

Nuremberg Trials Lesson Plan

Grade Level:

This lesson was developed for students in grades 9-12, in conjunction with the Nuremberg Exhibit at the New Mexico Holocaust and Intolerance Museum and specifically, the role that two New Mexicans played in the Nuremberg Trials. For a more in-depth study of the Nuremberg Trials, refer to additional resources at the end of this lesson plan.

Subject

World History, U.S. History

Rationale

Understand how the Nuremberg Trials were established and the role the Trials and individuals played in adjudicating justice after World War II.

Key Questions

What are crimes against humanity? How should nations deal with a country that is or has committed crimes against humanity? Can corporations be found guilty of crimes?

Pre-Lesson Work

Have students read the following summary of the Nuremberg Trials from the National WW2 Museum <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/topics/nuremberg-trials>

After the war, Allied powers—United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union—came together to form the International Military Tribunal (IMT). From 1945 to 1946, Nazi Germany leaders stood trial for crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing crimes.

In the days before Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945, President Harry S Truman appointed Associate Supreme Court Justice Robert H Jackson to be the chief prosecutor representing the United States in the proposed trials for the European Axis powers. Jackson helped lead the Allies—American, British, French, and Soviet governments—to an agreement called the **London Charter**, setting the procedures for the Nuremberg Trials. The [London Agreement](#) created the **International Military Tribunal (IMT)** on August 8, 1945, where each of the four Allied nations appointed a judge and a prosecution team.

The indictment against 24 major war criminals and seven organizations was filed on Oct. 18, 1945, by the four chief prosecutors of the International Military Tribunal. On Nov. 20, the trial began with 21 defendants appearing before the court. The U.S. held 12 additional trials in Nuremberg after the initial International Military Tribunal. In all, 199 defendants were tried 161 were convicted, and 37 were sentenced to death.

Lord Justice Geoffrey Lawrence of Great Britain would serve as the court's presiding judge. The proceedings would be simultaneously translated into English, French,

German, and Russian. The trial would make history being the first of its kind with judges from four countries.

Nuremberg, Germany was chosen as the location of the trials for being a focal point of Nazi propaganda rallies leading up to the war. The Allies wanted Nuremberg to symbolize the death of Nazi Germany. The court convened in the **Palace of Justice** in Nuremberg that was previously expanded by German prisoners to fit up to 1,200 detainees.

The indictment of 24 Nazi government officials and organizations was filed on October 18, 1945 by the four chief prosecutors of the International Military Tribunal: Robert H Jackson of the United States, Sir Hartley Shawcross of Great Britain, Francois de Menthon of France, and Roman A Rudenko of the Soviet Union. The jurisdiction of the Tribunal included crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The IMT defined **crimes against humanity** as "murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation...or persecutions on political, racial, or religious grounds."

Between November 20, 1945, to October 1, 1946, the Tribunal tried 24 of the most important military and political leaders of the Third Reich and heard evidence against 21 of the defendants. During the trial, the Tribunal—and the world—learned about the the Nazi Party and its "planning, initiating and waging of aggressive war" from the beginning. Footage of Nazi concentration camps taken by Allied military photographers during liberation was shown to the court. The graphic scenes of what had taken place in Europe were the most powerful evidence presented at the trial. Other memorable moments of the trial were the screenings of the *Nazi Concentration and Prison Camps* and *The Nazi Plan* films, the detailed description of the Final Solution, the murders of prisoners of war, atrocities in extermination camps, and countless cruel acts to prosecute Jews.

On October 1, 1946, the Tribunal convicted 19 of the defendants and acquitted three. Of those convicted, 12 were sentenced to death. Three defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment and four to prison terms ranging from 10 to 20 years. On October 16, executions were carried out by hanging in the gymnasium of the courthouse. Hermann Göring committed suicide the night before his execution. In 1947, the prisoners sentenced to incarceration were sent to Spandau Prison in Berlin.

From December 1946 to April 1949, a series of twelve additional military tribunals for war crimes against Nazi Germany leaders were held by the United States in the Palace of Justice. The defendants were 177 high-ranking physicians, judges, industrialists, SS commanders and police commanders, military personnel, civil servants, and diplomats. The trials uncovered the German leadership that supported the Nazi dictatorship. Of the 177 defendants, 24 were sentenced to death, 20 to lifelong imprisonment, and 98 other prison sentences. Twenty-five defendants were found not guilty. Many of the prisoners were released early in the 1950s as a result of pardons. Thirteen of the 24 death sentences were executed.

