

## Analysis of Editorial Opinion on War Trials and Criminals

September 14, 1945

Number of Editorials: 92

Time covered: August 15-September 12, 1945

### Increased Demand for Japanese Trial

With the release of news on Japanese atrocities and the attempted suicide of ex-premier Tojo, one-third of the editorials dealt with Japanese war criminals and their proposed trials. Eleven of these demanded the immediate trial of all war criminals.

"This requires that no group within the cruel ruling oligarchy of Japan be exempt from most searching investigation and prosecution."  
(Chicago, Illinois, Sun)

Six discussed Tojo's attempted suicide emphasizing that he desired to escape the humiliation of a trial and that he was needed to reveal war secrets. One pointed out that he should have been put into custody as soon as Americans entered Japan to prevent such an attempt.

General MacArthur's list of 40 Japanese war criminals was discussed by three. One criticized it because it did not include the industrialists and members of the cabinets succeeding Tojo's. Two approved, but one of these thought it too late.

Those specifically mentioned as war criminals were: men responsible for atrocities: 5 papers

Yamashita: 3  
Tojo: 2  
The Kempgei-tai: 1

Three editorials dealt with Hirohito's future, two stating that he should be punished as a war criminal and one that his fate should depend upon how he carries out MacArthur's orders.

"Neither Mussolini nor Hitler went to unprovoked and inexcusable war any more willingly than the government of which Hirohito is the titular head. Neither was more willing to ignore every canon of humanity and plunge the world into barbarous practices." (Oklahoma City, Okla., Oklahoman)

Three offered different opinions on the principles which should govern the trials. One stated that the guiding principle would be different from that in Europe because in Japan the military leaders were chiefly to blame for encouraging brutality in the soldiers. Another suggested that the formula contained in the four-power agreement on the Nazis be adopted. The Chicago, Illinois, Tribune maintained:

"Every act of torture, or murder, or mistreatment against an American prisoner of war is clearly a violation of the laws of war. No new authority is needed to punish the offender. General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz have all the authority that is necessary to bring the offenders before American courts-martial, give them a fair trial, and impose such penalties as their acts have justified."

The need for starting the trials soon was emphasized by two.

"The sooner trials are held, the sooner the Japanese people see the wages of their sins in terms of cold justice, the better for all concerned, including Japan itself." (Philadelphia, Pa., Record)

#### Allied Trials

Twenty-seven editorials dealt with the Allied trials of German war criminals. Of these, eight praised the list of 24 criminals, but one added "what can be objected to is the omissions."

The new definition of war criminality as a step toward peace was mentioned by five.

"Had they (German leaders) known in advance that they would land in prison as common criminals with a good prospect of hanging or being shot, not one of them would have had the nerve to have carried through with the plans." (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Herald)

The Charlotte, N.C., Observer remarked that it was alright if the trial did not follow U.S. procedure: "it could not cover or apply to the cases of criminals of their class and caliber."

Four criticized the delay in starting the trials since "the crime of war tends to diminish with the postponement of justice." But one praised the prosecutors because "they have moved with commendable speed."

Three welcomed the promise of no censorship, although one doubted if it would be carried out; and three commended the future trials as "a dignified and efficient sifting of facts according to the highest standards of justice."

Approve Quisling Sentence

Eighteen papers commented on the Petain trial with the same opinion expressed as previously.

Fifteen dealt with Quisling. Of six approving the death sentence, two stated that it would be an example to others. Two praised the trial for its fairness,

"The wisdom of leaving his trial to his fellow countrymen, whom he so despicably betrayed, is now fully established. The proceedings throughout were marked by dignity and decorum, affording complete opportunity to the accused to present his defense." (Philadelphia, Pa., Inquirer)