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Analysis: Has Germany learned from its Nazi history?

BENJAMIN WEINTHAL, jpost correspondent in Berlin THE JERUSALEM POST, December 2, 2009

Where is the intersection of the trial of alleged Nazi guard John Demjanjuk and the Islamic Republic of Iran?

The Demjanjuk trial is an example of Germany grappling with its historic responsibility to the victims of the Holocaust and to universal justice. Yet with regard to its more future-oriented responsibility to prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons and its threats to obliterate Israel, critics say Germany is stumbling.

The cross-paths of Iran and Demjanjuk were evident at the international Mideast Freedom Forum Berlin conference "Time to Act" this past weekend.

The Berlin conference's policy experts, journalists and academics raised questions about Germany's historic responsibility to Israel and the lessons from genocidal Nazi anti-Semitism.

The head of the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Anti-Semitism, Dr. Charles Small, rhetorically asked if Germany had extracted lessons from the Nazi period in order to prevent an Iran-organized Shoah. His answer: No.

Small cited the passivity and indifference of German academics, think-tank representatives and government officials who were fleeing this historical responsibility by not confronting Iran's genocidal anti-Semitism.

He exposed a number of raw nerves in his keynote speech.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's administration's docile approach to Iran revolves more around fluffy rhetoric than punishing Iran for its hatred of Israel and its energetic pursuit of nuclear weapons, critics say.

A telling example, according to critics at the Iran conference: The new German Ambassador to Iran Bernd Erbe announced that he looked forward to "preserving the historical treasure of the German-Iranian friendship." Erbe issued his statement despite the repression of the pro-democracy movement in Iran and the discovery of a new uranium enrichment plant.

Erbe's statement boded well for German industry. To the frustration and disappointment of Israel, the German government has refused to introduce unilateral economic sanctions on Iran and stop its flourishing trade relationship with the Islamic Republic.

Holocaust denial is unlawful in Germany. Yet Iranian Holocaust-deniers such as Muhammad Javad Ardashir Larijani, himself a former politician, denied the Holocaust yet again at a trans-Atlantic security conference organized by former German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Berlin.

His brother, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, also denied the Holocaust this past year at the Munich security conference.

While there seems to be no stomach to fight Iranian deniers of the Holocaust, German authorities have pursued such figures as Bishop Richard Williamson and the neo-Nazi Horst Mahler.

Critics in Germany argue that Germany's Iran-friendly policies allow for excusing Islamic anti-Semitism. There is no shortage of civil campaigns not to conduct business with the neo-Nazi German party NPD, but there exists no hesitation by Siemens, Mercedes-Benz, MAN, and Linde to trade with Teheran and its cadre of Holocaust deniers.

Actually, the snail-like process of pursuing war crimes charges against Demjanjuk parallels the passive posture of German authorities to Iran's human rights violations against the religious minority Baha'is, Iranian Kurds, women, gays and trade unionists.

While the German media such as *Der Spiegel* sharply criticized their country's missed opportunities in pursuing Demjanjuk, there seemed to be more apathy regarding the Iranian regime.

There is, however, growing awareness among the German media about the role of German technology in supporting repression in Iran. While the "Time to Act" conference could not compete with the saturation coverage the Demjanjuk trial has been receiving, the popular television news show *Die Tagesschau* broadcast a report on the conference, reaching almost seven million viewers on Sunday.

Historical responsibility unites Demjanjuk and the Islamic Republic, but the glacier-like pace at which the connection is being understood is rather surprising in a country that helped to develop philosophical thinking based on connections.

http://www.ipost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=12592430 65979&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull

[Remember, Germany still has no peace treaty and is thus open to any action – until someone stands firm and proclaims: 'This far and no further', as did Sylvia Stolz, Horst Mahler, Dirk Zimmermann, Kevin Käther. As Dr Wilhelm Stäglich noted a decade ago, if a thousand courageous Germans stood up against this mental oppression, then the whole mental construct of the Holocaust would crumble. – ed. AI.]

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A Composer's Ties to Nazi Germany Come Under New Scrutiny

The Chronicle Review November 29, 2009



Popperfoto, Getty Images

A U. of North Texas musicologist says that Jean Sibelius, shown here in 1934, was an active supporter of Nazism. Other scholars say the claim is overblown.