Handouts

Panel text on Adams Greene, Rhee, and I.G. Farben

Adams Greene Scrapbook <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/162927687/>

Article on Nazi Trials

Standards

National Standards for Civics and Government

Grades 6-8

III.B.1.3

To achieve this standard, students should be able to identify historical and contemporary examples of important foreign policies, e.g., Monroe Doctrine, Marshall Plan, immigration acts, foreign aid, arms control, promoting democracy and human rights throughout the world.

Grades 9-12

IV.B.1.2

To achieve this standard, students should be able to explain how and why the United States assumed the role of world leader after World War II and what its leadership role is in the world today.

New Mexico Social Studies Standards – High School U.S. History

Theme 8, History 19. Grades 9-12 Summarize U.S. diplomatic and military policies during the Cold War.

Theme 8, Geography 13. Grades 9-12 Describe how particular historical events and developments shaped human processes and systems between 1945 and 1975.

Vocabulary

Prosecutor

Defendant

Indictment

Acquittal

Opening Questions

What actions of a nation or group do you think should be considered “crimes against humanity”? How should other nations deal with them? How can a corporation (business) be guilty of crimes and how can it be punished?

Activity

(Role of women – women were rarely represented in the professions in the 1940s. Consider the role women play in the Nuremberg Trials.)

Students watch the testimony of Edith Coliver:

<file:///C:/Users/LeslieLawner/Documents/Edith%20Coliver.html>

Discuss the following questions:

1. Her father directed Edith to “Go to do justice, be just.” What does this mean? Why is it necessary for those seeking justice to do so in a just manner?
2. How does Edith’s small contributions to the Nuremberg Trials as an interpreter impart justice on the Nazi perpetrators? What do her contributions teach you about justice?

Read the article on Cecelia Goetz, a lead attorney at one of the Nuremberg Trials, at <https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2018/05/22096-women-nuremberg-cecelia-goetz>. What were some of the obstacles she faced in her role as an attorney? How did she contribute to imparting justice?

Review the biographies of Dorothy Adams Greene and Lawrence Rhee. How did the work of Dorothy Adams Greene and Lawrence Rhee contribute to imparting justice?

Additional Resources

https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/An_Overview_of_the_Nuremberg_Trials.pdf

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/first-trial-nuremberg>

<https://echoesandreflections.org/unit-10/?state=open#content> (Edith Coliver)

Nazi Trials May End Soon in U.S. Zone Despite Protests

(newspaper article from Adams Greene Scrapbook)

By Peter Edson

Washington (REA)

Trial of 210 high Nazis accused of war crimes will probably be wound up in the U.S. zone in Germany this summer, despite protests to the Army against "whitewashing" of German industrialists and petitions to Congress for an investigation of the way the trials have been conducted.

Much of the agitation has been stirred up by H. W. Ambruster of Westfield, N.J. He is a former manufacturer who was put out of business by the German dye trust. He has been leading a crusade against I.G. Farben, Krupp, and other German monopolies through his book, "Treason's Peace." And in a series of lectures he goes so far as to charge that U.S. trial officials were handpicked by U.S. capitalists to insure that the German industrialists were let off easy.

Many of the complaints made against conduct of the war crimes trials in Germany are based on the mistaken impression that these trials were expected to break up the German cartels. Such criticism fails to distinguish between civil and criminal cases, says Cecil F. Hubbert, deputy chief of the Army War Crimes branch.

Breaking up the German monopolies—the so-called decartelization of German industry—involves civil, not criminal, law. Incidentally, in the U.S.-British zone in Germany, the antitrust law now in force is even more severe than the U.S. Sherman Act on which it was based. No business is allowed to have more than 10,000 employees in Germany. That law in America would break up many big businesses.

Trials of the German war criminals have been going on since November, 1945, with 185 Germans indicted in the U.S. zone alone. No record has ever been compiled of trials by the allied powers.

In brief, this is their record to date. Case 1- 23 doctors and scientists accused of experimenting on human beings as guinea pigs. Seven sentenced to die, five to life, four to 10-20 years, seven acquitted.

Case 2-Air Force General Erhard Milch, Goering's second, accused of employing slave labor and other crimes against humanity. Sentenced to life imprisonment.

Case 3 – 16 Nazi judges are accused of frustrating criminal justice by carrying out Hitler's decrees. Four sentenced to life, six, 5-10 years, four acquitted, one died, one excused for illness.

Case 4 – 18 SS commanders of concentration camps. Four sentenced to death, three life, eight 10-35 years, three acquitted.

Case 5 – Six industrialists accused of employing slave labor and exploiting occupied territory. Three give 2-7 years. Three acquitted.

