

Holocaust conviction began in Cleveland

by [John Caniglia](#)

May 13, 2011

CLEVELAND (RNS) The case that led to John Demjanjuk's conviction in Germany on Thursday (May 12) was laid out 10 years ago in a Cleveland courtroom, where lawyers sparred over his wartime past.

At the time, prosecutors said he was a Nazi guard at an extermination camp. Defense attorneys said he was a prisoner of war.

The views on the case of the great-grandfather from Seven Hills, Ohio, continued on Thursday, as Demjanjuk was convicted of taking part in the murder of 28,000 Jews during World War II.

Jewish advocates called the decision a victory; others called it a travesty.

"Do you really think for one minute that he was going over there to be acquitted?" said Joseph McGinness, a Cleveland attorney who has represented nine men suspected of working for the Nazis.

"I considered this to be a show trial, and the verdict was a forgone conclusion," McGinness said.

John Broadley, who represented the 91-year-old Demjanjuk for decades in U.S. proceedings, said: "The Germans simply wanted to put their own guilt to rest, and what better way than to convict one of their own prisoners?"

But Jonathan Drimmer, who prosecuted the case against Demjanjuk in Cleveland, said the evidence against him is "overpowering."

Lee C. Shapiro, of the American Jewish Committee in Cleveland, applauded the ruling, which she said held Demjanjuk accountable for being an accessory to the deaths of thousands of people.

"To be a part of the camp apparatus where innocent people were murdered means that he is held responsible, too," she said. "It's an important signal to the world community that mass murderers are accountable to justice."