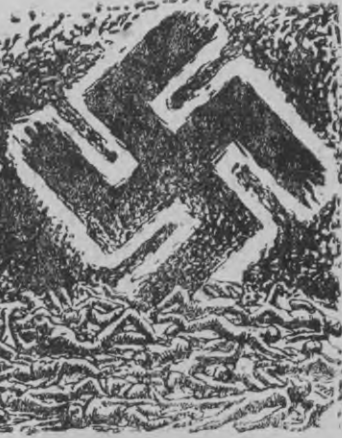


The World CONDEMNNS



THERE is no subject on which people feel more deeply than that of war criminals. And yet there is no subject about which there is more suspicion that the fine words uttered during the fighting will remain fine words and nothing more. The entertainment of Goering and other high-ranking thugs by Allied officers on their arrest has added to this deep distrust and it is nourished by the slow process of such machinery as exists.

The people of the world do not want slow pedantic justice. They have already tried and found guilty the leaders of the Third Reich. Protest Goering how he may, his guilt is known. He is a part and parcel of the whole criminal system he helped to create, and his advertised assistance to friends caught by the Gestapo is hardly mitigation. There was quite a number who did not have the honour of his friendship. They died under the rubber truncheon, the rack, and the Tommy gun.

The feeling of the people is undoubtedly right. Such men as Goering could be shot after the drum-head court martial, and only the Germans would deny the justice of the sentence. But there are only a few whose guilt is so crystal-clear, only a few, comparatively speaking, who are so well-known that identification and proof can be altogether dispensed with. At what point are the United Nations to

draw the line? The men in charge of the prosecutions know that there is no point at which the line can be drawn with any certainty. There is only one answer. Everyone must be tried in full form, and against each, however well known, proof must be brought sufficient to satisfy an impartial judge.

This collection of witnesses is a slow business. The preparation of the prosecutions so that no one escapes a merited punishment is also slow, and those who expected swift retribution to follow victory fret at the delay. It would probably have been worth while to do as the Russians did at Lublin, and make a start with some clear-cut cases, to show that justice could be done and was going to be done.

There are many difficulties in the way, and perhaps the greatest is the difficulty that almost all these criminals can plead military or political orders from higher up so that they have committed no offence under German law. And, in fact, there does not exist any law under which they can be punished. Their offences are crimes against humanity, but humanity has never enacted a world-wide criminal code to cover offences against itself, since there never has been nor is there now a universal legislative body. There is no precedent for charging an invading soldier under the laws of the invaded country for acts, however criminal, committed in the course of his military employment.