

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Death camp survivor identifies Ivan the Terrible

JERUSALEM — A survivor quivering with emotion testified Monday that John Demjanjuk was the Nazi guard "Ivan the Terrible" who clubbed prisoners, gouged out their eyes and turned on the gas at the Treblinka death camp. "This is the man, the man sitting over there," Pinchas Epstein shouted in the courtroom pointing at the retired Cleveland auto worker and pounding repeatedly on the witness stand. The outburst came minutes after he was asked to identify a picture of the guard in an album of photographs.

Epstein's parents, sister and two brothers perished at the concentration camp in Poland with 850,000 other Jews. He was the first survivor to testify at the trial of Demjanjuk, a native of the

Soviet Ukraine accused of being the brutal guard who terrorized and gassed prisoners at Treblinka in 1942 and 1943.

Demjanjuk, 66, denies ever being at the death camp and claims to be a victim of mistaken identity. He listened without emotion Monday as his interpreter translated Epstein's accusations from Hebrew to Ukrainian.

Epstein pointed out a 1951 picture of Demjanjuk on the third page of the photo album and said: "This is Ivan as I remember him."

"The picture is of an older man than the one I knew: Nevertheless, the round face, the very short neck, the broad shoulders, the slightly protruding ears. This is Ivan," he said.

Epstein escaped from Treblinka during a prisoner revolt August, 1943 in which some reports said the brutal guard was killed.

American defense attorney Mark O'Connor cross-examined Epstein about Ivan's appearance, that of a second Ukrainian guard, Nicholai, and about several Nazi SS officers at the camp.

O'Connor has based his defense on the contentions that Ivan died in the uprising and that survivors' memories more than 40 years later are not accurate.

Epstein described how Ivan beat prisoners and mutilated their corpses.

"He was insatiable. He committed incredible atrocities," Epstein said. "This Ivan would come

out of the engine room and beat us mercilessly. Sometimes he would have a bayonet, sometimes a sword, sometimes a metal pipe."

O'Connor pointed out contradictions in Epstein's statements Monday and earlier testimony he gave at the 1981 trial stripping Demjanjuk of his U.S. citizenship and at the trials of German SS officers at Duesseldorf, West Germany, in 1964 and 1965.

The contradictory testimony involved the color of the uniform worn by the Ukrainian guard Nicholai, the name of the SS officer who killed Epstein's brother David, and the identity of the Nazi soldier who separated Epstein from those who were to be executed.

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Soviet dissident returns home; vows to free political prisoners

MOSCOW — Josef Begun came home from prison Monday to a hero's welcome at a snowy railroad station in Moscow, where he vowed to keep up the fight for Jewish emigration and human rights until all Soviet political prisoners are free.

"Freedom for all prisoners of Zion," the 55-year-old Begun shouted to dozens of friends and supporters as he emerged from the train that carried him to Moscow after more than three years in Chistopol Prison.

His arms were raised triumphantly over his head and his mouth was open in a wise, gold-flecked grin. But he looked tired and gaunt from a two-week hunger strike and from what he called the "inhuman conditions" of prison.

"I am insanely happy to be free," Begun said in Russian. "I see this is a certain sign that all political prisoners will be free in the nearest future. I will devote all my strength to see that this happens as soon as possible."

Friends tossed tulips and carnations at the Hebrew teacher, who until Fri-

day was the only prisoner still in Chistopol under the law banning "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda."

Other such inmates were removed from Chistopol under a review of dissidents' sentences. Some were among the 150 dissidents who Soviet officials say have been pardoned in recent weeks.

Begun appeared optimistic about the release of political and religious dissidents and that Kremlin leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev's reforms would lead to some liberalization of Soviet politics, culture and society.

But he said without freedom for all political prisoners and free emigration, "the process of democratization will be just a lot of statistics and not real."

Begun said he still wanted to emigrate to Israel, but authorities had made no promises.

He was sentenced in October 1983 to seven years in prison and five years of internal exile for Jewish emigration activities and for opposing restriction on teaching Hebrew.

In Brief

Conservation group builds toad tunnels

LONDON — A conservation group concerned about the mass slaughter of toads by traffic is building tunnels under a busy street to give toads safe passage during their annual journey to ponds to mate and spawn.

The Fauna and Flora Preservation Society said Sunday it is working with a concrete manufacturer to build the tunnels under a main road west of London near Henley-on-Thames in a pioneering \$1,500 plan.

The society already coordinates the national "Help a toad across the road" campaign, which erects warning signs at nearly 200 sites across the country where toads migrate to breeding grounds.

