

‘The verdict of history’ from the Pravda (2 October 1946)

Caption: On 2 October 1945, the Soviet daily newspaper Pravda comments on the verdicts handed down by the International Military Tribunal which was set up in Nuremberg to try Nazi war criminals.

Source: Pravda. 02.10.1946, n° 234. Moskva. "Prigovor istorii", p. 1.

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The verdict of history

Sentence has been passed ...

The trial of the leading German war criminals is over.

For the last ten months, the International Military Tribunal, comprising four judges representing the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain and France, with due care and attention, studied many documents and material evidence and questioned witnesses, including victims of the horrors of the Fascist death camps, and exposed the heinous crimes committed by Hitler's fascist gangs, calling themselves the Government of Germany.

In the court room of the Nuremberg Tribunal, day after day for ten months, the court and the whole world heard terrible testimonies of the recent past, innumerable facts bearing testimony to the unprecedented evil actions of Hitler's people against the world and against humanity, against the generally held principles of morality and international law, against millions upon millions of innocent people who were robbed, tortured and exterminated.

The tribunal has exposed those who instigated, organised and directed these inhuman crimes which put the defendants to eternal shame. It has exposed and declared as serious crimes the mad bloodstained plans of the German fascist aggressors who prepared, organised and kindled the Second World War with the objective of enslaving freedom-loving peoples and asserting their own global hegemony.

The court has come down hard on the criminal German fascist aggressors with legal retribution — the death penalty. It is a just sentence, fair retribution for all the horrors of war, for all the heinous crimes, for all the suffering and torment which people and entire nations were made to endure under the German fascist butchers.

The sentencing to death by the International Tribunal of the 12 leading war criminals who dragged the world into the most aggressive war to date, which drew shame upon the German people and turned them into victims of the criminal clique of German fascist leaders, brings to a close the great events of the Second World War. In this war the Allied forces of the democratic countries combined their military strength to bring down the insidious aggressor, winning a victory over the dark host of fascist aggressors and releasing the people from fascist slavery.

The unanimous court verdict against the leading defendants, who, together with Hitler, Goebbels and Himmler, were the most responsible for this war and all the crimes committed by the German aggressors, expressed the spirit of military cooperation between the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain and France, a military alliance which enjoyed a global, historic victory over fascist Germany and militaristic Japan. It is no coincidence that another court is now sitting in Tokyo against Japan's war criminals, who await their fate.

The Soviet people and all progressive, honest people will regard the International Tribunal's ruling with a sense of satisfaction. The ruling resounds like the verdict of history itself: merciless and harsh, severe but just.

One must also note that the verdict of the Nuremberg Tribunal was not unanimous with regard to some of the defendants. Hess had his sentence reduced, and Von Papen, Schacht and Fritzsche were acquitted and set free. The Soviet judge at the International Military Tribunal did not agree with his fellow judges' verdict and expressed his dissenting opinion.

We share the Soviet judge's view. We understand and support his dissenting opinion, as the court had at its disposal enough convincing evidence to condemn the defendants. But even taking into account the Soviet judge's dissenting opinion, it should be emphasised that the sentence passed in Nuremberg on the fascist murderers will be considered just by all honest people throughout the world, as it was just and fair

punishment for the serious criminals against peace and the welfare of the people.

The court of history has reached its verdict. The first just penalty fell upon the heads of the organisers and leaders, the instigators and executors of the criminal plans of aggressive war.

This sentence was a sentence against aggression and aggressors.

It was a harsh punishment for past aggression, a stark warning against any future aggression and new wars against freedom-loving peoples who desire peace for their creative and constructive labours.

History has passed sentence ...