



Memorium Nuremberg Trials

The exhibit - A summary

museen der stadt nürnberg

Nürnberg



»THE WRONGS WHICH WE SEEK TO
CONDEMN AND PUNISH HAVE BEEN
SO CALCULATED, SO MALIGNANT, AND
SO DEVASTATING, THAT CIVILIZATION
CANNOT TOLERATE THEIR BEING
IGNORED, BECAUSE IT CANNOT
SURVIVE THEIR BEING REPEATED.«

*Robert H. Jackson,
US-chief prosecutor,
21 November, 1945*



THE MEMORIUM NUREMBERG TRIALS

The Nazis' regime of terror had led to the breakdown of civilisation and to human suffering of a then unimaginable extent. The Nuremberg Trials where, for the first time in history, representatives of a state had to answer for war crimes and crimes against humanity, made Court Room 600 in Nuremberg's Palace of Justice a venue of world history. Without the Nuremberg Trials and the Nuremberg Principles it would have been impossible to come to terms with those crimes and to develop an international criminal law.

The "Memorium Nuremberg Trials", opened in 2010, consists of an exhibition providing comprehensive information and of Court Room 600: The aura of this location and the power of words combine to create a location of knowledge, filling a gap in the landscape of memorial sites, bridging the gap between historical documentation and future-oriented education.

THE MEMORIUM NUREMBERG



Entrance to the Memorium Nuremberg Trials



View from the exhibition into Court Room 600



Layout of the exhibition, 2010



Nuremberg Palace of Justice, 2010

VENUE OF THE TRIAL

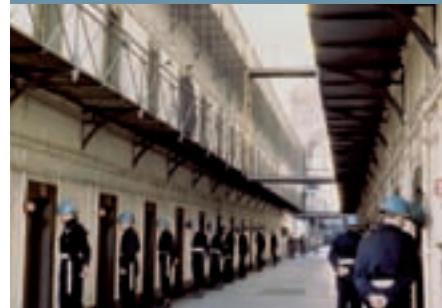
The decision, taken during the London Conference in August 1945, to hold the first trial of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg was mainly for reasons of infrastructure. With its 530 offices and 80 court rooms, the largely undamaged Palace of Justice provided space for the numerous staff recruited from four nations.

The adjacent prison made it easier to house and protect the prisoners. These were not only the defendants, but also a number of incriminated witnesses who were later indicted themselves. Although Nuremberg's historical role as the "City of the Nazi Party Rallies" and the "Racial Laws" was not decisive in the choice of venue for the trial, it gave this choice a particular symbolic meaning.

VENUE OF THE TRIAL NUREMBERG



The old prison



GIs on permanent guard, 1945/46



The wooden corridor between prison and court building



The Palace of Justice and the adjacent prison, 1945/46

COURT ROOM 600 – REFURBISHMENT FOR THE TRIAL

In August 1945, the Americans requisitioned the entire Palace of Justice and refurbished it for the trial. This particularly affected Court Room 600. The biggest change was the construction of an additional visitors' gallery. The back wall of the court room was taken out to provide space for media representatives. Today you can see four small windows which permit a view from the exhibition into Court Room 600.

During the trial, floodlights were suspended from the ceiling instead of the former chandeliers. They were necessary for recording the trial on film, because the windows were covered up for safety reasons. Several additional cut-outs in and above the wood panelling allowed reporters and camera crews a view of the court room.

COURT ROOM 600 REFURBISHMENT



US officers inspecting Court Room 600, 1945



Wall opening above the wooden panelling



View of the new press gallery



Court Room 600 after refurbishment

THE DEFENDANTS

Even though leading figures of the “Third Reich” abdicated from their responsibility by committing suicide (Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler), the allied powers managed to get hold of the most important representatives of the Nazi party, of politics, the economy and the military, and to put them on trial.

BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Hermann Göring, Rudolf Heß, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Wilhelm Keitel, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Alfred Rosenberg, Hans Frank, Wilhelm Frick, Julius Streicher, Walther Funk, Hjalmar Schacht

TOP ROW FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Karl Dönitz, Erich Raeder, Baldur von Schirach, Fritz Sauckel, Alfred Jodl, Franz von Papen, Arthur Seyß-Inquart, Albert Speer, Konstantin von Neurath, Hans Fritzsche

Indicted, but not present: Robert Ley (suicide before the trial), Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach (due to ill health, †1950), Martin Bormann (missing, †1945)



The Defendants

PARTIES OF THE TRIAL DEFENDANTS



Göring in the witness stand



A defence counsel talking to von Papen



Julius Streicher in his prison cell



Exhibition panel "The defendants' Corner"

THE PROSECUTION

On 20 November, 1945, the trial of the International Military Tribunal against leading representatives of the Nazi regime began. The four allied powers provided both the judges (presidency: Great Britain) and the prosecutors. In his opening statement, on 21 November, US chief prosecutor, Robert H. Jackson, described the high expectations put in the trial.

“We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our own lips as well. We must summon such detachment and intellectual integrity to our task that this Trial will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity’s aspirations to do justice.”

PARTIES OF THE TRIAL

PROSECUTORS



Robert H. Jackson
US chief prosecutor



Geoffrey Lawrence
president of the Tribunal
judge of Great Britain



General Roman A. Rudenko
chief prosecutor for the USSR



Iona T. Nikitchenko
judge of the USSR



Hartley William Shawcross
British chief prosecutor



Francis A. Biddle
judge of the USA



Auguste Champetier de Ribes
French chief prosecutor



Henri Donnedieu des Vabres
judge of France

DEFENCE COUNSELS

Each defendant had the option of either defending himself or using the help of a lawyer. In spite of their restricted power to procure documents and witnesses, the defence counsels managed to stand their ground on some points against prosecutors who were often better prepared. They also tried to assert their interests as a group, and managed to achieve the ruling which they wanted on the acceptance of defence materials.

WITNESSES AND EVIDENCE

In the course of the Nuremberg Trial, altogether, more than 280 witnesses were interrogated. The court did not have to hear witnesses in person, but could refer to affidavits sworn by witnesses and informants. It was largely due to the statements of survivors of the Holocaust that the world found out about the scale of the crimes committed during the "Third Reich", including genocide. In addition to witness statements, the evidence presented by the prosecution also comprised film footage from the concentration camps liberated by Allied forces.

PARTIES OF THE TRIAL

DEFENSE COUNSELS



Some of the defence counsels, 1945/46



Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier reported about the crimes in the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, 28 January, 1946



Presentation of evidence in court



Exhibition panels "Defence Councils" and "Interpreters"

THE VERDICTS

The trial lasted 218 days. For long stretches of time, lengthy readings of documents and interrogations provided little variety for the spectators. Nevertheless, there were many days when witnesses, prosecutors and evidence caused quite a stir. On 31 August, 1946, the defendants were given the opportunity of addressing the court and the public in their final statements. The court then adjourned for deliberations until 30 September.

The proclamation of the verdicts took two days and aroused major media interest. On 30 September, the evidence against the defendants and the criminal organisations, the NSDAP leadership corps, the Gestapo, the Security Service and the SS, was summarised and assessed. In the morning of 1 October, the judges took turns in reading the convictions and the three acquittals with corresponding reasons. In the afternoon, the tribunal pronounced the sentences: three acquittals, twelve times death by hanging (in absentia in the case of Bormann), three life sentences, and four long term prison sentences.

COURSE OF THE TRIAL VERDICTS



Special edition of "Süddeutsche Zeitung",
1 October, 1946



Exhibition panels "Course of the Trial" and "Sentences"

FOLLOW- UP TRIALS

THE FOLLOW-UP TRIALS

The "Nuremberg Trial" was not the only attempt to prosecute those who had committed Nazi crimes. Between 1946 and 1949, 177 high-ranking doctors, lawyers and industrialists, SS and police officers, military officers, civil servants and diplomats stood trial in Nuremberg in twelve subsequent proceedings before US military courts. The proceedings demonstrated the extent to which the German establishment had contributed to the rise and functioning of the Nazi regime. The Cold War and the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany led to a situation whereby half of those who had been sentenced to death in the follow-up trials were granted pardons and those who had received prison sentences were almost all released before serving their full term.

Further criminal trials of Nazi crimes – also by German courts – were to follow. The most well-known of them were the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial between 1963 and 1965, and the Düsseldorf Majdanek Trial between 1975 and 1981.