By Peter Monaghan

The composer Jean Sibelius is arguably as important to early 20th-century music as Ezra Pound was to literary modernism. Now, more than 50 years after the Finnish composer died, in 1957, at the age of 91, a musicologist in Texas is claiming that Sibelius was culpably entangled with Nazi Germany, and should join Pound, Richard Wagner, and Louis-Ferdinand Céline in the select group of artists who have been cast into anti-Semitic ignominy.

Sibelius's associations with National Socialism amount to active support of Nazism and its propaganda efforts in Germany and the Nordic countries, says Timothy L. Jackson, a professor of music at the University of North Texas.

Other Sibelius experts say Jackson is making a Nazi out of a man who needed to deal with the Third Reich to earn his living, and who, along with most of the world, was perhaps too complacent about the rise of Hitler.

The role European composers may have played in laying the foundations for the grotesque ethos of Nazism has long been a contentious issue in musicological circles; the heat generated by such discussions relating to figures like Wagner suggests that the emerging dispute over Sibelius may significantly affect both the reception of his music and the way musical Romanticism is viewed in the history of 20th-century cultural life.

Jackson lays out his charges against Sibelius in a long essay in a book he has edited with three colleagues, Sibelius in the Old and New World: Aspects of His Music, Its Interpretation, and Reception, which Peter Lang Publishing Group is set to publish in the first half of next year. Jackson, a specialist in late Romantic composers such as Anton Bruckner, Richard Strauss, and Sibelius, previewed his arguments last month at the annual meeting of the American Musicological

Society, in Philadelphia. That has sparked a vibrant email exchange among several Sibelius experts, much of which participants have shared with *The Chronicle*.

From Sibelius archives and other sources, Jackson has accumulated a mass of documents, letters, government papers, and newspaper reports to challenge the standard take on Sibelius: that he was a passive, apolitical observer of the rise of Nazism and its effects on Europe.

He says Sibelius's early fascination with Finnish mythology and nationalism resonated with Nazism. And, as the Third Reich gained in strength, Sibelius enjoyed its financial arrangements for artists. For example, in 1933, when Joseph Goebbels was named minister of propaganda, Sibelius, already well established and 67 years old, began to profit from taxation and currency-exchange and currency-export preferences that Goebbels approved for artists.

Those were perks of cooperating with the "artist friendly" regime, Jackson suggests. But the Nazis were particularly well inclined toward Sibelius, he adds. For example, Sibelius in 1935 accepted a Goethe Medal that Adolf Hitler confirmed with his signature. From at least 1941, he drew a German pension that was worth half the average German annual income. In 1942, Third Reich officials approved the founding of the German Sibelius Society.

Nazi admiration of Sibelius has long led some music historians to view the composer with suspicion. Jackson is providing more fodder for that unease. He argues that, by going along with all the accolades, Sibelius was committing "a political act of considerable importance to Finland, if not Germany, with a huge propaganda significance."

No single event more clearly illustrates Sibelius's empathy with the Nazi ethos, Jackson believes, than his

reneging on his promise to help a young, part-Jewish composer, Günther Raphael. In the years 1931 to 1936, Raphael implored Sibelius repeatedly, urgently, and obsequiously to help him to retain his teaching position in Germany at a time when Jewish artists were being dismissed from their posts.

Jackson insists that Sibelius could have joined the many prominent artists who asked Goebbels to protect favored Jewish colleagues. But he chose not to risk Goebbels's disfavor.

And in mid-1942, says Jackson, when it still seemed that Germany might win the war, Sibelius agreed to be interviewed at his home in Finland by Anton Kloss, an SS war reporter who had most likely taken part in war atrocities. Surely, says Jackson, by that time Sibelius would have heard what the Nazis were doing throughout Europe.

Such actions condemn Sibelius, he asserts, even though the composer did, in late 1943, denounce the Nazis' "bad social prejudices"—quietly, in his diary.

More significant, Jackson says, is that Sibelius continued to take money from Nazi Germany throughout the war, even complaining that payments were not consistently arriving.

Jackson says he believes that Sibelius scholars have viewed Sibelius from a hagiographic rather than historical perspective that is all too common in biographies of great artists—and have, as a result, overlooked that he was less than a saint.

