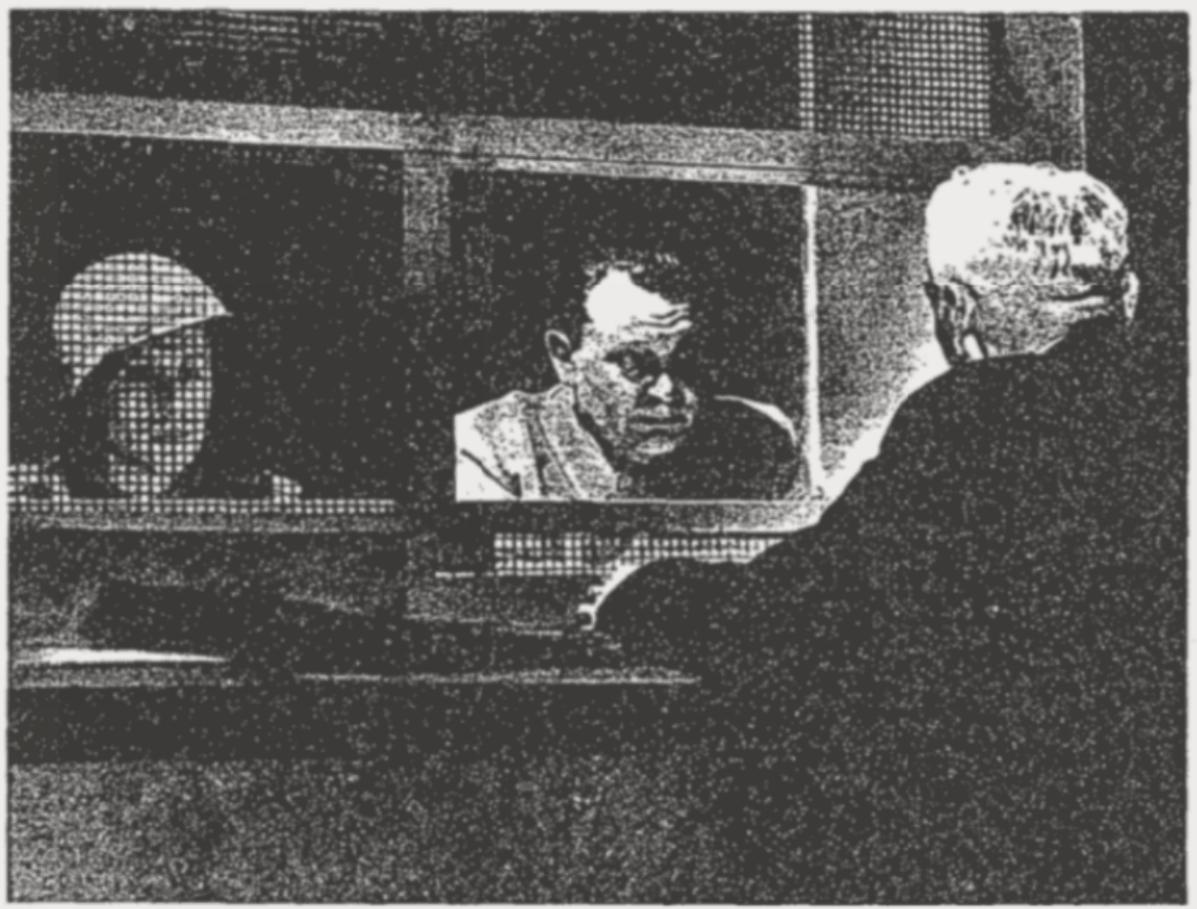


# A Psychiatrist Examines the Master-Criminals at Nuremberg

Frederic Wertham

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Genocide's Last Mile: Goering With His Lawyer.

