If not now, when?

Joshua Davidovich, Haaretz Januar 2010

Buchbesprechung:

Efraim Zuroff: „Operation Last Chance: One Man's Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice"

Efraim Zuroff beschreibt in seinem Buch die juristische Verfolgung ehemaliger Naziverbrecher und die damit verbundenen Schwierigkeiten. Vor dem Hintergrund eines zunehmenden Verschwindens der Täter/innen und auch der Opfer erscheint eine juristische Ahndung der Verbrechen als besonders dringend, aber auch schwierig, wie der aktuelle Fall Demjanjuk deutlich macht.

"[...] The author named the book after his latest drive to capture those surviving figutitives who have still noit stood in the dock for the crimnes they commites during the Holocaust. "Operation Last Chance" is an apt title: Both the perpetrators and the surviving victims are aging and dying off, as the latest trial of John (Ivan) Demjanjuk, which got under way in Germany in November, illustrates all too well. […]

So after all these failures, all this opposition from the families of the accused and even some of the public, who would rather he leave these "old men" alone, why does Zuroff continue to pursue Nazis? Surely it would be easier to just let the criminals die off, as they will all do soon enough.

The book gives a sense that the answer is the same reason that my grandmothers, both of whom survived Auschwitz, still talk about the numbers on their arms and the families that were wiped out long ago. The same reason my grandfather will tell anybody willing to sit down with him for two minutes about his time as a partisan and in the camps. And, as recounted in "Operation Last Chance," it's the same reason Simon Wiesenthal gave Zuroff when asked why he took up Nazi hunting instead of returnign to his prewar profession, architecture: When I get to heaven and the victims of the Holocaust ask me what I did with my gift of life, Wiesenthal said, "I want to be able to give them just one answer: I did not forget you."

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