Senate passes death penalty again

ALBANY, N.Y. — The Republican-controlled state Senate approved legislation 40-16 Monday that would restore the death penalty to New York for some murderers.

Even if the bill passes the Democratic-controlled Assembly, as expected, Gov. Mario Cuomo said earlier Monday that he would veto the measure as he has in each of his first four years as governor.

Similar legislation was routinely vetoed by former Gov. Hugh Carey during his eight years as governor. Both Carey and Cuomo are Democrats.

Thus far, sponsors of the legislation have never been able to muster the two-thirds vote needed to override those vetoes in the 150-member Assembly.

Terrorism suspect denounces "Yankee executioners" at trial

PARIS — A Lebanese man accused in the killings of American and Israeli diplomats said at the opening of his trial Monday that he was an Arab fighter and denounced "Yankee executioner" in his homeland.

Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, 35, spoke for about 10 minutes in what appeared to be a rehearsed monologue when he was interrupted by Judge Maurice Colomb, who said Abdallah was beginning to repeat himself.

When Colomb asked whether an attorney representing the United States and the wife of one of the victims would like to respond, Abdallah objected and, raising his voice for the first time, shouted he should not be forced to listen to a "Yankee criminal."

Abdallah was handcuffed and led from the courtroom, and the judge called a recess.

Abdallah's attorney, Jacques Verges, later said Abdallah did not plan to attend the remainder of the trial because he refuses to subject himself to French

justice and objects to the U.S. government's role in the trial.

Verges said he would continue to attend.

The case is the first to be tried in a special seven-judge "terrorism court," set up under laws enacted last year.

The trial is being conducted under heavy security. Two dozen gendarmes were stationed in the courtroom, which provided room for 117 journalists and about 70 spectators. Dozens of armed guards were stationed outside the courthouse near Notre Dame Cathedral in central Paris.

Abdallah is accused of complicity in the killings of Lt. Col. Charles Robert Ray, the deputy U.S. military attache in Paris, on Jan. 18, 1982, and Yacov Barsimantov, second secretary at the Israeli Embassy, on April 3, 1982.

Abdallah also is charged with complicity in the attempted murder of the U.S. consul-general in Strasbourg, Robert Homme, who was shot and wounded on March 26, 1984.

Supreme Court to decide on executions of teen-age killers

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court said Monday it will decide whether the death penalty is a valid punishment for convicted murderers who committed the crimes before they were 18 years old.

The justices agreed to hear the appeal of Oklahoma death row inmate William Wayne Thompson, convicted of a murder committed when he was 15.

Thompson's appeal contends that executing teen-age killers violates the Constitution's ban on "cruel and unusual punishment."

Of the more than 1,800 men and women on death rows nationwide, about 35 of them were condemned for crimes they committed as juveniles.

Of the 69 U.S. prison inmates executed since 1977, three were killed for murders committed before they were 18.

Returning from a four-week recess with a flurry of activity, the court also:

- Refused to use a case from Minnesota to reconsider its past rulings that let states require some girls who seek abortions to get permission from their parents or a judge.

- Agreed to judge the validity of a Virginia law banning the commercial display of some sexually explicit materials where children might get at them.

- Said it will consider killing a 12-year-old lawsuit stemming from an armed confrontation between Indians and federal agents at Wounded Knee, S.D. in 1973.

- In a victory for environmental groups, refused to reinstate federal regulations that allow industries to cut back their pollution treatment of wastewater also treated in public facilities.

Mo. Democrat announces bid for president

ST. LOUIS — Rep. Richard A. Gephardt of Missouri announced his bid for the presidency on Monday, acknowledging he is unknown to most Americans but insisting that sheer effort will catapult him to the 1988 Democratic nomination.

The moderate Democrat, accompanied by about 20 members of Congress including House Majority Leader Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski, D-Ill., opened his bid with a call "to make America first again" with a reactivated national government.

"In this campaign and in the presidency itself, you and I will speak for the vast untapped potential and possibilities of America," Gephardt said.

Gephardt said his campaign will center on trade. "The first task of national leadership is to remove the barriers that limit what people themselves can do," he said. The six-term St. Louis-area congressman became the first major Democrat to officially announce for president.

Although Gephardt has been actively campaigning for the past year in states with early primaries and caucuses, he remains low in presidential opinion polls. In Iowa, for example, the latest poll showed him a distant fourth at 3 percent, behind former Colorado Sen. Gary Hart with 59 percent, New York Gov. Mario Cuomo with 14 percent and the Rev. Jesse Jackson with 5 percent.

Gephardt, 46, has risen quickly through the House ranks since his election in 1976, currently holding the No. 4 leadership spot as head of the House Democratic Caucus.

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