22 CELLS IN NUREMBERG. By Douglas M. Kelley, M.D. 245 pp. New York: Greenberg Publishers. \$3.

WE ARE living through an epoch of history in which the foundations of civilization, of economic life and of social relationships have been shaken. We do not know yet what repercussions and adjustments will take place in response to these shocks. But it is evident that there is a crisis in morality. This has not created new problems so much as it has brought old ones into sharp relief. A deep aversion to the old irresponsibility has combined with an insistent demand for clarity concerning the relationship of the personality to society. What is the individual's responsibility and what is his share in social responsibility? This crisis in morality has found its clearest focus historically in the war crimes trials in Nuremberg. These trials, dealing fundamentally with murder—murder perpetrated, not in the old way but carried out scientifically, like a census—have been much debated, legally, philosophically, politically. Dr. Douglas M. Kelley, in his book "22 Cells in Nuremberg" discusses the defendants in psychiatric terms.

During the last decade and a half a great deal has been written and spoken by psychiatrists and psychoanalysts about Nazi Germany. A whole school of psycho-Teutonologists has sprung up, their sweeping generalizations for the most part so detached from history and sociology and so speculative that Vansittartism seems almost scientific in comparison. Dr. Kelley is more sober and more material to go by than most of his colleagues, having had psychiatric interviews with the twenty-two Nazi leaders in the Nuremberg jail where he served as official United States psychiatrist.

In brief, clearly written chapters Dr. Kelley gives on account of each defendant, concluding with a chapter on Hitler as described by his associates. All the data are evidently authentic and critically sifted. The psychiatric evaluation remains of necessity on a formal, not to say pedestrian, level, since in no case was the essential part of a psychiatric story, the inner life history of the individual, elicited by the examiner.

For the most part, Dr. Kelley's diagnoses are cautious and considered. But some are hard to agree with. He believes, for example, that Hess has a "tender mind" and that his lack of memory was "partly genuine and partly feigned": that "the total despoliation of conquered Russia" was the result of the fact that Rosenberg was a "loose thinker"; that Doenitz is "essentially an ethical person" and "sincere in his simple belief that Hitler was a kind, straightforward gentleman"; that Speer, who used hundreds of thousands of slave laborers, has a nature that is "sensitive," "boyish" and "sincere"; that "an entire war [the attack against Russia] was precipitated because of Hitler's stomach cramps."

It is a more significant diagnostic error when Dr. Kelley states that Streicher's anti-semitism "represents medically a true paranoid reaction." (Paranoid delusions are a highly personal matter and satisfy a deep inner emotional need of the individual.) Dr. Kelley gives as proof of his diagnosis the fact that Streicher "believed that one could tell a Jew by his physical characteristics." This is not a delusion peculiar to Streicher, but a notion shared by others. Unfortunately, it is not true that Streicher, as Dr. Kelley states, "stood essentially alone in the world."

Where he discusses the meaning of his findings for America, however, Dr. Kelley rises to greater stature than any psychiatrist or psychoanalyst who has written on this subject. He points out that von Schirach was converted to Nazi ideas by reading Henry Ford and that Dey reminded him that concentration camps were invented by the British. He describes how, after his return to America from Germany, he encountered the same type of prejudices expressed in the same words that he had heard in the corridors of the Nuremberg jail:

We can find the same ideas thinly veiled in our public press today. Even worse, we find some of our top political men, members of our highest governing bodies, making statements which would do credit to Rosenberg, Hitler or Goebbels... I am convinced that there is little in America today which could prevent the establishment of a Nazi-like state.

“22 Cells in Nuremberg” gives us a picture of the actors in a play, a bloody play. They performed their roles, but the plot was laid out by powerful underlying historical and economic forces.

THE book contains an interesting table listing the punishment of each individual. The man whom Dr. Kelley describes as “undoubtedly the most intelligent of the entire group ... and a perfectly stable personality,” Dr. Schacht, was completely acquitted. That fact stands out in conjunction with Dr. Kelley’s avoidance of the most fundamental aspects of political economy that provided the stage for these actors. Undoubtedly the yet unresolved crisis in morality through which we are living will some day lead to men like Schacht being found more responsible and more guilty than the marionettes who are the actual performers. It will be then that we shall come closer to an answer to Byron’s question: “Who shall heal murder?”

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