

The Activities of Wachmann Iwan Demjanjuk (1940-1952)

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I. *Introduction*

The purpose of this article is to provide insight into the whereabouts and the activities of *Wachmann* (guard) Iwan Demjanjuk (born on 3 April 1920), of Ukrainian origin and trained as a camp guard in Trawniki near Lublin.

This is of importance in connection with the case against Demjanjuk, who will shortly stand trial in the German Federal Republic, for being an accessory in the murder of tens of thousands of Jews from the occupied Netherlands, from the *Generalgouvernement* (Occupied Poland) and from the Soviet Union in the extermination camp Sobibor in the months of April up to and including September 1943.¹ Just as Treblinka extermination camp this camp was razed to the ground in the autumn of 1943, in order to eliminate all traces of the crime.² In the Belzec death camp killing operations were stopped in December 1942. Most, but not all, of the documents drawn up by the perpetrators were also destroyed at that time, in the autumn of 1943.³

In this article the emphasis is not on the judicial niceties of the numerous lawsuits in which Demjanjuk has been involved since 1977, and has also involved himself. From February 1987 up to April 1988 Demjanjuk stood trial in Israel under enormous interest from the media. He was accused of having been the feared Ukrainian guard “Iwan the Terrible” in Treblinka. On 25 April 1988 Demjanjuk was sentenced to be hanged for his role as “Trawniki man” in the service of the *Waffen-SS*, as “Iwan the Terrible” in Treblinka and as a guard in Sobibor.⁴ He appealed and was acquitted. It appeared that he had not after all been “Iwan the Terrible” in Treblinka. After his release, after seven and a half years imprisonment, he flew back to the United States on 23 September 1993.⁵

¹ Interview with *Oberstaatsanwalt* (Senior Public Prosecutor) Dr Kurt Schrimm in: *Die Welt* (internet edition, 19 June 2008; *Der Spiegel*, 2008, no. 41, 7 October 2008, 38-40; Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen - Der Behördenleiter -, Statement to the Press of November, 10, 2008, Preliminary Investigation against John Demjanjuk finished. For the Jews murdered during Demjanjuk's time in Sobibor, see: Jules Schelvis, *Vernietigingskamp Sobibor*, Amsterdam 2008, 245, 258-259, 263-265.

² Raul Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research*, Chicago 2001, 13-14.

³ Christopher R. Browning, *Evidence for the Implementation of the Final Solution* [2000], www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/GENOCIDE/browning5.htm [Website Genocide Documentation Centre, compiled by Dr. Stuart D. Stein].

⁴ See <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Demjanjuk2.html>, 11. See also Asher Felix Landau, *The Demjanjuk Appeal – Summary*, 29 July 1993; <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA>.

⁵ The question of the identification of Demjanjuk by survivors is extensively discussed in: William Albert Wagenaar, *Het Herkennen van Iwan. De identificatie van de dader door ooggetuigen van een misdrijf*, Amsterdam/Lisse, 1989. Wagenaar acted as an expert witness for the defence during the trial; Gitta Serenyi,

For many people this case demonstrated the “fragility of survivor eyewitness testimony”. But during this trial it also appeared that the accused, who reacted “almost mechanically” (“*I have never been in Treblinka, Sobibor or Trawniki. I was a prisoner of war of the Germans.*”), found it difficult to speak the truth, wrote the world famous investigation journalist Gitta Serenyi.⁶

Thus the intention here is not to provide a legal essay, but a historical reconstruction and contextualization of his role in the period from 1940, when he was called up for duty in the Red Army, until February 1952, when he emigrated to the United States. The evidence for this is provided by the judgement of the American Judge Paul R. Matia of 2002, which was based on authentic written sources from various archives, which came from the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) of the American Department of Justice. The authenticity of this evidence was contested by Demjanjuk and his associates, but has been declared proven.⁷ Further this article is based on the most recent specialist literature (which is not available on internet). The judicial dimension – after all Demjanjuk’s extradition forms the reason for this article – is discussed at the end.

It is his whereabouts and activities during the years 1940-1945 about which Demjanjuk has since 1948 made varying statements to different bodies. Further on in this text these statements will be considered. Thus my two pivotal questions are: where was Demjanjuk exactly and what did he do and see there? And what has he later said about these various whereabouts?

II. *Youth in Dubovi Makharinstsi (1920-1939)*

Iwan Demjanjuk was born on 3 April 1920 in Dubovi Makharintsi (Russian spelling: Dubovye Makharintsy). This lies in the Kozjatyn region, in the Vinnytsya (Russian: Vinnitsa) oblast. His father’s name was Mykola (Russian: Nikolaj).⁸ In this village there was also a cousin of Iwan’s, who was also called Ivan and was about a year younger, and a cousin Mariya.

Shortly before his birth fighting was regularly taking place in Koziatyn, which numbered 26,000 inhabitants in 1970, and around 1920 many less. Late in 1918 there was fighting between Ukrainian rebels and the German army. In February 1919 the “Sich Riflemen Corps” fought the Red Army and in the

“The Case of John Demjanjuk”, in: idem, *The German Trauma: Experiences and Reflections, 1938-2000*, London 2000, 345, 355.

⁶ Serenyi, *John Demjanjuk*, 309-310, 313.

⁷ This was not a criminal law trial, but a civil law trial. In the United States it is customary in civil law procedures that both parties present their Findings of Fact to the judge and that the latter makes a choice from them in the pronouncement of his judgement. Judge Matia (see the following note) has as a rule considered the material submitted by the American state (the OSI) to be authentic and the truth. These documents were not available for my perusal when I wrote this paper.

⁸ Judge Paul R. Matia, United States District Court, Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division, US of America vs. John Demjanjuk, *Findings of Fact* [2002], Government Exhibit 3, Trawniki identity card in the name of Iwan Demjanjuk, no. 1393.

summer of 1919 the Ukrainian-Galician army fought the Soviets during the advance on Kiev.⁹

The Vinnytsya oblast (26,500 sq. km) had been Polish territory up to 1793 and was then annexed by the Russian Empire,¹⁰ but had retained the character of a frontier area. The noted American historian Amir Weiner has written a monograph about this area, in which he showed that the process of partly forced Sovietisation only took place in this oblast during the Second World War.¹¹

The first drastic event in the life of Demjanjuk will have been the famine in the Ukraine in 1932-1933. According to Ukrainian historians this was a question of genocide with seven million victims, while authoritative Western historians such as Robert Conquest, Stephen Wheatcroft and Michael J. Ellman proceed on the assumption of 3 to 31/2 million victims. The Ukrainians hold the Stalinist regime personally responsible, while the consensus in the West – Wheatcroft is the pre-eminent expert – is that a number of explanatory factors played a part: bad harvests (with the exception of 1930), political blunders (no reserve stocks), the impossibility of grain purchases in the USA, the high rise in the population, the growth of the qualitatively improved livestock and Stalin's overestimation of the level of grain production in 1926. The mortality resulting from the famine rose steeply in Kiev, but afterwards also south of Kiev, as the Kiev authorities requisitioned grain there.¹²

The Great Terror of 1937-1938 will have formed a second radical experience in the life of Iwan Demjanjuk. In the town of Vinnytsya (German: Winniza), just as everywhere else in the Ukraine, thousands of citizens were executed. It was not so much these executions, as the widely publicised disinterment of the skeletons and the disclosure by the German authorities in May-July 1943, which made Vinnytsya known far beyond the Ukraine. A total of sixty-six mass graves were opened and shown to the world, including a forensic expert from The Netherlands. The total number of dead amounted to at least 9,270 men and 169 women (in a town with a population of some 100,000 people, although people from surrounding areas were also among the victims). Before they had been able to open all the graves, the German troops withdrew.¹³

III. Soviet Army and Prisoner of War Period (1940-July 1942)

⁹ Headword Koziatyn, in: Vlodymyr Kubijovyc (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, Toronto Buffalo London 1988, vo. II, 652.

¹⁰ Headword Vinnytsya, in: Danylo Husar Struk (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, Toronto, Buffalo, London 1993, vo. V, 608.

¹¹ Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War. The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Princeton/Oxford 2001, *passim*.

¹² Lecture by Stephen Wheatcroft in the CHGS, 3 October 2008, followed by connected paper by co-speaker Michael J. Ellman, see *De Volkskrant*, 11 October 2008, supplement *Kennis*, 7.

¹³ M. Stakhiv, headword Vinnytsya Massacre, in: Danylo Husar Struk (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, Toronto Buffalo London 1993, vol. V, 609-610.

In 1940,¹⁴ when there was not yet an immediate threat of war, the authorities called Demjanjuk up for the Red Army. Just as hundreds of thousands of other Ukrainians, he had to comply with the call-up.

If he had not done so, he would have been arrested and very severely punished, possibly even with a death sentence. This call-up was a breaking point in his young life, for Demjanjuk was a tall young man (1.75 m.), who was handy and skilful with vehicle engines. Nobody knows what his level of ambition was at that point, nor presumably does he himself any longer know, but if his level was to be a tractor driver, then he was fully successful at an early age.

According to his own words he had at that time obtained the (highly desirable) function of “*Traktorist*” (tractor driver) and was thus the driver of the (probably the only) tractor of the kolhoz. He thus belonged to the youngest of the village worthies, naturally subservient to the management of the kolhoz.

Demjanjuk was taken prisoner of war by German troops at the battle of Kerch in the Crimea in May 1942, which ended in a crushing defeat of the Red Army on 18 May 1942. He was imprisoned in a POW camp in Rivne in the Ukraine, together with many tens of thousands of other comrades.¹⁵ If he had then thought that the Soviet regime belonged to the past, and for good, then this was not an inconceivable idea. What was then to become of a “*Traktorist*”, who could not possibly return to the village of his birth?

