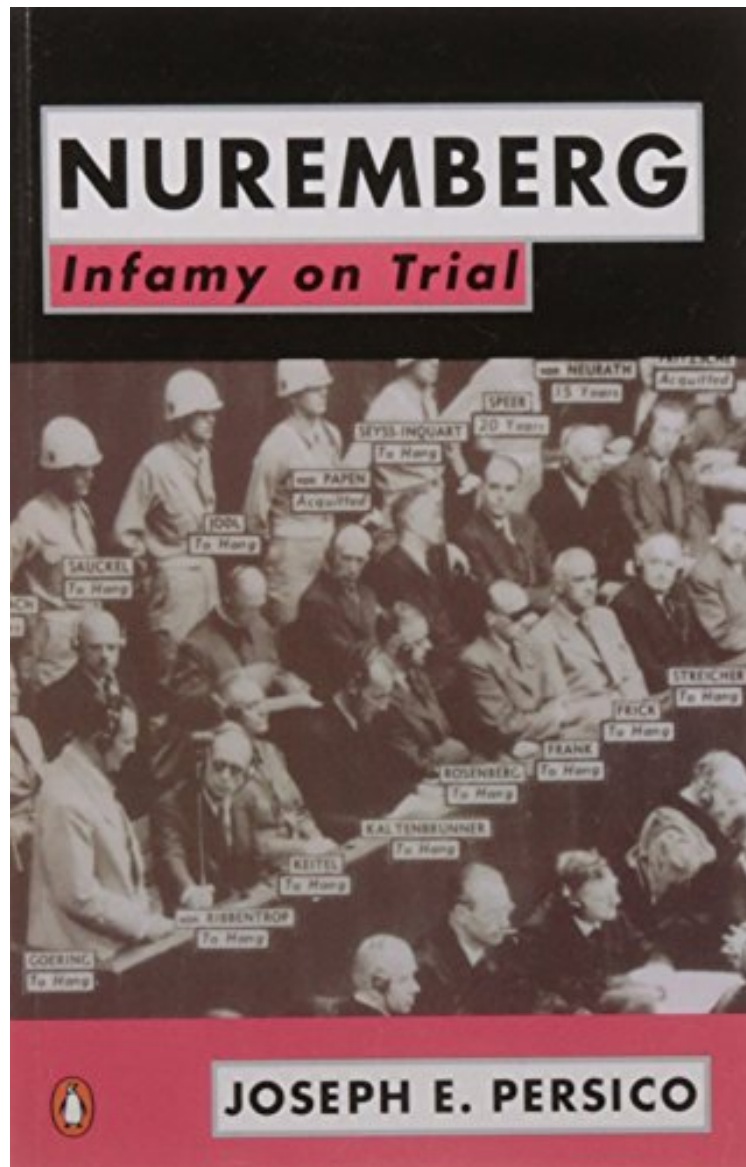


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Nuremberg : Infamy on Trial

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Persico offers not the history but the story of the trial of Nazi Germany's major war criminals. He is concerned less with legal issues and courtroom procedures than with a fundamental question: Did it all matter? His answer is mixed. While the tribunal's validity remains debatable, to demand perfection from the institutions of justice is to deny justice itself. Persico demonstrates that Nuremberg was not a kangaroo court; the defendants had their choice of attorneys and full access to the prosecution's documentation. If individual verdicts may be questioned, no saints or statesmen lost life or freedom. The trial demonstrated beyond question Nazi Germany's crimes and destroyed beyond hope any Nazi martyrology. Arguably, it helped lay the grounds for Germany's eventual democratic reconstruction. The Nuremberg proceedings may not have deterred later aggressors, but they at least established a precedent for law that supersedes national sovereignty. This well-written, well-researched volume belongs in all collections on World War II.
D.E. Showalter, U.S. Air Force Acad., Colorado Springs
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From Booklist
Tod durch den Strang: condemned by those satisfying words, 11 of Hitler's paladins swung at Nuremberg. Aiming to interest a new generation in that legal spectacle, Persico presents a robust, populist narrative that combines the numerous accounts set down by the trial's participants (lately by prosecutor Telford Taylor in *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials* [1992]). Here are flesh-and-blood portraits of the ogres, from Kaltenbrunner, the scar-faced deputy SS chief, to superficially less repulsive types, such as the technocratic Speer. But the judges, jailers, and prison psychiatrists are equally alive in Persico's hands, and the subdramas and conflicts within their separate guilds shade in the drama of the proceeding's admonitory purposes. He sketches the two shrinks vying for material for their books; the judges reconciling different national legal principles; and the prisoners demanding this or that exemption from the warden's regiment, all the while weaving among the personalities as if they were traffic cones along the trial's center line--the presentation of the evidence. A fluid re-creation from opening gavel to closing gallows. Gilbert Taylor