

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Bericht vom Kriegsverbrecherprozess in Nürnberg.

Mann, Erika

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HEADQUARTERS

In the primeval times, before the Nurnberg Trials),
I was commissioned one day to conduct two simple questions to the
American, British, French and Soviet delegations respectively.

The show was scheduled to open on November the 20th; but rumors
nourished and spread by THE STARS AND STRIPES had it, that the date
could not possibly be kept. Since, according to the initiated G.I.
paper, the U.S. Prosecution was ready, the clever and suspicious reader
could hardly escape the conclusion that somebody else was not. Hence
my editor's request for binding assertions straight from the four
horses' mouths. As for his second query, it will be dealt with in due
course.

I had been here for a week now - long enough to feel cosily at
home in the pentagonal labyrinth of the Palace of Justice and presently
to spot the American spokesman, the British representative and the
authorized mouthpiece of the French Republic. Their names, ranks and titles
were listed in a handy ^{house-} ~~house-~~ directory which also gave their room- as well
as their telephon-numbers; additional information concerning their ~~special~~
special functions appeared on small posters fastened to their doors;
their desks, too, were adorned with identifying plaques.

What with 45 minutes of brisk inter-office walking, it took exactly
one hour to conduct the three interviews. Five minutes went to Mr.
Gordon Dean, Press Relations Officer for Mr. Justice Jackson; three to
Colonel H. Phillimore, Secretary to the British Delegation; and seven
to M. Serge Meyer, French Public Relations Officer. Then the Soviet
representative had to be traced out.

While he was not, of course, listed in the house-directory,
it was reasonable to assume that he dwelled in one of the barren
bureaus forming the "Russian Wing". The doors were not numbered in

those parts and nowhere in these silent corridors appeared the faintest hint as to who occupied what room.

The first place I entered harbored a great many people who laughed heartily at my attempts to make myself understood and reacted altogether in the most friendly fashion. Behind the second door, a high-ranking officer (possibly a general) was found dictating to his secretary. When the latter had grasped the nature of my concern, there ensued a rapid and lengthy conversation at the conclusion of which the ^{general} ~~man~~ stepped outside, raised four fingers of one hand and, having counted them repeatedly, ^{USED} ~~used~~ the fifth to point to the right. He also said something which sounded like "Voschkov".

I knocked at the fourth door to my right.

"Mr. Voschkov?", I said, approaching a slim figure clad in civilians and seated behind a large and entirely empty desk.

He did not answer, but turned to what proved to be his interpreter, an attractively narrow-eyed girl with high cheek-bones and a fine command of the English language.

"The gentleman", she said smoothly, "wishes to learn the purpose of your visit."

I explained. Was I - to begin with - right in assuming that Mr. Voschkov was authorized to speak for the Soviet prosecution?

My inquiry having been duly transmitted, Mr. Voschkov looked me straight into the eyes and said (or so the girl told me):

"Your name? The name of your paper?"

While surrendering this bit of intelligence (which the girl took down in writing), I decided to take the man's question for an answer and to assume that ~~his name was~~ his approximate name was Voschkov and that he was indeed authorized to speak for the Soviet pro-

secution. What about this delegation's state of preparedness, I inquired; Was the Soviet prosecution ready?

Mr. Voschkov smiled. Had I not - he wanted to know - read the announcements according to which the trials would open on November the 20th ?

I had. But this was November the 8th and doubts had been expressed as to the readiness of one or several of the allied staffs. Would he, therefore, be kind enough to tell me whether or not the Soviet prosecution considered themselves ready?

He smiled no longer.

"The trials", he announced, "will open on November the 20th."

"Meaning", I suggested helpfully, "that the Soviet prosecution is ready?"

He talked for quite awhile, accompanying his remarks with impatient little gestures. What it all boiled down to, was that I must stop complicating matters by arbitrarily interpreting Mr. Voschkov's perfectly plain answers. He had said that the trials would open on November the 20th. Were there any more questions?

I said that, having assessed the number of people forming the American, British and French casts, I should like to determine the numerical strength of the Russian contingent.

This time he countered with a simple "Why?"

"Because", I elucidated, "we wish - somewhat childishly, perhaps, - to clinch the sum total of personnel necessary to run this show, or, rather, its legal end. Apart from the security crowd which is wholly American, the U.S. employs some 600 people; the British confess to one hundred and fifty and the French to a similar number. Now, if you'd just ^{let} me have the Russian figure...."

God knows what he said. Though in Russian it seemed an awful

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lot, the English version was scant: According to Mr. Voschkov the figure for which I asked was of no interest. All that counted and all ~~high~~ that any reporter should be eager to report, was the fact that the trials would open on November the 20th.

It was at this juncture that, in a woman-to-woman way, I sought the assistance of our pleasant-voiced go-between.

"Of course", I remarked reasonably, "the figure doesn't really matter. It just so happens that we'd like to have it and that everybody else seemed to see our point. Unless you and I can get Mr. Voschkov to do likewise, people will say that the Russians have slipped a small army into Nurnberg; or that they've seen fit to send but a measly bunch of men, thus demonstrating their contempt for the International Military Tribunal and all it stands for; or - at best - that they simply mean to annoy the Democracies by not telling us anything whatever. Pray, ask him again and tell him that any figure will do."

The girl, her head bent, listened attentively.

"I understand", she said, inexplicably saddened.

Mr. Voschkov, too, grew rather depressed upon receipt of my message. If only - he said darkly - that figure were of any significance, he'd gladly oblige, just as on another and more crucial issue he had spoken with complete frankness: the trials, this must not be lost sight of, would start ^{on} November the 20th.

He rose to his feet.

"One second, Sir", I said lightly; "how do you spell your name?"

The silence that ensued seemed shoreless like the Siberian steppes. Eventually I ^Earned that Mr. Voschkov attached not importance to

the spelling of his name. That such should be the case appeared to deepen the sadness which had gripped my ~~Slavic~~ Slavic friends. As I moved to depart, however, Mr. Voschkov's face brightened; not so much - I felt - because I was leaving, as because of what he was about to say. In a clear and ringing voice, very different from the veiled organ ^{HE'D} ~~which~~ ^{USING} ~~which~~ been ~~used~~ off late, he sounded that short sequence of words ^{WHICH} ~~which~~ I'd come to understand even in Russian and which I shall always remember like an endearing bit of melody.

"The trials" , echoed the girl, "will open.."

"Thank you", I said, stepping swiftly outside.

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