In general the Soviet POWs were exceptionally badly treated by the German troops. In this connection the pre-eminent expert Karel C. Berkhoff wrote of a “genocide” inspired by racist motives on the POWs who were regarded as “Russians”.¹⁶ They suffered starvation. The number of victims of this genocidal policy amounted in the winter of 1941-1942 alone to two million.¹⁷ After this the Germans treated them better, and the number of deaths decreased.¹⁸

There is no reason to believe that this phenomenon of mass deaths did not occur in Rivne; one source reports cannibalism amongst the Soviet POWs there in 1941,¹⁹ thus before Demjanjuk was there. For a time, in 1941, Ukrainian POWs were released, but around the time that Demjanjuk was taken prisoner, this had been cancelled at the personal order of Adolf Hitler.²⁰ Demjanjuk will have heard this, and he will also have seen quite a lot of misery around him in Rivne, even though the number of deaths was less massive than in 1941.

¹⁴ Kurt Schrimm (note 1) spoke of 1941, but I adhere to the finding of the court in Ohio.

¹⁵ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 13.

¹⁶ Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*, Cambridge/London 2004, 90, 112-113.

¹⁷ Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 89.

¹⁸ Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 90. Berkhoff speaks here of a genocide which lasted to “at least the end of 1942”. On the other hand the Trawniki guard I.T. Danilchenko in his statement of 1985 (Schelvis Archive, NIOD) makes no mention of hunger.

¹⁹ See: www.cwporter.com/sovcan.htm; Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 103

²⁰ Berkhoff, *Harvest*, 106.

In the camp in Rivne, Demjanjuk was recruited by *SS-Hauptsturmführer* (SS Captain) Karl Streibel, the commander of the Trawniki camp, or what is much more likely, by one of his representatives.²¹ Evidently the *Wehrmacht* allowed the *Waffen-SS* into POW camps such as these, thus *SS* personnel succeeded in making it clear to the *Wehrmacht* that they had an important reason for entering these camps; or, that could also be possible, the *Wehrmacht* did not make much fuss about it.

With “many others”,²² who in June and July 1942 were sent from Rivne to the training camp Trawniki, as part of an action to recruit 1250 men which began in May 1942 and ended in September 1942,²³ Demjanjuk was also sent to Trawniki. Streibel, a medium-sized man who was so corpulent that he had difficulty in walking,²⁴ did not always recruit the same numbers, but this varied from 50 to 100 men per camp.²⁵ Thus he worked with set selection criteria or according to his need of men.

Exactly how this recruitment in Rivne worked is not clear. More in general Christopher R. Browning wrote the following about it: “The key person (...) was Karl Streibel.²⁶ He and his men visited the POW camps and recruited Ukrainian, Latvian and Lithuanian “volunteers” (*Hilfswillige*, or *Hiwis*) who were screened on the basis of their anti-Communist (and hence almost invariably anti-Semitic sentiments), offered an escape from probable starvation, and promised that they would not be used for combat against the Soviet army.”²⁷ Browning does not however indicate what his source for this is.

Whether there was any real discussion on politics with Demjanjuk in Rivne, in the sense of a longer talk or a screening is not clear. It is quite possible that something like this took place, since there were more than enough candidates for service in the Third Reich. There will certainly have been criteria laid down by Streibel or by his *SS* non-commissioned officers (NCO's), who had entered the camp at Rivne.

A “screening” in the sense of an administrative search into the past with the help of others, for example the village worthies, can not have been possible. There was not the slightest opportunity for this. Even the realisation of a talk

²¹ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Bataillon 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, London 2001, 52.

²² Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 13.

²³ Peter Black, “Die Trawniki-Männer und die “Aktion Reinhard””, in Bogdan Musian (Hrsg), <<*Aktion Reinhard*>>. *Der Völkermord an den Juden im Generalgouvernement 1941-1944*, Osnabrück 2004, 317.

²⁴ *Statement J.H.Engelhardt*, 481, Schelvis Archive, NIOD.

²⁵ David Alan Rich, “Reinhard's Footsoldiers: Soviet Trophy Documents and Investigative Records as Sources”, in: John K. Roth/Elizabeth Maxwell (Eds.), *Remembering the Future. The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. 1, London/New York, 2001, 690.

²⁶ The authorities in the Federal Republic prepared and brought a case against Karl Streibel. See ZstL, II 208 AR 643/71. An extract from the sentence is in the Schelvis archives in the NIOD.

²⁷ It is my impression that Browning construes here somewhat artificially and perhaps not correctly a contrast between “ordinary “ members of the *Ordnungspolizei* and ideologically motivated Trawniki; Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 52.

between the recruiting officer and Demjanjuk is far from plausible, since the SS –NCO in question would presumably not have spoken Ukrainian and Demjanjuk did not speak a word of German. Where and from whom would he have learnt the language? But possibly Demjanjuk, if asked, would with the utmost difficulty have expressed or tried to express roughly what he thought about Communists and Jews, and perhaps there was an interpreter who helped. This interpreter could have been a *Volksdeutscher*, an ethnic German Ukrainian, who spoke both languages.

In my opinion it is more likely that Streibel's representatives were recruiting among Ukrainians, and then in particular Ukrainians who were used to guard Soviet prisoners, and that the SS men paid attention to racial criteria or to physical condition (which will materially have amounted to about the same).

The latter view is shared by David Rich, one of the historians of the OSI, who in 2001 wrote a short scientific article on this group of Ukrainian guards. This is based to a great extent on a considerable part of the many thousands of pages of documents made available to the American Justice Department by the KGB archivist.²⁸ “*The recruiters inspected a POW camp's population in formation, selecting those who still appeared healthy and strong.*” Many of them were better fed because they had got extra rations in exchange for “*local physical labour details*”.²⁹

In view of the secrecy over the gassing of Jews in Belzec and Sobibor with the cooperation of men from Trawniki, which had been going on for months,³⁰ it is utterly implausible that at that time in Rivne Demjanjuk was told in so many words that after his arrival in Trawniki he would be trained as a guard for Jewish prisoners of the Third Reich, let alone that he would later be required to actively cooperate in mass extermination.³¹

However, he must have understood that formally speaking he was voluntarily entering the service of the *Waffen-SS*, since the recruiting officer will have worn that uniform, and perhaps also that he would not become a soldier again, this time as an opponent of the Red Army. Perhaps even the place name Lublin was mentioned to him, in any case he will at a given moment have understood that that was the place to which he was brought. Probably he was given the idea that his future conditions would be better than those in Rivne, and it did not take much to give him the impression that anything was better than staying in Rivne.

²⁸ Rich mentions as an introduction that “*The documents cited in this paper are in the public domain, either through public archival holdings or as a result of their introduction in judicial proceedings as evidence. Among the latter, the documents used in this paper represent a small fraction of the materials relating to Trawniki Training Camp held by the U.S. Department of Justice, and which corroborate the conclusion drawn in this paper.*”; Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 688.

²⁹ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 690.

³⁰ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 52.

³¹ Cf. Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 316, who comes to the same conclusion.

In short, Demjanjuk entered the service of a subdivision of the SS “voluntarily” as a *Hilfswillige (Hiwi)*, to escape a certain death by starvation (or very heavy work) in Rivne.³² When he came forward in this capacity, he had four particular qualities: he was young, tall and strong and these qualities were visible. He knew about engines, and perhaps he made that known.

Demjanjuk later stated that he was taken POW in Kerch and held prisoner in Rivne, which corresponds with historical evidence on the recruitment of Trawniki personnel in mid-1942 and on his arrival in Trawniki in the second half of July 1942.³³

IV. *The SS Training Camp Trawniki ([19 July] 1942-22 September 1942)*

The Trawniki camp was primarily a training camp, thirty kilometres south-east of Lublin, on the railway line from Lublin to Chelm, where from July 1941 a total of some 5000 young Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Latvians were trained as auxiliaries in the implementation of the racist policy of the Third Reich,³⁴ in particular for the implementation of *Operation Reinhard*, i.e. the extermination of Jews in occupied Poland.³⁵ This extermination was under the supervision of *SS-und Polizeiführer* (SS and Police Leader) *SS-Brigadeführer* (SS Brigadier General) Odilo Globocnik, the regional representative of *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler in Lublin, a town of some hundred thousand inhabitants. When Demjanjuk was in training there, he was 22 years old. He thus probably belonged to the younger group.

The men trained in this camp were often referred to as “Trawniki” or “Trawniki men”,³⁶ but also as *Hilfwilligen (Hiwi’s)* (“volunteers”),³⁷ a connotation which applied to a very much larger group.³⁸ They were also called “Ukrainians”, “*Askari’s*”³⁹ and, in particular by Polish Jews, “blacks” or “*karaloechies*” (cockroaches) from the colour of their uniform.⁴⁰ The Trawniki received wages, paid per week, and food, and the

³² Cf. Browning, *Evidence for the Implementation*; Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 53.

³³ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 13-14.

³⁴ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 698, note 8, arrives at 4,500 Trawniki in total, Black at 5,000; Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 319.

³⁵ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 14. See also the *Holocaust Encyclopedia* on the website of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, article no. 470.

³⁶ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 311. The articles of Rich and Black are what you call “State of the art”. The earlier literature is in the meantime very out of date (Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Bloomington, Indiana 1987; Adalbert Rückerl, *NS-Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse*, Munich 1977 and Helga Grabit/Wolfgang Scheffler, *Die letzten Spuren. Ghetto Warschau, SS-Arbeitslager Trawniki, Aktion Erntefest*, Berlin 1988)

³⁷ Cf. Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 52.

³⁸ Black wrote that strangely enough Michael Burleigh speaks of 230,000 men who would have been trained in “Trawniki” (sic); Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 311, note 6. Thus Burleigh confused the Trawniki with the much larger group of *Hilfwilligen (Hiwi’s)*; Berkhoff (*Harvest*, 107) estimates that number at 200,000-310,000.

³⁹ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 313. “*Askari’s*” was the name given to the native troops in German East Africa during the colonial period; Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 313-314.

