

Dr. Lewis Tells Rotarians Hitler, Aides Not Insane

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Were the men who carried out Adolf Hitler's reign of terror and attempted genocide of the Jews insane lunatics or geniuses?

An 83-year-old Braddock Heights man probably knows the answer better than anyone else alive today.

Dr. Nolan D.C. Lewis is internationally known as the psychoanalyst who investigated and interrogated the 22 high level Nazi officials during their trials at Nuremberg.

He found them "sane and fit for trial."

Lewis, speaking at the Frederick Rotary Club Wednesday afternoon, said the world has been duped into believing that the Nazi leaders were insane idiots.

"Hitler was not a poor, ignorant outcast like most people have been led to believe. He was born in a large Austrian house. He was well versed in art and later he astonished many people with his knowledge of the arts and music. He was an evil genius."

Hitler managed to build Germany into a great power in ten years, Lewis pointed out. "I am saying now, if Hitler had been killed or assassinated before he started on his idea of purifying the nordic race or of conquering the world, he would have gone down as Hitler the Great. One of the greatest leaders in the history of Germany and in the history of the world."

Lewis has drawn these conclusions from the intensive research he did when he was called to Germany during the Nuremberg war trials in 1945-46.

"They had these members of Hitler's cabinet in jail and they wanted to know something about their sanity before taking them to trial," Lewis recalls. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson was acting as prosecutor in the trials and requested a psychoanalyst to determine the defendants' sanity.

"I had a double job," Lewis explained. "Number one was to examine these men in prison and

secondly to travel over the countryside on weekends to interview the German people in hiding who were Hitler's assistants."

From talking to Hitler's backers, Lewis deduced that the German people were depressed from their loss in World War I and were dissatisfied with the weak rule of President Paul Von Hindenburg, under whom the dynamic Hitler served as chancellor.

Hitler was a dynamic organizer and a captivating crowd pleaser, Lewis says. Hitler raised the national ego by conning the German people into believing that Germany was not defeated in World War I because their homeland had not been invaded or plundered.

Lewis tells the story of two American reporters in Germany at the time of Hitler's rousing beer garden lectures. "They said he spoke for two hours but it only seemed like one. They told me that he was so interesting and convincing that if they were Germans they would have joined the Nazi party that night."

But Hitler's final step into power was grounded in the people he surrounded himself with. "They were extremely intelligent men also. They were not fools at all. Some of them even had Ph. D's."

"Outside their particular ideology they were like the rest of us. I know...I talked to their wives and friends," Lewis said.

That "particular ideology" paved the way for the sickening mass slayings that followed, Lewis continued. "Germans at the time and for a long time before, were brought up in a strict military fashion. Obey, obey, obey, was pounded into their heads. They were

taught that there were three alternatives if they didn't obey. One, they could either go to the backroom and blow their brains out; secondly, they could refuse and have their brains blown out or thirdly, they could run away and risk getting shot."

Each of the 22 criminals were different but when they were together they shared their particular ideology. "Hitler's followers had no conscience like ours. All they know is obey authority. Their crimes were committed without emotion or hate. This was a pathological group," Lewis continued.

Hermann Goering, second in command to Hitler, for instance was one of the most ruthless in the mass slayings, Lewis said. Yet in private Goering was jovial, funny and good natured. "I heard him when he was scrubbing his cell floor and he joked...this is a fine thing for a field marshal to be doing." Goering later escaped the hangman by taking poison.

Rudolf Hess, secretary and body guard to Hitler, and still alive in a British prison, was an intelligent and interesting man.

Lewis recalls his "three rounds" with Hess, trying to disprove Hess alleged "bad memory" defense.

"He won the first round," Lewis recalls. "I asked him to draw a map of Italy to see how his memory was. When Hess drew the map I thought I caught him but then he pointed to the wall of his cell where a large map of Italy was hanging."

"In the second round I knew he read a lot by men like Immanuel Kant and I caught him writing passages from them along the margins of a book."

"In the third round I brought a woman who claimed to be his secretary into his cell. Hess denied knowing her. She pulled out a photo of his wife and son but he still denied remembering her. But when I turned around, out of the corner of my eye I saw him shake his fist at her. Later I told him I saw his gesture and knew that he remembered. He told me: you must have eyes in the back of your head."

When Hess went to trial, most newspapers reported that he was psychotic because he didn't pay attention while Justice Jackson was reading the charges. "They thought that since he didn't have earphones on to hear the German translation and because he was reading a book at the time, that

Hess must be psychotic. But they didn't understand that Hess speaks and understands English and understood what Jackson was saying. Besides we had gone over the charges time and time again and he knew and understood it. I'd say he was acting like a normal man.

Lewis said he found it unusual that although Hess was often called "the perfect Nazi" because he didn't drink, smoke or use cuss words, he lived with his "wife" for years without being married. "When Hitler found out he demanded that Hess get married immediately," Lewis said.

Twelve of the 22 leaders were eventually condemned to be hanged, three received life sentences, four received prison terms ranging from ten to 20 years and three were acquitted.

Lewis concluded his speech by saying he felt the decision to hang the high German generals was a mistake. This precedent allows any nation grounds to hang the top generals of a nation when conquered. "If Russia somehow took over the United States they could hang any of our top generals," he said.

Lewis added, "Why, oh yes it could happen here (in the U.S.). All it would take is a strong intelligent dictator to turn it all inside out. But I wouldn't compare our President's cabinet to Hitler's. As much as I hate to admit it, they (Hitler's cabinet)

were much more intelligent and better educated."