

Nazis Threaten Death for Those Shirking Effort

London, Feb. 16 (AP).—Hitler and Himmler imposed martial law upon virtually all Germany today and poised the executioner's axe with a decree establishing courts-martial to "handle ruthlessly" any one who shirks the Nazi death struggle.

"Courts of summary justice" will be set up immediately in all invasion-threatened areas of Germany, with power to deal the death sentence to any one who attempts, "especially through cowardice or selfishness," to evade his duties.

The decree, broadcast by the German radio, meant that even in deepest Bavaria a German could be sentenced to death for selfishness in refusing shelter to a refugee from an overrun Province or for "damaging the Reich" by uttering or repeating a rumor.

The summary courts are to be established, said the decree, "on orders of the Fuehrer in agreement with the Reichsminister of the Interior (Himmler)," and they will be packed firmly with Nazis.

Complete Nazi Setup

Presiding judges will be "assisted" by political leaders or section leaders of the Nazi Party and by officers of the army, the S.S. Elite Guard or the police. Since Hitler is commander-in-chief of the army and Himmler controls the S.S. and the police, it will be a thoroughly Nazi setup.

Before the summary courts will be brought all persons charged with "crimes by which German fighting strength or fighting determination is endangered." This could cover almost any dereliction in the invasion-torn country.

Defendants before the special courts either will be given the death penalty or win acquittal—nothing in between. Execution of the death sentence will be so swift that even the prosecutor may fix the time, place and method in certain cases.

In announcing the decree, the Reichsminister of Justice said, in part:

"The difficult struggle for the continued life of the Reich requires that every German should be ready to fight and display his devotion unto the last.

"Whoever tries to escape his duties to the community, especially out of cowardice or selfishness, must immediately be dealt with, applying the necessary rigor so that the Reich shall suffer no dire result from the failure of an individual.

"The procedure shall be governed by the spirit of the regulations laid down in the Reich criminal proceedings order."

While the German High Command said resistance was stiffening against the Russian offensive, reports pictured a worsening situation within Germany.

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177-026-001

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
RUSSIA
INVASION

Berlin
Himmler
Hitler
Mussolini