⁴⁰ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 53.

wages were as high as those of their counterparts in the *Waffen-SS* and the rations were just as large.⁴¹ They also had the possibility of taking leave.⁴² Demjanjuk admitted in his trial in Ohio that the Iwan Demjanjuk who was in German service “*was paid as a guard.*”⁴³

Not much escaped the notice of the Trawniki where the extent of the Holocaust in this region was concerned. One of the instructors in Trawniki, Erich Lachmann, later stated the following about this: “*We could see the transports as the trains passed the Trawniki camp. We were aware of everything that was going on.*”⁴⁴

After the arrival of new recruits Streibel’s subordinates followed a standard procedure. Forms were filled in and the recruits were told that they were now “German soldiers of the *SS*”. A *Personalbogen* (personnel sheet) with biographical information was completed, photos and fingerprints were taken and the recruit had to sign a *Dienstverpflichtung* (service obligation).⁴⁵ The *Personalbogen* contained further the service oath by the recruit that he had no Jewish forefathers, had not been a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or of the *Komsomol* Youth. They guaranteed that they would serve for the duration of the war and subject themselves to the service regulations.⁴⁶

Demjanjuk arrived in the Trawniki training camp on or about 19 July 1942,⁴⁷ and received there at about that time a special Trawniki identity card in his name, and on which an individual number was stamped. In his case this number, his *Erkennungsmarke* (identification number), was 1393.⁴⁸ This proof of identity comes from an archive in Vinnytsja.⁴⁹ There were at that time – possibly – still a few hundred other men in the camp of the 800 who were there at the beginning of 1942 and further an intake of new recruits.⁵⁰ Black wrote that in the summer of 1942 there were two battalions, each with four *Kompanien* (training companies), stationed in Trawniki with a total of 1000 men (and thus about 125 men per *Kompanie*). 1500 others were at that time stationed outside the camp.⁵¹

At that moment, on or about 19 July 1942, he entered, purely formally speaking, into the service of the *Wachmannschaften* (guard corps) of the *SS-und Polizeiführer* Odilo Globocnik in the Lublin district, Trawniki subdivision.⁵²

⁴¹ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 691.

⁴² Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 16.

⁴³ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 16.

⁴⁴ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 54.

⁴⁵ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 690-691.

⁴⁶ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 321.

⁴⁷ See also www.deathcamps.org.

⁴⁸ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 690, 698, note 8. The identity card is to be seen on: www.Vho.org/D/dfd/4.html.

⁴⁹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 7.

⁵⁰ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 691.

⁵¹ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 319.

⁵² Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 313.

Thus Demjanjuk was not a member of the SS, but was working for the SS, he was an “SS soldier”.

The training aimed at instilling the SS military discipline; the men were assigned to platoons of 35-40 men and companies of 120 men. A guard who had trained there, J.H. Engelhardt, later stated that you were taught there to shoot with a gun, machine gun and submachine gun and to throw grenades and “*all this in the German language.*”⁵³ The training was directed by *Reichsdeutschen* [before 1938: person under the jurisdiction of the German Reich] from the SS and the police, but the squads, the *Gruppen*, were directed by ethnic Germans, who could receive orders in German and pass them on in Ukrainian. At the end of their training these ethnic Germans were (quite often) promoted to *Oberwachmann* (junior Trawniki NCO).⁵⁴ Commandant Streibel had deliberately created promotion possibilities in his own ranking system, derived from the NCO ranks in the *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police). The rank on entry was that of *Wachmann*, the highest rank that of *Oberzugwachmann* (senior Trawniki NCO).⁵⁵

The identification number 1393 remained attached to his personal details during the following years, just as was the case with the other men trained in Trawniki. There are no Trawniki documents to hand (and also very few other, later documents about him) on which the name Demjanjuk occurs without the accompanying identification number 1393, or the other way round, a document on which this identification number occurs but not his surname or a name which is very similar. Thus in Trawniki Demjanjuk was a person, with personal details and outward characteristics, but he was also a number and without that number he was administratively seen incomplete.

This procedure typified his status in the Trawniki camp and the way in which his masters treated him. As a *Hiwi* Demjanjuk was a subordinate collaborator. When a Trawniki carried out a service order, he did that in a group under the command of a lower SS officer.⁵⁶ He could not do as he wished. A German who came across him without an official task had to see to it that he was brought back to Lublin, to Globocnik’s office.⁵⁷ When he left that training camp he was *Wachmann*.⁵⁸ There was no lower rank.

On the identity card it was recorded that he was a POW from the Soviet army, born on 3 April 1920, in “Duboimachariwzi”.⁵⁹ A place with this name has never existed. This was evidently the way in which the person who registered him, presumably the SS Corporal Teufel, spelt the name of his birthplace Dubovi Macharintsi. Writing errors such as this occur fairly

⁵³ *Statement by Engelhardt*, 469, Schelvis Archives, NIOD.

⁵⁴ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 691.

⁵⁵ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 320.

⁵⁶ For an example, see Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 80.

⁵⁷ See the imprint on the identity card.

⁵⁸ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 15.

⁵⁹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 1.

frequently in registrations which were made during the Second World War, particularly when the person noting the personal details was not conversant with the language of the person standing in front of him,⁶⁰ and thus more or less phonetically noted what he thought he had heard. Only after the war did it appear, to take only one example, that hundreds of different ways of spelling the name Abramowitz existed.⁶¹

Iwan Demjanjuk's Trawniki identity card stated further that he had Ukrainian nationality, that he was 1 metre 75 cm tall, had grey eyes and dark blond hair. It also stated that he had a visible scar on his back.⁶² Demjanjuk signed the identity card in Cyrillic letters. Demjanjuk later admitted that this was about the way he wrote his name.⁶³

Finally the identity document stated wrongly that "Duboimachariwzi" came under the administrative area of "Saporosche" (Russian: Zaporozje), while it actually formed part of the Vinnitsya oblast. This was an error;⁶⁴ and it is not clear who made it. It is more likely to have been Demjanjuk himself than the German official, who will not have been acquainted with the precise division into oblasts, let alone that he could make a mistake about it.

In its judgement of 2002 the Court in Ohio tried to date exactly when Demjanjuk signed and received the identity document. This could only indirectly be reconstructed, because it was signed by "SS Corporal Teufel", one of the subordinates of camp commandant Streibel, who had also signed at least nine other identity cards of this type. Teufel was promoted "SS Sergeant" on 19 July 1942, from which the Court concluded that Demjanjuk had received the identity card not much later than 19 July 1942.⁶⁵

Although this identity card was repeatedly shown Demjanjuk before this time, it was not until 1999 that he recognised his deceased (1970) cousin Ivan on the photo on this card.⁶⁶ He then denied that this card was issued to him, and suggested that this was not issued to him but to his cousin Ivan. Thus his cousin Ivan was supposed to have alienated his identity.

However, his cousin Ivan, who exhibited no outward similarity with the accused Iwan [but was evidently born in the same place and was as tall –JHtC], was not born on 3 April 1920, but on 22 February 1921 (Old Style: 9 February 1921). Cousin Ivan's father was called Andrij (and not Mykola/Nikolaj). Cousin Ivan did not have dark blond, but dark, black hair. Iwan Demjanjuk could not make it credible that his cousin Ivan also had a scar on his back. As far as is known cousin Ivan never served in the Soviet army.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *International Tracing Service (ITS)*, Papers from meetings on making the *ITS* open to the public, 2003-2004.

⁶¹ Statement from *ITS* Director Dr. Charles Biedermann to the author, 2004.

⁶² Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 2,4.

⁶³ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 3-4.

⁶⁴ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 4.

⁶⁵ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 12-13.

⁶⁶ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 6.

⁶⁷ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 6.

A cousin, Marija Demjanjuk, declared however in 2001 that Ivan Andrijoyvysj Demjanjuk was called up for the Soviet army around 1940.⁶⁸ Although he had stated that he knew his cousin personally, the accused Iwan said in July 2000 that he had never seen a photo of his cousin Ivan.⁶⁹ By saying this he materially cancelled his assertion that there had been a case of mistaken identity or that cousin Ivan had stolen his identity.

For all these reasons the Court of North Ohio concluded in 2002 that the Trawniki identity card no. 1393 relates to Iwan Demjanjuk, and not to his cousin.⁷⁰ The Court further concluded that this document, contrary to what Iwan's lawyers had said, was not a falsification but as far as could be proved authentic.⁷¹

The training in Trawniki, to which Demjanjuk will also have been subjected, consisted as a rule of drill, guard instruction, but was also partly in the form of practical training, where it concerned picking up and guarding Jews. Also when Demjanjuk was there, a prison camp for Jews existed directly adjacent to the Trawniki camp and was guarded by Trawniki guard trainees.⁷²

Not much is known about the transports to that other camp in Trawniki. At the end of 1941 or beginning of 1942 Jews from Lublin were brought here by the Trawniki. A former guard, Engelhardt, later stated that Jews from their camp were taken to the training camp and were shot dead by the recruits by way of practice. The living conditions were dreadful.⁷³

Later on this improved, for from February 1943 thousands of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, who worked for the textile firm Schulz, were transferred to Trawniki labour camp. At the end of April 1943 there were 5,600. They were fairly well treated, since their work there was financially profitable.⁷⁴ A Jewish shorthand-typist, who worked for the Schulz firm in Trawniki, Helene Chilf, recounted in her diary, which she entrusted to a works superintendent, that in mid-September 1943 two transports with Jews from the Minsk ghetto arrived in Trawniki.⁷⁵ These late transports (which were exterminated to the last man and woman at the beginning of November 1943)⁷⁶ will not have been guarded by Demjanjuk, as he was then elsewhere. He may possibly have seen them, when he was in Trawniki for a short time at the end of September 1941. It often occurred that Trawniki were in camp Trawniki between detachments.⁷⁷

⁶⁸ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 6.

⁶⁹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 6-7.

⁷⁰ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 5.

⁷¹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 7-11.

⁷² Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 16.

⁷³ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 691.

⁷⁴ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 134-135, 141.

⁷⁵ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 141, 259.

⁷⁶ Angelika Benz, "Trawniki", in: Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Hrsg.), *Der Ort des Schreckens. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 7, Munich 2007, 99-100.

⁷⁷ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 692.

