The Nuremberg Trials/War Crimes Essay, Research Paper

The Nuremberg Trials

War crimes, in practice, are offenses charged against the losers of the

war by victor. During WW II there were three types of war crimes were

committed by Germany. The first: crimes against peace, which included

preparing for and starting a war of aggression in violation of treaties. The

second: murder, ill treatment, the killing of hostages; plunder of public or

private property; the destruction of cities and towns. The third: crimes

against humanity, which include persecution on racial, political, or religious

grounds either before or during a war. All of these violations were raised on

Germany’s actions.

Trials of the Nazi leaders begun on October 18, 1945, and lasted for 10

months. Trials of Japanese leaders began on May 3, 1946 in Tokyo and

ended on November 12, 1948. There were more than 2,000 lesser trials

accusing Nazi leaders of wrong doing. Even more took place in the Soviet

Union. Most of the war criminals were convicted, and many were also

executed.

The Nuremberg Trials, one of the more substantial trials, accused 22

German Nazi leaders of war crimes. Altogether 12 were sentenced to death,

including Keitel, Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, Bromann (who was tried in

absentia), and Goering (who committed suicide). Only three, including Hess

were given life sentences. Just four, including Doenitz and Speer were

sentenced to up to 20 years of prison. Amazingly, three including Papen and

Schacht were acquitted. These trials brought some anger and sadness. The

prosecution took almost four months to present their case to the jury.

Each man who was being tried was a major part of the whole Nazi

power. Albert Speer (1905-81) was a German architect and public official

who became Hitler’s number one architect. Albert devised a system of slave

labor which showed in the concentration camps. Albert served 20 years in

prison.

Arthur von Seyss-Inquart (1892-1946), was a German political leader.

He became the leader of the Nazi movement in Austria, then became

governor of Austria after it was taken over by Germany. Soon after he was

made the deputy governor of Poland which was occupied by Germany.

Shortly after, he was made the Reich commissioner of Netherlands. Arthur

von Seyss-Inquart was the Reich commissioner for five years before being

hanged.

Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) was a German political leader and the

educator of Nazi youth. Later in his life he directed a philosophical outlook

for the Third Reich. He was made minister for the East in 1941. He was

later hanged for war crimes in October 1946.

Erich Raeder (1876-1960) was the commander-in-chief of the German

Navy from 1935-43. Erich Raeder was the naval adviser to Hitler and head

of the naval service to combat the Allied invasion. He was sentenced to life

imprisonment for war crimes in October 1946, but was released due to ill

health. While in prison Erich wrote many books.

Karl Doenitz (1891-1980) was a German submarine expert and was

made commander-in-chief of the German Navy in 1943 after Erich Raeder.

Karl succeeded Hitler and made fuhrer in May 1945. About one year later he

was imprisoned for war crimes in 1946-56, and while in prison wrote a book

called ‘Memoris’.

Wilhem Keitel (1882-1946) was a German army officer that was also

made commander-in-chief of German armed forces in 1938. Wilhem was one

of the more notable people who signed the World War II surrender in 1945.

Wilhem was hanged for war crimes in 1946.

Martin Bormann (1900-45?) was the German head of the Nazi party

during most of World War II and a very powerful associate of Adolf Hitler.

He was imprisoned in 1924 for participation in a politically-motivated

murder. Although he was suppose to be in prison for a long period of his life

he joined the Nazi party and was easily released from prison. He was a major

advocate of the extermination of many Jews. Although he wasn’t present for

the Nuremberg trials he was tried in absentia. He was convicted and was

sentenced to death by hanging. Some people believe his remains were found

in West Berlin in 1972.

Hermann Wilhem Goering (1893-1946) was a German Nazi leader,

chief of secret police, field marshal, and marshal of the Third Reich. He was

second to Hitler himself. Hermann was the one man in Hitler’s inner circle

with a distinguished social and military background. He was the second most

powerful man and was thought to be very pleasant, but in reality was addicted

to morphine. He was captured by the allies and was tried for war crimes. He

was convicted but committed suicide on October 19, 1946.

Josef Mengele “Angel of Death” (1911-79?) was the Nazi doctor at

Auschwitz. Josef had a medical degree from the distinguished University of

Frankfurt. He thought up the idea of the deadly gas chambers. Mengele was

also known for his many medical experiments, especially on twins. He

escaped to Bavaria than to South America, settled in Brazil and moved to

Paraguay to because there was no extradition treaty with any other country.

Supposedly Mengele’s body was found in 1979 and after much controversy

and later DNA testing this proved to be true in 1991.

There were also many German officials who fled the demolished Nazi

empire and moved to South America. Many were never heard from until their

deaths, but Israel’s intensive efforts in tracking down the war criminals paid

off. It was poetic justice that the people who tried to exterminated the Jews

were caught and punished by the same Jews.