The dock in the Nuremberg
Doctors' Trial, 1946/47



Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach
during the Krupp Trial, December 1947



The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1964



Exhibition panel "The Follow-up Trials"

FROM NUREMBERG TO THE HAGUE

In retrospect, there seems to be a direct path from the 1945 Nuremberg Trial to today's International Criminal Court (ICC). In fact, however, the "Nuremberg Promise" to punish state crimes remained unfulfilled for decades. The first International Criminal Tribunal established by the UN Security Council was to deal with crimes committed during the wars in the territories of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

On 1 July, 2002, the International Criminal Court began its work in the Hague. It is an independent court on the basis of an international agreement ("Rome Statute" of 1998). So, as a rule, only its member states are subject to its jurisdiction. Important major powers, such as the USA, Russia, India, China or Israel still have not ratified the Charter of the International Criminal Court. With the definition of "aggressive war" as an element of crime, adopted in 2010, the last gap in the development of International Criminal Law, stretching from the Nuremberg Trials to the International Criminal Court, was finally closed.

NUREM- BERG PRINCIPLES



The ICC headquarters in the Hague



ICC judges in the Hague



Nuremberg's Human Rights Road

PRINCIPLE I

Any person who commits an act which constitutes a crime under international law is responsible therefor and liable to punishment.

PRINCIPLE II

The fact that internal law does not impose a penalty for an act which constitutes a crime under international law does not relieve the person who committed the act from responsibility under international law.

PRINCIPLE III

The fact that a person who committed an act which constitutes a crime under international law acted as Head of State or responsible Government official does not relieve him from responsibility under international law.

PRINCIPLE IV

The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him.

PRINCIPLE V

Any person charged with a crime under international law has the right to a fair trial on the facts and law.

PRINCIPLE VI

The crimes hereinafter set out are punishable as crimes under international law:

a) Crimes against peace:

- (i) Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances;
- (ii) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under (i).

b) War crimes:

Violations of the laws or customs of war include, but are not limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave-labour or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war, of persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity.

c) Crimes against humanity:

Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhuman acts done against any civilian population, or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds, when such acts are done or such persecutions are carried on in execution of or in connexion with any crime against peace or any war crime.

PRINCIPLE VII

Complicity in the commission of a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity as set forth in Principle VI is a crime under international law.

June 1950

COURT ROOM 600 TODAY

After the Court Room was handed back to the Germans in 1961, the Bavarian judiciary had all the alterations removed. The back wall was replaced, the judges' tables shifted before the front wall and the dock made smaller. In spite of having been turned back to its original state, there is still some sense of the atmosphere which existed when for the first time in world history, criminals who were heads of state were convicted in a fair trial in the eyes of the world.

For a long time, the historical importance of Court Room 600 as the venue of a "World Tribunal" was underestimated. After the opening of the "Memorium Nuremberg Trials", the court room will continue to be used as a venue for major criminal trials. Access to court room 600 may therefore be restricted on some days during the week.

COURT ROOM 600 TODAY

»THAT FOUR GREAT NATIONS, FLUSHED WITH VICTORY AND STUNG WITH INJURY STAY THE HAND OF VENGEANCE AND VOLUNTARILY SUBMIT THEIR CAPTIVE ENEMIES TO THE JUDGMENT OF THE LAW IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRIBUTES THAT POWER HAS EVER PAID TO REASON.«

Robert H. Jackson

THIS IS THE REAL MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THIS LOCATION, COURT ROOM 600 IN THE NUREMBERG PALACE OF JUSTICE.