The conditions in the part of Trawniki where the SS-men were housed were good for three reasons. In the first place Trawniki came directly under the command of Globocnik, one of Himmler's favourites, who gave him the rather jocular pet name of "Globus".⁷⁸ Thus the Trawniki men ate from the same manger as the *Waffen-SS*, an independent imperium of Himmler's, which, for example as regards budget, was autonomous and was thus separate from other German authorities in the occupied territories.⁷⁹ In view of the fact that board and lodging and clothes and medical care were free, the Trawniki could spend their pay of 50 *Pfennig* (1/2 *Reichsmark*) a day (for a *Wachmann*) on alcohol, the cinema, snacks and cigarettes. Their family at home also received a remuneration, which was stopped in the event of desertion.⁸⁰

In the second place (and this can have occurred more often) a transport of Jews from Vienna to Sobibor, which left Vienna on 14 June 1942, first stopped in Lublin, where 51 Jews were selected for work, then stopped in Trawniki. There the three wagons with the luggage and food of all the deportees were uncoupled and handed over to *SS-Scharführer* Mayerhofer.⁸¹ Thus Trawniki, besides being a training camp, was also a repository for luggage and food (which according to the regulations belonged to Globocnik's *SS*, c..q. the German Reich).

It was also a reservoir of manpower for concentration and extermination camps and individual slaughters in smaller places, which had no railway connection. One such bloodbath took place on 17 August 1942 in Lomazy, where the bulk of the manpower was provided by the *Ordnungspolizei*, but the *Hiwi*'s from Trawniki did the actual shooting. As Christopher Browning wrote, this was to lighten the psychological burden of the ordinary, middle-aged German men, who formed the 101 battalion *Ordnungspolizei* from Hamburg.⁸²

Browning described this bloodbath at the beginning of the Nineties on the basis of interrogations he had consulted of members of the *Ordnungspolizei* from 1962-1972,⁸³ members in whose interest it was to push the blame for the murders in the direction of Trawniki. He did this rather explicitly and I shall therefore give a more concise version of his description.

In Lomazy half the population was Jewish, and there was no ghetto, but a Jewish quarter, inhabited by 1700 Jews. The *Ordnungspolizei* gathered these Jews together and then left them to wait. After the arrival of 50 men from Trawniki the latter first drank the vodka they had brought with them. During the actual killing, standing in the mass grave, they had a bottle in one hand and their gun in the other. The *Hiwi*'s stood over their knees in a pool of groundwater and

⁷⁸ For the role of Globocnik in the broader context, see: Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide. Himmler and the Final Solution*, London 1991, 199-202.

⁷⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, New York/London 1985, vol. I, 200-201.

⁸⁰ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 322.

⁸¹ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 28.

⁸² Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 79.

⁸³ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, XV.

blood. One after the other they fell over dead drunk, so the number of shooters steadily diminished. After the SS-commander of the *Hiwi*'s had reproached First Lieutenant Gnade of the *Ordnungspolizei* ("Your shit police don't shoot at all"), the killing was taken over by the *Ordnungspolizei*.

Two hours later the *Hiwi*'s woke from their fuddle and finished off the slaughter of the Jews of Lomazy. When they left Lomazy the top layer of the mass grave still moved, since they had failed to give the victims the *coup de grace*. They did, however, collect the victims' possessions, including their valuable objects.⁸⁴

It would be naïve to assume that none of these possessions got to Trawniki, although this was officially forbidden. The collaboration of Trawniki in bloodbaths frequently occurred, and since they were always taken back to their camp afterwards,⁸⁵ the obvious assumption is that valuable objects were not worth much more within the camp, and vodka and cigarettes all the more.

Thus there will have been dealing in Trawniki, at the gate, since the men stationed there had only limited freedom of movement. And perhaps – the information from Lublin-Majdanek given below points in that direction – food and clothing such as that from the transport of the Jews from Vienna were worth much more for the Trawniki than the valuable objects of the Jews from Lomazy.

The men from Trawniki were also used (but this seems to have happened more incidentally) to pick up Jews and bring them to Sobibor extermination camp. This took place for instance on 24 October 1942 in Włodawa, about 9 kilometres away from Trawniki, during a "*Grossaktion*" (Major action).⁸⁶ But Demjanjuk was no longer working there at that time.

V. *The Oksów Country Estate (22 September 1942-18 January 1943)*

The identity card in the name of Iwan Demjanjuk states that on or about 22 September 1942 he was detached as a member of Globocnik's *Wachmannschaften* to go from Trawniki to a country estate in the neighbourhood of Chelm.⁸⁷ On this estate there was also an alcohol distillery.⁸⁸ Presumably Jewish prisoners worked on the estate, women, whom Demjanjuk also helped to guard, but it is also conceivable that Demjanjuk did other work there, in so far as that work did not require knowledge of the German language, since as far as is known Demjanjuk spoke no German.

VI. *Lublin-Majdanek (18 January 1943-end March 1943)*

⁸⁴ For a detailed description of this massacre, see Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 78-87.

⁸⁵ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 28, 52, 77, 79-80, 87, 104, 134-135, 137, 139.

⁸⁶ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 265.

⁸⁷ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 16-17.

⁸⁸ Rich, *Reinhard's Foolsoldiers*, 698, note 13.

A disciplinary report drawn up on 20 January 1943 mentions that two days earlier four men trained in Trawniki were punished in Lublin-Majdanek, which lay five kilometres away from the town of Lublin, because of disobeying the quarantine rules on account of a typhus epidemic in that camp. Evidently they had left the camp without permission to do shopping, possibly in Lublin. A note dated a day later reports that these four men have been punished.

One of the four men was “Deminjuk”, *Wachmann*, with number 1393. This report comes from an archive in Vilnius, Lithuania.⁸⁹ Black wrote that there were then two Trawniki *Kompanien* (thus about 240 men) assigned to the *SS-Totenkopfsturmbann* (SS Death Head Guard Unit) of Lublin-Majdanek.⁹⁰ One of the three other men punished, Zaki Tuktarov (number 1730), admitted after the war that he had served as a guard in Majdanek.⁹¹ The disciplinary report was signed by an “*SS Sergeant*” Hermann Erlinger, who it appears from other documents was stationed in Majdanek with a detachment of men trained in Trawniki.⁹² This was naturally not a very promising start to Demjanjuk’s career in Lublin-Majdanek.

Peter Black wrote that comparable problems were not uncommon, and did not form an obstacle to the continued use of Trawniki men. This same Erlinger, who signed the disciplinary report and commanded two Trawniki *Kompanien* who were stationed in the *Kriegsgefangenenlager* (POW camp) of the *Waffen-SS* in Lublin (up to February 1943 the official name of Lublin-Majdanek), complained at the end of January 1943 about these men, after six of them who had ignored a typhus quarantine in order, as they said, to buy “onions”, had been punished by him with “*25 Peitschenhieben*” (cracks of the whip): “*Wenn es ans Räubern und Totschlage gingen, ständen sie an erster Stelle. Eine Zuverlässigkeit für anderen Dienst könne man nicht voraussetzen.*”⁹³ Thus they were above all good at plundering and killing, but suitability for other work was not to be expected.

The pre-eminent specialist Tomasz Kranz wrote that when Demjanjuk arrived in the winter in Majdanek, this camp was virtually completed, for in the second and third quarters of 1942 intensive work took place in Lublin-Majdanek on a camp with an area of 270 hectares.⁹⁴ In the course of 1942 24,733 Jews were killed.⁹⁵ In the men’s camp there were then (31 December 1942) about 5,751 men of whom 4,683 were Jews, and much smaller groups of Poles, Russian POWs and *Reichsdeutschen*.⁹⁶ In the women’s camp there were at that

⁸⁹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 17-19.

⁹⁰ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 327, note 61.

⁹¹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 22; Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 316, note 23, gives “Saki Idrissowitsch Tuktarow”.

⁹² Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 22-23.

⁹³ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 327, 342-343.

⁹⁴ Tomasz Kranz, “Lublin-Majdanek – Stammlager”, in: Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Hrsg.), *Der Ort des Schreckens. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 7, Munich 2008, 36.

⁹⁵ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 72.

⁹⁶ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 47.

time 2,803 people, of whom 2,659 were Jewish women, 131 Polish and 13 *Reichsdeutschen*.⁹⁷

Majdanek was a primitive camp, compared for instance with Dachau,⁹⁸ but it did have two stoves in each barrack of 30 by 10 metres.⁹⁹ There was above all a shortage of water¹⁰⁰ and food for the prisoners.¹⁰¹ In 1942 the mortality was mainly caused by hunger, spotted fever, abscessed cellulitis and scabies, which under the prevailing conditions there could give rise to ulcers and infections.¹⁰² Maltreatment was commonplace, and also theft, but then from the prisoners amongst themselves.¹⁰³

During Demjanjuk's stay there the number of prisoners grew to about 7,375 men (3 April 1943), of which 2,600 were Jews and 3,952 women, of which 1,539 were Jewish.¹⁰⁴ Thus during his work there, a change took place in the character of Lublin-Majdanek, with which he had nothing to do. From a camp mainly filled with Jews, it became a camp that was increasingly peopled by non-Jewish Poles.¹⁰⁵

In Lublin-Majdanek trading went on, with clothes, watches, jewellery and blankets from the camp being bartered for cigarettes and food from the town of Lublin. A gold ring was worth about 1-2 loaves of bread or a block of margarine.¹⁰⁶ Through this the Trawniki had enormous possibilities of enriching themselves. This was even possible for the prisoners working in the camp staff, the *Funktionshäftlinge*, who could order "poultry, fish, vodka and cakes" in the town.¹⁰⁷

Executions were continually taking place in Majdanek, but only sporadically during the phase in which the gas chambers were in use (September 1942-September 1943).¹⁰⁸ That does not alter the fact that it is quite possible that Demjanjuk has heard about earlier executions of Soviet POWs in Lublin-Majdanek, thus before his time there.¹⁰⁹ The peculiarity of the gassings in this camp was that both carbon monoxide and hydrocyanic gas were used. The use of carbon monoxide illustrates the relation between this camp and the other camps of *Operation Reinhard*, and the use of *Zyklon B* indicates a relationship with the extermination method in Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹¹⁰ From April 1943 up to August of that year all the incoming Jewish transports were subjected to a

⁹⁷ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 48.

⁹⁸ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 56.

