

Priebke Trial

Trial of former SS captain Erich Priebke, who was convicted in July 1997 of ordering the massacre of 335 men and boys during World War II. Priebke ordered the slaughter, which took place in the Ardeatine caves near Rome, in retaliation for the bombing death in Rome of 33 German soldiers. The bomb had been set by the Italian resistance, so most of Priebke's victims were anti-fascist prisoners whom he took from the city's jails. However, Priebke also included 75 Jews in the massacre, who had had nothing to do with the bomb. The victims were brought to the caves, where they were shot.

After the war Priebke moved to Argentina, where he lived openly until he was discovered by ABC news. In 1995 he was extradited to Italy. In a trial that took place in 1996, an Italian court decided to drop the charges against Priebke, claiming that his crimes were not bad enough to disregard Italy's 30-year statute of limitation. Many Italians vehemently protested the decision, especially the Jewish victims' families. The first verdict was overturned and a retrial was held in 1997. Priebke was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison, of which only five were to be served.