in the face. The device he was now showing was meant to catch the door and prevent a recurrence of that nasty event.

Some recent descriptions speak of black gallows at Nuremberg, but Tilles says that Woods suggested to paint the gallows olive drab, not black, because "trucking black lumber all the way to Nuremberg might look funny, and somebody could figure out what we're carrying". Now getting 25 gallons of olive paint was not easy because everybody in the Army seemed to want it at the time, but Tilles found that those verbal orders to the depots worked magic, and it was done as Woods had suggested.

On 10 September, 1946 Tilles got a telephone call from Colonel Clayton, telling him to be the officer in charge at an execution at Landsberg on September 12. "Officer in charge" meant that this time Tilles was to be standing on the gallows platform close to the culprit, hangman and trap door, not below in the court

yard as in May. Therefore after the body had dropped, Tilles was able to look down through the opening, and “I noticed that the trap door was firmly anchored, and for some reason, I was inordinately pleased that Woods' new latch had worked.”

Two days after the announcement of the Tribunal's verdicts, Tilles was told by Clayton that the execution date would be – subject to change – October 16. On Monday 7, Tilles drove to Landsberg and met with Woods in the prison workshop. The three gallows, each in three parts, were ready. The next day, Tilles and Woods timed the assembly of the gallows, and found that assembling all three of them would take eleven to twelve hours.

On October 10, the smaller paraphernalia were stowed in four duffel bags: Eleven ropes stretched and fitted with nooses (plus two ditto as reserve), eleven black hoods, leather boot laces to tie the hands, and army web belts to strap the legs. On that day, a telephone call from Clayton told Tilles that the 16th was definite, and that they were to arrive in Nuremberg on the morning of the 14th.

Tilles had arranged with a Munich depot to send three trucks to Landsberg on Sunday, October 13, leaving Munich at 8 a.m. But no truck arrived at the expected time. After lunch, Tilles phoned the Munich depot and was told the trucks had left the depot on time. But since this was so important, they'd send out three more trucks immediately.

The second set of trucks did not arrive at Landsberg either. When Tilles called the depot for the third time, he was told all men were off duty meanwhile, and that they could try again in the morning. In the morning? They were supposed to have arrived at Nuremberg in the morning. Tilles needed all his self-control to steady his voice. Then he told the sergeant at the depot that this mission was of international importance, that his (Tilles') butt would be chewed off if it was screwed up, and that in this case he'd be sure to mention the sergeant's incompetence. “Do you understand what I am saying to you, Sergeant?” This finally got the message across.

It was after dark when the trucks arrived, and it was 1 a.m. on October 14 when the convoy was loaded and ready to go. The distance to Nuremberg was more than 110 miles, it was raining, and at that time army trucks and jeeps had only rudimentary wipers and no defrosting mechanisms. They missed their rendezvous with a Nuremberg prison representative who was to guide them and had to ask MPs for direction, but finally they arrived in the morning of the 14th.

In the afternoon, after blackening out all windows, Woods and his men began to assemble the gallows in the prison gymnasium. As Woods had predicted, it took them about eleven hours, and they completed their job in the small hours of October 15th.

At 8 a.m. of that day a visibly upset major told Tilles and Woods that the Soviets had requested to inspect the gallows and witness a mock hanging, that they were extremely difficult and stubborn, and that it was important to humour them. Tilles and Woods were told to be ready for a demonstration at 1 p.m.

The Soviet delegation consisted of General Nikitchenko, the Soviet representative on the Tribunal, his aide, a medical doctor, and an interpreter. Tilles led the delegation to the gymnasium where Woods explained all the details and answered the general's questions, evidently to the latter's satisfaction. Finally, upon a signal given by Woods, Malta pulled the handle and dropped a sand bag. Tilles' memoirs, verbatim: “Woods pointed out his device to latch the trap door open. The Soviets were impressed with this, and all four crowded under the platform to examine it.”

At 11 p.m. that night Tilles and his men received their final instructions. There was some delay at first, and Tilles had time to notice that among the thirty or so witnesses present there were eight press representatives: Arthur Goeth and Joseph Kingsbury-Smith (USA); Ronald Selkirk Panton (Australia) and Basil Gingell (Great Britain); Louis DeRoche and Sacha Simon (France), and Major Antonvic and Captain Boris Vladimirovic (Soviet Union). Two official German witnesses were also present, Dr. Wilhelm Hoegner, Bavarian prime minister and minister of Justice, and Dr. Friedrich Leistner, General Prosecutor with the (German) Nuremberg Higher Court.

