

I Can Remain Silent No More!

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(English translation)

Throughout my seven months since September 26, 2009, the date of my arrest at Zurich Airport, where I had landed with a view to receiving a lifetime award for my work from the representative of the Swiss Minister of Culture, I have refrained from making any public statements and have requested my lawyers to confine their comments to a bare minimum. I wanted the legal authorities of Switzerland and the United States, as well as my lawyers, to do their work without any polemics on my part.

I have decided to break my silence in order to address myself directly to you without any intermediaries and in my own words.

I have had my share of dramas and joys, as we all have, and I am not going to try to ask you to pity my lot in life. I ask only to be treated fairly like anyone else.

It is true: 33 years ago I pleaded guilty, and I served time at the prison for common law crimes at Chino, not in a VIP prison. That period was to have covered the totality of my sentence. By the time I left prison, the judge had changed his mind and claimed that the time served at Chino did not fulfil the entire sentence, and it is this reversal that justified my leaving the United States.

This affair was roused from its slumbers of over three decades by a documentary film-maker who gathered evidence from persons involved at the time. I took no part in that project, either directly or indirectly. The resulting documentary not only highlighted the fact that I left the United States because I had been treated unjustly; it also drew the ire of the Los Angeles authorities, who felt that they had been attacked and decided to request my extradition from Switzerland, a country I have been visiting regularly for over 30 years without let or hindrance.

I can now remain silent no longer!

I can remain silent no longer because the American authorities have just decided, in defiance of all the arguments and depositions submitted by third parties, not to agree to sentence me in absentia even though the same Court of Appeal recommended the contrary.

I can remain silent no longer because the California court has dismissed the victim's numerous requests that proceedings against me be dropped, once and for all, to spare her from further harassment every time this affair is raised once more.

I can remain silent no longer because there has just been a new development of immense significance. On February 26 last, Roger Gunson, the deputy district attorney in charge of the case in 1977, now retired, testified under oath before Judge Mary Lou Villar in the presence of David Walgren, the present deputy district attorney in charge of the case, who was at liberty to contradict and question him, that on September 16, 1977, Judge Rittenband stated to all the parties concerned that my term of imprisonment in Chino constituted the totality of the sentence I would have to serve.

I can remain silent no longer because the request for my extradition addressed to the Swiss authorities is founded on a lie. In the same statement, retired deputy district attorney Roger Gunson added that it was false to claim, as the present district attorney's office does in their request for my extradition, that the time I spent in Chino was for the purpose of a diagnostic study.

The said request asserts that I fled in order to escape sentencing by the U.S. judicial authorities, but under the plea-bargaining process I had acknowledged the facts and returned to the United States in order to serve my sentence. All that remained was for the court to confirm this agreement, but the judge decided to repudiate it in order to gain himself some publicity at my expense.

I can remain silent no longer because for over 30 years my lawyers have never ceased to insist that I was betrayed by the judge, that the judge perjured himself, and that I served my sentence. Today it is the deputy district attorney who handled the case in the 1970s, a man of irreproachable reputation, who has confirmed all my statements under oath, and this has shed a whole new light on the matter.

I can remain silent no longer because the same causes are now producing the same effects. The new District Attorney, who is handling this case and has requested my extradition, is himself campaigning for election and needs media publicity!

I can no longer remain silent because the United States continues to demand my extradition more to serve me on a platter to the media of the world than to pronounce a judgment concerning which an agreement was reached 33 years ago.

I can remain silent no longer because I have been placed under house arrest in Gstaad and bailed in very large sum of money which I have managed to raise only by mortgaging the apartment that has been my home for over 30 years, and because I am far from my family and unable to work.

Such are the facts I wished to put before you in the hope that Switzerland will recognize that there are no grounds for extradition, and that I shall be able to find peace, be reunited with my family, and live in freedom in my native land.