For other Sibelius specialists, however, it is Jackson's perspective that is warped. In telephone interviews, as in their e-mail exchanges with the Texas music historian, they characterize his allegations as a cherry-picking smear campaign.

Consider the age and isolation of Sibelius by the time the war came—he had virtually stopped composing 20 years earlier—suggests one Finnish Sibelius authority, Vesa Sirén. "Keep in mind that we are talking about a bald-headed old man with shaky hands and a cataract in his eye who probably didn't even know what the SS was," says Sirén, a music journalist, author of a study of how Sibelius's contemporaries viewed him, and the editor of the Sibelius estate's official Web site.

Sirén, like Veijo Murtomäki, a professor of music history at the Sibelius Academy, in Helsinki, and a leading authority on the composer, praises Jackson for calling attention to facts of Sibelius's life, such as the monetary value of the well-known favors that he received from Third Reich admirers. But Jackson's claims are consistently overblown and out of context, Sirén and Murtomäki insist.

Take that 1942 interview with the SS reporter. Jackson says it was highly significant, because Sibelius was a recluse who rarely granted press interviews. "Total nonsense," scoffs Sirén. Sibelius agreed to numerous interviews during the 1940s, often at the behest of the Finnish foreign ministry. "He said he wouldn't want to see so many people in his home, but he would, if it was

good for Finland," says Sirén. "Sibelius was a great composer and also vain, a little bit childish. But he was also a patriot."

Or consider Jackson's characterization of Sibelius's payments from Germany as being "on the Nazi payroll." Says Sirén: "When the Nazis took over, the last thing on their mind was obeying international copyright laws." Sibelius doggedly pursued his royalties—from Germany, where most were due, as well as from other countries. "We can argue that it would have been better that he said 'I don't want anything to do with Germany,' but still, he was entitled to his copyright money," she says.

And was Sibelius's decision not to help Günther Raphael really proof of anti-Semitism? That claim, says Sirén, ignores that the composer received, and rejected, hundreds of such requests, and by the 1930s had had enough. In fact, says Sirén, Sibelius had given out so many recommendations, motivated by politeness rather than informed by their recipients' qualifications, that "he now felt that he was in the middle of a nest of lies." Murtomäki, who with Jackson is one of the editors of a forthcoming collection of essays, *Sibelius in the Old and New World*, contends that the weakness in all his colleagues' criticisms of Sibelius is that they ignore historical context.

One simple example: Jackson's objection to Sibelius's accepting the Goethe Medal, in 1935. Murtomäki asks: Why would Sibelius not accept such honors, given that he was at the time arguably the world's most successful living classical composer, winning honors around the world?

Jackson also ignores the complexity of Finnish views of Germany, contends Murtomäki. He notes that at the beginning of the Third Reich, many Finns believed that Germany not only was improving the lot of its citizens but also was emerging as an effective foil to the Bolshevist threat. In 1939 the Soviet Union attacked and managed to annex part of Finland. So in 1941 Finland allied itself with Germany, hoping to stave off both Nazi and Soviet invasion. But in September 1944, it began the seven-month Lapland War against Germany.

With these turnabouts, Sibelius, too, suffered reversals: At times he was hailed as a standard-bearer of freedom; at others he was decried as a Nazi stooge trading on his Aryan birth. But throughout this vacillation, Sibelius valued his acclaim in Germany, the country that Finns considered a cultural mecca.

"Professor Jackson has some pieces of a puzzle at his hands, but the picture he is constructing with the pieces is rather strange for us who know better the cultural and political situation of Finland during the Third Reich," says Murtomäki.

He allows that Jackson is doing a service to the history of Finnish cultural, scientific, and political relations with German colleagues during the Third Reich. But while Jackson insists that his evidence against Sibelius is

more than circumstantial, Murtomäki is not so sure: "So, Sibelius was selfish and flattered by his fame in Germany and wanted the money. I am sorry for that. But it does not make him a Nazi or a great friend of any

SS person or acts made by them. History is not that easy."

http://chronicle.com/article/A-Composers-Ties-to-Nazi/49256/?sid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

Accessory vs. Perpetrator By Gilad Atzmon, December 3, 2009



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6T_YaWtn-

k&feature=player_embedded

German State Prosecutors Hans-Joachim Lutz announced yesterday that Mr John Demjanjuk, 89, is accused of being an 'accessory' of the death of 27,900 Jews.

