

Powell Lied, People Died: Justice Delayed Was Justice Denied

On October 19, 96-year-old Irmgard Furchner appeared in a German court to answer charges of aiding and abetting 11,412 murders. The murders took place between 1943 and 1945 at the Stutthof concentration camp, where a much younger Furchner worked as secretary to the camp's commandant.

A day before Furchner's indictment, Colin Powell, the US government's 16th national security advisor, 12th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and 65th Secretary of State, died at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center from complications related to COVID-19.

Seventy-six years after the end of World War Two, governments are rounding up the last few living Nazi war criminals — nonagenarians and even centenarians who played minor roles in the Holocaust — and hauling them to court for their crimes against humanity.

Eighteen years after the US invasion of Iraq, the ringleaders of THAT crime against humanity are beginning to die off, in bed, surrounded by their loved ones, eulogized in the press as “leaders” and “statesmen.” Powell was preceded in death this year by former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

The process of seeking justice for the victims of Nazism has been long, difficult, and spotty in application, but at least it's still pursued.

The process of seeking justice for the victims of Powell, Rumsfeld and other architects of the Iraq war — hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, thousands of US troops — hasn't even begun.

Like Powell, Rumsfeld lied to the American public — and to the world — about Saddam Hussein's supposed weapons of mass destruction, providing a pretext for war as trumped-up as Hitler's excuse for Germany's 1939 invasion of Poland.

Iraqi journalist Muntader al-Zaidi (famous for throwing his shoes at then-president George W. Bush during a 2008 Baghdad press conference) puts it bluntly: “I am saddened by the death of Colin Powell without being tried for his crimes in Iraq. But I am sure that the court of God will be waiting for him.”

Assurances of a final judgment in the afterlife aside, Powell's life since 2003 has been a case of justice delayed, his death a case of justice denied.

Other Iraq war criminals, however, remain at large.

Bush fancies himself an artist these days, when he's not hobnobbing with Ellen DeGeneres at football games.

Former national security advisor (and Powell's successor as Secretary of State) Condoleezza Rice teaches at Stanford.

Former US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz went on to head the World Bank and currently enjoys a sinecure at the American Enterprise Institute.

And there are others.

They're not paying for their crimes. They're not absconding to non-extradition countries one step ahead of arrest and trial. They're enjoying the good life, seemingly unworried at the prospect of ever facing justice.

That's something that can, and should, change.