At half past eleven Colonel Andrus, the commandant of the prison, strode in and announced that Göring

had committed suicide – he had swallowed cyanide. After that, another officer outlined the procedures of the night to the men present. At 0.25 a.m., the briefing was completed, and the men were led to the gymnasium.

During the executions, Tilles had the following tasks: Every time a prisoner was brought in and led to the table where the representatives of the Tribunal were sitting, he was to bring up the rear of the procession. And: “Besides escorting the prisoners, I was to record the time that each prisoner dropped through the trap door and the time that he was declared dead. After we escorted the condemned man to the steps, I would stand to the left of the gallows and would wait for the prisoner to drop. I would note the time on yellow lined paper and then rejoin the formation. When the doctors, one American and one Russian, declared the man dead, I would note the time again.”

There are some discrepancies between the times that Tilles gives in his memoirs and the times that Kingsbury-Smith gives in his well-known newspaper report. They will be discussed as they appear. For the moment, it should be noted that although printed in 1999, Tilles' times are based on the original source, not on memory: “I kept the times of death for each of the men, and I still have the original paper on which I recorded the times.”

At 1.10 a.m., Joachim von Ribbentrop was brought in. Colonel Andrus took off the shackles from his hands. With that, the prison's responsibility for the prisoner ended, and he was in the hands of the execution team. According to Tilles, the pinioning of the hands and feet occurred when Ribbentrop had already spoken his last words, simultaneously with the hood and noose being put on. Woods opened the trap upon a signal from the Provost Marshal's officer, at 1.16 a.m.

The next to die, on the second gallows, was Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel. He dropped at 1.20 a.m.

While Ribbentrop and Keitel were hanging, the Tribunal permitted smoking. No one spoke. There were ten minutes of eerie silence.

At 1.30 a.m. the doctors appeared from behind the curtain under the gallows platform and declared Ribbentrop dead. Malta cut him down, two MPs appeared with a stretcher and carried his body away, and Woods secured a new rope. Gallows #1 was ready for the next prisoner.

At 1.33 a.m. Keitel was pronounced dead, according to Tilles and according to Arthur Goeth in his broadcast for the US radio stations. Kingsbury-Smith, in his report for the newspapers, says it was at 1.44 a.m. It was this statement, repeated by many other newspaper reports, which led to the claim that Keitel had suffered for 24 minutes, that his execution was an inhumane one by slow strangulation etc.

Ernst Kaltenbrunner entered the execution room at 1.36 a.m. and was dropped at 1.39 a.m. from the #1 gallows. This means that it had taken the hangmen six minutes to remove one body and to prepare the gallows for the next execution (1.30 a.m.: Ribbentrop dead; 1.36 a.m.: entrance of Kaltenbrunner at which time the gallows must have been ready for him).

Alfred Rosenberg was hanged from the same gallows on which Keitel had died. He dropped, says Tilles as well as Kingsbury-Smith, at 1.49 a.m.

If Kingsbury-Smith is right with Keitel's death time, there would be five minutes between Keitel's death and the moment Rosenberg dropped on the same gallows. There were some formalities (identification, last words) between the entrance of each prisoner and his dropping through the trap doors which took up between two and three minutes (see Kaltenbrunner's times). This would leave only two or three minutes for the removal of Keitel's body and the preparing of gallows #2 (Keitel/Rosenberg) – unlikely.

The obvious solution is to assume that Tilles is right with Keitel's death time, and that Keitel was left hanging until Kaltenbrunner had dropped at 1.39 a.m. This would give ample time to prepare Keitel's gallows until at about 1.47 a.m. Rosenberg entered the chamber. The consequence of this assumption is that Keitel must have been dead 13 minutes after dropping. Since Tilles writes that no prisoner took longer to die than Jodl (16 minutes), this is a further argument in favour of 1.33 a.m. as Keitel's time of death.

The party present was again allowed to smoke. At 1.52 a.m. Kaltenbrunner was declared dead, after having been on the rope for 13 minutes. Woods and his men needed only four minutes until the next

prisoner could be brought in: Hans Frank, at 1.56 a.m. He dropped at 1.58:30 a.m.

Tilles: "Seconds later Rosenberg was declared dead at 1.59 a.m." (10 minutes after drop), "and a new rope was affixed for Wilhelm Frick." Frick was dropped at 2.08 a.m.

One minute later, the doctors pronounced Hans Frank dead, and gallows #1 was made ready for Julius Streicher.

