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**From the Nuremberg Trials
to the
Memorial Nuremberg Trials**

Nuremberg's name is linked with the NSDAP Party Rallies held here between 1933 and 1938 and with the „Racial Laws“ adopted in 1935. It is also linked with the trials where leading representatives of the Nazi regime had to answer for their crimes in an international court of justice. Between 20 November, 1945, and 1 October, 1946, the International Military Tribunal's trial of the main war criminals (IMT) was held in Court Room 600 at the Nuremberg Palace of Justice. Between 1946 and 1949, twelve follow-up trials were also held here. Those tried included high-ranking representatives of the military, administration, medical profession, legal system, industry and politics.

History

Two years after Germany had unleashed World War II on 1 September, 1939, leading politicians and military staff of the anti-Hitler coalition started to consider bringing to account those Germans responsible for war crimes which had come to light at that point. The Moscow Declaration of 1943 and the Conference of Yalta of February 1945 confirmed this attitude. Nevertheless, the ideas concerning the type of proceeding to use in the trial were extremely divergent.

After difficult negotiations, on 8 August, 1945, the four Allied powers (USA, Britain, France and the Soviet Union) concluded the London Agreement, on a "Charter for The International Military Tribunal", providing for indictment for the following crimes in a trial based on the rule of law:

1. Crimes against peace
2. War crimes (violations of the laws or customs of war, in particular of the Hague and Geneva Conventions)
3. Crimes against Humanity (persecution, enslavement or murder of civilians on political, racial or religious grounds)
4. Conspiracy against world peace



Nuremberg Prison. The corpses were cremated, and the ashes were scattered in a tributary of the river Isar. The seven defendants sentenced to prison started to serve their sentences in Nuremberg, and in July 1947, were moved to Berlin-Spandau.

Von Neurath, Raeder and Funk were permitted to leave prison early, on health grounds, Dönitz, Speer and von Schirach were released after serving the full term. Rudolf Heß, as the last remaining prisoner, committed suicide at the age of 93 in 1987.

Follow-up Trials (1946-49)

On 9 December, 1946, the “Doctors’ Trial” was the first of the twelve so-called „Follow-up trials“ to be opened in Court Room 600. The trials of doctors and jurists, members of the SS and police, industrialists and bankers, military staff and government officials were exclusively conducted by the Americans.

Until 1949, the twelve trials were conducted by American military tribunals here and in other court rooms of the Nuremberg Palace of Justice. An overall number of 185 defendants were indicted in the follow-up trials, and 177 were tried. 13 out of 25 death sentences were executed, and 90 of the 117 defendants sentenced to imprisonment were either pardoned or released early in the 1950s. 35 defendants were acquitted.

The building remained in American hands after the end of the trials. Finally, on 30 June, 1961, Court room 600 was officially handed over to the Bavarian judiciary. In the same year, all alterations made by the Americans were reversed in a comprehensive refurbishment, including complete new furnishings. Since then, the court room has returned to German jurisdiction.

Nuremberg and its Repercussions

The Nuremberg Trial of the main war criminals was a legal first in several respects: for the first time, states with very different government systems and constitutions, conducted a trial of a defeated enemy in a court of law. Instead of taking revenge, legal proceedings were held governed by the rule of law, and for the first time, individuals were held personally responsible on the basis of international law.

The Charter of the United Nations of 26 June, 1945, was an attempt to secure world peace by creating international law – and the Nuremberg Trial of the main war criminals and its London Charter were of fundamental importance to the development and implementation of international criminal law. The “Nuremberg Principles” recorded by the United Nations in 1950 are the historical basis for modern international criminal law. Thus the International Military Tribunal held in Nuremberg was the model for today’s International Criminal Court established in The Hague.