Many of us may not understand what the legal notion of 'accessory' stands for. An 'accessory' is a person who assists in the commission of a crime, but who does not actually participate in the commission of the crime as a joint principal.

Bearing that in mind. I wonder what Demjanjuk's court case is there to serve?

Clearly geriatric Demjanjuk is not a danger to society. He is neither blamed for being a murderer nor accused of being a mass murderer. Being an alleged 'accessory' he is not exactly the story of the Shoa either. If the Holocaust is an account of a racially driven industrial homicidal crime, a Ukrainian POW serving as a German guard while being a prisoner is not exactly a story of a principal executioner. If this court case is aimed at perpetuating the message of the holocaust, all it really does is spread the opposite message. It only proves once again that the Holocaust ideology is revengeful and merciless.

If the Germans are really after a last Holocaust spectacular trial can't they pick something slightly more juicy than an 'alleged accessory'?

In1986 John Demjanjuk was extradited to Israel where he was put on trial. According to the Israeli prosecutors, Demjanjuk was brought to a German POW camp in Chelmno in July 1942. He then volunteered to collaborate with the Germans and was sent to the camp at Trawniki, where he was trained to guard prisoners and was given a firearm, a uniform, and an ID card with his photograph. The principal allegation was that Demjanjuk was in fact "Ivan the Terrible" the notorious cold blooded murderer of Treblinka. On April 18, 1988,

the Israeli court found Demjanjuk guilty of all charges. One week later it sentenced him to death by hanging. In 1993, five Israeli Supreme Court judges overturned the guilty verdict on appeal. They realised that the case against Demjanjuk was based on 'mistaken identification'. "We restrained ourselves" the Israeli judges wrote, "from convicting the appellant of the horrors of Treblinka. Ivan Demjanjuk has been acquitted by us, because of doubt, of the terrible charges attributed to Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka"

By the time the Israeli supreme court decided to release Demjanjuk the Israeli Attorney General was fully aware of John Demjanjuk being a guard in Sobibor. And yet he decided not to pursue accessory charges against him. Amongst other arguments in favour of Demjanjuk's release Israeli Attorney General claimed that "new charges would be unreasonable given the seriousness of those of which he had been acquitted" he also argued that "conviction on the new charges (being a German guard) would be unlikely". The Israeli Attorney General grasped that charging Demjanjuk for being an accessory would be counter effective.

Seemingly the German legal system lacks that necessary 'Jewish' wisdom performed by Israeli supreme judges and Attorney general. As it seems, the German court found a very embarrassing method to deal with the German past. They are now charging a dying Ukrainian/American for attempting to survive a Nazi POW camp by collaborating. That is, a onetime German prisoner became an 'accessory' of the German killing machine.

If the Germans are insisting to search for Nazi collaborators and brutal 'accessories', survivor Israel Shahak can adivise them where to find them. "Every Jewish child was taught (in the Ghettos)" says Shahak that "if you enter a square from which there are three exits, one guarded by a German SS man, one by a Ukrainian and one by a Jewish policeman, then you should first try to pass the German, and then maybe the Ukrainian, but never the Jew".(Prof. Israel Shahak, 19 May 1989. Kol Ha'ir, Jerusalem). Apparently, this story is reflected in many survivors' personal and academic accounts. The Jewish capos and Judenrat were the most brutal of them all.

I think that the Germans better move on and let go of their past. Composing great symphonies and writing philosophy is by far a superior contribution to humanity than Holocaust trials. Guilt is a futile and destructive mode of being. However, if the Germans still feel at fault, they better transform their guilt into responsibility. They better remember that the Palestinians are de facto the last victims of Hitler. Their ordeal is far from being over. If the Germans feel culpable about their past they should never send German warships to Israel. If Germans are concerned with their history they better transform it into meaning. Rather than charging an 89 year old for being an alleged 'accessory' they better bring to justice some of the perpetrators of genocidal crimes that are taking place in front of our eyes.

Rather than pushing old Demjanjuk into court in a wheelchair, the German ministry of Justice better pursue Tony Blair, George Bush, Ehud Barak, Ehud Olmert, Tzipi Livni, and Shimon Peres. They are all free and healthy enough to stand a trial. Unlike alleged accessory Demjanjuk they are all perpetrators of colossal crimes against humanity.