The former editor of *Der Stürmer* made a real nuisance of himself, shouting "Heil Hitler" to the Tribunal, refusing to give his name, then shouting "Purim feast, 1946" (reference to a Jewish feast which commemorates the hanging of an anti-Semite, cf. Esther 7:10) and "the Bolsheviks will hang you one day". At 2.14 a.m., the trap door opened under his feet. Kingsbury-Smith: "He went down kicking." He as well as Tilles and Hoegner reports that gasps and gurgles were heard after Streicher had dropped. Again Kingsbury-Smith: "Finally, the hangman, who had descended from the gallows platform, lifted the black canvas curtain and went inside. Something happened that put a stop to the groans and brought the rope to a standstill. ... I assume that he grabbed the swinging body of Streicher and pulled down on it." Tilles however in his memoirs is positive that "Woods never left the platform of the gallows. ... The only persons who went behind the curtain were the doctors who pronounced the men dead and Malta who cut them down."

It is odd to see that Tilles, who on the whole seems to have liked Woods, thus tries to exonerate him from having done what would merely amount to mercy killing (and which is precisely what William Calcraft, British hangman 1829-1874, routinely did) but does not hesitate to impute a far nastier act to him, namely the intentional bungling of the execution in order to make Streicher suffer: "Woods adjusted the noose but placed its coils off center, would not snap Streicher's neck, and he'd strangle. I realized instantly that this was Woods' intent, and I saw a small smile cross his lips as he pulled the hangman's handle."

Tilles never says that he heard Woods speak about his intentions – he just inferred them from what he saw, but he cannot have known about hanging except what Woods told him. Tilles is not an expert in his own right who could say what will be the consequence of the coils being off centre. Now it is simply untrue that this noose position would make a man strangle. On the contrary, quite a number of executioners chose this position in the belief that it was the right one to break the neck.

Joseph Malta who had been trained by Woods said in an interview shortly before his death (i.e. in 1998/99) that "to the side" was the right spot: "We had to make sure that the noose was in the back of the neck, precisely along the ear. It was important that the coils were to the side of the neck." And from films shot by the Army during the Landsberg hangings on 28/29 May, 1946 it can be seen that the German executioner Reichhart placed the coils behind the ear of the prisoner, sometimes even on their left shoulder. "Just behind the ear" or the "subaural position", as the prison doctors called it, was the approved spot for British hangman James Berry (in office 1884-1892), and as recently as 1993 Wesley A. Dodd was hanged at Walla Walla (Washington) with a subaural knot – and his heartbeat ceased after one minute.

We come to the conclusion that if Woods placed the knot off centre in Streicher's case, this was probably not the cause of his suffering. It cannot be in doubt that he did suffer, but the cause may have been something else, for instance his going down "kicking". We do not believe that Kingsbury-Smith went so far as to completely inventing the hangman's intervention "behind the curtain". We rather believe that Streicher's case was one of those where Malta used his method of "helping along" by adding his weight to that of the hanging man, and perhaps even breaking his neck manually (see above in the paragraph on Malta, chapter 3). At any rate, Streicher's death was pronounced at 2.23 a.m. (Tilles) or 2.28 a.m. (Kingsbury-Smith) which gives 14 minutes at the outside for the time it took him to die – not longer than the others.

Several minutes before Streicher was declared dead Wilhelm Frick's death was recorded – Kingsbury-Smith says it was at 2.20 a.m.

Fritz Sauckel who was to replace him on gallows #2 entered the chamber at 2.24 a.m. and was dropped two minutes later. Within the next four minutes, Woods and his team probably removed Streicher's body and prepared gallows #1 for General Alfred Jodl who was led in at 2.30 a.m. and was dropped four minutes

later.

Again there's a discrepancy, this time about when Sauckel died: The Gloucester Citizen of October 16, 1946 says it was 2.40 a.m., however Tilles says that already at 2.38:30 a.m. Arthur Seyß-Inquart, the last prisoner, was brought in – and he was hanged on Sauckel's gallows. It is reasonable to assume that again about four minutes passed between Sauckel's death and the entrance of Seyß-Inquart. In this case, Sauckel's death must have occurred at about 2.34:30 a.m. – rather fast.

Arthur Seyß-Inquart fell through the trap door at 2.45 a.m. Five minutes later the doctors declared Jodl dead. There is no death time for Seyß-Inquart in the reports, but we know that it was 2.57 a.m. when the Tribunal announced “These proceedings are closed”. If Seyß-Inquart was dead by now which it is logical to assume, it would have taken him 12 minutes to die – a not unlikely span of time. While Jodl and Seyß-Inquart were hanging, a stretcher with Göring's body was brought in and shown to the assembled witnesses. Nobody should be left in doubt that he, too, was no more.

