

Rosh Hashanah in Bavaria (1945)

*John Q. Barrett**

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In the Hebrew year 5705, *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, the eve of the Jewish New Year, came at sundown on the 29th day of the month of *Elul*. On the Gregorian calendar, it was Friday evening, September 7, 1945.

In Allied-occupied former Germany that year, four months after Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender, few synagogues were standing and functional, of course. In the Bavarian city of *Fürth*, however, the space that once had been the synagogue had survived. It was a ground floor room, built to hold 100 or so worshippers, in a big, four-story stone building that once had been a Jewish orphanage. During the Nazi period, the synagogue and orphanage, like virtually every Jewish space, facility and business in Germany, were closed. Other Germans used the upper floor rooms and turned the former synagogue space into a warehouse.

In late summer 1945, about two weeks before *Rosh Hashanah*, the United States Army, the occupying power in the region, returned this building to the Jews of *Fürth*. They—survivors who had returned—numbered only 30 or 40, out of 3,000 Jews who had lived in *Fürth* before the Nazis and the war. These survivors cleaned up and reconsecrated the nearby Jewish cemetery. (Allegedly, some knowledgeable persons dug up there the congregation's *Torah* scrolls, which had been buried in the cemetery and thus saved during the war. Others say today that the *Torahs* of *Fürth* were saved in hiding places beneath the synagogue's floor.) The survivors also cleaned and reconsecrated their synagogue, bringing it back to life by relighting the eternal candle (*nair tamid*), rehangng embroidered drapes on the holy ark (*oron chodesh*), and restoring other fixtures.¹

On that *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, services in the *Fürth* synagogue were overfilled. The worshippers included returned congregants, American

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For a selected archive of Jackson List posts, see my homepage at www.law.stjohns.edu. To subscribe to the Jackson List, which does not display recipient identities or distribute their email addresses, send a note to barrettj@stjohns.edu.

¹ This account is based on contemporaneous letters and recent interviews.

soldiers and “displaced persons” from Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere who were living nearby.²

Fürth is located just a few miles from *Nürnberg*. In that same month of September 1945, work crews, including German prisoners of war in U.S. Army custody, labored at the courthouse, the Palace of Justice, located on *Fürtherstrasse* between the two cities. They prepared that facility for the International Military Tribunal proceedings—the Nuremberg trial of the principal Nazi war criminals—that would begin that November in Courtroom 600.

For Jews on Justice Robert H. Jackson’s United States prosecutorial team during 5706, the *Fürth* synagogue became their congregation.

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Three recent photographs of the *Fürth* synagogue follow this text.

For addition information on Jewish history in Bavaria, please visit **The Jewish Museum of Franconia in Fürth and Schnaittach** sites and visit its website, <http://www.juedisches-museum.org/>.

² *Id.*



Hallemanstraße