July 1995

An Evil Campaign to Frame an Innocent Man

The Demjanjuk Affair: The Rise and Fall of a Show-Trial, by Yoram Sheftel. London: Victor Gollancz, 1994. 379 pages.
Reviewed by Lesya Jones

On July 29, 1993, John Demjanjuk was acquitted by the Israeli Supreme Court of the charge of being the sadistic Treblinka guard "Ivan the Terrible." This book, written by his Israeli attorney, deals with the pivotal Israeli chapter of his 16 year ordeal.

The title says it all, in a nutshell. It is a scathing and uncompromising account of the "trial of the century." Its author, a fervent Zionist and Israeli patriot, spares none of the many players in the Demjanjuk affair, not even the "Ukrainian goyim" who paid for his fees. It is a highly personal account in which the defense counsel, and not the accused, is the star attraction in a courtroom drama that riveted a worldwide audience.

An experienced criminal lawyer and expert in identification cases, with a penchant for adventure (he successfully defended the notorious gangster Meyer Lansky), Sheftel decided to join the defense team after being shown the highly suggestive and biased photo spread used to identify John Demjanjuk as "Ivan the Terrible." On a more personal level, he was motivated to take on the case because he was convinced that "the one and only purpose of this move was to conduct a special 'Israel-style' show trial, to teach Israeli children the story of the Holocaust and heighten Holocaust awareness among the public."

An International Conspiracy

The fast-paced and ebullient style contrasts chillingly with the grim and sinister content. Sheftel amasses incontrovertible evidence which proves that the Demjanjuk affair was not simply a case of mistaken identity but, rather, a deliberate and cold-blooded conspiracy by superpowers United States and former Soviet Union, as well as Germany, Israel and Poland to withhold exculpatory evidence in their possession and send to the gallows an innocent no man's man. These countries did this in pursuit of their respective agendas. In the United States, the Office of Special Investigation (OSI) at the Department of Justice, which was established to investigate alleged Nazi war criminals residing in the US, was particularly zealous in its efforts to destroy Demjanjuk. Having just lost a series of decisions, the OSI was, in fact, fighting for its life. Congressman Joshua Eilberg, Chairman of the House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Immigration, wrote in August, 1978, to US Attorney General Griffin Bell re the Demjanjuk case: "We cannot afford to risk losing another decision." This anxiety was shared by Alan Ryan Jr., who headed the OSI from its establishment until 1981. In an interview with a local Alabama newspaper in 1991, Ryan reminisced: "If we had lost that case, we probably would have had a very short life span." In other words, "the OSI conspired to shorten Demjanjuk's life in order to lengthen its own."

Evidence Discarded and Manufactured

In fact, the OSI knew as early as August 1978 from Moscow cables sent to the State Department in Washington as well as to the American Embassy in Tel Aviv that John Demjanjuk was not "Ivan the Terrible," and not only did it withhold that evidence from the defense, but dumped some of it, including original documents, into its trash bins. Furthermore, the garbage contents revealed that the OSI did not just conceal exonerating evidence, but manufactured false affidavits in collusion with the Israeli prosecution.

In reading this book, one gets the impression that, far from being intimidated, the author relished being "Satan's lawyer" and "the most hated man in Israel." Courage, not modesty, is Sheftel's cardinal virtue. But then, Demjanjuk's attorney has nothing to be modest about. After all, he took on single-handedly his country's justice system and formidable mass media and won unprecedented decisions on both counts, debunking firmly entrenched myths that Israel possesses a model justice system and an independent, unbiased press.

Neither death threats, unrelenting harassment by the judges, daily vilification in the media, suspicious suicide of a prominent colleague on the eve of the appeal, an acid attack by an alleged Holocaust survivor, which nearly left him blind; not even the wrath of his beloved mother could stay this intrepid attorney from the case. And in the darkest hour, when all seemed lost -- there being no time to prepare the appeal -- fortune and history intervened. A timely heart attack of one of the judges granted a crucial respite and the collapse of the Soviet Union made it possible to access KGB archives which established conclusively Demjanjuk's innocence and forced the Israeli Supreme Court's hand.

Sheftel delights in getting back at his opponents and detractors, especially his nemesis, the presiding Supreme Court Justice Dov Levin. The chapter entitled "Dovele" is written as "sweet revenge" for the many humiliations, trials and tribulations Sheftel endured, and may be of particular interest to the legal community in North America. It will shock those who choose to read it, for the instances of judicial misconduct are legion.

