***Francis Biddle***



Francis Biddle was a distinguished American legal scholar and wartime Attorney General of the United States, 1941-45. He is best known as the US representative at the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, also known as the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, where former Nazi leaders were tried for war crimes and a new category of crimes, labeled “crimes against humanity.” He earned his law degree with special academic honors (cum laude) from Harvard Law in 1911 and served as private secretary to Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes from 1911 to 1912. He practiced law in Philadelphia and went on to join Roosevelt’s New Deal in 1934 as the first chairman of the National Labor Relations Board. He was a US circuit judge, an appeals court judge, the Solicitor General, and during the war years, the Attorney General of the US. He at first opposed Japanese-American Internment (Executive Order 9066) but gave in to pressure from the military to imprison 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent from the west coast for several years during the war.

The Nuremberg Tribunals tried 23 members of the political, economic and military leadership of Nazi Germany for war crimes, including genocide and others. Several of the defendants were convicted and hanged. Several received long prison terms despite reported repentance. Several were acquitted. The Tribunal consisted of judges from the Soviet Union, the U.S., Great Britain, and France. Decisions on sentencing were not the sole discretion of one representative but were collaborative, and presumably influenced by the politics of that situation and time.

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**VIDEO:**

# United States Army. “Sentencing Of Nazi War Leaders At Nuremberg, 10/1946.” *United States Army.* United States Army, Oct. 1946. Web. 28 Jan. 2015. <https://archive.org/details/ADC-10018>

# National Archives description: Summary: Voices of Russian Justice, Justices Francis Biddle, and Sir Geoffrey Lawrence stating conclusions of the tribunal on Constantin von Neurath and Albert Speer. LS, courtroom as Justice Lawrence states that any appeal of the defendants to the Control Council for clemency must be lodges with the General Secretary of the Tribunal. Shots of Hans Fritzsche and Franz von Papen speaking to fellow defendants after adjournment. Defendants filing out of dock. MS, English and Russian translators in interpreters' section speaking. French Justices Henri D de Vabre and Robert Falco reading statements. Pan of courtroom as Justice Falco reads the tribunal's conclusion on the cases of Erich Raeder and Alfred Rosenberg. MS, side view, Justice Biddle speaking of crimes committed against mankind and quoting from Kellog-Briand Pact." National Archives Identifier: [23782](http://research.archives.gov/description/23782)

**BOOKS:**

**VIDEO:**