

Goering and Nuremberg, an alternative history

by Phillip W. Weiss

I wonder what would have happened if during the Nuremberg trial the notorious Nazi, Joachim von Ribbentrop, had become an existentialist awakening and declared to the court that he now is concerned over the fate of the world and the role he played in pushing the world closer to the brink of annihilation. That would have shocked the court. It certainly would have galvanized a skeptical court to closely re-evaluate Ribbentrop's mental state. The court probably would have dismissed Ribbentrop's as a theatrical stunt to deflect attention away from the trial. The prosecutors probably would have used Ribbentrop's declaration against him. They probably would have asked him to explain why he felt those concerns now and not in 1939 when he led the way to war.

Ditto for Goering if he had made a similar statement of contrition, for example, by admitting that he failed his country by not acting to stop Hitler from leading Germany to destruction. The court would have ascribed Goering's statement as being just another transparent and pathetic attempt to manipulate the court to avoid execution. Given that Goering had made it clear that he wanted to play the role of martyr for the cause, the court would have questioned Goering's sincerity and motivations for such a startling turnabout. "So, Herr Goering, now you feel that Hitler was wrong, and you should have acted to stop him. Why didn't you?" Goering may have replied, "Because I was weak, habituated to codeine and did not want to lose

my job.” Anyway, none of this would have gained Goering any sympathy from the court. In fact, the court would have used his statement against him.

Goering blamed the Allies’ policy of unconditional surrender for why the Nazis never asked to negotiate a cease fire. Anyway, Goering was so utterly defeated and his credibility so thoroughly eroded that there was nothing he could have said in mitigation that would have earned him any sympathy. The same can be said for all those Nazis in the docket. They were a reprehensible bunch. They used the trappings of office to justify the criminal nature of their acts.

All of them acted in common to promote mass murder. That is a fact. The goal of the regime was to murder people without due process. And that was the crux of the case against them. They were killing people without affording due process to their victims. That is known as murder. The Nazis argued that they were officials doing their jobs, but what they left out was the nature of their job, which was to aid and abet forced labor and murder.

Goering could not admit that he was a murderer. Despite the mountain of evidence pointing to his guilt, he just couldn't do it. Goering refused to connect the mountain of evidence revealing his guilt to his own personal culpability. All the defendants had the same lack of insight. They insisted that they were just functionaries doing their job serving their country which just happened to be governed by dictator whose goal was to exploit and exterminate. Hitler had made it clearly known to all that wasn't interested in gaining allies or liberating people from subjugation. Hitler wanted to enslave and ethnic cleanse Europe. Anyway,

no matter what these Nazis may have said, it would not have altered the court's findings. Of course, this is all speculation, so it is in the realm of fiction and alternative history.

PWW 8/18/2025, 9/15/2025