⁹⁹ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 56.

¹⁰⁰ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 57.

¹⁰¹ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 58.

¹⁰² Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 58.

¹⁰³ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 60-61.

¹⁰⁴ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 48-49.

¹⁰⁵ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 47-48.

¹⁰⁶ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 65.

¹⁰⁷ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 65.

¹⁰⁸ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 51.

¹⁰⁹ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 51.

¹¹⁰ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 53-54.

selection, with the gas chambers as the destination of the children, elderly, sick and weak,¹¹¹ and incidental medical experiments on Polish women,¹¹² but Demjanjuk was then no longer working there.

He did indeed experience, see or at least notice or once or twice hear that about twice a month selected sick prisoners, not only Jews but also Poles, including some from the Pawiak prison in Warsaw, were killed in the gas chambers.¹¹³

In the second half of March 1943 all the Trawniki men stationed in Lublin-Majdanek were taken away from there.¹¹⁴ Demjanjuk, who was sent to Majdanek in mid-January 1943, returned to Trawniki not later than 26 March 1943. On 26 March he was detached with 79 other men from Trawniki to Sobibor.¹¹⁵ He was presumably moved with others from Majdanek so that he could be sent from Trawniki with tens of others to Sobibor, since a detachment period of less than three months was shorter than usual in the Trawniki unit.¹¹⁶

VII. *Sobibor (26 March – 1 October 1943)*

On the list of 80 men, all *Wachmänner*, who on or about 26 March 1943 were taken to the *SS-Sonderkommando* (SS Special Detachment) *Sobibor* to relieve the Trawniki guards present there, a list coming from the archives of the former *KGB*,¹¹⁷ there is the name of *Wachmann* Demjanjuk, Iwan, born on 3.4.1920 in Dubai-Makarinski and also the identification number 1393. They were employed there under the supervision of the *Gruppenwachmänner* and *Oberwachmänner* (junior Trawniki NCO's) already there, since originally the latter were to leave together with this detachment, but this was later cancelled.¹¹⁸

It was thus the lower ranking Trawniki personnel in particular, who circulated from one camp to another. For instance, guard Engelhardt later stated that shortly after Sobibor had actually started to function in May 1942 a Trawniki detachment was taken from there, because these men had gone off in search of drink and women in the neighbouring village.¹¹⁹ Peter Black wrote that on 27 March 1943 an *Ersatzkompanie* (replacement company) was sent to Belzec, because twelve men of the first *Kompanie* had deserted on 3 March 1943. At this moment in time the killings in Belzec had stopped, but Work Jews excavated and burned corpses there. This second *Kompanie* in Belzec mutinied

¹¹¹ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 54.

¹¹² Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 59.

¹¹³ Kranz, *Lublin-Majdanek*, 55.

¹¹⁴ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 327, note 61.

¹¹⁵ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 24.

¹¹⁶ It is not clear exactly how this worked. Browning wrote about some 120 Trawniki per camp (Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka) as complement.; Browning, *Evidence for the Implementation*.

¹¹⁷ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 25; Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 324, footnote 50.

¹¹⁸ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 26.

¹¹⁹ Rich, *Reinhard's Foolsoldiers*, 692, 699, note 21.

on 10 April 1943.¹²⁰ He wrote further: “*Tatsächlich hatten die SS- und Polizeidienststellen im ersten Halbjahr 1943 mit mehreren Fällen von Massendesertion und Meuterei von Trawniki-Männern zu tun.*”¹²¹ (In fact in the first half of 1943 the SS and Police authorities experienced more cases of mass desertion and mutiny by the Trawniki men). But they did not take place in Sobibor and Demjanjuk was thus not involved in them.

In view of the fact that their own bosses did not go with them, the Trawniki were fitted into the existing hierarchy after arrival in what was for them a new camp. Within the detachment of 80 *Wachmänner* there were no differences in rank, but there must however have been some sort of pecking order among them. If this was determined by age, and not by physical strength, then Demjanjuk (who was in the meantime 23) with many others was at the lower end of the hierarchy, but not right at the bottom.

There is reason to believe that Demjanjuk associated in particular with one other guard. In January 1985 Ignat Danilchenko (born 26 April 1923 in Gretschina), recruited just as Demjanjuk in Rivne,¹²² a Trawniki man sent to Sobibor on the same day as Demjanjuk, admitted in Lisakovsk that he had served in Sobibor, under cross examination remembered Demjanjuk and recognised him from a photo.¹²³ It is not clear exactly how the recognition process took place.¹²⁴ Danilchenko’s witness deposition is important, since it makes it clear that the detachment orders did not simply exist on paper, but were actually carried out.

In Sobibor the first gassings had taken place in the beginning of May 1942. Rich wrote in 2001 the following about this beginning phase: “*Sobibor had begun operation in the spring of 1942 with its first Trawniki detachment of twelve to fifteen men under a Volga German Trawniki NCO. They initially guarded the construction detail (...).*” During the test period, also for the gas chambers, thousands of Jews were killed in twenty days, declared Engelhardt later. Engelhardt was himself the ethnic German commandant of this operation.¹²⁵ After this the camp was in use for six weeks and Jews from the Lublin region were exterminated.¹²⁶ Then a second detachment of guards will have arrived there.

After that, and that must have badly upset the calculations, the railway line from Lublin to Chelm broke down, which meant that Sobibor could not be used during the peak of the extermination of the Jews from Galicia, from July to October 1942.¹²⁷ At the end of 1942, according to very reliable figures drawn up

¹²⁰ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 343.

¹²¹ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 343.

¹²² Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 53, 320, note 32.

¹²³ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 41.

¹²⁴ Serenyi, *John Demjanjuk*, 312.

¹²⁵ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 699, note 29, 700, note 35.

¹²⁶ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 52-53.

¹²⁷ Browning, *Evidence for the Implementation*, part V.

by *SS-Sturmbannführer* (SS Major) Hermann Höfle, in Sobibor 101,370 Jews had been killed. This was written by the pre-eminent expert Jules Schelvis, honorary doctor of the University of Amsterdam in 2008.¹²⁸

Thus as an extermination camp Sobibor turned out to be much more important than Lublin-Majdanek (24,733 victims in 1942), but again less important than Treblinka (713,555 victims in 1942) and Belzec (434,508).¹²⁹ Why 80 Trawniki were detached to Sobibor at the end of March 1943 is not clear. It will have been part of the normal circulation of these men, since nothing is known about difficulties such as desertion or mutiny in Sobibor.

Possibly it was known in Trawniki that the transports from the occupied Netherlands areas would be continued, but presumably this was not the case, since the camp commandant of the transit camp of Westerbork only sent a telex to Globocnik in Lublin after the transport had left to say that it was underway,¹³⁰ and from Lublin it was then presumably phoned through directly to Sobibor. In other words, Trawniki was not a coordination centre, but a manpower reservoir.

When exactly Demjanjuk and the 79 other Trawniki arrived in Sobibor, is not clear, but it will not have been much later than 27 March. It is possible that they were deployed there when the last of four transports of Jews from France, which had left there on 25 March, arrived in Sobibor. The transport numbered 1008 deportees, two of whom survived. One of them was Josief Duniec. He later stated about his arrival in Sobibor: *“Directly after arrival we were driven together on the Rampe [platform-JHtC] by Ukrainians and badly maltreated. There were many victims during the unloading.”*¹³¹ From 5 March 1943 onwards three transports from The Netherlands also arrived, one per week, with 4,424 deportees.¹³² Possibly Demjanjuk and his Trawniki colleagues were (just) not yet in Sobibor, when the fourth transport from The Netherlands arrived on 26 March. However, Demjanjuk and his mates will have installed themselves there when the fifth transport from The Netherlands arrived on 3 April 1943.

Including this transport up to and including the third week of July 1943 29,889 Jews from the occupied Netherlands territories arrived in Sobibor.¹³³ Of the 34,313 Jews who were deported from Westerbork to Sobibor a total of 18 Jews survived the war. 13 of them were in the transport of 10 March 1943. Thus of the Jews who came there from The Netherlands in Demjanjuk’s time, five survived.¹³⁴

Nothing is known about possible transports to Sobibor in the last week of July, August and the first two weeks of September 1943, but there are scanty reports (but no transport lists) about transports from Minsk, Lida, and possibly

¹²⁸ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 266.

¹²⁹ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 166.

¹³⁰ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 68.

¹³¹ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 257.

¹³² Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 245.

¹³³ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 245.

¹³⁴ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 233.

also from Wilna in the second half of September 1943. The total number of deportees amounted then to at least 3,800 and possibly 8,100.¹³⁵ In the meantime it is absolutely certain that these transports took place, since the leader of the uprising in Sobibor (which took place on 14 October, thus after Demjanjuk's departure) was Alexander Aronowitz Petjerski (1909-1990), who was taken on 18 September from Minsk to Sobibor and arrived there on 22 September.¹³⁶

It is not evident from the available evidence that Demjanjuk was personally responsible for individual Jewish victims, through killing them himself. He certainly did not give orders, since he was too low-ranking. Nor did he make promotion in Sobibor, though there were indeed possibilities to do so,¹³⁷ he remained *Wachmann*. Thus he performed there the same duties as the other *Wachmänner*, but these were special duties, since Sobibor was an extermination camp.

When a transport arrived in Sobibor, the Trawniki, armed with revolvers, acted as helpers for the *Bahnhofskommando* (railway station detachment) and assisted them with emptying the wagons, the forced undressing of the victims and moving them in the direction of the gas chambers.¹³⁸ Thus they facilitated the work of the *Bahnhofskommando* and the other *Kommando's* directly involved in the gassing and they did this wittingly, since the gassing by means of carbon monoxide took place in the camp precinct itself.¹³⁹ They also guarded the so-called *Arbeitsjuden* (Work Jews), who were employed to carry and cremate corpses, and to deal with the possessions of the victims.¹⁴⁰ They were not responsible for the selection of the *Arbeitsjuden* as this task was the prerogative of the SS-men.¹⁴¹

The reputation of the Trawniki in Sobibor, who provided the bulk of the manpower there, could only be called atrocious. Duniec said something about it in the above. Schelvis described the behaviour of the Trawniki, armed with whips and captured Russian carbines, as follows: "As well as harshness, they were also trained, as far as was necessary, to be unscrupulous and merciless." But they were not really trusted, for "only if they were on duty did they get a few cartridges assigned to them." (...) "Their activities in Sobibor were various. They were on guard at the entrances to the different parts of the camp and at the main gate. They patrolled day and night round the camp between the double barbed wire fencing and manned the watchtowers. Within the complex they guarded Lager 3, in order to prevent Jewish contacts between this area and the other parts of the camp. They went as guards with commandos, which worked under the direction of SS-men outside the camp enclosure. On the arrival of

¹³⁵ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 258-259.

