

The true haters

by *Patrick_Buchanan*

On Good Friday, John Demjanjuk, 89 and gravely ill, was ordered deported to Germany to stand trial as an accessory to the murder of 29,000 Jews at Sobibor camp in Poland.

Sound familiar? It should. It is a re-enactment of the 1986 extradition of John Demjanjuk to Israel to be tried for the murder of 870,000 Jews at Treblinka camp in Poland.

How many men in the history of this country have been so relentlessly pursued and remorselessly persecuted?

The ordeal of this American Dreyfus began 30 years ago.

In 1979, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) at Justice, goaded and guided by Yuri Andropov's KGB, was persuaded that Demjanjuk was "Ivan the Terrible," a huge, brutal, sadistic guard at Treblinka, who bashed in babies' heads and slashed off women's breasts, as he drove hundreds of thousands of Jews into the gas chambers.

Demjanjuk's defense was simple: I was never at Treblinka.

Yet, a dozen survivors, shown a photo spread, identified him as the beast of Treblinka. In 1986, OSI had him extradited to Israel. In 1988, he was convicted and sentenced to death. The greatest Holocaust monster since Mengele was to be hanged.

His family, friends and lawyers did not give up. They scoured Europe and, in the last days of the Soviet Union, struck pay dirt. In Moscow's files on Treblinka they discovered a photo of the real "Ivan," a far bigger, more mature man than the 23-year-old Demjanjuk in 1943.

Ivan Marchenko was positively identified as Ivan the Terrible.

To its eternal credit, Israel's Supreme Court threw aside the verdict and stopped Demjanjuk from being the first man hanged in Jerusalem since Adolf Eichmann in 1961.

A humiliated OSI, through its Israeli friends, now asked the court to authorize a new trial, charging Demjanjuk with having been a guard at Sobibor "during the same time they previously charged he had been at Treblinka.

What OSI was admitting was that its case against Demjanjuk, to see him hang from the gallows as "Ivan the Terrible," had been based on flimsy or falsified evidence and worthless or perjured testimony.

Replied the court, we don't do double jeopardy here in Israel.

Demjanjuk was released. And the grin of the jailer who opened his cell testified that many in Israel never accepted the charge that this simple man was some unrivaled devil of the Holocaust.

So, after 13 years, the last four on death row reflecting on his hanging for horrors he never committed, Demjanjuk came home to Cleveland, a free man. His citizenship was restored.

Though disgraced, OSI was not ready to throw in its hand. For it had been dealt a new card by its old comrades in the KGB.

The new evidence was a signed statement by one "Danilchenko," who claimed to have been a guard at Sobibor and had worked with Demjanjuk. As this document would have blown up the Treblinka case in Jerusalem, OSI had withheld it from the defense.

Another document turned up suggesting that Demjanjuk had indeed, after training at Trawniki camp, been assigned to Sobibor.

When the defense asked to interrogate "Danilchenko," to verify he had made and signed the statement and to question him on details, they were told this was not possible. Seems Danilchenko had died after signing.

So, after the first 13 years of his ordeal took him right up to a gallows in Jerusalem, Demjanjuk has now been pursued for another 17 years by an OSI that will not rest until he has been convicted, somewhere, of genocide.

And so we come to today.

Demjanjuk is to be taken to Germany and prosecuted as an accessory to the murder of 29,000 Jews at Sobibor — though not one living person can place him at that camp and not even the German prosecutor will say that he ever hurt anyone. One witness in Israel, who was at Sobibor and says he knew all the camp guards, says he never saw Demjanjuk there.

If Friday's ruling is upheld, John Demjanjuk, who has been charged with no crime on German soil, is to be taken to Germany, home of the Third Reich, to be tried by Germans for his alleged role in a genocide planned and perpetrated by Germans. He is to serve as the sacrificial lamb whose blood washes away the stain of Germany's sins.

But if Germans wish to prosecute participants in the Holocaust, why not round up some old big-time Nazis, instead of a Ukrainian POW.

Answer: They cannot. Because the Germans voted an amnesty for themselves in 1969. So now they must find a Slav soldier they captured — and Heinrich Himmler's SS conscripted and made a camp guard, if he ever was a camp guard — to punish in expiation for Germany's sins.

The spirit behind this un-American persecution has never been that of justice tempered by mercy. It is the same satanic brew of hate and revenge that drove another innocent Man up Calvary that first Good Friday 2,000 years ago.

Patrick Buchanan is the author of the new book "Churchill, Hitler and "The Unnecessary War."

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