

Transcript of Nuremberg trials coverage from World War II donated to US Holocaust Museum

(Jacquelyn Martin/ Associated Press) - An archivist looks through a never-before-published transcript of coverage of the Nuremberg trials after it was donated to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington on Tuesday Nov. 19, 2013. The never-before-published transcript of coverage of the Nuremberg trial after the Holocaust is being donated to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum by Harold Burson who covered the trial for the American Forces (radio) Network.



THE AMERICAN FORCES NETWORK
Palace of Justice
Nuremberg, Germany
19 November 1945

Good evening. This is Corporal Sy Bernhard talking from AEN's special booth in the courtroom at Nuremberg, the same courtroom where tomorrow one of the final chapters of the Second World War will begin as twenty-two members of the Nazi Party will be charged by the four great powers with the conspiracy that launched every year of the world into total war... total war... total war... years.

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1945

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WASHINGTON — A one-time U.S. Army reporter during World War II donated a never-before-published transcript of radio coverage of the Nuremberg war crimes trials of Nazi leaders to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on Tuesday — 68 years to the day after he began reporting on the landmark military tribunal.

Harold Burson covered the trials in 1945 and 1946 for the American Forces Network on the radio. He wrote extensive scripts for on-air announcers who were broadcasting to U.S. soldiers in Europe and to the English-speaking population in Germany during the first Nuremberg trial.

Burson, now 92, took the train from New York to Washington to deliver his collection of 40 scripts to curators Tuesday. The broadcast recordings have been lost. After the war years, Burson, went on to create the large public relations firm Burson-Marsteller.

In 1945, 22 Nazi political, military and economic leaders were put on trial in Nuremberg, Germany, for crimes against humanity. Of those, three were acquitted, 12 were executed, three were sent to prison for life, and four others were imprisoned for 10 to 20 years, according to museum records.

Burson was 24 when he began reporting on the courtroom scene, the defendants and the key players. Before enlisting in the Army, he had paid for college by working as a stringer for his hometown newspaper, The Commercial Appeal in Memphis, Tenn. He joined about 200 other news reporters covering the first trial.

“To me, it was exhilarating because these were arguably the best news people in the world,” Burson told The Associated Press, recalling how he met Walter Cronkite who was reporting at the time for United Press and Howard K. Smith of CBS. “My audience was primarily the million or so soldiers who were still in Europe and had fought the war.”

Burson said surveys at the time also showed the American military radio network was one of the most trusted sources of news in Germany after the war because people believed the U.S. Army would not lie to its troops. So Burson was under orders to report for English-speaking people in Germany as well.

“General Eisenhower wanted the German people to know exactly what happened and how the war began and how it was prosecuted by the Nazi regime,” he said.

The United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain and France all supplied judges and a prosecution team for the trials. Burson reported on efforts to make the trials fair and legitimate for the defendants, including paying for defense lawyers.

“It was, I think, an honest effort to do so,” he said. “Of course, I don’t think it’s possible to overcome the fact that the winner is trying the loser.”

This will be the museum's first detailed transcript of coverage of the trials, said Scott Miller, the museum's director of curatorial affairs.

The Nuremberg trials produced the first legal documentation and evidence of genocide by the Nazis during World War II, before their atrocities were referred to as the Holocaust. Miller said the transcripts will be a new resource for researchers studying the Holocaust and the precedent for international military tribunals set by Nuremberg.

"This is an incredible eyewitness primary source of history," Miller said. "He was witnessing the testimony of Nazi criminals, the captured German photos, the captured German film footage, the captured German documents that were shown at Nuremberg, shown to the world for the first time. He witnessed them become the evidence of the Holocaust."

Audiobook maker Audible produced a recording of Burson's transcripts with actors reading the scripts. Burson also conducted an oral history interview to leave his vivid memories with the museum.

"This was still new to the world," Miller said of Burson's accounts. "It was fresh and raw."

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: <http://www.ushmm.org>

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