¹³⁶ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 258, 274.

¹³⁷ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 339.

¹³⁸ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 27.

¹³⁹ For ground plans, see Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 55, 58.

¹⁴⁰ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 27-28.

¹⁴¹ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 84, 101.

transports they closed off the surroundings to prevent possible escapes by the newcomers.” Finally they sometimes formed execution platoons, but mostly the SS-men did that themselves.¹⁴²

Schelvis wrote further: “*The Ukrainians were in general zealous and fanatic guards. Without awaiting further orders, they used their whips and butts of their guns to drive the naked Jews from the undressing area to the gas chambers. They in fact had an active share in the extermination process.*”¹⁴³

The same view was held by Christopher R. Browning, who in his expert’s appraisal for the London proceedings against David Irving cited Hermann Erich Bauer (1900-1980), the *Gasmeister* of Sobibor,¹⁴⁴ an SS-man who worked in Sobibor from April 1942 until November 1943: “*Perhaps 3 or 4 times I also led certain groups through the tube to the gas chambers. After all, no member of the permanent staff in Sobibor could exempt himself over the course of time from having to perform this and all other functions of the destruction process.*”¹⁴⁵ In 1962 Bauer testified that a Ukrainian with the name Iwan, called “the Terrible”, worked in the gas chambers of Sobibor. According to Schelvis he was “probably” alluding to Demjanjuk,¹⁴⁶ the former “*Traktorist*”, who was good with machines.

Exactly how the division of work was in Sobibor, when Demjanjuk served there, is not clear. It is plausible, and that is also evident from Rich’s account about Treblinka, that not all Trawniki working in the three platoons of about 35 men each were on duty 24 hours a day. “*At any given time, about half of the members of one platoon were on post duty around the camp. The men in another platoon were on rest (“Zug bei Freiheit”) and assigned to routine camp fatigue duty. The third platoon commander divided his men into two squads, one assigned as stand by (“Bereitschaft”), for meeting and processing trains of victims, the other on local passes for relaxation in nearby villages (the “Urlaubsschein” squad).*”¹⁴⁷ Further it is certain that the *Arbeitsjuden* were used especially on the arrival of the transports and for dealing with the possessions of the victims.¹⁴⁸ In Sobibor there was practically no administrative work (apart from keeping account of the number of victims) and what there was will have been done by the *Reichsdeutschen*, and the same applied to the executions and the selection of *Arbeitsjuden*. The *Zugwachmann* (senior Trawniki NCO) Shultz (Treblinka) later stated that, although he worked in the

¹⁴² Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 54.

¹⁴³ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 54.

¹⁴⁴ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 56, 283.

¹⁴⁵ Browning, *Evidence for the Implementation*.

¹⁴⁶ Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 56, 121.

¹⁴⁷ Rich, *Reinhard’s Fightsoldiers*, 693.

¹⁴⁸ The survivors have testified that on arrival *Arbeitsjuden* were waiting for them on the platform, while the *Arbeitsjuden* did the lion’s share of the work in dealing with the possessions. Personally I do not believe that these *Arbeitsjuden* were all, thus without exception, killed at regular intervals. The statement of the goldsmith of Sobibor points rather to a relation between customer (Camp Commandant Stangl) and vendor (the goldsmith); Gita Serenyi, *Into that Darkness. An Examination of Conscience*, London 1974, 119-131.

Schreibstube (orderly room), he also took part in the killing in a narrower sense.¹⁴⁹ Rich wrote of Treblinka: “Thus, during a six day period each Trawniki man rotated through three days of camp guard duty or killing duty.”¹⁵⁰

There remained various other tasks over, namely keeping guard, manning the watch towers, and moving new transports on in the direction of the gas chambers with everything which went with this, which seems to have been done exclusively by the Trawniki. This work comprised among other things forming a single or double cordon by the *Rampe* on the arrival of a transport by train, guarding the sick and crippled who were taken in lorries to the gas chambers, accompanying Jews from the undressing rooms to the gas chambers, burning corpses, guarding separate parts of the camp, digging up trees for the cremations and supervising the sorting barracks and the *Arbeitsjuden* who worked there.

In Treblinka, when a transport arrived, the *Zugwachmann* on duty called into formation the guards not on post duty or leave, (i.e. half of each of the *Bereitschaft* platoon and the post duty platoon as well as the *Zug bei Freiheit*). Normally this amounted to 60-70 guards (half the total number) who joined with the 10-15 SS-men (also half the total number) in the processing and killing zones of the camp.¹⁵¹ “None of the *Wachmänner* could avoid participation in these duties. Our entire service [in Treblinka death camp-DR] consisted only of exterminating and shooting people.”, said former guard Vasilenko in 1961. “Every guard had to rotate through the various duty posts when his platoon had responsibility for one phase or another in the process. This was a result not merely of the military organization of the guard force but also of the small size of the guard contingent, according to another former guard.”¹⁵² In Sobibor this was not really any different.

In Sobibor there will also have been opportunities, more in general, for Demjanjuk to get further up the ladder,¹⁵³ to the rank of *Oberwachmann* or even to *Zugwachmann*, since the reservoir of ethnic Germans was limited, but he failed to do so. Neither did he desert, as did a group of Trawniki in Belzec in January 1943, shortly after the Battle of Stalingrad, “when”, as Rich wrote, “news of German military set-backs filtered through to Lublin District.”¹⁵⁴ Lublin was a railway junction, and *Wehrmacht* trains with wounded passed through there, visible for all to see, also for Trawniki. According to Black supposedly one in three Trawniki men ultimately disappeared from his post without permission.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 693.

¹⁵⁰ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 693.

¹⁵¹ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 694.

¹⁵² Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 694, 700, note 38.

¹⁵³ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 691. A visit to the camp by *RFSS* Himmler in February 1943 had resulted in April 1943 in a number of promotions, but only of *Reichsdeutsche*; Browning, *Evidence for the Implementation*, part V.

¹⁵⁴ Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 695.

¹⁵⁵ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 340.

On 14 October 1943 an uprising took place in Sobibor. On 19 October 1943 Globocnik terminated *Operation Reinhard* and abolished Treblinka and Sobibor.¹⁵⁶

VIII. *Flossenbürg (8 October 1943 – mid December 1944)*

Around 1 October 1943 Demjanjuk returned to Trawniki from Sobibor. On that day he was sent with 139 other Trawniki to the Flossenbürg concentration camp, as appears from the list drawn up in Trawniki, on which he is recorded as “Demjanjuk, Iwan”, with number 1393.¹⁵⁷

The principal reason for the detachment of such a large group of Trawniki to Flossenbürg will have been that *Operation Reinhard* was ended,¹⁵⁸ while Flossenbürg was still growing. More in general, according to Black, from September 1943 “fast 1000 Trawniki-Männer in das KZ-System des WVHA [Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt-JHtC (SS Economic and Administrative Main Office)] eingegliedert und dienten in allen grossen WVHA-Lagern, ausser Auschwitz und Lublin-Majdanek, als Wachen.”¹⁵⁹ (almost 1000 Trawniki men were assigned to the KZ system of the WVHA and served as guards in all the large WVHA camps, except for Auschwitz and Lublin-Majdanek). For Demjanjuk this transfer meant the first long journey since he was moved in July 1942 from Rivne to the Lublin region. Flossenbürg was in South Bavaria, close to the Czech frontier.

According to the arms register of Flossenbürg, on 8 October 1943 “Demianiuk” was issued with a gun and on the same day a bayonet was also issued to “Demianiuk” of the guards *Block* (section).¹⁶⁰ A year later, on 4 October 1944, Demjanjuk was still in Flossenbürg, in the *Hauptlager* (main camp), for “Demenjuk 1393” was ordered armed with a gun to guard the *Kommando* (detachment), which was building¹⁶¹ or rebuilding the *Bunker*, the camp prison. This *Bunker* will have been in the main camp, since the numerous *Aussenlager* (outer camps) of Flossenbürg did not have their own prisons.¹⁶² These documents come from the *Bundesarchiv* (Federal Archives) in Berlin.¹⁶³

In Flossenbürg Demjanjuk joined the *SS-Totenkopfsturmbann* Flossenbürg. He thus became an active member of the *Waffen-SS*, which meant that he was given a tattoo under his left arm which indicated his blood group. Demjanjuk later admitted that he had an *SS* tattoo, but according to him that was

¹⁵⁶ Browning, *Evidence for the Implementation*, part V.

¹⁵⁷ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 29.

¹⁵⁸ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 346-347.

¹⁵⁹ Black, *Die Trawniki Männer*, 347, see also note 129 in which he mentions the list of men sent to Flossenbürg.

¹⁶⁰ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 29.

¹⁶¹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 30.

¹⁶² Statement made to the author in October 2008 by Hans de Vries (NIOD).

¹⁶³ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 33.

done in Graz in Austria,¹⁶⁴ where there was indeed a large SS training centre (but that was then common knowledge).

There is possibly a great temptation to see an ideological choice in this, but this seems to me a wrong interpretation. It is more likely to have been the case that when Globocnik terminated *Operation Reinhard*, he assigned the men under his command to the regular concentration camps of the Third Reich,¹⁶⁵ just as he assigned or had to assign his labour camps for Jews to the WVHA of the SS.¹⁶⁶ The Trawniki too were now under the authority of the WVHA. This offered them unknown possibilities, especially as regards their freedom of movement, and also for their career.¹⁶⁷ After all the German men had to go to the front, and that implied chances for the Trawniki. But even in Flossenbürg the former *Traktorist* did not seize the opportunity. He was evidently content with his position as *Wachmann*.