Court Room 600 today

EXHIBITION PLAN 3rd FLOOR



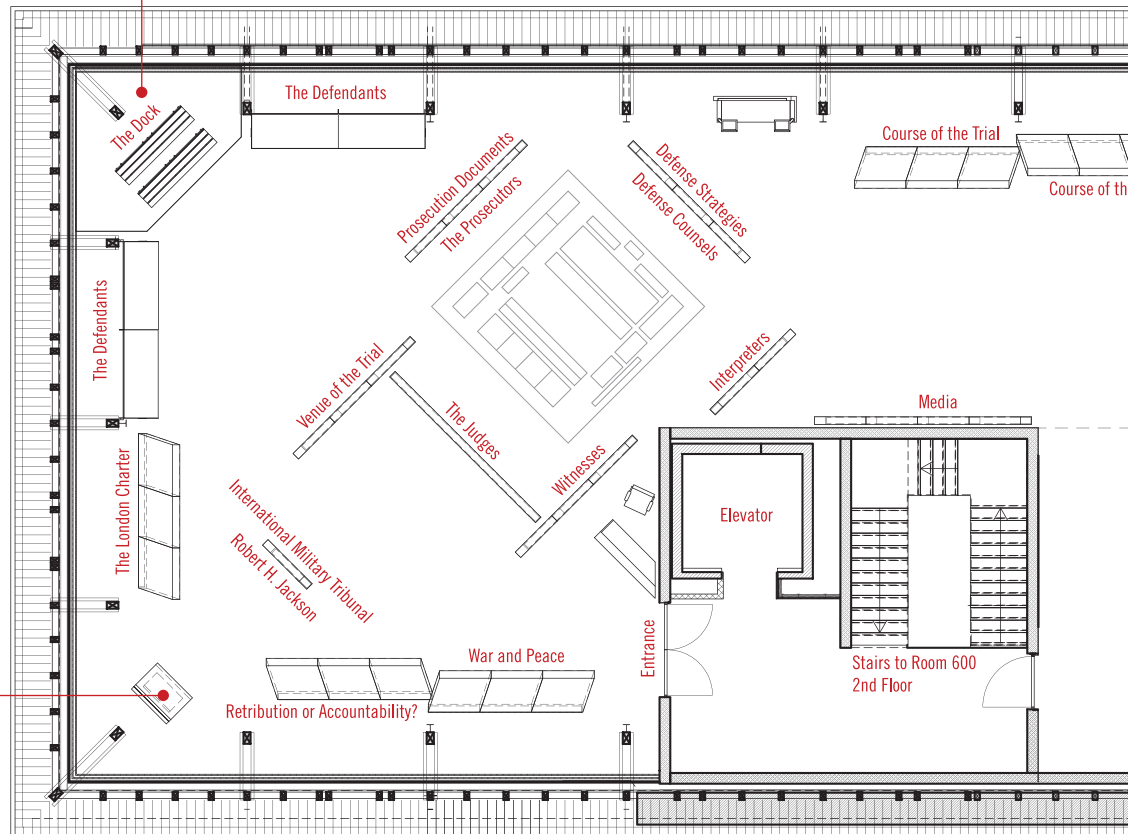
two parts of the original dock
from 1945/46

