



Nuremberg Trials, May 13, 1946: Hermann Goering on the witness stand

Beltmann

JUSTICE!

“Now we know. They will hang me—they can’t shoot. I have bet on twelve death sentences...and eleven it is.”—Goering

“Death! Death! Now I won’t be able to write my beautiful memoirs. Tsk! Tsk! So much hatred! Tsk! Tsk!”—Ribbentrop

“Death by hanging! That, at least, I thought I would be spared.”—Keitel

“Life imprisonment! What does that mean? They won’t keep me in prison all my life, will they? They don’t mean that, do they?”—Funk

“Death—by hanging. That, at least, I did not deserve. The death part—all right. Somebody has to stand the responsibility. But that—that I did not deserve.”—Jodl

What punishment did the Nazi leaders face for the crimes they committed? The War Crimes Commission was established by the United Nations in 1943 to investigate and identify the responsible individuals.

Some Nazi officers took extreme measures to escape capture. Hitler and Goebbels committed suicide in Berlin. Himmler, disguised

as a wounded soldier, tried to escape but was caught and later killed himself. Many fled—but only a few succeeded in getting away. The fate of still others is unknown to this day.

Nineteen leaders of the Third Reich were tried for their crimes. The most famous of these trials was held in the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, Germany, beginning on November 20, 1945. The trial lasted 218 days.

It took two days (September 30 and October 1, 1947) to announce the verdicts and sentences. Newspapers and radios all over the world covered the story. Twelve of the accused were condemned to death by hanging. Three were sentenced to life imprisonment, two received twenty years in prison, one received fifteen years, and one was sentenced to ten years.

Editor’s Note: In Stuttgart, Germany, on May 18, 1992, former Nazi commandant Josef Schwammberger was sentenced to life in prison after being convicted of killing over 600 people. The 80-year-old Schwammberger may be the last Nazi to stand trial since no other Nazis are in custody and most potential witnesses have died.