Demjanjuk's name also appears on an undated list of 116 guards in Flossenbürg, which must have been drawn up between 10 December 1944 and 15 January 1945.¹⁶⁸ Danilchenko, who stated that he had known Demjanjuk in Sobibor, later also admitted that he had served in Flossenbürg and that he had also known Demjanjuk there.¹⁶⁹ Danilchenko could also remember that Demjanjuk got the SS tattoo, but he no longer knew exactly when that had happened.¹⁷⁰

The second reason for Demjanjuk's transfer to the SS-*Totenkopfsturmbann* Flossenbürg was the growth of this camp. In the year that Demjanjuk served in Flossenbürg, where up to the summer of 1942 some 2000 Russian POWs were executed,¹⁷¹ this camp was bursting at the seams through the influx of new prisoners, wrote Jörg Skriebeleit, now the director of the memorial centre in Flossenbürg. In the years 1941-1943 the camp numbered about 3,100-3,500 prisoners. At the end of 1943 there were 5,726, 1,000 of whom were taken away to Auschwitz.¹⁷²

From March 1944 the number of prisoners grew explosively. At the end of May 1944 there were 10,000 and in September 1944 25,000. "*Ganze Lagerbereichen wurden zu Siechen- und Sterbearealen, in denen die arbeitsunfähigen Häftlinge ihrem Tod entgegen vegetierten.*"¹⁷³ (Whole camp areas became zones for the sick and dying, in which prisoners unfit for work vegetated awaiting their death). Flossenbürg, which was begun as a camp for

¹⁶⁴ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 36.

¹⁶⁵ Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 346-347.

¹⁶⁶ Benz, *Trawniki*, 99-100.

¹⁶⁷ For the latter, see Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 695.

¹⁶⁸ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 31.

¹⁶⁹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 41.

¹⁷⁰ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 41.

¹⁷¹ Jörg Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, in: Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Disterl (Hrsg.), *Flossenbürg. Das Konzentrationslager und seine Aussenlager*, Munich 2007, 28-29.

¹⁷² Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 39.

¹⁷³ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 40.

political prisoners from Germany itself, was then a camp for young foreigners, primarily from the Soviet Union and Poland, punished foreign workers, resistance members, but also for former insurgents from Warsaw and young Jews from Poland and Hungary.¹⁷⁴ Because of the growth of these numbers, everything was lacking, and the violence of the *Kapo*'s and the *SS* greatly increased, so that in mid-1944 the "*Massensterben*" (mass deaths) began in this camp, which only ended with the liberation on 23 April 1945.¹⁷⁵

In order to solve the problem of manpower various troops were added to the *SS-Totenkopfsturmbann*: "*Doch verrichteten den Wachdienst in den Aussenlagern zunehmend ältere, nicht mehr frontverwendungsfähige SS-Männer. Schliesslich wurden 1944 auch Volksdeutsche aus Rumänien und Ungarn sowie nicht-deutsche Hilfstruppen aus Ukrainern und Litauern zur Bewachung der Konzentrationslager- und Aussenlager eingesetzt.*" (The guard duty in the outer camps was increasingly carried out by older *SS*-men who could no longer be sent to the front. Finally in 1944 ethnic Germans from Rumania and Hungary as well as non-German auxiliary troops from the Ukraine and Lithuania were employed to guard the concentration camp and its outer camps). In mid-January 1945 the *Totenkopfsturmbann* numbered 2,564 *SS* men and 515 *SS-Aufseherinnen* (*SS* female overseers) in the main camp, and then there were also the *SS* men in various *Aussenlager*.¹⁷⁶ In this camp, in which the term "*Vernichtung durch Arbeit*" (extermination through work) appositely described the living conditions, it were primarily the prisoners who had to carry out the building activities who were "*zum Teil gezielt zum Tode geschunden.*"¹⁷⁷ (partly sweated to death). Demjanjuk was one of the guards of this type of building *Kommando*.

He wanted to leave Flossenbürg, since he saw for himself that prisoners from Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen were brought to Flossenbürg,¹⁷⁸ and will thus have realised that there was a real risk of liberation by the Soviet Army. It was a question of weeks, before there would also be prisoners brought to Flossenbürg from other camps in Silesia. The whole of the camp system of the Third Reich was about to implode.¹⁷⁹ However, the chance that a request for transfer would be approved by his superiors was nil in view of the shortage of guard personnel in Flossenbürg. He left, how he did it is not clear, but since Flossenbürg had so many *Aussenlager*, and he wore the uniform of the *Totenkopfsturmbann*, it cannot have been so very complicated. But it was certainly precarious.

IX. In the Vlasov Army (December 1944-Spring 1945)

¹⁷⁴ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 40-41.

¹⁷⁵ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 42.

¹⁷⁶ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 45.

¹⁷⁷ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 46.

¹⁷⁸ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 46.

¹⁷⁹ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 46.

Presumably he went away from Flossenbürg in about mid-December 1944, to take service in the so-called *Vlassow Armee*, a division of Ukrainians who after very long hesitation had got permission from the *Reichsführer-SS* to fight in the *SS* context against the advancing allies.¹⁸⁰ Whether he left with the permission of his superiors of the *Totenkopfsturmbann* of Flossenbürg, where the conditions had in the meantime become catastrophic,¹⁸¹ is not clear but improbable.

If Demjanjuk actually deserted or left his unit unauthorized (“*unerlaubt van der Truppe entfernt*” was the technical term),¹⁸² then he had considerable problems, for he had first entered the military service of a foreign power (from the Soviet perspective), had then collaborated (from the Allied perspective) and finally, when the German defeat was imminent, had disappeared (from the perspective of the *Totenkopfsturmbann*).

Later, on 4 March 1981, Demjanjuk stated that in 1944 he had joined the Vlasov units in Heuberg, when it was snowing, thus possibly in December 1944 or in January 1945. On other occasions he has stated that he arrived in Heuberg earlier, but that is not plausible, because the Vlasov units were only formed in January 1945. It is indeed possible that Demjanjuk went to these units at an early stage, but his own statement of 1981,¹⁸³ the statement of Danilchenko, and naturally above all his documented presence in Sobibor and Flossenbürg contradict a very early entry, for example in 1943.

X. *Emigration to the United States (Spring 1945-February 1952)*

At an unknown point in time Demjanjuk was taken prisoner of war by American troops, who did not discover what he had done in the war. He was released. What sort of work he did after that is not clear. Probably he did unskilled work, as a guard, or skilled work as a mechanic or vehicle driver. He married.

In March 1948 Demjanjuk put in a request in southern Germany to be recognised as a refugee by the International Refugee Organisation. This recognition was a condition for later emigration to the United States as a homeless European refugee. In this request he stated that from April 1937 to January 1943 he had worked as a driver, in “Sobibor, Chelm, Poland”, from January 1943 to October 1944 as a dockworker in Pillau and from October 1944 to May 1945 as a labourer in Munich.¹⁸⁴ During his trial in Ohio Demjanjuk denied, however, that he had ever been in Sobibor.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Address by *RFSS* Heinrich Himmler in Posen, October 1943, see: www.lsg.musin.de/geschichte/Material/Quellen/1943_okt.htm.

¹⁸¹ Skriebeleit, *Flossenbürg-Hauptlager*, 46-48.

¹⁸² Black described the “*ständige unerlaubte Entfernen von der Truppe*” (constant absence without permission) as a major problem for the authorities. The *Trawniki* could not desert, since they were not Germans; Black, *Die Trawniki-Männer*, 343.

¹⁸³ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 50-51.

¹⁸⁴ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 51,54.

¹⁸⁵ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 55.

In the same month, in March 1948, a translator working for the MGB, the predecessor of the KGB, translated the Trawniki identity card of Iwan Demjanjuk as part of the preparation of a very secret list of 100 former guards from Trawniki, which was distributed in the Soviet Union in August 1948. On the list it was stated that it was not clear whether Demjanjuk was born in the Zaporozje oblast or in the Vinnitsya oblast.¹⁸⁶ Demjanjuk did not find out that he was wanted by the Soviet authorities. Perhaps he suspected or was apprehensive about this.

In October 1950 Demjanjuk made it known that he wanted to emigrate to the United States.¹⁸⁷ Now he said that had worked on a farm in Sobibor, from 1936 to September 1943, and after that in the docks in Danzig (from September 1943 to May 1944) and then on the railway in Munich (from May 1944 to May 1945).¹⁸⁸ Thus Demjanjuk not only kept quiet about Trawniki, Lublin-Majdanek, camp Sobibor and Flossenbürg, but also his period in the Vlasow Army.¹⁸⁹ On 27 December 1951 Demjanjuk applied for a visa for America. Before he got it he had to swear an oath before the American Vice Consul Harold Hendrikson; on his application he again swore that he had been in Sobibor, Pilau, Danzig and Munich.¹⁹⁰ The existence of an extermination camp in Sobibor was then not yet generally known.

On or about 9 February 1952 the ship which brought Demjanjuk to America sailed into the harbour of New York.¹⁹¹ Whether he heard there that in the Soviet Union, in a second round of arrests of Trawniki, twelve Trawniki who had served in Sobibor, had been tried in Kiev (ten death sentences and a fifteen year prison sentence),¹⁹² is not known, but it is not very plausible. This took place with the greatest secrecy.¹⁹³

In the United States, on 1 August 1952, this man, who had as a Displaced Person been trained by the American army, went to work as “excellent mechanic” for the Ford Motor Company in Cleveland, Ohio.¹⁹⁴ It was a logical choice for a former “*Traktorist*”.

XI. *The Judicial Dimension*

Demjanjuk entered foreign military service in July 1942 and collaborated with the Nazis just as some five thousand other East European young men who were taken prisoner of war by the German army and recruited for Trawniki by the

¹⁸⁶ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 48.

¹⁸⁷ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 55-56.

¹⁸⁸ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 60.

¹⁸⁹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 62.

¹⁹⁰ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 62-65.

¹⁹¹ Matia, *Findings of Fact*, 66.