Case 6 – 24 I.G. Farben industrialists accused of plunder, spoliation, slavery and mass murder. Trial still in progress.

Case 7 – Twelve generals accused of mass murder, plunder, illegal executions, and employing slave labor. Two given life, six 7-20 years, two acquitted, one suicide, one excused for illness.

Case 8- Fourteen SS officers accused of kidnaping and resettlement. One given life, five released as having already served sufficient time awaiting trial.

Case 9 - Twenty-four SS officials accused of eliminating racial “undesirables.” Fourteen given death, two life, five 10-20 years, one acquitted, one suicide, one excused for illness.

Case 10 – Twelve Krupp industrialists accused of slave labor, plunder, and crimes against the peace. Trial still in progress.

Case 11 – Twenty-one high Nazi officials. Trial still in progress.

Case 12 – Fourteen German generals. Trial still in progress.

Total criminal box score including Nuremberg case – 37 sentenced to die, 21 given life, 43 lesser imprisonment, four suicides, five excused, only 28 acquitted or released and 71 still on trial.

Biographies of Dorothy Adams Green and Lawrence Rhee

Dorothy Adams Greene

Born Dorothy Kathryn Adams in Little Falls, Minnesota in 1913, “Dot” Adams Greene was a clerk secretary for prosecuting attorneys at the subsequent Nuremberg Trials. In her role as part of the Office of Chief Counsel of War Crimes, she participated in the sixth case, the trial of the directors of German chemical giant I.G. Farben. She worked closely with American prosecutors recording not only the events of the trial, but also interviews with former prisoners of war who were incarcerated in camps administered by I.G. Farben.

She traveled widely, both as part of her work documenting atrocities and as a tourist, chronicling her observations of a post-war Europe and beyond. After the trial, she remained in Germany another year as Secretary to the Director of Training at the EUCOM Intelligence School in Oberammergau.

Adams Greene returned to the United States, where she continued to work in civil service, including three years in Alaska, where she met her husband, Roger J. Greene. Upon Roger's retirement from the Air Force in 1957, they moved with their children, Nancy and Janet, to Albuquerque. Adams Greene continued to work as a secretary on Sandia Base for many years, receiving numerous awards for outstanding service. She died at the age of 75 and is buried with her husband in the Santa Fe National Cemetery in New Mexico.

In 2022, her daughter Nancy donated a large collection of Adams Greene's original writings, personal effects, and photographs to the New Mexico Holocaust & Intolerance Museum.

Lawrence Rhee

Lawrence “Larry” Rhee was born in Recklinghausen, Germany on July 13, 1917 to Moritz Rhee and Else Seligmann Rhee. The family was Jewish and, in 1936, fled Nazi Germany to settle in Bernalillo, NM. The Rhees were related to the New Mexico Seligman family who owned and operated the Bernalillo Mercantile Company since the late 19th century.

In 1942, Rhee enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in Military Combat Intelligence in the European Theatre, interrogating German POWs. After the war, he served in the first Nuremberg War Crime Trials, first as a translator, then in the Photographic Evidence Division.

After the trials, he returned to the US and worked in the lumber industry. He moved to Mexico where he taught lumber grading. While in Mexico, he met and married his wife Alicia B. Moreno. He returned to Albuquerque with his family in 1959 and worked for Duke City Lumber Company until his retirement in 1982.

Since all of his school records were lost in Germany, he started night school in 1962 and graduated from Albuquerque High School in 1964. After retirement, he often spoke at New Mexico schools and civic organizations about the Holocaust and his experience at Nuremberg. He died in 2005. Larry and the Rhee family generously donated photographs and documents related to the trials to the New Mexico Holocaust & Intolerance Museum.

I.G. Farben

I.G. Farben was a chemical and pharmaceutical conglomerate based in Frankfurt, Germany. The 6 companies that made up I.G. Farben produced products ranging from photographic chemicals to aspirin. The company had employed many Jewish chemists and businessmen, but by 1938, they had all been ousted.

Farben's subsidiaries had been involved in developing chemical weapons and military aid. Under the Nazi regime, Farben manufactured a form of cyanide gas, Zyklon B, which was used in mass murder in the gas chambers in the concentration camps. Over one million people died in the gas chambers. I.G. Farben also used slave labor in its production work, taking prisoners from camps, such as Auschwitz and its sub-camp Monowitz. Over 100,000 prisoners were used as slave labor, helping add to the profits I.G. Farben made.

Thirteen directors of I.G. Farben were found guilty at trial, but none served out a full sentence. Many returned to jobs at the company. Some I.G. Farben companies are still doing business today; Bayer, which makes Bayer aspirin, is one.