The Defendants in the Hitler-Ludendorff Trial (April 1, 1924)

Abstract

After the failed Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch of November 1923, Hitler and his co-conspirators were put on trial in Munich. While the Weimar government had sought to try Hitler and the other putschists before a special Court for the Protection of the Republic in Leipzig [*Staatsgerichtshof zum Schutze der Republik*] in accordance with the Law for the Protection of the Republic [*Republikschutzgesetz*], the Bavarian state government was eager to try them in Bavaria. The Bavarian government ultimately succeeded, and the trial was held before the People's Court [*Volksgericht*] in Munich from February 26 to April 1, 1924. The *Volksgericht* had been established in 1918 as a special court for the accelerated sentencing of certain criminal offenses. Its proceedings were summary, and its decisions could not be appealed. Charged with high treason, Hitler's defense strategy included a combination of dramatic courtroom oratory and nationalist rhetoric, which garnered substantial public attention and sympathy. The presiding judge conducted the trial in a manner that clearly benefitted Hitler and the other defendants, giving Hitler the opportunity for lengthy propaganda speeches. His courtroom appearance provided Hitler with a prominent platform to articulate his political ideology and grievances against the Weimar Republic, contributing to his rising influence among the political right. His sentence to five years in prison, the statutory minimum penalty, was very mild for a charge of high treason, and he was released early on probation although he had a previous conviction. As a foreign national, he would have been subject to deportation according to the Law for the Protection of the Republic, but the court expressly did not seek it. Erich Ludendorff was acquitted while the other defendants received prison sentences between one and five years. Both the Social Democratic and the liberal press criticized the trial and the lenient sentences as a farce. This photo by Heinrich Hoffmann, who had documented the Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch and was to become Hitler's personal photographer, shows the defendants posing defiantly for the camera. From left to right: Heinz Pernet, Friedrich Weber, Wilhelm Frick, Hermann Kriebel, Erich Ludendorff, Adolf Hitler, Wilhelm Brückner, Ernst Röhm, Robert Wagner.

Source

Source: The Defendants in the Hitler-Ludendorff Trial, 1924. Photo: Heinrich Hoffmann. Bundesarchiv, Aktuelle-Bilder-Centrale, Georg Pahl, Bild 102-00344A, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABundesarchiv_Bild_102-00344A%2C_M%C3%BCnchen%2C_nach_Hitler-Ludendorff_Prozess.jpg

Bundesarchiv

Recommended Citation: The Defendants in the Hitler-Ludendorff Trial (April 1, 1924), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:image-4283> [November 18, 2026].