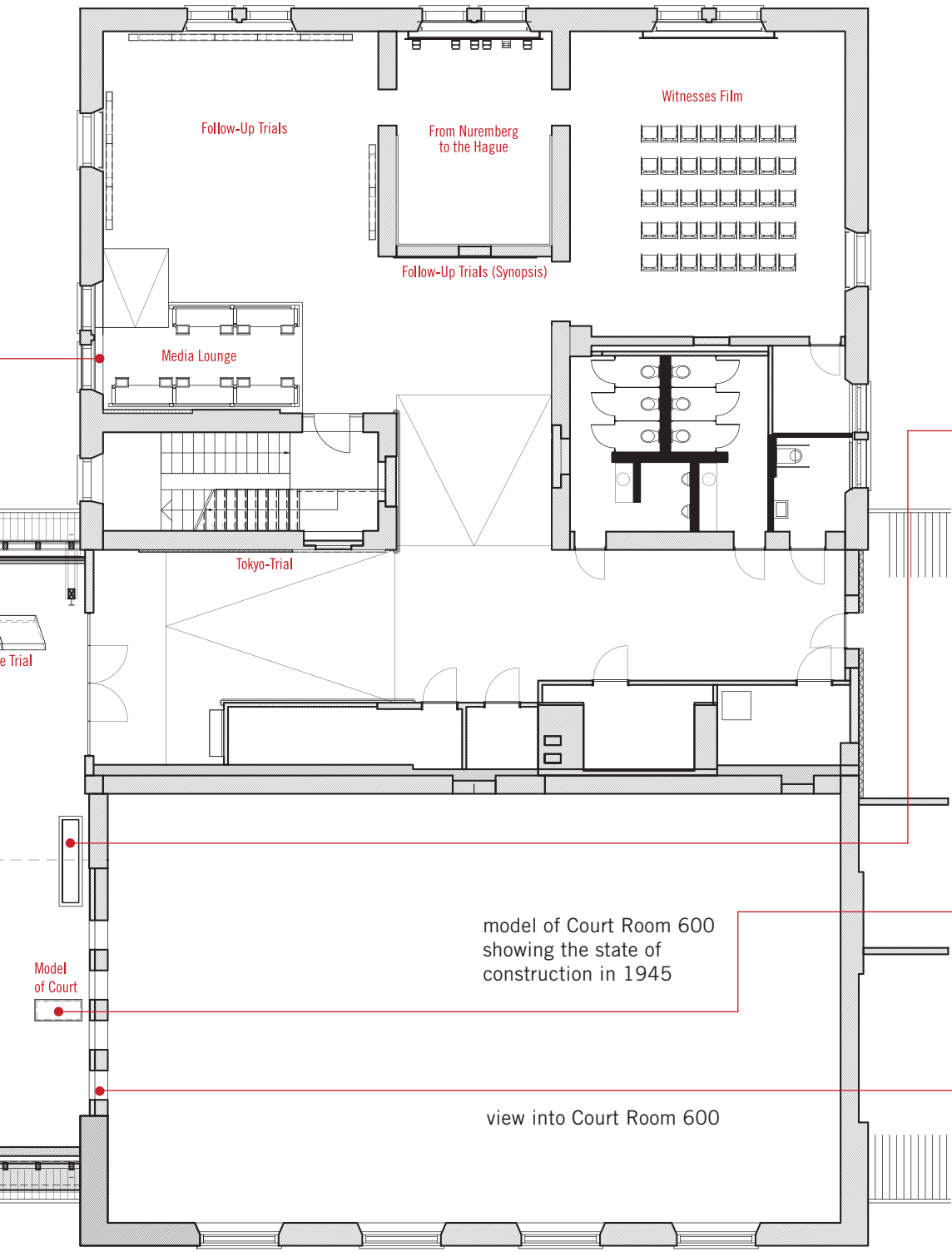


view on the remains of the old prison, 2009

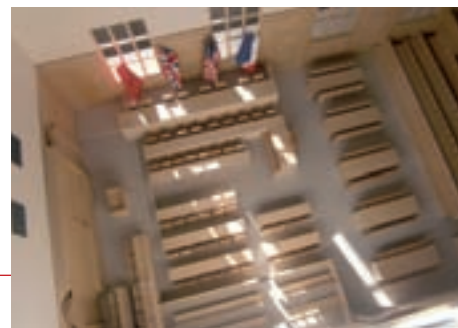


US-army box for the transport of evidence
documents for the Nuremberg trial





electric control cabinet for Court Room 600



model of Court Room 600 showing the state of construction in 1945



view into Court Room 600

IMPRINT

EDITORS

museen der stadt nürnberg – Dr. Matthias Henkel
Hans-Christian Täubrich

TEXTS

Dokumentationszentrum Reichsparteitagsgelände
Dr. Alexander Schmidt, Dr. Martina Christmeier

TRANSLATIONS

Ulrike Seeberger, Jane Britten, Maria O’Hanlon

EXHIBITION PANELS

Büro Müller-Rieger; CAD Markus Flämig

PICTURES

Christine Dierenbach; ICC-CPI/Wim van Cappellen;
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CONTACT

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Memorium Nürnberger Prozesse
museen der stadt nürnberg
Bärenschanzstraße 72 • 90429 Nürnberg
Tel.: (0911) +49 (0)911 321 – 79372
Fax: (0911) +49 (0)911 321 – 79373
Email: memorium@stadt.nuernberg.de
www.museen.nuernberg.de



OPENING TIMES

Wed-Mon 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., closed Tue.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Court Room 600 remains a venue of jurisdiction. Therefore a visit to the court room cannot be guaranteed in the context of a visit to the exhibition. You may obtain information concerning access to the court room in advance from above contact numbers.