For example, immediately after affixing his signature to the verdict, Judge Levin set off on a lecture tour of the United States, undeterred by the fact that the Demjanjuk case was still sub judice. Ohio's Plain Dealer cited one of his many legal gems, namely: "We cannot be impressed by someone claiming 'I am innocent.' Innocence must be proven." Sheftel is angered and embittered by "the cowardice and hypocrisy of the thousands of the Israeli legal community." The only one who dared to speak out publicly was the highly respected, retired Judge Haim Cohen. In an interview with the newspaper Al Hasharon, Judge Cohen stated: "It was a spectacular for the people. Any resemblance to justice was purely coincidental."

'Death to Ukrainians'

The reader will be revolted, along with Lord Denning, revisiting the reading of the sentence after which a jubilant mob danced and shouted: "Death, death," "Death to Ivan," "Death to the defense attorney," "Death to all Ukrainians ..." It may be recalled that Lord Denning condemned the grotesque spectacle in Jerusalem as "contrary to international law" and showing "signs of racial and political vengeance." (The Daily Telegraph [London], April 28, 1988).

The book has flaws. There is no index and there are misspellings of names, as well as some factual errors. For instance, the author confuses The Ukrainian Weekly with a Ukrainian communist newspaper. Sheftel's explosive book has suffered an even worse fate than that by expert witness for the defense, Willem A. Wagenaar, Identifying Ivan: A Case Study in Legal Psychology (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). With the exception of Chrystia Freeland's review in The Financial Times (London), December 10-11, 1994, Sheftel's work continues to be ignored, except in Israel where it became an immediate best-

seller. Demjanjuk's miraculous acquittal appears to have put a damper on the projected multimillion "Ivan the Terrible"/Demjanjuk entertainment industry. The only ones benefitting are those who conspired to send an innocent man to a horrific death by hanging.

Lessons

In spite of the fact that the Sixth Circuit Court in Cincinnati, Ohio, found "fraud upon the court," the OSI is still in business, and the chief architects of the Demjanjuk affair not only remain unpunished, but have found lucrative employment elsewhere. While in Israel, Judges Zvi Tal and Dalia Dorner were elevated to the Supreme Court.

The book is highly recommended, especially to our legal Ukrainian community. There was quality input by Ukrainian attorneys into Demjanjuk's defense. Paul Chumak of Toronto did a first-rate job as one of a team of Demianjuk's lawyers and the late Jaroslaw Dobrowolskyj of Detroit played a crucial role in uncovering evidence which cleared John Demjanjuk. Others labored behind the scenes. This reviewer is, therefore, saddened by the fact that our legal community continues to pretend that the Demjanjuk affair involved one individual Ukrainian, and refuses even to acknowledge the existence of a collective indictment against Ukrainians. Let me cite from pages 4 and 7 (English translation) of the Indictment by the State of Israel versus Ivan (John) Demjanjuk, Criminal Case 373/86:

The auxiliaries played an essential role in the annihilation of the Jews; without them, the commanders of Operation Reinhardt could not have carried out their plan... These auxiliaries, in the main Ukrainians, worked with SS personnel in carrying out all the acts of annihilation, murder and oppression committed against the Jewish victims in the camps.

May this indictment, which still stands, serve as a challenge to our legal community to right a historical wrong.

Lesya Jones is the former Secretary of the Canadian Charitable Committee in Defence of John Demjanjuk. This review first appeared in The Ukrainian Voice (Winnipeg), July 31, 1995. http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v15/v15n6p45 Jones.html

Swiss ban mosque minarets in surprise vote



By ALEXANDER G. HIGGINS

Associated Press Writer

GENEVA – Swiss voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional ban on minarets on Sunday, barring construction of the iconic mosque towers in a surprise vote that put Switzerland at the forefront of a European backlash against a growing Muslim population.

Muslim groups in Switzerland and abroad condemned the vote as biased and anti-Islamic. Business groups said the decision hurt Switzerland's international standing and could damage relations with Muslim nations and wealthy investors who bank, travel and shop there.

"The Swiss have failed to give a clear signal for diversity, freedom of religion and human rights," said

Omar Al-Rawi, integration representative of the Islamic Denomination in Austria, which said its reaction was "grief and deep disappointment."