A large black curtain screened off part of the gymnasium. Here the eleven coffins had been waiting until, one after the other, their occupants were brought by the MP stretcher bearers, and laid on top of them. After all executions were over, army photographers came and took two pictures of each body resting on top of his coffin.

Some time after the executions, the Allied Control Council decided to release these images for publication. The British members had voted against it, and when the decision was taken, strenuously appealed to all British publications not to print them. (They didn't.) Publication in the German press was explicitly forbidden. However the Council strangely did not forbid the sale of foreign publications featuring these photos in Germany.

When the photos were made public, there had already been rumours that the hangings were bungled. British journalist Cecil Catling of the London Star was particularly critical of Woods' performance. He claimed that the men took too long to die (Keitel had, according to him, struggled for 28 minutes), that all of them emitted horrible noises and struggled, that they had not enough dropping distance, and that their faces were smashed. Subsequent articles picked up on this, and to this day the general opinion seems to be that the men were injured in their faces, either because the trap door opening was too small and they hit the edge in falling, or from the trap door bouncing back.

From the photos it can be seen that there are two men where blood staining is clearly visible.



Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel

caused by his head having been dangling backwards-downwards while the body was resting on the coffin. Before the photo was taken, someone folded his black hood into a kind of cushion and put it under his head.

Keitel's face, of which chiefly the left half is visible, shows blood trails running from each corner of the mouth upwards over the cheek, and ending, on the left side, between the outer corner of his eye and the cheekbone. His left eye is filled with blood; there are thin blood trails running from the inner corner over the nose bridge to the right, over the forehead upwards, and downwards-outwards to the left. His temporal hair on the left side also seems to be discoloured by blood. His nose does not show any sign of injury; there is no blood coming from his left nostril. One thin, dark, strangely curved line runs from a corner of his tunic towards his left cheekbone. It does not look like a blood trail but like a blood-soaked loose thread from his tunic. The source of the blood trails seem to be the mouth and the eyes. The strange upward (cranial) direction of the trails may be



Wilhelm Frick

Wilhelm Frick's head is resting on a white but heavily bloodstained piece of cloth. Since there are no blood trails from his face running down to the cloth, his face may have been wiped with that cloth. Traces of blood are still visible round his mouth. The coat he is wearing shows several blood trails on his right side over the full length from collar to hem. The source of the blood is not evident at first sight except that it must have been in the region of the head. There are no visible injuries. The evident conclusion is that the blood most probably has come from his mouth, nose, or eyes.

As we have seen, Tilles takes great care to show that a trap door bouncing back cannot have been the cause of the injuries, because of Woods' ingenious latch. There is no reason why the size of the trapdoor opening should have been made smaller than in the gallows which Woods had used at Landsberg, Bruchsal, and Rheinbach, and if it was the same it would be strange if in Nuremberg two out of ten men hit the edge which seemingly did not happen once in the 28 hangings in May. The explanation Tilles offers for the bleeding follows the official line which already accompanied the publication of the photos: that bleeding from mouth or nose is a normal occurrence in hanging, e.g. because the men bit their lips or tongues in falling.

Convincing as this sounds, it must be pointed out that such bleeding is never mentioned in British

executions. The LPC4 sheets are scrupulous in itemising every small laceration of the skin; to “never draw blood” can almost be termed the basic law of British executioners, so it is near impossible that such bleeding should have been “natural” in Britain as well.

Of course Catling, being a Brit and being conversant with a fairly different method, has no hesitation to call the Nuremberg results a bungle. However Tilles very rightly points out that Catling was not present and that therefore all his positive statements, especially if unsourced, need to be taken with a grain of salt.

All in all, the hangings at Nuremberg were fast work, no masterpiece, but fairly “state of the art” by US standards.

To see them in perspective, one needs to remember what hangings at home in the States looked like at the time.

Reports the St Quentin warden, Clinton Duffy, of a hanging in 1942:

The man hit bottom and I observed that he was fighting by pulling on the straps, wheezing, whistling, trying to get air, that blood was oozing through the black cap. I observed also that he urinated, defecated, and droppings fell on the floor, and the stench was terrible. I also saw witnesses pass out and have to be carried from the witness room. Some of them threw up.

When the man was taken down and the cap removed, it became evident that “big hunks of flesh were torn off” the side of his face where the noose had been, “his eyes were popped,” and his tongue was “swollen and hanging from his mouth.” His face had turned purple.

Compared to this effort, Woods may be forgiven for being proud of his work.