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ONA 1 WIESBADEN TRIALS

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WIESBADEN, GERMANY, AUG. 27 (ONA)--UNLESS SWIFTER AND MORE EFFICIENT LEGAL PROCEDURES ARE ADOPTED, THE TRIALS OF WAR CRIMINALS IN AMERICAN OCCUPATION ZONES MAY STRETCH ON FOR FIVE YEARS AND EVEN LONGER, SOME WAR CRIMES OFFICERS GLOOMILY PREDICTED TODAY.

THESE MEN, WHO DO NOT OCCUPY TOP POSTS, ARE FEARFUL THAT UNLESS THE TRIAL SYSTEM IS REVAMPED, THE PUBLIC AND ARMY WILL LOSE INTEREST AND MANY OF THE WORST CRIMINALS MAY ESCAPE.

THEY CITED THE EXAMPLE OF THE DARMSTADT TRIAL, WHICH WAS SPEEDILY AND EFFICIENTLY CONDUCTED ACCORDING TO AMERICAN STANDARDS. IN THIS TRIAL, THE LARGEST HELD THUS FAR, SEVEN GERMANS, INCLUDING TWO WOMEN, WERE SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR THE MURDER OF AMERICAN FLIERS. THE MILITARY COMMISSION WHICH JUDGED THEM CONSISTED OF A BRIGADIER GENERAL AND FIVE COLONELS. IT TOOK A CRACK TEAM OF INVESTIGATORS MORE THAN A MONTH TO GATHER EVIDENCE FOR THE TRIAL.

BUT ALTHOUGH THE GERMANS WERE CONVICTED THREE WEEKS AGO, THE CONVICTION MUST STILL BE APPROVED BY THE SEVENTH ARMY LEGAL DIVISION, THEN BE REVIEWED BY GEN. WADE HAISLIP, COMMANDER OF THE SEVENTH ARMY, THEN BE APPROVED BY USFET'S (UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER) MILITARY GOVERNMENT LEGALISTS BEFORE FINALLY RECEIVING GEN. EISENHOWER'S SIGNATURE.

THIS CUMBERSOME MACHINERY GRINDS VERY SLOWLY BUT NOT NECESSARILY EXCEEDINGLY FINE. INVESTIGATORS ARE SWAMPED WITH PENDING CASES BECAUSE EACH CASE REQUIRES THE AMERICAN TYPE OF LEGAL PROCEDURE--GUILT BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT. THIS MEANS WEEKS AND PERHAPS MONTHS OF INVESTIGATION FOR EACH SEPARATE CRIME.

TRAINED INVESTIGATION TEAMS ARE SO FEW THAT THEY LOOK FORWARD TO ALMOST LIFETIME JOBS SIMPLY GATHERING EVIDENCE FOR THESE CASES UNLESS THEIR NUMBERS ARE INCREASED. THERE ARE 2,000 ALLEGED CONCENTRATION CAMP ATROCITY WAR CRIMINALS ALONE IN CUSTODY IN THE AMERICAN ZONE AND THEIR TRIALS HAVE NOT, AS YET, BEGUN.

THE TRIALS OF MAJOR WAR CRIMINALS LIKE MARSHAL HERMANN GOERING AND JOACHIM VON RIBBENTROP, FORMER GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN AUGUST, HAVE BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL MID-OCTOBER