About 300 people turned out for a spontaneous demonstration on the square outside parliament, holding up signs saying, "That is not my Switzerland," placing candles in front of a model of a minaret and making another minaret shape out of the candles themselves.

"We're sorry," said another sign. A young woman pinned to her jacket a piece of paper saying, "Swiss passport for sale."

The referendum by the nationalist Swiss People's Party labeled minarets as symbols of rising Muslim political power that could one day transform Switzerland into an Islamic nation.

The initiative was approved 57.5 to 42.5 percent by some 2.67 million voters. Only four of the 26 cantons or states opposed the initiative, granting the double approval that makes it part of the Swiss constitution.

Muslims comprise about 6 percent of Switzerland's 7.5 million people. Many are refugees from the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and about one in 10 actively practices their religion, the government says.

The country's four standing minarets, which won't be affected by the ban, do not traditionally broadcast the call to prayer outside their own buildings.

The sponsors of the initiative provoked complaints of bias from local officials and human-rights group with campaign posters that showed minarets rising like missiles from the Swiss flag next to a fully veiled woman. Backers said the growing Muslim population was straining the country "because Muslims don't just practice religion."

"The minaret is a sign of political power and demand, comparable with whole-body covering by the burqa, tolerance of forced marriage and genital mutilation of girls," the sponsors said. They said Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan compared mosques to Islam's military barracks and called "the minarets our bayonets." Erdogan made the comment in citing an Islamic poem many years before he became prime minister.

Anxieties about growing Muslim minorities have rippled across Europe in recent years, leading to legal changes in some countries.

There have been French moves to ban the full-length body covering known as the burga.

Some German states have introduced bans on head scarves for Muslim women teaching in public schools. Mosques and minaret construction projects in Sweden, France, Italy, Austria, Greece, Germany and Slovenia have been met by protests.

But the Swiss ban in minarets, sponsored by the country's largest political party, was one of the most extreme reactions.

"It's a sad day for freedom of religion," said Mohammed Shafiq, the chief executive of the Ramadhan Foundation, a British youth organization. "A constitutional amendment that's targeted towards one religious community is discriminatory and abhorrent."

He said he was concerned the decision could have reverberations in other European countries.

Amnesty International said the vote violated freedom of religion and would probably be overturned by the Swiss supreme court or the European Court of Human Rights. The seven-member Cabinet that heads the Swiss government had spoken out strongly against the initiative but the government said it accepted the vote and would impose an immediate ban on minaret construction.

It said that "Muslims in Switzerland are able to practice their religion alone or in community with others, and live according to their beliefs just as before." It took the unusual step of issuing its press release in Arabic as well as German, French, Italian and English.

Sunday's results stood in stark contrast to opinion polls, last taken 10 days ago, that showed 37 percent supporting the proposal. Experts said before the vote that they feared Swiss had pretended during the polling that they opposed the ban because they didn't want to appear intolerant.

"The sponsors of the ban have achieved something everyone wanted to prevent, and that is to influence and change the relations to Muslims and their social integration in a negative way," said Taner Hatipoglu, president of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Zurich. "Muslims indeed will not feel safe anymore."

The People's Party has campaigned mainly unsuccessfully in previous years against immigrants with campaign posters showing white sheep kicking a black sheep off the Swiss flag and another with brown hands grabbing eagerly for Swiss passports.

Geneva's main mosque was vandalized Thursday when someone threw a pot of pink paint at the entrance. Earlier this month, a vehicle with a loudspeaker drove through the area imitating a muezzin's call to prayer, and vandals damaged a mosaic when they threw cobblestones at the building.



AP - FILE -

In this Nov. 4, 2009 file photo a man passes by a poster of the right-wing Swiss People's Party ...

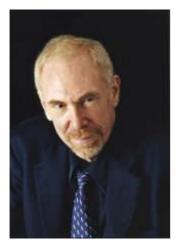


Slideshow: Switzerland bans building of minarets

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091129/ap on re eu/eu switzerland minaret ban

The following item, below, is from a fervent Holocaust believer who hates free expression and who now finds his worldview crumbling as others snatch away his to-date effective weapon of deflecting the quest for truth by labelling his opponents 'Holocaust deniers'.