¹⁹² Schelvis, *Sobibor*, 56.

¹⁹³ For the trial of *Trawniki* in the Soviet Union, see Rich, *Reinhard's Fightsoldiers*, 697, note 4.

¹⁹⁴ Serenyi, *John Demjanjuk*, 317.

commandant of Trawniki or by one of his subordinates. In July 1942 he was taken with 'many others' from Rivne to Trawniki.

From September 1942 to December 1944 he had wittingly been guilty as a Trawniki of deprivation of freedom in Okszów, and in Lublin-Majdanek, Sobibor and Flossenbürg. He appears to me to be an accessory to the killing in Sobibor of more than 25,000 people who were deported there from the occupied Netherlands territories. He worked there for a wage, did not desert, killing was the only activity there and the SS there had no other helpers than the Trawniki (with the exception of the *Arbeitsjuden*).

But nowhere did he have any authority to give commands or any other authority whatsoever, and he did not maltreat or kill prisoners of his own accord, without an order. Nor does he seem to have been involved in mass killings elsewhere, such as that of the Trawniki in Lomazy on 18 August 1942. *Wachmann* Demjanjuk, who was never promoted, was thus a low-ranking accessory, who executed orders, never a chief offender, a perpetrator or a co-perpetrator. As far as is known he never used his gun to kill Jews. In Sobibor the executions were mostly carried out by SS-men and the Trawniki were not often involved.

In Flossenbürg, to which he was transferred, he was recruited for, but in particular joined the *SS-Totenkopfsturmbann* Flossenbürg. This was not individually ideologically determined, but more an administrative question. Presumably he left this *Totenkopfsturmbann* without the permission of his superiors in order voluntarily to join the so-called Vlasov Army.

Since March 1948 he has repeatedly made contradictory and deliberately incomplete and thus fraudulent statements about his whereabouts in the years 1937-1945 and sometimes did this on oath. In Israel he has been tried and sentenced as a Trawniki man and as a guard in Sobibor.

As stated above, he seems to me to be an accessory to the mass killings in Sobibor. There can only be speculation on the question of how the legal proceedings will go in the Federal Republic. Presumably the media and the public at large will not want to wait too long for a trial of the 88 years old Demjanjuk and for a sentence, but nevertheless the whole procedure can well last six months or longer. In the meantime anything can happen, and Demjanjuk's judges have previously been known to come up with surprises.

But where surprises are concerned, I think more at the end of the proceedings than at the beginning. In view of the fact that the case has been transferred to the Public Prosecutor in Munich, the phase of the preliminary investigation by the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* (Central Office of the Judicial Authorities of the Federal States for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes) in Ludwigsburg is now concluded. The request for extradition will be

prepared at the political and diplomatic level,¹⁹⁵ and it is obvious to presume that Demjanjuk will actually be extradited.

And once he is held in the Federal Republic and as a stateless person presumably may not return to America, a case against him will be prepared by a *Staatsanwaltschaft* (Public Prosecutor's Office) in Munich. Unlike for example in the Netherlands, in the Federal Republic there is no principle of discretionary powers of the public prosecutor. Thus the public prosecutor has less room to manoeuvre, he cannot himself sound out whether prosecution is desirable. In principle he has to institute criminal proceedings, and I simply cannot imagine that Demjanjuk will be extradited and that then no case will be brought against him. It will thus come to an indictment and a trial.

But the judges in the Federal Republic, thanks to the unsurpassed *Trias Politica*, are no more kept in leading strings than they usually are in The Netherlands. The proceedings against Demjanjuk will be short, since eyewitnesses from Sobibor, thus surviving *Arbeitsjuden*, scarcely exist any more. Since there are no witnesses, the proceedings will be carried on mainly on the basis of historical documents.

The chance of acquittal does not seem to me to be entirely illusory, since the presence of Demjanjuk can be proved, and also the active share of the Trawniki in the process of extermination, but not his personal involvement in one or more gassings or executions. On the other hand: if being an accessory supposes that someone knowingly and willingly facilitates the crime,¹⁹⁶ then Demjanjuk is an accessory after the fact in the committal of some tens of thousands of cases of extermination, and then it is to be expected that a severe sentence will be called for.

I lack sufficient legal expertise, but I presume that the judges in the Federal Republic will take the following factors into consideration: Demjanjuk is an older man, who has made varying statements. His punishment – the exact sentence will in due course be determined by a *Strafvollziehungskammer* (sentencing chamber) – will be related to the convicted *SS*-men, in particular in Sobibor. He has already been in prison, in Israël, and for a considerable length of time. The material dug up about Trawniki, Sobibor and Treblinka from the various Eastern European archives will be considered in the court's decision-making, since German judges will on more occasions have made use of East German and East European evidence in their considerations. On the other hand: if Demjanjuk's defence again questions the authenticity of the written sources, the court will have to make a pronouncement on that.

But these are all suppositions. We shall just have to wait and see.

¹⁹⁵ See note 1.

¹⁹⁶ For different interpretations of the concept of complicity, see: Johannes Houwink ten Cate, "The Enlargement of the Circle of Perpetrators of the Holocaust", in: *Jewish Political Science Review*, Fall 2008, 1-18.

XII. *The non-judicial Dimension*

So much for the more judicial side of this question.

Naturally there is also a non-judicial dimension, but it is difficult to gauge this precisely, since most of the documents were destroyed in the autumn of 1943, only a few of the 5,000 Trawniki have been cross-examined, and above all because Demjanjuk has robbed himself of the chance to tell his own story as the result of his numerous alibi statements.

“*Traktorist*” Demjanjuk was a young man from the country in a not yet Sovietised frontier area, who had to fight for the Soviet army, although these same Soviets had wrought havoc in his native region during the collectivisation of agriculture and the famine which followed. Demjanjuk was then a boy of twelve, thirteen years old. After that he more consciously experienced the Great Terror in the Ukraine in 1937-1938, in the sense that he heard reports about it. He was then seventeen, eighteen. At about that time as a “*Traktorist*” he was a young man of standing in his village birthplace. His call-up for the Red Army put a drastic end to this village idyll.

In 1940 he had to enter military service, which he did for about two years. He experienced an overwhelming defeat and for two, three months afterwards saw with his own eyes or at least heard reports of how the National Socialist authorities and their subordinates perpetrated genocide on Soviet POWs. He will have heard that in 1941 there were still numerous Ukrainian POWs being released, but when he had become a POW, the possibility no longer existed. That his generation was better fed than its predecessors was not much consolation. Resignation to ultimate death by starvation was one possibility, special service, the performance of very heavy work in exchange for extra rations was a second, and reporting for service with the Germans was the only other.

The circumstances of his own recruitment could not be clarified, but can be inferred and even indicated with a certain degree of precision, particularly thanks to the studies of Peter Black and David Rich. He understood that he would become *Hilfswilliger* with the SS, could leave Rivne, and that he would be working somewhere in the Third Reich and would not be used to fight the Soviets, and above all that he would receive adequate food, clothing, housing and wages.

Also, after Rivne, he only saw the Third Reich from its cruellest and most inhumane aspect. From his twentieth to his twenty-fifth year – with the exception of a few months in Okszów – he only experienced barracks, campaigns, a POW camp, an SS training camp, a concentration camp, an extermination camp and another concentration camp, followed by fighting again and becoming a POW for the second time.

In the Third Reich he was someone with a whip and a carbine (with a few cartridges) or a gun with bayonet, thus a person of authority, subservient to SS

officers, even to the lowest ranks, to *SS-NCOs* and also to *Zugwächsmänner* and *Oberwächsmänner*, partly of ethnic German descent. Thus Demjanjuk was a person of authority, but also a number, a young man with *Erkennungsmarke* 1393, a man without freedom of movement, but way above *Funktionshäftlinge* and *Arbeitsjuden*.

If he had the same experience as many of his Trawniki colleagues, he was not determined by disposition but by the situation, was made heartless and emotionless, became hardened and corrupt. But all this is not demonstrable, it does not appear from the specialist literature. It seems that when he was in the service of the Third Reich he had absolutely no personal ambition, he learnt no German, perhaps he was too stupid to do so, and he was certainly never promoted. But how many words of German will he have had to learn (as an engine enthusiast)? Two hundred? In Sobibor but especially in Flossenbürg he seems deliberately to have ignored the opportunities for promotion. On the other hand quite a number of other Trawniki already absconded at the beginning of 1943, but Demjanjuk did not belong to this group either.

Both in Majdanek and in Flossenbürg he lived in a camp where Soviet POWs were slaughtered, though it was before his time. That can have strengthened his conviction that he had made the right choice, and that someone who had broken adrift did better to keep a low profile. He was certainly not blind to what he will have come to see as his second or his first home. He had eyes in his head and was streetwise enough to make the best of a bad job in precarious situations.¹⁹⁷

But there is nothing to show that he put himself forward for bloodbaths such as that in Lomazy, or that his superiors considered him suitable for it, and the *Arbeitsjuden* of Sobibor did not remember him, either in the positive or the negative sense. That too fits into the picture of an experienced but also routine guard.

It appears contradictory to this that disciplinary measures were taken against him in Majdanek. But this was more a question of trifling matters, which evidently had no far reaching consequences. His departure from Flossenbürg was a different matter. In Flossenbürg, in December 1944, he realised that he must get away, and to enlist with the *Vlassow Armee* was the only possibility. He was no longer welcome anywhere else, to put it mildly. However, this absconding from the service of the *SS-Totenkopfsturmbann* occurred fairly often.

When all is said and done Demjanjuk did not fundamentally differ from his colleagues who were trained in Trawniki. He behaved like the others and that was evidently his aim.

¹⁹⁷ Serenyi called him “by no means unintelligent though unschooled”; Serenyi, *John Demjanjuk*, 315.

He emigrated to the United States, where in peacetime he was a responsible, experienced but routine citizen and “*Traktorist*”, no longer in the *kolhoz*, but with the *Ford Motor Company* in Cleveland, Ohio.

Prof.dr Johannes Houwink ten Cate,
11 November 2008.