The Disgusting Use of "Denialist" by Warming Advocates Trivializes the Holocaust November 28th, 2009 9:02 am



Ron Rosenbaum

Nothing in the climate debate which I've been paying sporadic attention to is more repulsive than the global warming advocates' attempt to smear skeptics of their theories and models and predictions as "denialists." As if they were some analog of holocaust deniers.

Not all those concerned about climate change use the term. (Some stick to a sneering use of "skeptics" as a stigmatizing word, as if science itself wasn't an ongoing process of skepticism about received wisdom. Copernicus was a skeptic about the idea the sun revolved around the earth. He wasn't a "solar denialist.")

But nothing causes me more revulsion — and skepticism — than the warming advocates' (I think the CRU scandal — and the shameful reaction to it — has revealed many of the most celebrated of them to be more p.r. advocates than scrupulous scientists) application of the opprobrious term "denialist" to anyone who questions the work they have so assiduously screened from scrutiny.

When I started paying attention again to the controversy after the release of the pathetic CRU emails, I noticed the most desperate of the last ditch defenders of the CRU charlatans — and indeed the CRU charlatans themselves — would resort to calling any of those who disagreed "denialists." That the use of "denialist" had grown as the failure of their predictions (the discredited "hockey stick" chart) increased.

To me that shameful, trivializing word use alone is more exposure than any e-mail could be of their lack of critical intelligence of the sort that makes them unfit to call themselves scientists, or, in the case of many of their "green journalist" sycophants, ignorant of how actual science works.

Are they really so stupid they can't see the difference? Let me try to explain it in simple terms for them: The holocaust happened. Already. It's history. Up to six million were exterminated. They're gone and their families still mourn. Climate scientists show us graphs and charts and predictions of terrible things that will happen (but have not or may not) because of human perpetrators. Unfortunately, many of their predictions

have not come true. Others are based on (we now know) flawed or terminally tweaked models and dishonestly skewed data sets. There is doubt, there is room for skepticism. There may be warming, but it may not be caused or curable by man. So you see, denying every tenet of anthropogenic global warming is not the *same* as denying the Holocaust. Get it?

Having dealt with the question of Holocaust denial in my book, *Explaining Hitler*, and a number of later essays, I find it hideously offensive, this conflation of an unimaginably horrific history of mass murder with an alleged immutable "scientific consensus" that (if it isn't dodgy and sketchy) is at best a majority vote, not the same thing as scientific truth. Using the bodies of the dead to stifle dissent when your "science" isn't persuasive to some.

I took on fellow liberals (most "green journalists" are liberals who have, alas, sacrificed the liberal belief in dissent to enforce uniformity on this issue of "scientific consensus") more than a year ago here. I sought to point out that it's an utter misunderstanding of the Popperian "falsification" view of how science works — to stifle debate and dissent. Maybe if the warming alarmists cheerleaders who disingenuously call themselves journalists had paid attention to my warning about their credulousness as displayed in what is supposed to be the leading self-critical publication for journalists, this scandal would have been exposed earlier and it wouldn't have blown up in their faces so embarrassingly for the scientists and their "green journalist" (green begins to take on a new meaning) parrots. The funniest thing about it is the way the "green journalists" won't admit they have a conflict of interest in covering (up) this scandal.

I think someone should keep track of those journalists who still use the term "denialist" and make their trivialization of the holocaust a continuing issue. Don't let them get away with this shameful tactic without exposure of their repulsive tactic. Holocaust denial can be seen in someways as adding evil to evil by adding insult to injury. Trivializing the evil of holocaust denial is an evil in itself.

http://pajamasmedia.com/ronrosenbaum/2009/11/28/ /the-disgusting-use-of-denialist-by-warming-advocates-trivializes-the-holocaust/

[Think of those who are now called 'climate change deniers'! Persons who label others as 'deniers' have no argument to offer anyone who refuses to believe in unsubstantiated propositions put to them, often with the force of law behind them. Such totalitarian mindsets fear factual information that unsettles their fraudulent worldview, hence they fear the open debate and thus claim 'there is no debate' because any discussion would expose them as fabricators of propositions that have no truth-content. Many such individuals are ignorant of the facts or outright liars, even suffering from persecutory delusions. Like a child who cannot have its way, these climate change believers play the victim if they cannot have their way in an argument. – ed AI.]